RESILAC*

*REDRESSEMENT ÉCONOMIQUE ET SOCIAL
INCLUSIF DU LAC TCHAD

SUPPORT SOCIAL COHESION
BY SUPPORTING ENDOGENOUS MECHANISMS OF
CONFLICT PREVENTION, MEDIATION AND RESOLUTION?

**LAKE CHAD BASIN - REGIONAL RESEARCH STUDY**

NOVEMBRE2 020

Study

Carried out between January and March 2020, the study aimed to better understand to what extent and for what purposes aid can support endogenous mechanisms of conflict prevention, mediation and resolution and thus participate, to some extent, in the strengthening of social cohesion at the community level. For this purpose, the research firstly drew up an inventory of the current conflict dynamics in the territories of the survey, before mapping the endogenous mechanisms (whether they are part of traditional justice or modern justice) able to prevent and manage conflicts in these areas.

The full report of the study is available on the Groupe URD website.
For more information, please contact Johanna Baché: jbache@urd.org.

# RESILAC - Map of the Lake Chad Basin
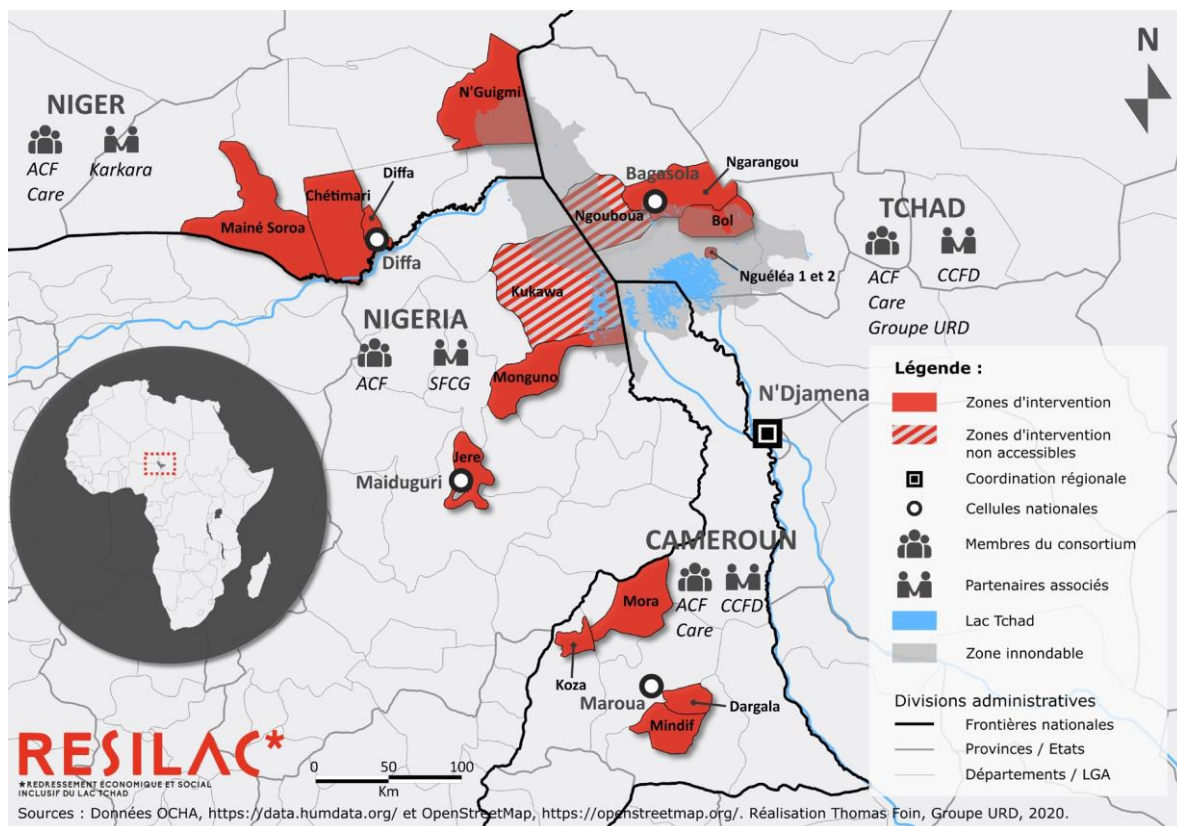
Research Team

The study was conducted under the direction of Johanna Baché by a multidisciplinary team composed of Nasser Abdoul (jurist, Nigeria expert), Hadiza Kiari Fougou (geographer, Niger expert), Henri Mahamat Mbarkoutou (political scientist, Chad expert), with the methodological support of Florence Chatot (socio-anthropologist expert).

Methodology

This research was structured around three specific objectives for each of which hypotheses and research questions were formulated :

1. Analyze the nature and causes of ongoing conflicts/factors of tension in the areas of intervention.

2. Identify endogenous mechanisms at the community, local, national and regional levels for conflict prevention, mediation and resolution.

3. Provide an overview of the mechanisms for peacebuilding and dialogue in the areas of intervention.

60
INTERVIEWS AND 12 FOCUS GROUPS

9
TERRITORIES STUDIED

3
COU

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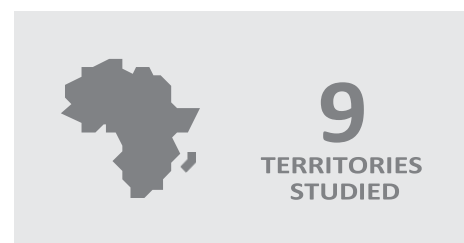
Finding 1. Access to resources and land management remain at the heart of the conflicts in the territories surveyed, exacerbated in part by new factors of tension linked to the security crisis.

The analysis of conflict dynamics shows first of all that the security crisis is rooted in already fragile contexts where the state is weak and a source of mistrust, access to basic services is restricted and ethnic tensions are quickly activated and instrumentalized. The crisis has exacerbated conflicts over land and access to resources, which remain among the main sources of conflict mentioned in the territories surveyed.

On the one hand, because insecurity, by provoking the massive displacement of populations, has increased pressure on land and resources; on the other hand, because the conflict has reinforced the loss of legitimacy that has already begun for the traditional authorities, who play a central role in land management in these territories. Moreover, the increased presence of "dressed bodies" is generating new tensions. While in Chad, militia members are frequently accused of collecting taxes at improvised checkpoints and committing abuses against the population, in Nigeria, citizen self-defense militias and the use of "vigilantism" have been reported to amplify the violence. Finally, the level of violence has created a climate of suspicion and fear that has encouraged the revival of certain religious and ethnic cleavages (stigmatization of the Kanouris, Boudoumas and Fulani) and the reactivation, in Niger, of the former Peule militia that fought the Toubou rebellion in the 1990s.

Finding 2: Traditional mechanisms that remain privileged but are being heavily tested

The multiplicity of   existing the pluralism of norms (traditional, mo-

The different types of conflicts (e.g., conflicts over land and water, etc.) provide different opportunities for people and allow them to use different routes to win their case in the event of a conflict. Mediation by traditional authorities, which is accepted a priori, can thus be called into question as soon as a different opportunity for conflict resolution arises, if it refers to mechanisms and/or norms that are more advantageous. However, despite the possible opportunistic use of the law, it is very clear that traditional conflict management mechanisms (as instruments to prevent, moderate or resolve conflicts brought about by individuals based on norms and values that are perceived as legitimate because they are based on references to customs, religion and history) are more used than modern mechanisms to resolve low-intensity conflicts (proximity conflicts, land and resource access conflicts, intra-community and inter-community conflicts, etc.). In the interviews we conducted, the populations justify this preference by pointing out the ethnic and religious basis of these mechanisms, as well as their rapidity in resolving conflicts and their low cost. However, the surveys also showed that these mechanisms are now being put to the test (mainly in Nigeria and Chad) because of the crisis of legitimacy of their representatives, but also because some of the new conflicts are partly beyond the power of traditional chiefs (particularly the case of displaced and repentant people from Boko Haram who return to their communities).

Finding 3: Strengthening peace: what kind of peace are we talking about?

While traditional conflict management mechanisms play an undeniable role in alleviating certain conflicts and maintaining social cohesion in the survey areas, they cannot take on responsibilities for "peace" that are played out on a different scale. This observation, no doubt "common sense", seems to be diluted in the prism of so-called "peace" interventions.

"triple Nexus. It emerges from interviews conducted with aid actors (donors,

operational) that the "peace" component of the Nexus is very broad, and that it encompasses both "small peace" issues at the community level and more global issues of stabilization and even the fight against terrorism. The interviews show that this double reading grid sometimes blurs the actors' understanding of the objectives pursued by the peace programs.

It is also a way of promoting "peace" and "social cohesion".

Finding 4: Relevance of support for traditional mechanisms for more cohesive territories

Having made this observation, the research then confirmed the relevance of supporting traditional conflict management mechanisms to strengthen social cohesion and "local peace". It emerged from field observation that support for these mechanisms can take different forms and interact more or less directly with them via a very wide range of activities focusing primarily on prevention issues (creation of spaces for interfaith/inter-community dialogue; organization of forums on social cohesion and reconciliation between certain communities, particularly between Boudouma, Kanouri and Fulani in Chad; conducting awareness raising activities and disseminating messages of peace, etc.).

(e.g., support to chiefdoms for the revitalization of pastoral conventions and the demarcation of transhumance routes; support to chiefdoms for the integration of displaced, rebel and demobilized persons from Boko Haram, etc.). Finally, a major limitation to these interventions to strengthen social cohesion through conflict management was also mentioned. It refers to the multiplication in recent years of "peace committees": groups of individuals composed with the aim of promoting dialogue between communities, stimulating exchange and a relationship of trust, and defusing potentially conflictual situations through dialogue and mediation. If, in some cases, these committees are coherently anchored in social dynamics, sometimes acting as a real link to traditional endogenous mechanisms, in others, they are widely questioned.

because of their exogenous nature, their non-representativeness, their lack of legitimacy and their weak sustainability. Without totally questioning the establishment of such committees, perhaps more attention should be paid to their composition, ownership and sustainability, and to how they actually interact with traditional endogenous conflict resolution mechanisms. Otherwise, there is a great risk of creating new (temporary) norms of conflict prevention and management in territories where several levels of rights and dispute resolution modalities are already juxtaposed.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In regional contexts where highly localized conflicts are intertwined with national and transnational antagonisms, international solidarity programs are increasingly involved in "peace promotion" actions, with objectives as different as the definition of such a notion.

Within the framework of a highly territorialized approach to interventions, research has shown that support for traditional conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms at the community level can help promote social stability and thus prevent local conflicts (most often related to land management) that can lead to even greater conflicts. However, the study also showed that certain sources of current conflicts linked to the security crisis (reintegration of repentant returnees from Boko Haram; presence of displaced persons and refugees, etc.) were partly beyond the control of traditional authorities, and that the capacity of the community approach should not be overestimated in alleviating these types of tensions.

Finally, the highly politicized framework of the Triple Nexus, within which many of these interventions take place, undoubtedly requires all aid actors to conduct an in-depth reflection on their positioning, their partnerships, and the way in which they articulate - or not - the issues of community cohesion and social change on a more global scale.

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Recommendations for aid actors

1. **Strengthen the representativeness of the members of the local consultation** committees/dialogue platforms/peace committees set up in the framework of humanitarian and/or development projects. It is important to ensure ownership of these committees.
instruments by populations, their interactions with traditional mechanisms, and their sustainability beyond the intervention.

2. **Promote activities that generate citizen participation and debate,** with a view to taking ownership of the democratic question, governance issues and societal choices. Since social cohesion is played out at all levels of society, it would probably be too partial to approach this theme solely through the community prism. Project teams could, for example, develop "democratic debates" around issues raised by populations through partnerships with local civil society organizations.

3. **Valuing the approaches promoted by actors with specific and proven expertise in terms of social cohesion** and the strengthening of **social cohesion.** peace, through the implementation of training sessions for partners with a humanitarian mandate. Indeed, a good number of "classic" actors in the fields of humanitarian crises are not familiar with the concepts of social cohesion and peace building. The need for a better understanding of these issues has emerged, and training sessions for field teams could promote the appropriation of the meaning and purpose of certain activities carried out in the field.

4. **Support the production of knowledge** by continuing to closely monitor conflict in the territories and changes in the way these conflicts are resolved. To also promote the conduct of new operational research. Topics to be explored include women's perception and use of conflict management mechanisms, the issues and problems raised by the operationalization of the Triple Nexus in the Lake Chad region, and the strengths and weaknesses of peace committees.

Recommendations for RESILAC

1. **Pursue multi-sectoral (cross-pillar) coordination efforts** by further strengthening the links between social cohesion activities (particularly in terms of prevention), natural resource management and governance. The aim is to take advantage of RESILAC's resilience/inter-pillar strategy to increase the effects of Pillar 1.

2. **Ensure the representativeness of the members and the sustainability of the committees / dialogue platforms created or supported by the project, in** order to make adjustments to maximize the impact of actions and anticipate exit strategies. In this perspective, new partnerships with civil society organizations could be envisaged in the field of human rights.

3. **Strengthen the transfer of skills between partners.** CCFD and SFCG, in particular, have a strong experience in this area that could benefit other partners, who are sometimes less comfortable with the issues of development, cohesion and social change. Spaces for exchange and discussion could be organized within the teams, possibly leading to position papers on these issues. More generally, an in-depth questioning of RESILAC's positioning on peace issues (including within the very political framework of the Triple Nexus programs) would be worthwhile.

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Cofinanced by the European Union and the French Development Agency (AFD)

Members of the RESILAC Regional Consortium

The RESILAC project "Inclusive Economic and Social Recovery of Lake Chad" aims to contribute to the economic recovery and the strengthening of the resilience and social cohesion of the territories of the Lake Chad Basin most affected by the security crisis and climate change.

The project works to promote economic development, preserve social cohesion and strengthen the institutional capacity of the authorities in Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad.

Co-financed by the European Union (Emergency Trust Fund for Africa) and the French Development Agency for a period of 4 years (2018-2021), RESILAC is implemented by an international consortium (Action contre la Faim - lead partner, CARE and Groupe URD) in partnership with the CCFD network - Terre Solidaire, Search For Common Ground and local organizations in the four countries of intervention.

The project embodies in a single, large-scale initiative the multi-country, multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder approach to strengthening the triple nexus of humanitarian assistance, development and peace.