

RESILAC*

★REDRESSEMENT ÉCONOMIQUE ET SOCIAL
INCLUSIF DU LAC TCHAD

RESILAC LESSON-SHARING

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ECONOMIC RECOVERY



SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION	4
Context	4
Presentation of the RESILAC project	4
Areas of intervention	5
Study rationale and methodology	6
1. CONTEXT AND ISSUES	7
1.1 A region that is full of opportunity	7
1.2 Impact of the climate and security crisis	8
1.3 International, regional and national responses	8
2. THE RESILAC RESPONSE	10
2.1 Presentation of pillar 1.2	10
2.2 Pillar 2 results	12
3. RESULTS	13
3.1 Youth empowerment	13
3.2 Contribution to the local economy	14
3.3 Contribution to social cohesion	15
3.4 Empowerment of women	16
4. LESSONS LEARNED	17
4.1 Sequencing of activities	17
4.2 Inter-pillar coordination	17
4.3 Territorial specificities	19
4.4 Cooperation with local actors	21
4.5 Monitoring activities and their impacts	23
5. RECOMMENDATIONS	26
4.1 Strategy	26
4.2 Implementation	27
4.3 Advocacy	28

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACF	Action contre la faim
CSO	Civil society organisation
DTS	Decentralised technical services
FCFA	Franc de la communauté financière africaine
IGA	Income generating activity
GANÉ	Groupes armés non étatiques
LCB	Lake Chad Basin
LCBC	Lake Chad Basin Commission
LIPW	Labour intensive public work
MFI	Microfinance institutions
MHPSS	Mental health psychosocial support
NGN	Nigerian naira
NRM	Natural Resources Management
NSAG	Non state armed groups
PM	Pillar Manager
SC	Steering Committee
URD	Urgence Réhabilitation Développement
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The Lake Chad region includes parts of the four countries around the lake (i.e., Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Chad) and extends 1,000 km from north to south, and 500 km from east to west. In 2015, it was estimated that the active watershed of Lake Chad was home to nearly 50 million people. Considered essential to the food security of 13 million people and two metropolises - N'Djaména, the capital of Chad, and Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State in Nigeria - this area has been under threat for several decades. Indeed, the Lake Chad Basin (LCB) region is faced with major challenges, whether environmental (vulnerability of ecosystems to climate change and pressure on natural resources), socio-economic (rapid population growth, religious tensions, poverty, etc.) or political (corruption, repeated political crises, geopolitical issues).

Since 2009, the region has also been subject to an unprecedented security crisis due to the activities of various Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs). Their attacks, exactions and territorial expansion since 2013-2014 have had a profound impact on the regional system (stopping trade flows) and its population (murders, kidnappings, massive population displacements, etc.). The NSAGs' strategy of terror and the response by the national defense and security forces, combined with the chronic challenges of the region, have both reinforced pre-existing conflicts (agro-pastoral conflicts induced by the scarcity of natural resources, inter- and intra-community conflicts, etc.) and created new forms of conflict (conflicts between displaced and host populations, between different religious and ethnic groups, the creation of citizen self-defence militias leading to an increase in violence, etc.). In 2017, this region was considered one of the most vulnerable in Africa and subject to one of the worst contemporary humanitarian crises¹.

PRESENTATION OF RESILAC PROJECT

It is in this multidimensional crisis context that the RESILAC project «Inclusive Economic and Social Recovery of Lake Chad» was launched in 2018. Co-funded by the European Union (Emergency Trust Fund for Africa) and the French Development Agency for a duration of 4 years (2018-2021), and an extension of one year (2022).

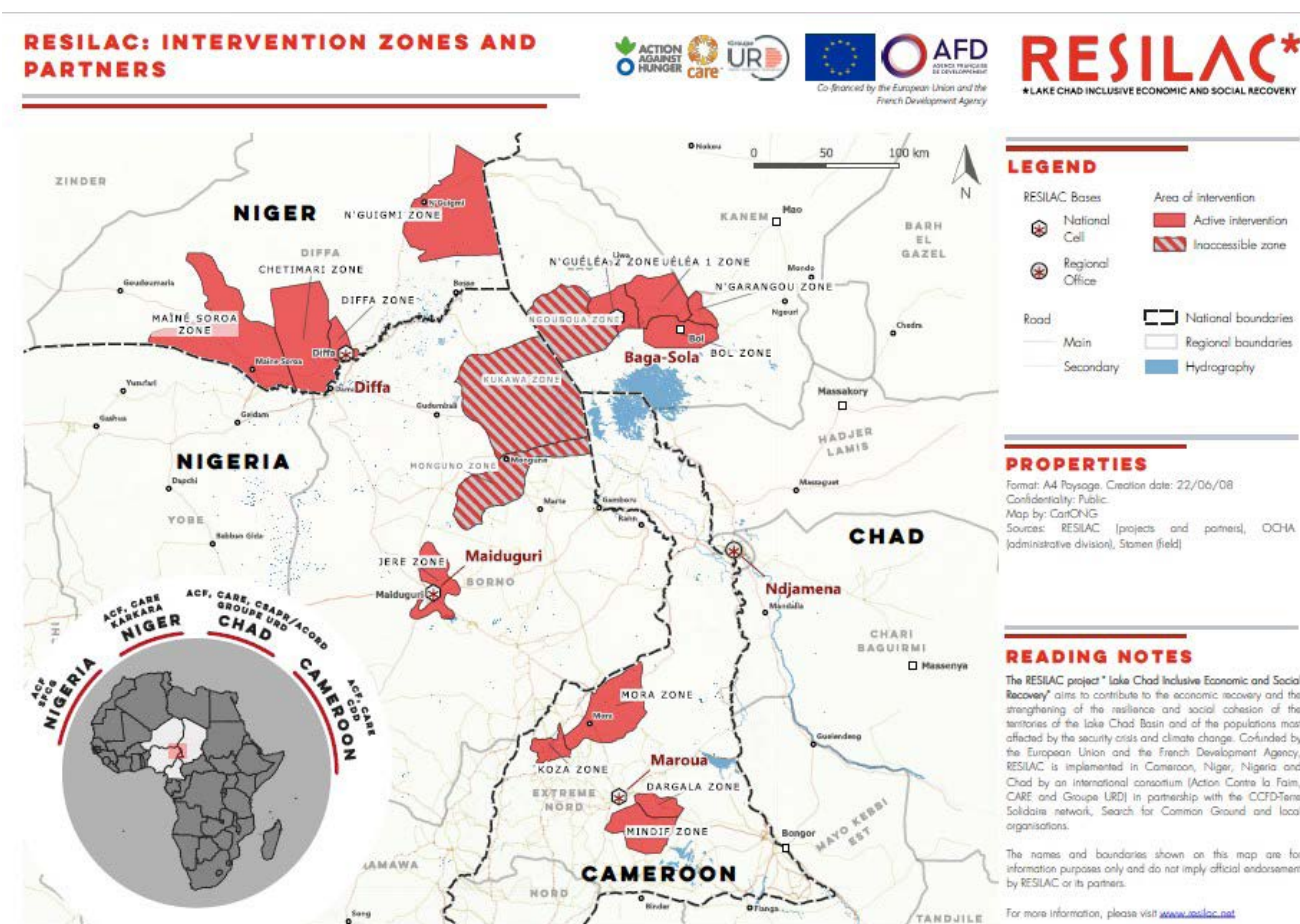
RESILAC is implemented by an international consortium: Action contre la Faim (ACF) - lead partner, CARE and Groupe Urgence Réhabilitation Développement (URD), also in partnership with the CCFD - Terre Solidaire network, Search For Common Ground (SFCG) and local organizations in the four countries (Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad). This project aims to contribute to economic recovery and increased resilience and social cohesion in the territories of the Lake Chad Basin (LCB) most affected by the

¹ - Groupe URD, «Can a territorial approach help to reinforce resilience in a crisis context?», March 2022.

security crisis and climate change. The RESILAC project is structured around four operational areas (pillars):

- **Pillar 1:** Strengthening human capital and social cohesion, by improving the social cohesion of the population, particularly through support for territorial development and psychosocial support for victims of armed groups.
- **Pillar 2:** Economic recovery and population resilience, creating jobs on community infrastructure rehabilitation sites and supporting agricultural micro-entrepreneurship and apprenticeships.
- **Pillar 3:** Institutional strengthening, improving the governance of municipalities for better management of territories and natural resources.
- **Pillar 4:** Knowledge production to contribute to the quality of project activities, and to inform the decisions made by local actors.

AREAS OF INTERVENTION



METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This report is part of the RESILAC lesson-sharing process after more than 3 years of implementation; it focuses on the project's economic support activities (pillar 2) and has 3 objectives:

1. Sharing the project **results** within the team, but also with donors, aid actors, authorities, local actors, etc.
2. Formalizing **lessons learned** (challenges, good practices, innovative practices, etc.) in order to share them with internal and external stakeholders.
3. Sharing these lessons with donors and authorities in order to help **decision-making** and to bring about changes in practices at a more systemic level.

The methodology of the report is based on:

- A **literature review** (project proposals, pillar 2 lesson-sharing reports, success stories, experience reports, mental health research).
- **15 interviews** with members of the project team in the four countries of intervention.

RESILAC's lesson sharing activities aim to highlight the main aspects of the project as seen by the main actors, their partners and beneficiaries. It is therefore not an evaluation that aims to establish a value judgment on the achievement of results, but to formalize the lessons learned on certain aspects of the project, beyond the results, and based on their experience.

Limitations

- the availability of participants to provide information for the lesson-sharing process during the final phase of the project;
- the inability to travel to the operational areas.

1. CONTEXT AND ISSUES

1.1 A POOL OF OPPORTUNITIES

The Lake Chad Basin is a rural area that is rich in natural resources and is a source of employment for some 30 million people in the region. The region's inhabitants have developed the area to meet their priority needs using locally adapted farming, fishing and livestock rearing methods. Dykes have been built in the seasonally flooded wetlands in order to develop polders, allowing crop cultivation which would not otherwise have been possible in such arid areas². Family farming is characterised by diversification, including large and small livestock, and different species and cultivars. This diversification is as much a strategy to deal with price and climatic variations, as a way to take advantage of the complementary aspects of different types of land and agricultural seasons³.

Before the crisis, the Lake Chad Basin was also known for being a sub-regional trade hub. Each week, boats carrying hundreds of people and merchandise (such as smoked fish, maize, wheat, and cow and camel skins) left Bol and Baga Sola in Chad heading for Baga Kawa in Nigeria. Baga Kawa is a large trading centre from which fishing, crop farming and livestock products are transported to Nigeria, and Nigerian manufactured goods are marketed in the other countries of the Lake Chad Basin⁴.

1.2 IMPACT OF THE CLIMATE AND SECURITY CRISIS

However, over the past six decades, the 90% reduction in the size of Lake Chad⁵ has limited agricultural, fish farming, and livestock activities. The diminished waters have become uninhabitable for fish and other aquatic life, causing fishing yields to drop by 90% in some areas. Global warming has also had multiple impacts in the region (rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, soil erosion, siltation of land) that have resulted in reduced agricultural land and decreased fertility⁶. The lack of water has also reduced livestock production and worsened the living conditions of communities in an area where 80-90% of the local population depends on agriculture, livestock farming and fishing. These developments have particularly affected young people and women. Already vulnerable before the crisis, they have little access to productive resources and basic services, and lack technical support and economic opportunities, which are often overlooked by the government⁷.

2 - UNESCO, *Paysage culturel du Lac Tchad (Chad)*, accessible à cette adresse : <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/6361/>

3 - AFD, *La région du lac à l'épreuve de Boko Haram*, 2018.

4 - ISS Africa, *Boko Haram blocks Lake Chad trade routes*, January 2021.

5 - It is important to note that for the past 13 years the total water stock of Lake Chad has been increasing. «Lake Chad is not drying up» IRD, *Le mag*, July 2021, available at: <https://lemag.ird.fr/fr/le-lac-tchad-ne-sasseche-pas>.

6 - Cairn, *Global warming and migration to the shores of Lake Chad*, 2016.

7 - Ibid.

Lack of economic opportunities and dwindling natural resources have fuelled local conflicts and the spread of extremist groups in the region. Limited access to natural resources has fuelled conflicts among fishermen, especially in the Nigerian part of the lake, where tensions are rising over control of fishing grounds and among farmers over irrigation of their agricultural plots. Faced with poverty and mass unemployment, young people are more likely to be recruited by NSAGs as a way to meet their priority needs or as a way to obtain financial support for their informal activities or protection for their families⁸.

Persistent insecurity, coupled with global warming, has led to mass displacement, and limited people's means of subsistence. As of January 17, 2022, there were 2.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Lake Chad Basin, 60% of whom were in Nigeria, and more than 260,000 refugees in the region⁹. These displacements have created tension over access to **natural resources**, particularly between host and displaced populations regarding access to water resources (boreholes, village wells, pastoral wells, ponds) and cultivable land, or the cutting of wood and the exploitation of grazing areas. The conflict with the NSAGs has also had an impact on local people's **sources of income**. In areas affected by the conflict, livestock have been stolen or killed by the groups, or have been abandoned by herders fleeing the violence. In addition, this situation has been exacerbated by government security measures that have closed borders, impeded the movement of goods and people, and increased food prices¹⁰. People are struggling to meet their needs and nearly 7.5 million people are currently classified as severely **food insecure**¹¹.

1.3 INTERNATIONAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL RESPONSES

Since 2017, the international community has intensified its efforts in the Lake Chad Basin and has promoted a «nexus» approach that includes humanitarian, development, and stabilization activities. The crisis, which began in 2009 with the Boko Haram conflict, had been somewhat forgotten at the international level. Donors began to step up their efforts in the region in 2017, with the Oslo conference raising enough funds to reduce the risk of famine and assist the 2.5 million displaced persons¹². In 2018, a second conference was held in Berlin, which aimed to mobilize financial support to continue the **humanitarian** response, while helping to stabilize the region, and build people's **resilience**¹³. In the medium term, the response seeks to restore livelihoods and access to social services such as water, health and education, and to strengthen social cohesion in fragile communities. In the long term, it aims to modernise and expand agriculture to improve livelihoods and adapt practices to climate change¹⁴.

8 - RESILAC, *Project Proposal*, 2016.

9 - OCHA, *Lake Chad Basin: Humanitarian Overview*, January 2022.

10 - FAO, *Lake Chad Basin: a crisis rooted in hunger, poverty and lack of rural development*, 2017.

11 - Ibid.

12 - *Le Monde*, « Le lac Tchad reste une des plus graves crises humanitaires », September 2018.

13 - UNDP, «Second Lake Chad Conference aims to maintain momentum and expand international support», August 2018.

14 - Wilson Center, *Climate Change and Violent Extremism in the Lake Chad Basin: Key Issues and Way Forward*, July 2020.

Though the complexity of the Lake Chad crisis means that this **multidimensional approach** is necessary, some actors fear that development objectives will be **prioritized** despite there being major humanitarian needs on the ground. If humanitarian funds are insufficient, or only available through development funds that are often governed by slower and less agile financial mechanisms, this reduces the ability of implementing partners to respond to people's urgent needs. Other actors fear the negative impact of a «nexus» approach if it is not properly implemented. Development activities can include capacity building and partnerships with the authorities, thereby undermining the neutrality necessary for humanitarian interventions and putting beneficiary populations and aid actors themselves at risk¹⁵. This neutrality is further undermined in a «triple nexus» approach, which integrates peace activities (conflict resolution, mediation, security) with humanitarian and development actions.

States in the region initially focused on a security response by increasing the human and material resources of their defence forces. The Multinational Joint Task Force (MJTF), created in 1994 by the member states of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), has helped to coordinate the subregional response to Boko Haram and limit its expansion, forcing it to take refuge in the Sambissa forest and within Lake Chad. However, the terrorist movement still has the capacity to cause great harm and has taken advantage of the absence of the state around the lake to resolve local conflicts and provide basic services to the population. The regions bordering the lake have often been neglected by the central authorities, particularly Diffa (Niger) and Borno (Nigeria), which are geographically distant from the national political and economic centres (in Chad, the area can be considered more central since it is closer to the national capital). In addition, the sense of disconnection and abandonment by the state authorities is reinforced by recurring accusations of corruption and mismanagement. Finally, the military response to the security crisis also contributes to resentment against the government. There have been numerous accusations of **abuse and violence** by security forces against civilians, and government measures to combat insecurity, including **border controls**, may have affected trade in the region¹⁶.

15 - Norwegian Refugee Council, *Stabilisation in the Lake Chad Basin: A Humanitarian Perspective*, août 2018.

16 - Groupe URD-RESILAC, *Regional Research Study Lake Chad Basin: Endogenous Conflict Prevention, Mediation and Resolution Mechanisms in the Lake Chad Basin*, 2020.

2. THE RESILAC RESPONSE

2.1 PRESENTATION OF PILLAR 2

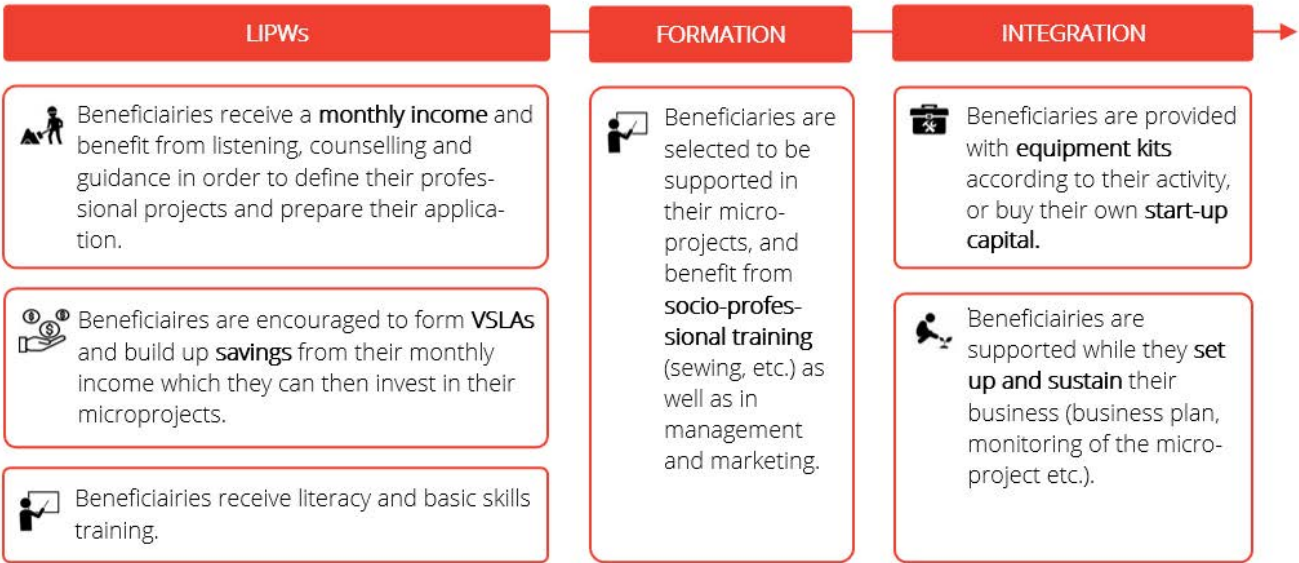
In order to adapt to the LCB context, pillar 2, which concerns economic recovery, is based on a «nexus» approach that addresses both the priority needs of beneficiaries and their sustainable economic integration. The assistance therefore includes both short- and medium-term action, with the goal of contributing to the resilience of individuals and their territories around four outcomes:

1. The local economy and youth (and adult) employment are supported through labour-intensive public works (LIPW) to create or rehabilitate community assets ;
2. The creation of jobs and sustainable sources of income for rural youth is increased thanks to an effective education-training-economic integration system (socio-professional training, literacy training, advisory and guidance support, installation of economic microprojects, etc.) ;
3. Family production systems are intensified, diversified and adapted to climate change (land development and input support, definition and dissemination of new innovative and adaptive practices, strengthening of crop management skills, access to savings and credit) ;
4. The economic autonomy of the target groups is improved thanks to their inclusion in promising value chains (study of promising value chains, financial and technical support for various links in the value chains selected, structuring of groups and establishment of relations with new actors).

This report focuses on results 1 and 2, and more specifically on the implementation of professional integration activities, ranging from LIPWs to the setting up of microprojects. This approach offers comprehensive support to beneficiaries who, thanks to the LIPWs, receive a monthly income¹⁷ and are able to build up savings. They can then invest these in a microproject, which they will have defined and chosen with the help of RESILAC staff, and for which they will receive socio-professional training.

17 - This is a monthly «income» and not a salary, as the beneficiaries are not registered as employees with the states of the various countries of intervention, and therefore are not subject to taxes and do not benefit from social security.

Diagram 1: Professional integration activities (Pillar 2)



- **LIPWs** last between 4 and 6 months:
 - They aim to provide young people with economic and social stability through temporary employment, in exchange for a monthly income of 50,000 to 70,000 CFA that allows them to meet their food and non-food needs, but also build up savings to invest in economic activities ;
 - They also allow community assets, such as polders, wells, transhumance corridors, dams, dune fixation, riverbank protection and rural roads to be built or rehabilitated to support production in the agro-sylvo-pastoral and commercial sectors.
- **Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs)** are small groups in which members pool their savings and grant each other loans (with or without interest, depending on the agreement made between the members). They are created or reinforced during the LIPWs with support from pillar 2 which provides training in account management, transparency, credit, savings, etc.
- **Literacy and basic skills training** is offered to the beneficiaries of the LIPWs. The courses last an average of three months and, depending on the country, are provided by local state technical services or by civil society organizations.
- **Socio-professional training and kits** are given to the beneficiaries who have been selected to launch a microproject (about 60% of the people working on the LIPWs). The selection is made by a local committee based on different criteria (motivation, socio-economic vulnerability, gender, location) and, when possible, links between microprojects and promising economic sectors identified in the area through market studies. The training

ning courses can last from a few weeks to three months, depending on the sector chosen (livestock breeding, sewing, market gardening, livestock fattening, or fishing). The kits are a set of tools or materials given to the beneficiaries according to their chosen activity. The beneficiaries can also buy themselves their starting capital to launch their activities (cattle or sheep for their breeding activity, for example).

- **Launch of the microproject:** beneficiaries are accompanied for the launch of the microproject (provision of a kit, support for the business plan, monitoring of the project in the field by RESILAC teams through weekly visits).

The implementing partners for pillar 2 are: ACF in Nigeria, and ACF and CARE in Niger, Chad and Cameroon, in partnership with the various DTS and CSOs at the local level.

2.2 PILLAR 2 RESULTS



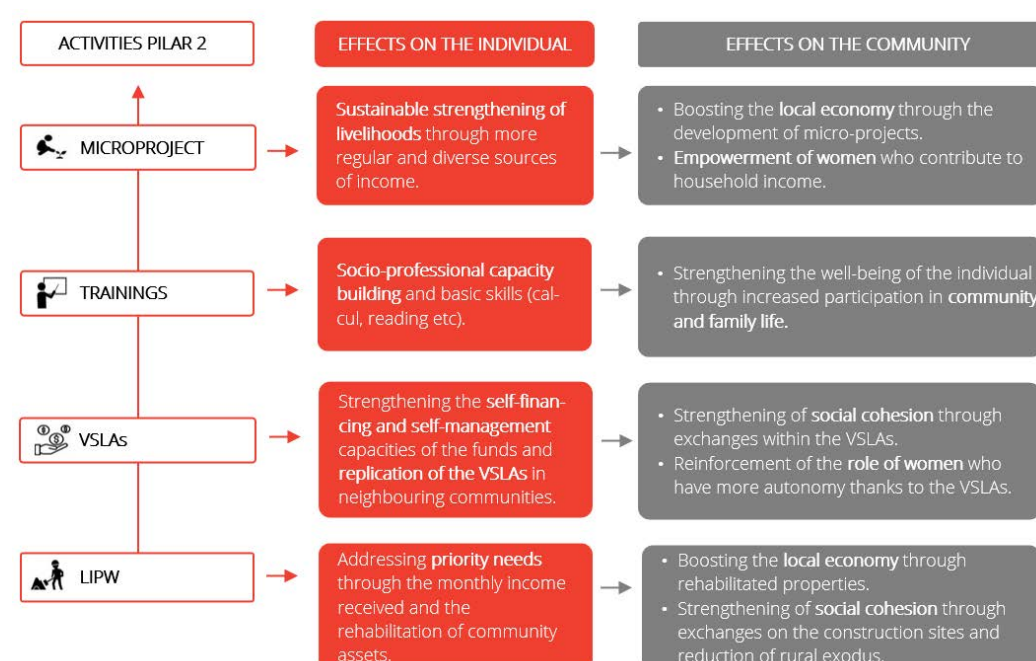
National level

Activities	Niger	Nigeria	Cameroon	Chad
LIPW	9	1	8	14
VLSAs supported	7	24	146	18
Professional trainings	811	1137	140	1181
Microprojects support	15	236	306	373

3. RESULTS

Pillar 2 is based on a «nexus» approach that addresses both the priority needs of beneficiaries and their sustainable economic integration. Both short-term and medium-term support is therefore provided, with the objective of strengthening the resilience of individuals (self-financing, self-management, capacity building, etc.) and of their communities (boosting the local economy, social cohesion, etc.).

Diagram 2: Pillar 2 Direct and Indirect Results Chain



3.1 YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Pillar 2 has put in place an effective professional integration system, ranging from LIPWs to the implementation of microprojects, which has helped to empower youth in the region. The Lake Chad Basin area is affected by insecurity, the proliferation of NSAGs, and a lack of economic opportunities. The main sources of income are based on agricultural activities, which are productive for four months of the year. This forces young people to leave their villages to find an economic alternative for the rest of the year. The holistic support provided by pillar 2 addresses their priority needs and their sustainable economic integration. All the beneficiaries welcomed the «nexus» approach adopted during the project, which fosters their long-term resilience and self-reliance.

RESPONDING TO PRIORITY NEEDS

Thanks to LIPWs and the rehabilitated community assets, the beneficiaries have been able to meet their priority needs and those of their families more effectively. They receive a monthly income of about 65,000 CFA francs over a period of 4 to 6 months, which they use to cover their food needs, their children's school and medical expenses, and build up savings to invest in their microproject. The LIPWs are an important phase of the integration process, which ensures that beneficiaries' immediate needs are met and that they are committed to the project in the long term. The monthly income helps to cope during the lean periods. It limits the number of departures to the city, so that young people stay in the area, are committed to the integration programme and invest in the local economy.

NIGER CASE STUDY: THE IMPACT OF LABOUR-BASED INDUSTRIES

The inhabitants of Adebou say they have been facing chronic agricultural deficits for the past six years, with crops covering household food needs for only a small part of the year. The LIPWs have provided income for young people to buy food to support their families. According to local people, the villages that were attacked were those whose young people went to the NSAGs to earn money, or to seek some form of protection for their families by working for them¹⁸.

NIGERIA CASE STUDY - ADAPTING THE LABOUR-BASED APPROACH TO ADDRESS INSECURITY

During the inception phase, 300 young people were employed on LIPWs in the Jere area and received 50,000 naira (NGN) monthly for 3 months. As of 2019, due to the deterioration of the security situation in this area, the LIPWs were stopped. Two measures were taken to ensure that new beneficiaries were committed and would contribute to the implementation of their microprojects: 1) they received NGN 40,000 per month during the training to cover their transportation and food costs, but also to save and contribute to funding their projects; 2) they made a material contribution to their project (for example, those who were planning to start poultry farming built cages).

18 - Groupe URD, «Can a territorial approach help to reinforce resilience in a crisis context?» (Niger), April 2022.

SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

Through the VSLAs and the literacy and socio-professional training courses, pillar 2 has strengthened the capacities of the beneficiaries to launch their microprojects independently. The VSLAs, which were created or reinforced during the LIPWs, are made up of between 15 and 30 people who decide to pool their savings in two distinct funds: a saving fund that is redistributed in proportion to the contribution made by each member at the end of the cycle, and a solidarity fund used for social and solidarity projects among the members or within the community. Members can withdraw their individual share after a given period (which they agree on) to make a purchase or a personal investment or can borrow an amount (with or without interest, depending on the agreement between the members)¹⁹. In the project's operational areas, which are rural, with a banking system that is non-existent or poorly adapted to the needs of rural households, the VSLAs allow beneficiaries to reinforce their **autonomy** and finance the launching of their microprojects themselves. At the end of the LIPWs, they save on average more than 100 000 CFA and, by grouping together, they can gather between 100 000 and 1 700 000 CFA at the end of a 9 to 12 months cycle. In Cameroon, the project has started a legalization phase to have the VSLAs recognized as Simplified Cooperative Societies (SCS). This status will allow them to borrow from microfinance institutions, contribute to local tax revenues and respond to calls for tenders to increase their self-financing capacity. The project helps the VSLAs to make contact with the microfinance institutions and establish person-to-person relations and trust between these two types of structures²⁰. The simple and efficient functioning of the VSLAs, and the project's efforts to adapt them to the specific cultural characteristics of the intervention areas (see section 4.2), have helped to **replicate** them within the territory, such as in Cameroon for example, where 176 VSLAs have been created or reinforced since the beginning of the project.

CAMEROON: WOMEN-LED VSLAS

In Cameroon, beneficiaries have created a dynamic group of 30 women called HAYAVA, which means «joy of being together». The women were motivated by the different services offered by the VSLA, notably solidarity, savings and credit. They decided what the different weekly contributions should be: savings (200 FCFA), solidarity (100 FCFA) and interest (5%). The group borrowed 45,000 CFA francs from the savings bank to carry out their income-generating activity (IGA), which involved extracting peanut oil. The women then divided the VSLA into three sub-groups, each one paying a part of its profits (2,500 FCFA) to the VSLA's common fund. Thanks to the 7,500 CFA received each week, the group has already recovered the 45,000 CFA borrowed, as well as the interest that this money generated, and is continuing its IGA.

¹⁹ - VSLAs are governed by internal rules elaborated by their members and operate based on a 9- to 12-month cycle. Members are able to take out a loan with interest (varying from 5% to 10% per month over a period of 3 to 4 months). At the end of each cycle, all the loans are repaid, and all savings and profits are distributed to members in proportion to the shares saved.

²⁰ - Groupe URD, «Can a territorial approach help to reinforce resilience in a crisis context?» (Niger), April 2022.



HAYAVA VSLA, weekly meeting, Cameroon © RESILAC

The **training sessions** have also reinforced the autonomy of the beneficiaries and their capacity to manage their microprojects in a sustainable and autonomous way. RESILAC runs 9 modules related to VSLAs that help groups to become more structured and mature, and to build their capacity in terms of accounting, transparency, and loan and savings management.

Beneficiaries have also had access to socio-professional training: one-week courses in small trade, agriculture, or animal husbandry, or three-month courses to learn skills in sewing, masonry, or mechanics, for example. By reinforcing their basic skills (reading and arithmetic), beneficiaries have also acquired more autonomy in their daily tasks (use of cell phones, access to information, shopping at the market, etc.). They feel that they can participate more in community and family life, which has increased their self-esteem and that of their peers²¹.

Thanks to the successful professional integration program, the beneficiaries were also able to diversify their economic activities and secure sustainable sources of income. RESILAC staff helped young people establish professional plans based on their personal preferences, their skills and the local economic context, if a market study had been carried out before the activities (see section 4.3). The economic activities gave beneficiaries a more regular source of income, allowing them to meet their basic needs, save part of their profits, and use these funds to grow and diversify their economic activity. As a result, they were able to adapt to different agricultural cycles, the fluctuating demand for products on the market and the evolution of prices.

²¹ - RESILAC, Midline, August 2021.

NIGERIA: ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES' DIVERSIFICATION

Abbas, who is 24 years old, is the eldest of 12 children. He became responsible for his siblings when his father died. Despite working several jobs, he struggled to earn NGN 500 a day. «Thanks to RESILAC, I now raise livestock. I buy and feed goats and rams and sell them. I have earned about NGN 120,000 from raising and selling livestock in the last 12 months. With the profits from selling, Abbas started a cell phone charging business from which he earns an average of NGN 700 per day. «Now I can save NGN 300 while covering the needs of the household with the rest. RESILAC has given me a livelihood I can rely on, I am more stable now, and my family can feed themselves properly too.» By charging phones, he has diversified his sources of income, and does not need to sell his livestock immediately if demand is low in the market.



Abbas, Nigéria © RESILAC

3.2 CONTRIBUTION TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Pillar 2 has also had a visible impact at the commune level, with the local economic fabric revitalised due to the rehabilitation of community assets. LIPWs aim to integrate young people, while allowing the rehabilitation of community assets for productive or economic use. This concerns a wide range of projects: hydro-agricultural developments (polders), pastoral (wells, transhumance corridors), environmental (dune fixation, bank protection), etc.

These projects are selected based on the priorities of local development plans (LDPs) and community diagnoses. They help to meet people's basic needs (water, food, transport) while reviving economic activities (agricultural, pastoral) at the territorial level. **Dams** can promote the growth of economic activities that were previously constrained by the lack of water, such as fishing, market gardening or livestock breeding, as observed in Cameroon, for example. For farmers, they improve the irrigation of agricultural plots at reduced cost and allow them to increase their income. For livestock breeders, they help to care for the animals who have better access to water and pastures. This strengthens the autonomy of the territory because the inhabitants no longer need to leave the village to obtain supplies or find work, thanks to the availability of foodstuffs (fish, meat, vegetables, etc.) and the revival of economic activities²².

Dune fixation and land clearing have also helped to rehabilitate agricultural land and revive the local economy. In Chad, thanks to the clearing of areas invaded by prosopis and other creeping plants, the inhabitants have had access to small plots of land for rain-fed cultivation or market gardening. In Niger, 80 hectares of sand dunes have been fixed and 40,000 trees planted, thus combating the silting up of villages, agricultural land, pastures and waterways. Coupled with other project activities, such as training in innovative practices or the development of agricultural plots, land protection has helped to strengthen and sustain agricultural activities (market gardening, animal husbandry, etc.)²³.

Finally, in some countries, beneficiaries **have replicated the skills** acquired through the project within their community. In Cameroon, for example, in the commune of Mora, a mason recruited on the labour-based sites says he has strengthened his skills thanks to RESILAC's supervision and the support of a civil engineering technician. He now has more legitimacy within the community, obtains new construction contracts and works with apprentice masons whom he helps train.

22 - Groupe URD, Territorial approach in a crisis context: a lever for building resilience? (Regional), April 2022.

23 - Groupe URD, Territorial approach in a crisis context: a lever for building resilience? (Niger), April 2022.

3.3 CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIAL COHESION

Pillar 2 has strengthened social cohesion by helping to reduce rural exodus and religious tensions, but also by creating solidarity mechanisms through the VSLAs. According to the interviews, in particular in Niger, the involvement of young people in the LIPWs and agricultural training courses has been a key factor in reducing the **rural exodus**. This appears to have had a very positive impact on household stability and harmony and has had repercussions on community life and the consolidation of the social fabric²⁴. The VSLAs have sometimes helped to reduce **religious tensions** between Christians and Muslims, as in Mindif (Cameroon). In general, they have helped to create a framework allowing community members to tackle different problems and find solutions.

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Local partner, Cameroon

24 - RESILAC, Feedback days, September 2020.



VSLA composed of Christians and Muslims, Cameroon © RESILAC

The VSLAs have also helped to create **solidarity mechanisms** in communes. They allow the inclusion of people who cannot make contributions for several weeks and allow the creation of solidarity funds to help the most vulnerable members of the association, or to contribute to the expenses of the village for health or education²⁵.

Within our VSLA, we have set up a contribution programme for the widows in the association, and the money that is set aside allows them to buy what they need. Because very often, when their husbands die, they are abandoned by their whole family (...). It is our way of helping them to cope (...).

Female President of a VSLA, Cameroon

The IGAs also encouraged **exchanges** between men and women, notably through an effective division of labour to reinforce the impact of the activity. However, it should be noted that in some of the more traditional villages, the mixed groups or VSLAs did not work, because the women did not dare to speak or to take on important roles within the groups.

Cameroon : Economic empowerment of youth in the «Tan Tan» group through female leadership

The “Tan Tan” group, which means mutual trust, is chaired by a woman and consists of four women and two men in total. Formed during the LIPWs, the group decided to launch a pig fattening project, combined with a small village restaurant activity. Pig farming is very profitable but risky because of the losses caused by plagues and other pig diseases. To diversify their income sources, the group decided to start a small business restaurant, in which the women have proven expertise. This is a profitable activity, and one that makes the livestock farming more profitable because food waste from the restaurant is used to feed the pigs.

3.4 EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Pillar 2 has empowered women and strengthened their role in the household and community. Overall, beneficiaries praise the participation of all socio-economic strata in RESILAC activities, especially women. Beyond the systematic consideration of gender in the targeting, the adaptation of activities to allow women to participate in IGAs, VSLAs, and labour-based projects was a positive aspect of the project, which showed that there was a desire to make women co-actors of development²⁶. In Cameroon, for example, the «mother-child» spaces on the labour-based sites have allowed women to work without having to leave their children unattended at home.

25 - Groupe URD, Territorial approach in a crisis context: a lever for building resilience? (Regional), April 2022.

26 - RESILAC, Feedback days, 2020.

In Niger, pillar 2 teams adapted the number of days on site and the type of work to the gender of the beneficiaries. By taking part in these different activities, women have been able to increase their **autonomy**, particularly through the VSLAs, which have allowed them to access solidarity funds or request loans to start an IGA.

NIGERIA: EMPOWERING WOMEN

Banjeele, 27, is a widow with four children. Through the RESILAC project, she was trained as a herder at the College of Agriculture in Maiduguri, Borno State. ACF paid her NGN 50,000 per month for food and transportation for the duration of the training, and which she was then able to use to start her business, feed her children and enable them to go back to school.



Banjeele, Nigeria © RESILAC

Pillar 2 has also strengthened the **role of women in the community**, especially through the VSLAs and the creation of solidarity funds. In Mindif, a women's association called Bénédiction developed an IGA, increased their savings, and thus contributed to the activities of the commune by restoring the roof of a school, for example. The local authorities and the village chief became aware of their contribution and recognized their role in the community and the importance of including them in the decision-making process. VSLAs also allowed them to work with men, to dare to speak in their presence, to buy their own plots of land for farming, and to manage their financial resources independently²⁷. In Cameroon, out of 176 associations, ten are chaired by women.

Pillar 2 activities have also strengthened the **role of women in the household**, especially during the dry season. Thanks to IGAs, they are now able to cover household expenses while their husbands are away in town looking for work. According to a Cameroon team member, the impact is particularly noticeable in terms of girls' schooling. If the household lacks income, girls' education is never a priority, and the mother can rarely influence this decision. With IGAs, women have more say in household choices, and can finance their daughters' education so that they can have a different future than their own.

27 - RESILAC, Iterative evaluation with mini-seminar, EIMS 3, February 2021.

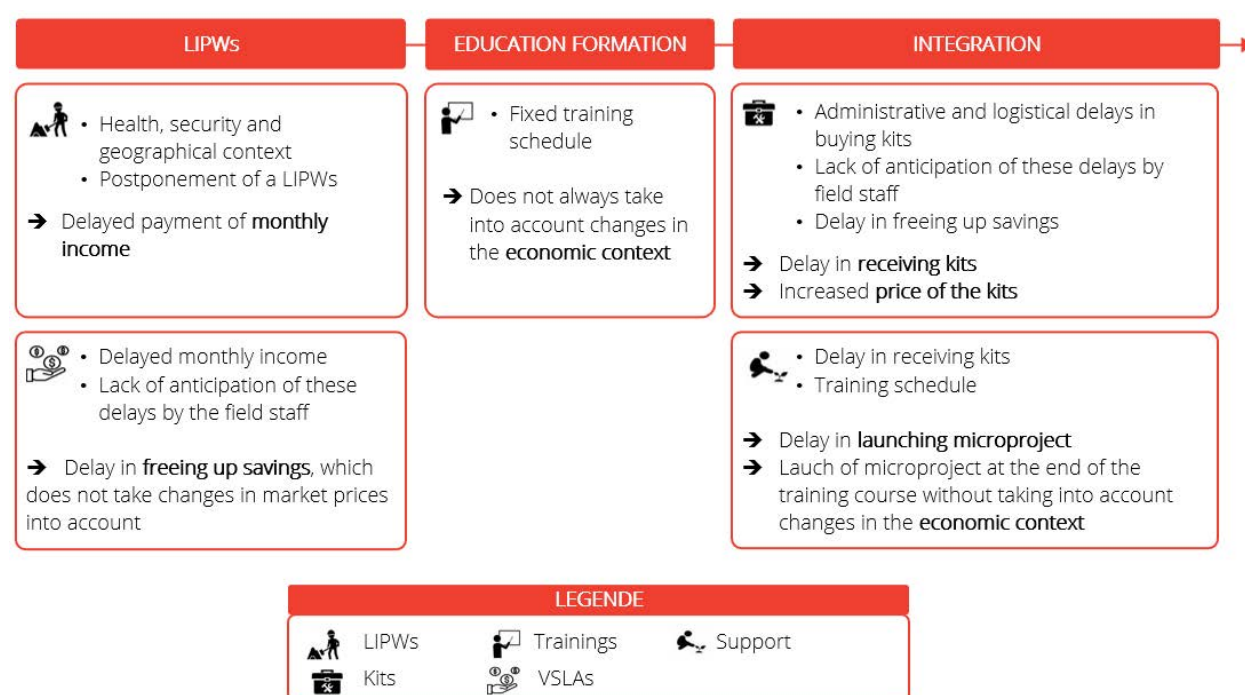
4. LESSONS LEARNED

By implementing a territorial approach, the RESILAC project has sought to pay attention to the specific characteristics of the intervention areas. Pillar 2 thus adapts its activities to the multi-dimensional needs of the populations and the changing context within the different territories. To do this, it offers holistic support to beneficiaries through a job placement program (pillar 2), while integrating psychosocial support (pillar 1), social cohesion and natural resource management activities (pillar 1) and capacity building (pillar 3). Its implementation relies on close collaboration with local stakeholders and a demanding inter-pillar approach. What are the challenges and good practices of pillar 2's flexible and integrated approach?

4.1 SEQUENCING OF ACTIVITIES

Operational constraints sometimes delayed the implementation of activities and hindered the articulation of the different stages of the professional integration process..

Diagram 3: Obstacles in the socio-professional pathway



In relation to LIPWs, delays in money transfers may have slowed the building of beneficiaries' savings. The transfer of funds is most often done through a telephone agency or a microfinance institution (depending on the country), which then contracts an authorized cash distributor, who hands over the amount to the beneficiaries. This adds an intermediary person to the payment of beneficiaries, whose movements may be limited by the geographical context (distance between villages, rainy season), the health context (lockdown) or the security context (inaccessible areas). These logistical obstacles, added to the administrative constraints related to money transfers, were not always anticipated by the field teams, who did not systematically put in place alternative solutions to avoid delays in payment.

Beneficiaries then took longer to build up their **savings**, which hindered the implementation of their microprojects. They had to wait before they had the money necessary to buy their starting capital (sheep, cattle, seeds for example) that would allow them to launch their activity. However, waiting too long without taking into account the evolution of prices on the market, poses the risk of an initial investment that is potentially higher than the expected benefits of the microproject. For example, in Cameroon, some groups only managed to gather enough savings to invest in sheep fattening in July, when sheep are the most expensive (about 30,000 FCFA - 45 €). This forced them to extend their planned fattening period to obtain profits from their sales²⁸.

Delays in purchasing kits also affected the implementation of microprojects. Procurement procedures varied depending on the quantity and type of equipment chosen, but sometimes took a long time (two to three months) for NGOs to tender, select and contract the supplier, and for the supplier to make the deliveries. Field teams did not always anticipate these logistical and administrative constraints, and local partners preferred to use their own suppliers, if they were able to ensure that purchases were made to the required standards.

After their training, some beneficiaries had to wait six months before they received their kits and were able to start their microprojects. In response to these delays, the project organized **refresher** training sessions which covered certain trades in greater depth and ensured that the skills that had been acquired were still applicable when the microproject started.

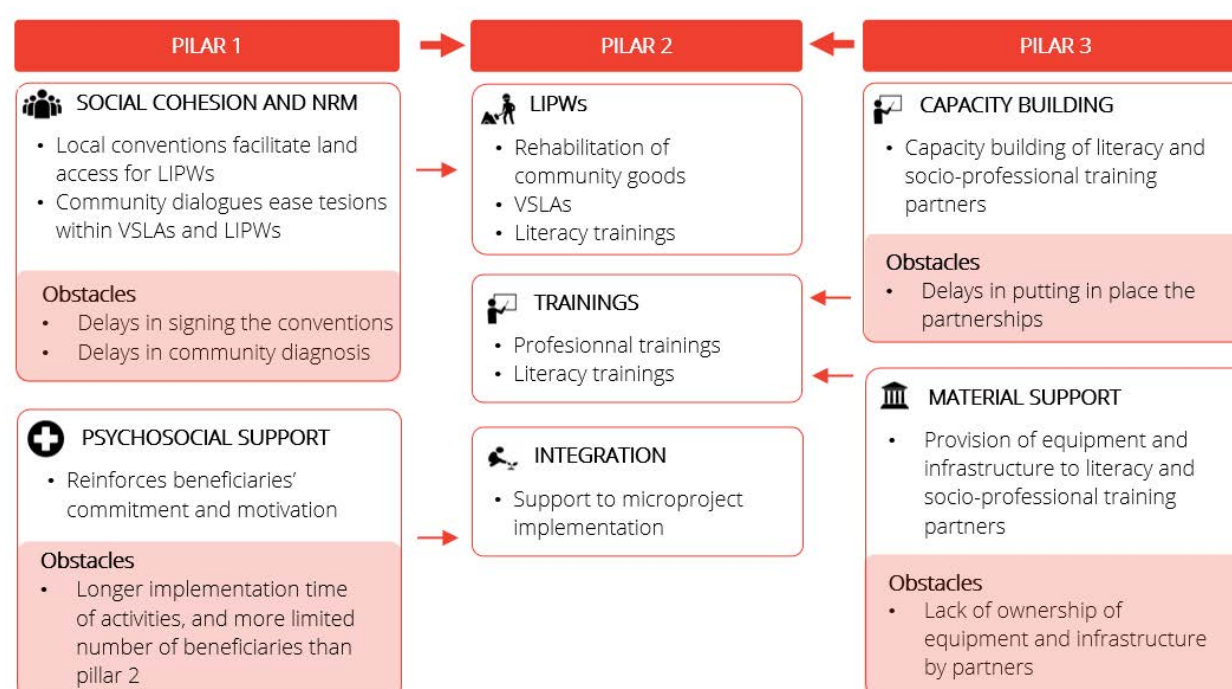
Pillar 2 is therefore based on a complex sequence of activities that can only adapt to the external context to a certain extent. Several factors can influence the beneficiary's microproject (climate, agricultural cycle, changes in supply and demand, price changes, etc.) and this impact can vary according to the type of activity chosen. In order to ensure that there is continuity in the integration process, the teams cannot necessarily delay training or the launch of a microproject to adjust to these different factors. However, they can help beneficiaries to adapt to this changing context by adapting the content of the training courses or by ensuring that each person has two microprojects (a plan A and a plan B).

28 - RESILAC, Feedback days, 2020.

4.2 INTER-PILLAR COORDINATION

Inter-pillar coordination helps to reinforce the impact of pillar 2 activities and the commitment of beneficiaries to the project but remains very demanding from an operational point of view.

Diagram 4: Cross-pillar in the pathway to employment: obstacles and assets



PILLAR 2 AND PILLAR 1.2

Psychosocial support helped to strengthen beneficiaries' engagement in the local economy. The mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) activities helped them build their self-confidence, to look to the future with more confidence and to become more involved in local economic activities²⁹. Beneficiaries also established strong ties within the psychological support groups, which sometimes led to the setting up of VSLAs and the launch of IGAs³⁰.

We noticed that there is a difference with the beneficiaries who do MHPSS activities. They are more mature, they know where they want to go, what microproject they want to do. As a result, things go faster, because they are more stable, committed, and assiduous.

Local partner, Cameroon

29 - RESILAC, Feedback days, December 2020.

30 - RESILAC, Feedback days, December 2020.

Conversely, pillar 2 activities reinforce the engagement of beneficiaries in MHPSS activities who appreciate the holistic support offered by RESILAC, combining psychological and economic support. Socio-economic problems, which are also a source of stress and fatigue, are thus addressed to prevent them from undermining mental health.

However, the time required for the implementation of psychosocial support, and the limited number of beneficiaries compared to those of the LIPWs, may have hindered the effectiveness of the inter-pillar coordination approach. Most often, economic recovery activities (pillar 2) began before psychosocial support activities (pillar 1.2), and at the end of the psychosocial support cycle. As a result, beneficiaries were unable to take part in the LIPWs that had already been completed. If the activities were implemented simultaneously, the number of beneficiaries of the LIPWs greatly exceeded the number of beneficiaries planned by the MHPSS teams, who were therefore unable to provide psychosocial support to all those who wanted it. In Chad, for example, in the first intervention cycle, only 30% of the youth involved in LIPWs were provided with psychosocial support. In Niger, on the other hand, as of December 31, 2021, 671 of the 900 young people involved in the LIPWs had received PM+ support, which shows an improvement in inter-pillar coordination during the project. Close collaboration is therefore necessary between pillar 1.2 and pillar 2 staff for the implementation of activities. They can share the schedules of the LIPWs and the psychosocial support sessions in order to ensure that beneficiaries are available and justify their absence, if necessary. This sometimes proved difficult when staff were not part of the same organizations³¹.

PILLAR 2 AND PILLAR 1.1 - 1.3

Increased social cohesion and better natural resource management (NRM) create an enabling environment to boost the local economy. Socio-cultural events and community dialogue (pillar 1.1) strengthen social cohesion in the area. They also avoid tensions on LIPW sites, promote trust between individuals and the establishment of sustainable VSLAs, and reinforce the commitment of citizens to the territory and the desire to contribute to the local economy. Better natural resource management (pillar 1.3) facilitates access to the land for the implementation of LIPWs and helps to avoid tensions related to managing the rehabilitated resources.

However, the time required to implement social cohesion and NRM activities and the lack of a common understanding of the context and its challenges can hinder the effectiveness of inter-pillar coordination. Pillar 1 was responsible for doing the community diagnosis to inform the implementation of activities across all pillars. The objective was to first identify people's problems (e.g., lack of water in the dry season), and then to understand «the issues around those problems» (e.g., social relations, resource and power sharing, etc.). Carried out in an inclusive and participa-

31 - RESILAC, Lesson-sharing Report: Mental Health and Psychosocial Support, March 2022.

tory manner, this two-step diagnostic process took time, and was not always finalized before the launch of pillar 2 activities. In Mindif-Centre, for example, in Cameroon, labour-based activities started without this second reading, and the reality of the social fabric was not considered at the beginning. Tensions then emerged during the implementation of the activities, leading to blockages and delays³². In relation to VSLAs, taking the social dimension into account helps to reinforce their functioning and their legitimacy. Finally, the existence of a common fund and a solidarity fund within each VSLA has reinforced the spirit of social responsibility and the idea that the activity is not purely economic and individual but can also contribute to the development of the commune³³.

Lack of cooperation with pillar 1.3 sometimes also hindered the implementation of pillar 2 activities and their sustainable impact. NRM, particularly through the establishment of consultation frameworks and the signing of local agreements, can facilitate access to the land chosen for LIPWs and avoid tensions around rehabilitated assets in the long term. However, the implementation of the agreements requires time and effort to strengthen the committees that are created and to ensure that there is genuine ownership by the actors concerned³⁴.

It was particularly in relation to natural resource management that there was a lack of inter-pillar coordination. They set up consultation frameworks and signed conventions, but this came after the labour-intensive public works, whereas it could have helped us address the problems related to land clearing. The texts are clear and authorize this practice in Chad, but a surveillance brigade attached to the regional environmental department comes to tax the farmers when they are clearing land as part of labour-intensive public works. However, at the local level, the landowner and the land clearing services have given their agreement. As a result, we sometimes have to choose other sites that are not necessarily as productive.

RESILAC Pillar Manager, Chad

PILLAR 2 AND PILLAR 3

The exchange visits and capacity building of local actors conducted under pillar 3 helped facilitate the implementation of pillar 2 activities. In Chad, the teams visited Oxfam-supported projects in the region and were able to exchange best practices on okra and maize processing as part of an exchange visit organized by the pillar

32 - Groupe URD, Territorial approach in a crisis context: a lever for building resilience? (Niger), April 2022.

33 - RESILAC, Iterative evaluation with mini-seminar, EIMS 3, February 2021.

34 - Ibid.

3 teams. Pillar 3 teams also supported local technical services and CSOs working within pillar 2, providing training and material support. In Cameroon, pillar 2 works closely with the CSOs who are in charge of the follow-up of the VSLAs and the micro-projects, as well as accompanying and connecting young people with training centres.

4.3 SPECIFIC TERRITORIAL CHARACTERISTICS

As part of the territorial approach, pillar 2 aims to adapt its activities to the local, cultural and economic realities of the areas of intervention and any changes that may affect these.

LABOUR-INTENSIVE PUBLIC WORKS: MEETING THE NEEDS OF BENEFICIARIES AND THEIR TERRITORY

For the labour-intensive projects, the involvement of local stakeholders in identifying community assets to be rehabilitated helped to meet the specific needs within each territory. In Cameroon, Chad and Niger, the assets were chosen according to the priorities set out in the local development plans (LDPs), through multi-stakeholder workshops at the communal level, or based on community assessments when they were available. This helped to take people's needs into account, which can be different from one territory to another for the same problem, and may require a different response from pillar 2, as shown in the example below.

CAMEROON AND NIGER: THE EFFECTS OF GLOBAL WARMING AND THE RESPONSE OF PILLAR 2

Global warming is a regional issue in the LCB, but its local manifestations vary. Depending on the geographical area, increased droughts and irregular rainfall have very different effects. In Cameroon, in the village of Taparé (Mindif commune), the inhabitants have seen water stress increase from year to year. Based on the criteria established during the communal workshop and the infrastructure needs expressed during the community diagnosis, the village was selected for the construction of a dam. In addition to providing a permanent source of water for the inhabitants, this has encouraged the growth of economic activities that were previously constrained by the lack of water, such as fishing, market gardening and livestock breeding. In Niger, in the village of Adebou, the inhabitants also identify the impact of climate change as one of their main concerns, particularly concerning the silting up of land. This destabilizes agricultural production, weakens the food security of communities and encourages the exodus of young people. Fixing the dunes was therefore identified as a priority during the community diagnosis and retained as part of the labour-intensive public works. In total, 80 hectares of dunes have been fixed, with 40,000 trees planted³⁵.

35 - Groupe URD, Can an integrated territorial approach help to reinforce resilience?, April 2022.

The implementation of public works also had to be adapted during the course of the project, in order to respect the beneficiaries' schedules. For example, some of them asked that the schedule of activities be adapted due to the constraints of agricultural cycles. The project therefore reduced the number of days that participants had to be present for LIPWs as the winter season approached to give beneficiaries time to prepare their fields³⁶.

VILLAGE SAVINGS AND LOAN ASSOCIATIONS (VSLA): ADAPTING THEM TO DIFFERENT CONTEXTS AND INCREASING THEIR SUSTAINABILITY

In creating or reinforcing VSLAs, the project has made an effort to adapt them to the local cultural context. In some communes, the mixing of men and women was not encouraged because women did not dare to speak or to take on important roles within

36 - RESILAC, Feedback days, 2022.



Exchange visit with the multicultural VSLA in Maoudine, Cameroon © RESILAC

the VSLAs. The project also adapted VSLAs to religious customs, notably in Cameroon. In the Muslim associations, it was possible to borrow money but without paying interest, because this is contrary to their beliefs. In order to ensure the maintenance of the funds, the latter were accompanied in the setting up of collective IGAs which, in addition to increasing the savings, also had the role of reinforcing the appropriation of this approach by the members.

The impact of VSLAs varied from one country to another and different implementation methods were required to ensure their sustainability. In Cameroon, in addition to the support that was provided, people were appointed within each association to promote its autonomy. They received technical training and participated in quarterly meetings to exchange ideas with their peers, thus ensuring that the VSLA would be operational in the long term. In Cameroon, out of the 176 VSLAs that have received support, 96 are completely autonomous. In Chad, VSLA members raised concerns about the weak presence of pillar 2 staff in the field and wanted more support for their networking. This allowed them to come together to create a forum for discussion, express themselves at the national level and request more funding. This resulted in a larger number of monitoring agents and their reorganisation, as well as the strengthening of their support capacities³⁷.

TRAINING AND MICROPROJECTS: MEETING THE NEEDS OF BENEFICIARIES AND THE ECONOMIC MARKET

The lack of knowledge about the socio-economic context upstream of the activities sometimes limited the relevance of the training and the impact of the microprojects. During the start-up phase, the socio-professional training and the choice of projects responded more to the beneficiaries' wishes than to the needs of the local economy. In the four countries, a market study upstream of the activities was not systematically carried out or was not based on an in-depth analysis of local realities in the various villages. For some sectors, such as fishing in lakeside villages, supply was greater than demand and limited beneficiaries' profits. For others, such as carpentry, the products did not always correspond to the usual practices of the local inhabitants, who preferred to sit on carpets or traditional mats rather than wooden benches or chairs. In some areas, certain activities could not be practiced, such as masonry, because construction work requires electricity and specific materials that are not available in all villages. Finally, social categories are sometimes very important within countries, such as in Chad, where certain trades, although economically promising (handicrafts, for example), are not considered by the beneficiaries because they are reserved for particular castes.

While the majority of beneficiaries recognize the effectiveness of the professional integration program, some would like to deepen the content of the training courses and extend their duration. In the *midline* survey conducted in August 2021,

37 - RESILAC, Feedback days, 2022.

67% of all respondents who had started a microproject felt that the support provided by pillar 2 had allowed them to re-establish an economic activity. However, some wanted to see training content that was easier to assimilate, in particular by translating the modules into the local language, and by using image boxes and practical examples for people who cannot read or write³⁸. There seems to be a consensus among beneficiaries and Pillar Managers that literacy or vocational trainings need to be extended, as they are considered too short (some last no more than a week)³⁹ to allow the content to be assimilated, and also to go into greater depth, so that the participants remain competitive on the local market. In Nigeria, for example, beneficiaries who have received training in fishing say they need more specific modules (processing, conservation, packaging) to add value on the labour market. The same is true for sewing, which, in addition to the three months of training, would require continuous tutoring in the field to ensure that the youth in the villages remain competitive. In addition, beneficiaries' knowledge of record keeping, financial management or grouping of products could also be improved.

Individual and group initiatives have enabled beneficiaries to adapt to different local economic contexts. In Cameroon, the RESILAC team implemented the «champions» initiative to recognize and promote youth who have been successful in implementing their microprojects, in order to encourage other community members to replicate the initiative and encourage their competitiveness. In Nigeria, on the other hand, individual initiatives have not always enabled youth to achieve sustainable resilience, especially in the face of price inflation. As a result, some young people have decided to work together to increase their profits, and the project staff began distributing kits to these groups.

4.4 COOPERATION WITH LOCAL ACTORS

Cooperation with local actors has helped to improve targeting and the engagement of beneficiaries and has facilitated the implementation of activities in the field. Targeting is based on vulnerability criteria predefined by the RESILAC team and four categories of households - affluent, average poor, poor, and very poor (the project targets the last two categories). The customary authorities help to establish this categorization in the different intervention zones and ease tensions regarding certain selection criteria, such as age (targets only 18 to 35-year-old people) and the limited number of beneficiaries. Cooperating with local authorities and local technical services also strengthens **the commitment** of beneficiaries throughout the insertion process. According to the Pillar Managers, these state actors give legitimacy to the project because they know the field, the populations and the local language, and they are able to continue the activities when the RESILAC teams leave. The same is true for CSOs. They worked with pillar 2, particularly in Nigeria and Cameroon, and because they had better access to the various intervention villages were able to provide hands-on support.

³⁸ - RESILAC, Feedback days, septembre 2021.

³⁹ - Une semaine pour l'élevage parfois, ou trois mois pour des filières plus complexes (couture, mécanique, etc.).

In Cameroon, there is more ownership of the activities by the beneficiaries (...) This is because at the country level the actors are quite close to the communities. The CSOs spend time in the villages, exchanging, and getting accepted. (...) CSO agents can sometimes stay a week in the community, sleeping there in lodgings (...) In international NGOs, there are security constraints, and we have to leave the area and return to the base around 3 or 4 pm.

RESILAC Pillar 2 Manager, Regional office



Literacy sessions, Niger © RESILAC

The involvement of customary authorities also allows them to intervene if some beneficiaries disengage from the activities, as has sometimes been the case in Niger. Having abandoned the training courses and sold their kits, they then had to reimburse the project teams, under pressure from the local authorities.

Working with local actors also helps in the definition and **implementation** of activities, as they have precise knowledge of the intervention context. In relation to LIPWs, the local authorities know what the needs of the population are and the priority community assets to be rehabilitated. For literacy sessions, rather than working with an external consultant, RESILAC teams preferred to work with the state education services, who have curricula and manuals that are appropriate for literacy training courses, and assessments to select local instructors to deliver the training sessions.

Local actors can also help to overcome some of the **obstacles** in implementing activities. In Cameroon, cooperation with the local authorities helped to accelerate the administrative procedures for the VSLAs supported by the project. In Chad, cooperation with the customary authorities was crucial to facilitate the implementation of the labour-intensive projects when they took place on private land. They also helped to draw up agreements with the landowners to guarantee access to the land during and after the projects.

The signing of protocols prior to the activities, and the setting up of participatory steering committees, facilitated cooperation with local stakeholders within pillar 2. To ensure that local technical services were committed to implementing activities, partnerships were formalized by means of a **protocol** stipulating the clauses and duration of the partnership, as well as the activities to be implemented and the budget allocated. The protocol had to be clear in order to avoid tensions between the signatories. The local technical services, for example, sometimes felt that the per diem was insufficient and that the monitoring of activities required more financial and logistical resources than estimated by the RESILAC teams. The clarity of the protocol also ensured that the partnership remained fluid over time - especially given the regular changes in local administrative authorities - which is on average two to six months. Numerous round-trips between the project teams and the local actors were sometimes required to reach agreement on the different points of the protocol, thus delaying the implementation of the activities, all the more so as the local technical services need to be informed well in advance of their participation in the project's activities, as they are also solicited for numerous other interventions.

The operational **steering committees** are also very much appreciated at the local level because they bring together all of the project's actors: NGOs from the consortium, local and national partners, local technical services, representatives of women's organizations, youth, township chiefs, etc. They bring together about 30 people and are chaired by the governor.

4.5 MONITORING OF ACTIVITIES AND THEIR IMPACT

The monitoring of activities helps to ensure that rehabilitated assets are of good quality and that training courses are sustainable, but may be limited by logistical and financial constraints. Monitoring the assets rehabilitated via LIPWs involves checking the **quality** of the work carried out, whether the asset is functioning properly and making repairs if necessary.

CHAD: MONITORING OF COMMUNITY ASSETS REHABILITATED THROUGH LABOUR-BASED WORKSITES

In Chad, a design engineer, member of the DTS, went to see all of the RESILAC project's constructions in the 40 villages of intervention. The mission was planned in advance with a fixed per diem, means of transport and a member of the RESILAC team to accompany the engineer to the various sites. The delegate was able to note all the imperfections of the structures in terms of painting, locks and finishing, and even recommended the total reconstruction of certain infrastructures.

Monitoring activities also helps to ensure that rehabilitated assets are being used properly⁴⁰. This ensures that there are no tensions surrounding the management of the assets, but also that they are appropriated by community members. In Chad, for example, sites were restored to conduct the ALPHA trainings. However, the team realized that the premises were no longer being used by the local population, due to a lack of financial resources to pay the local training facilitators.

It is sometimes difficult to monitor activities due to a **lack of human and financial resources**. In some countries, such as Chad, the intervention areas are numerous (about 40 villages) and far apart (spread over two regions), which limits the possibility of conducting regular monitoring given the limited number of facilitators. Similarly, in terms of maintaining the rehabilitated assets, the authorities do not always have the means to cover the repair costs, which are then covered by the local population. In Niger, two mills donated as part of the support to the VSLAs in the villages of Tat-toukoutou and Sayam Djouloum broke down regularly. The beneficiaries had to use their savings to do the repairs, but received support from the project to be trained in repair techniques.

To compensate for the lack of human and financial resources allocated to monitoring activities, pillar 2 engages in **capacity building of local stakeholders** and promotes **ownership of the project by the beneficiaries**. In Nigeria and Cameroon, where partnerships with CSOs are the most numerous and effective, beneficiaries have received support on the ground and have been able to strengthen their autonomy (see section 4.4). Some of them, such as the promoters appointed within the VSLAs, can monitor the groups themselves and report problems to the RESILAC teams if necessary.

Monitoring the impact of activities helps to ensure that the pillar 2 implementation strategy remains relevant, but its effectiveness can be limited by methodological constraints. The lack of conceptualization and methodological framing at the start of the project, particularly around the concept of resilience and the different levels of resilience that were being aimed for, made it impossible to clearly identify the impact expected from the economic recovery activities. This can partly be explained by pillar 2's overall approach, linked to the social cohesion and psycho-social support activities, which is relatively innovative in the intervention zones. After

40 - RESILAC, Feedback days, September 2021.

three years of implementation, it is therefore not a question of verifying the impact of pillar 2 in terms of pre-established objectives related to resilience, but rather of analysing how and why pillar 2 produced certain impacts to consolidate its intervention logic⁴¹.

Methodological constraints throughout the project also hindered the monitoring of pillar 2 impacts. Shortcomings were noted in terms of reporting on impacts in all four countries, particularly due to the lack of harmonized monitoring tools within the pillar. The objective is not only to report on the results of each activity separately, but to show the impact of the overall approach on the beneficiaries who participated in all the activities of the public works-education-training-integration scheme.

41 - RESILAC, Iterative evaluation with mini-seminar, EIMS 3, February 2021.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 STRATEGY

1. Continue pillar 2's holistic support, by integrating the LIPWs at the beginning of the education-training-integration pathway:

- Including the **LIPWs** at the beginning of the professional integration process will help to respond to the immediate needs of the beneficiaries, so that they remain in the area and can make a long-term commitment to the integration process. The savings, built up thanks to the monthly income received on the LIPW projects, also allow them to contribute to the financing of their microprojects. This reinforces their autonomy and their motivation for the activity.

2. Continue and strengthen cross-pillar collaboration to facilitate the implementation and sustainability of pillar 2 activities, and formalize its implementation modalities:

- Continue economic recovery activities while ensuring **cooperation with other pillars** that strengthen social cohesion, natural resource management, psychological well-being and capacity building of local partners. This cooperation facilitates the implementation of pillar 2 activities and their sustainability.

3. Continue to build resilience at multiple levels and formalize the intervention logic of such an approach (levels of resilience, targets, goals, steps to achieve them):

- Continue to build **household resilience** through the strengthening of VSLAs and support to IGAs which help to consolidate their self-reliance and financial autonomy, and diversify their sources of income.
- Continue to build **community resilience**, clarifying the impacts of the project in this regard, and identifying other potential levers of action.

5.2 IMPLEMENTATION

1. Further adapt activities to highly vulnerable populations and gender:

- Strengthen **gender parity** in all Pillar 2 activities, with a percentage quota for women to be rigorously monitored, and further adapt certain activities to their needs (e.g., adapting LIPWs in Cameroon with the development of mother-child spaces on site).
- Introduce **bi-monthly payments** on LIPWs so that the most vulnerable people are able to meet their needs in an emergency.
- Include more **people with disabilities**, consider establishing a quota and tailor activities to their aspirations and abilities.

2. Continue to reinforce VSLAs, which help beneficiaries to increase their autonomy and financial self-reliance, and encourage them to achieve legal recognition and establish networks in the long term:

- Strengthen the **legalization process** of the VSLAs, as in Cameroon, which allows them to borrow directly from microfinance institutions, to contribute to the tax revenues of the commune and to reply to calls for tender.
- Continue to consolidate **the networking** of the VSLAs to help them establish a forum for discussion and reinforce their advocacy at the national level and their capacity to apply for funding.
- Continue to reinforce **the social dimension** of the VSLAs which provide a forum for discussion between members of the community. Include more training modules on social issues and support the development of a social and solidarity action plan.

3. Continue to support microprojects, which provide access to diverse and regular sources of income, and their long-term networking:

- Reinforce the constitution of **economic interest groups (EIG)**⁴² with beneficiaries who have sufficiently matured their microprojects. These groups could be strengthened and technically equipped so that they could then be put in contact with other young people in order to support them in the implementation of their projects and provide them with technical guidance⁴³.

⁴² - An economic interest group has legal status and allows its members to pool some of their activities in order to develop, improve or increase the results of their activities while retaining their independence. The group can have a civil or commercial purpose.

⁴³ - RESILAC, Iterative evaluation with mini-seminar, EIMS 3, February 2021.

- Strengthen the **networking** of beneficiaries within Pillar 2. Some receive individual support to set up their microprojects (outcome 2) and can provide services (repairing machinery, selling seeds, etc.) to those who are part of strengthened target groups within the identified promising value chains (outcome 4). Conversely, the groups can assist young people with their individual initiatives by supporting them to negotiate prices and better produce or market their services⁴⁴.

4. Strengthen socio-professional and ALPHA training to promote the competitiveness of beneficiaries and the transmission of knowledge:

- Add **training modules or a tutoring period** for complex socio-professional fields with a competitive market (mechanics, carpentry, sewing, for example).
- Strengthen **the capacities of the literate** through three cycles (levels) of literacy in order to assimilate the knowledge transmitted properly.

5. Strengthen communication around pillar 2 activities to encourage the replication of certain initiatives, and strengthen the legitimacy of beneficiaries in relation to community members and the local authorities:

- Reinforce the **ripple effect** of the VSLAs, as observed in Cameroon, through social communication operations (on local radios and at fairs) with young people or other communities (who have not yet benefited from the project's activities).
- Promote **successful microproject initiatives** (and 'champions'), to encourage the authorities to increase their support to pillar 2 activities, and to encourage the population to engage in similar initiatives.
- Promote the **results of RESILAC** with neighbouring municipalities (not necessarily beneficiaries of the project) to encourage the replication of successful initiatives through exchange visits and more communication with the media.

6. Continue to work with local actors who facilitate the flexible, responsive and sustainable implementation of activities, while strengthening their independence and partnerships with CSOs:

- Continue to work in partnership with local technical services by ensuring that **protocols are put in place** upstream of the activities, based on clear and detailed clauses, to ensure the sustainability of the partnerships despite the significant staff turnover in the project teams and government services.

⁴⁴ -Ibid

- **Strengthen partnerships with CSOs**, particularly in Chad and Niger, as they have greater access to intervention areas and legitimacy among the population, and play an essential role in complementing state services.
- Continue to strengthen the role of local state technical services and CSOs, give them more **financial and administrative independence** for the implementation of activities, and **strengthen their strategic role** within the project (facilitate communication with the donor, integrate them from the design phase, etc.).

7. Strengthen cooperation with international actors to avoid duplication of activities and enhance the exchange of good practices:

- Strengthen cooperation with the various economic recovery actors already present in the region through the organisation of **forums** (as in Niger with the establishment of a forum on youth employment) or the strengthening of **local coordination structures** such as the Cadre de Concertation de Développement Economique et Social (CCODES)⁴⁵ in Cameroon.

8. Strengthen the sequencing of activities and the ability to adjust to delays to ensure that employment pathways are effective:

- Formalize **the sequence of activities** and identify potential financial, administrative, logistical and contextual obstacles in each country.
- Reduce **delays** in the purchasing of kits:
 - by promoting communication and anticipation within the field teams (between the programme staff and the support staff);
 - by finding faster alternatives for purchasing the kits (cash transfers to beneficiaries, cash transfers to local partners, etc.).
- Ensure the effectiveness of the employment pathway, by offering **retraining** as in Chad, or **support to beneficiaries** to adapt their activities to the changing context (economic opportunities, agricultural cycles, etc.).

45 - CCODES : Le Cadre de Concertation du Développement Économique et Social (CCODES) est une instance de suivi et de conseil auprès de l'exécutif communal en vue d'une meilleure prise en compte des besoins prioritaires de toutes les populations par le conseil municipal dans les domaines prioritaires tels que la santé, l'éducation, l'eau, la sécurité alimentaire, l'alerte précoce, l'insertion socio-économique des jeunes et des femmes, etc. Il réunit les représentants de la commune, des STD, des OSC et des différentes ONG présentes dans la commune.

9. Continue the flexible approach adapted to the territories, in particular by reinforcing the use of certain methodological tools:

- Continue to adapt VSLAs to **cultural practices** (concerning religion and gender, for example), training courses to **economic opportunities**, activities to **agricultural cycles**, and rehabilitated assets to **community needs**.
- Strengthen the use of **methodological tools** that allow local characteristics to be taken into account (community diagnoses, market studies, etc.) while ensuring that timetables of activities are respected and that their results are shared within the team.

10. Strengthen the monitoring of activities and their impacts to ensure that pillar 2 support mechanism is effective and sustainable:

- Continue to strengthen **partnerships with local actors** (CSOs, local technical services) to monitor the activities and strengthen the ownership of the project by the beneficiaries.
- Strengthen **the monitoring of the direct and indirect effects of pillar 2** with better and more regular data reporting and harmonized tools and indicators.
- Based on this data, analyse the contribution of the RESILAC project to strengthening the resilience of individuals and their territory, and clarify **pillar 2's approach** with staff.

5.3 ADVOCACY

1. Continue to emphasize to donors and local authorities the importance of the integrated approach and the limited number of beneficiaries within pillar 2:

- Emphasize **the importance of cross-pillar coordination**, including in emergency areas, to build individual and community resilience in a sustainable manner.
- Emphasize the sustainable effects of the project on different levels of resilience (individual, household and commune) and demonstrate **the importance of focusing and deepening action** on specific communes and acting on different sectors, rather than expanding assistance to a larger number of beneficiaries.

2. Insist on the importance of the territorial approach with donors and other development actors:

- Emphasize the importance of **taking into account local specificities** to build resilience in a sustainable way and adopting an agile approach to adapt to people's needs and the changing context in volatile areas.

3. Insist that donors and other development actors strengthen the role of local actors (local state technical services, CSOs) in both implementation and strategy:

- Emphasize the importance of giving them more **financial and administrative autonomy**, a **strategic role** in project design, and having more direct exchanges with donors.
- Demonstrate that this is possible by choosing a **case study per country**, a CSO for example, which has benefited from capacity building and show its added value in the project (on the ground support to beneficiaries, sustainable access to unstable areas, knowledge of the area, legitimacy with authorities and populations, sustainability of activities, etc.).

4. Emphasise to the authorities and other development actors the importance of cooperation to avoid duplication of activities and to strengthen the exchange of good practices:

- Promote and contribute to the development of **youth employment strategies** in the regions and provinces of intervention, in order to:
 - take into account strategic needs in the choice of micro-projects;
 - coordinate between the different initiatives implemented in the intervention areas;
 - advocate for the strengthening of training centres (particularly in the Lake Province in Chad).

5. Continue to inform local authorities about the project's results to strengthen their commitment to its long-term sustainability:

- Share the **impact of the project and pillar 2** in terms of increasing beneficiary autonomy, particularly that of women, boosting the local economy and reinforcing social cohesion.

RESILAC*

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