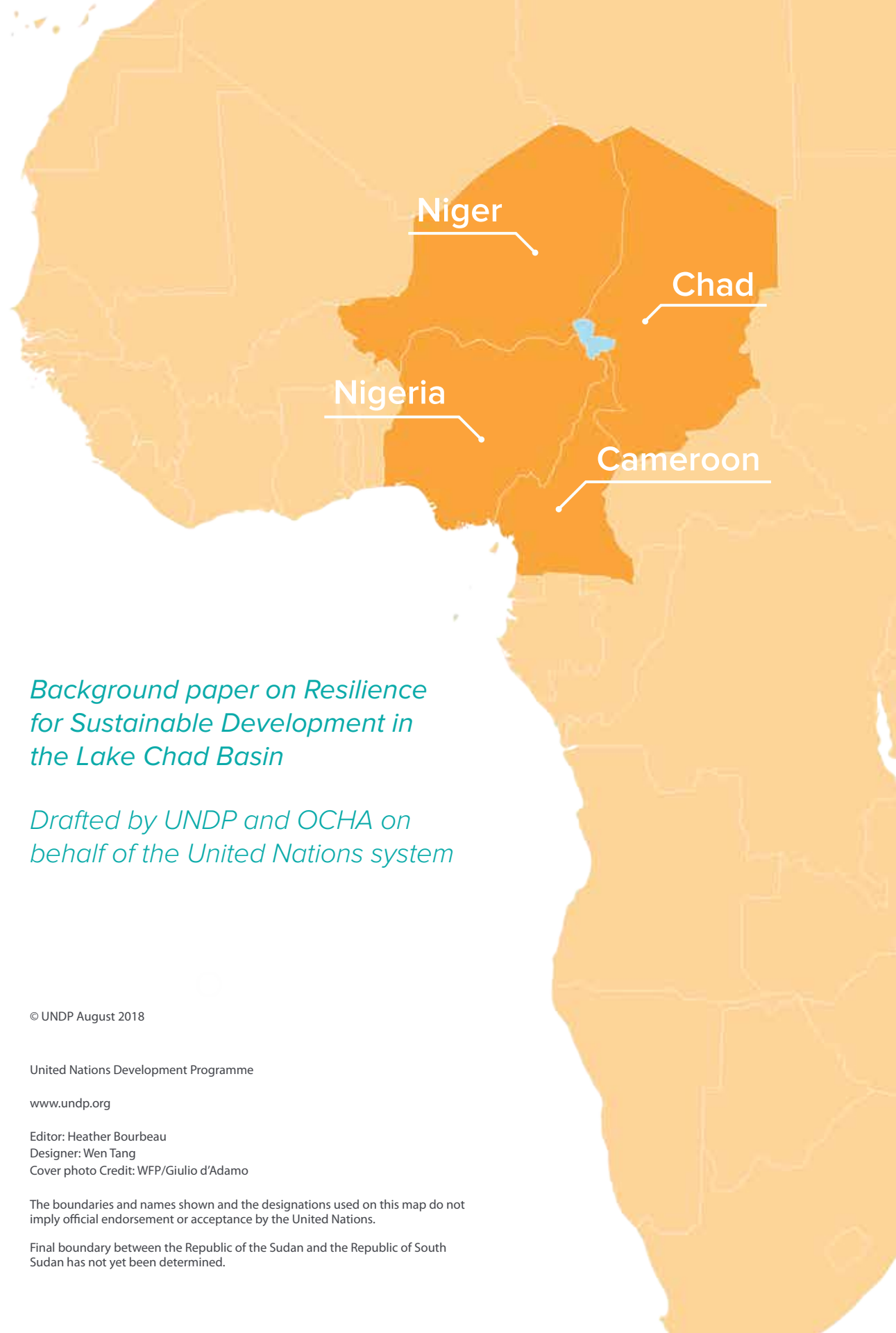


# RESILIENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN



*Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.*





*Background paper on Resilience  
for Sustainable Development in  
the Lake Chad Basin*

*Drafted by UNDP and OCHA on  
behalf of the United Nations system*

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Final boundary between the Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined.

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(Photo credit: UNDP Chad/Jean Damascene Hakuzimana)

.....The urgent need for a resilience-based approach



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**The humanitarian crisis in the Lake Chad Basin (LCB) is among the most severe in the world, with more than 10 million people in urgent need of life-saving assistance and protection.** As the crisis enters its ninth year, attacks by non-state armed groups remain frequent, and the violent conflict continues to fuel large-scale human suffering, including massive violations of human rights, especially for women and girls, who are often victims of abuse and sexual violence. Communities and individuals in the LCB, especially women, are accustomed to shocks and have withstood numerous crises in the past decades. Life-saving humanitarian assistance has been critical in helping them absorb the impact of these shocks and continues to be needed considering the severity of the situation.

**Yet, it is critical that we urgently scale up development interventions to strengthen resilience in the region, help people and communities recover as quickly as possible and prevent a**

**further deterioration of the crisis.** While acute emergency needs continue to be dire, delivering only humanitarian assistance year after year will not be enough to prevent the further erosion of local capacities nor to bring communities back to a path of sustainable development. Development programmes for strengthening resilience need to be scaled up now, even while humanitarian programmes continue. This means enhancing local governance, providing basic services, improving economic opportunity and strengthening social cohesion, while also restoring people's and institutions' sense of agency and dignity, as well as their ability to adapt to changing circumstances—all with a focus on women and young people. A more coordinated approach to humanitarian and development programming that upholds and safeguards human rights is needed to “move from delivering aid, to ending need”, as expressed in the Secretary-General's Agenda for Humanity, which called for a New Way of Working. This requires a boost in development action that focuses on “those furthest





behind first” and addresses the structural deficits and root causes underlying the crisis in the LCB.

**The underlying causes of the LCB crisis include high inequality, perceived social injustice, a lack of social service provision, historic marginalization, inadequate economic opportunities, high levels of poverty, rapid demographic growth and the impacts of climate change and land degradation.** These

pre-existing structural constraints and deficiencies have disproportionately affected women and girls, and reduced the ability of the population and political, social and economic systems to cope with conflict-induced disruptions. The violence has further increased people’s vulnerability, disrupting farming, fisheries and pastoralist livelihoods, freedom of movement, commerce, local governance and the provision of basic services. It has affected the ability of communities to effectively and peacefully manage these conflicts. Competition over diminishing natural resources due to the impacts of rapid population growth, climate variability and climate change have further exacerbated tensions in the region.

**As a result, a military victory alone would not be enough to create positive peace and stability and protect human rights. A focus on restoring and enhancing resilience is needed, even as humanitarian activities and security operations continue.** The recently released UN-World Bank report “A Pathway for Peace” shows that conflict stems from the mobilization of people’s perception of exclusion

and injustice, which are rooted in inequalities, and tackling these issues should be a priority to prevent further escalation of conflict. While military and security agencies have made some progress in limiting the activities of extremist groups, their own practices have, at times, been heavy-handed and have included violations of human rights, adding to the sense of insecurity and alienation which increase divisions among displaced persons and communities.

**Resilience in the affected zone means going beyond simply restoring the status quo ante, which had contributed to the escalation of the crisis. Resilience means building a better standard of living than before.** This will lessen the risk of and vulnerability to future crises, and thus reduce the costs of responding to humanitarian needs. Moreover, equipping stakeholders with peacebuilding tools to strengthen social cohesion between divided and/or adversarial groups will enable communities to foster peaceful and cohesive initiatives to improve socio-economic development.

**However, there is a shortage of effective and coordinated development interventions in the LCB that address the root causes of the crisis and focus on strengthening resilience of people and communities.** Some development programmes were halted when the crisis began, mainly due to insecurity, the prioritization of security-related interventions and the shortage of government actors to work in these areas. Even in areas not in active conflict, a lack of political will and prioritization from governments, a



high level of corruption and high operational costs have made LCB areas less attractive to receive development funding.

**Finding ways to scale up development interventions and improve their efficiency in the LCB in order to address these structural deficits is therefore critical.** Central and local government authorities have the primary responsibility to address the underlying structural constraints and weaknesses that contribute to the conflict and create high levels of vulnerability. Development partners should find ways to support national institutions and build their capacity to address underlying development deficits in the LCB and the root causes of grievances and religious extremism. Also, development partners must adopt conflict-sensitive approaches to avoid exacerbating existing conflicts or creating the conditions for new conflicts to arise. Bringing in development assistance ‘earlier’ in a crisis (when possible) has been shown to result in clear economic benefits, including offsetting medium- to long-term losses, mitigating risks, catalyzing economic growth and decreasing reliance on humanitarian funding.

**There is considerable scope to scale-up development investments in the LCB.** Several donors are already allocating development funds for the LCB starting in 2017 and have adapted their operational modalities in order to do so. For those projects that have already begun implementation, the feedback has been that the activities remain effective, despite difficult

operating circumstances. They are demonstrating that scaling up development-oriented action in the LCB is possible, in spite of the continued conflict and rapidly evolving situation, by involving communities and integrating more risk-tolerance, flexibility and creativity in programme design, as well as investing in building the capacity of women and youth.

**This paper highlights the type of medium/longer-term efforts that need to be supported and scaled up, in parallel with humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts, in order to strengthen resilience. These need to be initiated now and make the 2030 Agenda a reality for the more than 10 million people affected by crises year after year in the Lake Chad Basin.** This approach is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, Agenda 2063 of the African Union, National Recovery and Development Plans (such as the Buhari Plan for North East Nigeria, and the Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessments, or RPBAs, in Nigeria and Cameroon), and UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF). It is also in line with the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit’s Agenda for Humanity and subsequent efforts to strengthen the humanitarian-development collaboration and roll out the New Way of Working. The paper is also well aligned with several regional and sub-regional strategic frameworks, including the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) and its new Support Plan, and the African Union and Lake Chad Basin Commission joint Lake Chad Basin Stabilization, Resilience and Development Strategy.

# .....Understanding the social, economic, governance and environmental causes and impacts of the LCB crisis

## PRE-EXISTING STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS AND DEFICIENCIES...

The severity and scale of the impacts of the LCB crisis are exacerbated by pre-existing economic and sociocultural practices that promote social, environmental, climatic and governance constraints, which over the past several decades have progressively weakened individual, household and systemic resilience and disrupted regional economic productive systems, institutions and social cohesion.

The LCB regions of Nigeria and Cameroon have traditionally not benefited from the same level of development and investment as other parts of the country. This disparity can be explained by the geographical positioning and demographics of these regions, political dynamics, sociocultural factors and the structure of the regional economies, characterized by sub-optimal productivity and endemic poverty. In Nigeria, 50 percent of the population lives below the poverty line in the North-East Region, while the national average is 33 percent. For Cameroon, the gap is even greater, with 74.3 percent of the population living below the poverty line in the Far North Region compared to 37.5 percent nationally. The regions have also witnessed low human capital development with significant gender gaps in school attendance (all below the national averages), due to limited provision of basic social services. In the Far North Region of Cameroon, the net academic enrolment rate is 23.5 percent while national average is 44.5 percent. These social and economic disparities within the population have deepened the perceptions of marginalization and exclusion. While the regions bordering Lake Chad in Chad and Niger have been less marginalized and less excluded from development planning compared to equivalent regions in Cameroon and Nigeria, development indicators remain worse than the national averages and access to basic services there is limited or inexistent.

Historically, limited state presence and government capacities have contributed to low rates of development, popular discontent and a loss of legitimacy, as well as the inability to manage tensions and conflicts. Weak governance in the LCB region has been a driver of conflict, and financial mismanagement

has undermined the effectiveness of development programme implementation. Traditional governance mechanisms have often proved to be more effective in promoting local conflict resolution than the formal justice system has.

Women are historically disadvantaged compared to men in all social development indicators in all four countries of the LCB. Within each country, conditions for women are usually worse in the LCB region than in other areas of the country. In Nigeria for instance, 70 percent of women over thirty are illiterate in the North-East compared to 34 percent in the South. Women and girls also have significantly less decision-making power than men and boys, and violence compounds and reinforces this disadvantage. Young people feel they have limited economic, social and political prospects across the LCB crisis zone. This is one of the factors that has enabled the rise of Boko Haram and will destabilize the region again if it is not resolved through an approach that combines human capital and economic transformation, providing decent work and incomes.

The combined impacts of accelerating global climate change, local extreme hydro-meteorological weather events and climate variability, and unsustainable resource-use practices by a growing population have added an additional environmental stress to the existing structural constraints. Climate and weather variability play a part in this environmental degradation, exacerbated by man-made stresses. In turn, these have exacerbated gender inequalities. For instance, access to resources often defines power relationships between men and women, and when resources are stretched, women lose out even more. There is a debate about the role of climate change and hydrology in the ongoing conflict around the Lake Chad Basin. According to some stakeholders, the priority should be the replenishment of the lake, which has shrunk in size since 1963. However, according to a study commissioned by the French Development Agency (AFD), the Lake Chad Basin wetlands, which are favorable for farming and fishing, have expanded and are now at more or less optimal levels for many livelihoods.

## ... MADE WORSE BY CONFLICT DYNAMICS

The armed conflict, combined with structural constraints described above, has caused widespread displacement, market and social service disruption, and regional economic deterioration.

**Conflict-related displacement:** In all four countries, most internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees (mainly women and children), live in host communities. They are often in areas that do not have adequate absorptive capacity in terms of livelihoods and social services, which, in turn, has environmental and economic impacts. In many cases, IDPs and refugees are compelled to remain for years. Some will even reestablish permanently in their area of displacement. Administrative maps and corresponding national budget allocations have not been reviewed to reflect the demographic changes caused by displacement. At the same time, an estimated 1.5 million people have attempted to return to their areas of origin in Nigeria, but many remain in displacement in makeshift settlements due to inaccessibility and/or inexistence of livelihood options and services back home. Once returnees have settled back in their villages of origin, the lack of livelihood opportunities and employment has been cited by many IDPs as an immediate threat to social cohesion, especially with regards to youth. In Niger's Diffa Region, for instance, the security situation has worsened since the first Boko Haram attack in February 2015, which has caused the displacement of more than 300,000 internally displaced persons and refugees (coming mainly from Nigeria). About 70 percent of these displaced persons are women and children.

### **Production/productivity and market disruptions:**

The conflict has significantly impacted economic productivity in the LCB, which is largely based on farming, pastoralism and fishing. The main impacts of the conflict include inaccessibility and a loss of productive assets and inputs due to human displacement and the disruption of markets due to physical destruction of facilities, and the enforcement of security-related measures such as restrictions of movement and the prohibition to farm or trade in certain areas. As a result, agricultural production and access to land have declined sharply, resulting in a widespread loss of livelihoods and employment. Undoubtedly, women are the backbone of the agricultural sector and represent up to 70 percent of the agricultural workforce and food trade in the

region. Thus, a disruption of women's activities has a knock-on effect on productivity. In addition to direct losses in productive assets, agricultural trade has also been significantly impaired by damages to the road network and the closure of borders. Commerce has been severely curtailed. People are not receiving appropriately tailored weather and climate preparedness services to cope with different constraints. As a result, it is reported that 62 percent of the Chadian population in the LCB will face food insecurity during 2018.

### **Disruptions of essential social services and governance systems:**

Proximate leadership and governance are essential for resilience. Many local and traditional governance structures have been challenged by the crisis and the deployment of military personnel. The conflict has also significantly impacted the already limited provision of essential social services through the deliberate targeting and destruction of infrastructure, facilities and equipment in Nigeria and the departure of civil servants in the face of the deteriorating security situation in all four countries. Boko Haram has targeted schools in northern Cameroon, leaving an estimated 35,000 children without access to education since 2014, which will hinder their ability to find alternative employment. The weak capacity of social service providers at the regional and local levels does not allow them to cope with the growing number of separated and unaccompanied children. Humanitarian Needs Overviews (HNO) in the four countries show that millions around the Lake Chad Basin do not have access to basic social services, such as education, health, nutrition, protection and water/sanitation.

**Economic deterioration:** Due to the conflict, macroeconomic conditions, which were already in decline prior to 2009, have significantly deteriorated in the LCB region. According to the RPBA estimates, the estimated economic losses due to the conflict in North-East Nigeria amount to approximately US\$8.3 billion between 2011-2015, and in Cameroon, the Recovery and Peace Consolidation Strategy for Northern and East Cameroon was costed at US\$4.6 billion. The fiscal impact of the conflict has also been severe due to an increased share of public expenditures related to security and defense. The lack of economic opportunities in the LCB region make youth easy prey for Boko Haram recruiters, prolonging the conflict.



# .....How to strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability and risks in the LCB

The complex and multi-faceted nature of the crisis in the LCB underscores the need for a comprehensive approach that complements life-saving assistance with efforts to strengthen specific individual and systemic resilience, within an overall long-term framework that is focused on achieving collective outcomes in order to respond to humanitarian needs while simultaneously reducing need, risk and vulnerability. Such approaches should also aim at building local capacities for future risk management and prevention and be complemented by efforts to address core structural issues, including unequal opportunities for men, women, boys and girls. Governments, in partnership with the development and humanitarian communities in these countries, have started to articulate concrete, measurable collective outcomes around which humanitarian and development programming will be coordinated over the next three to five years, thus advancing the 2030 Agenda in the region.

This comprehensive people-centered approach must include strengthening resilience that improves coping capacity and reduces vulnerabilities. Strengthening resilience in the LCB will require improving four types of capacities to endure shocks and stresses:

- Absorptive capacity, which is the capacity to take intentional protective/preventive action and to cope with shocks and stresses (e.g., harvesting early);
- Adaptive capacity, which is the capacity to make intentional incremental adjustments in livelihood strategies in anticipation of or in response to a changing environment (e.g., diversifying livelihoods or introducing drought resistant seeds, mapping agro-ecological regions, provision of weather, agrometeorological and climate tailored services);
- Transformative capacity, which is the capacity to make intentional change to stop or reduce the causes of risk, vulnerability, poverty and inequality (e.g., reduce political marginalization);
- Leadership capacity for women and youth groups that combines both professional and life skills to reinforce their decision-making powers.

Medium- and longer-term support focused on resilience, recovery and development are required to capitalize on these absorptive capacities, while also improving adaptive and transformative capacities.



(Photo credit: UNDP Cameroon)

## MEDIUM-TERM RESPONSE: RESILIENCE AND RECOVERY

In areas where security and economic conditions are sufficient, the focus of efforts should be on strengthening the resilience of individuals and households, and on community-level economic empowerment through increased productivity and trade and the provision of social services. The prioritization of the most vulnerable groups, particularly women and children, will be crucial. The objectives of such support should be to enhance capacities in order to prevent further deterioration of vulnerability, to facilitate the return and sustainable and peaceful reintegration of displaced people, and to enable improvement of socio-economic conditions. The following enabling factors should be considered: sufficient security, freedom of movement, the degree of access to the target population, and the presence and capacity of local administration, technical services and service provision in target areas. Depending on the presence and sustainability of enabling conditions, two sets of interventions can be considered targeting host communities, internal displaced persons and refugees:



### STRENGTHENING INDIVIDUAL AND HOUSEHOLD COPING CAPACITIES

In areas where enabling factors such as security and local authority presence are still volatile, the focus should be on support for restoring livelihoods and access to social services, especially education, health, water, sanitation, energy and agro-meteorological information (on both supply and demand). The aims of this assistance are to enhance resilience to shocks and promote recovery through restoring social cohesion and local governance for the sustainable management and use of productive resources (land, pasture, water, etc.) at the community level, restoring access to productive assets, increase economic production and increase income and employment opportunities. Specific measures could include facilitating access to productive assets, especially for women who face difficulties in accessing and owning land (e.g., identify solutions with local and traditional authorities to facilitate access to land and livestock replenishment, particularly targeting IDPs and returnees); provision of agricultural inputs (e.g., seeds and livestock); short-term employment creation through cash for work; provision of social safety nets (e.g., cash transfers); provision of weather and climate services (forecasting of extreme hydro-meteorological events, tailored weather/climate information for agriculture, livestock, fisheries, etc.); restoration of access to essential

services, including the provision of delivery systems and rehabilitation of small community infrastructure; and addressing women's specific needs as expressed by the women themselves. Where possible, programmes should go further than agricultural opportunities and promote new economic opportunities (including for women and youth groups), such as, supporting agro-processing of and added-value in agricultural, livestock and fisheries products, introducing bio-enterprises in urban areas, connecting stakeholders through technologies to enhance marketing opportunities. An over-reliance on unproductive pastoralism and agriculture, degraded soils, weak value chains, inadequate physical and financial infrastructure and poor entrepreneurial capacity have all contributed to low income and asset levels, which undermine resilience.



### ENABLING MEDIUM-TERM RECOVERY AND SYSTEMIC RESILIENCE

In areas not directly impacted by the conflict and in addition to some of the activities above that are also relevant, a focus on strengthening systemic resilience and social cohesion at the local and community levels can help both prevent future destabilization and promote growth, despite a constrained regional economic environment. Objectives of this assistance could include economic empowerment by increasing and improving economic production, ensuring full access to high quality services on a sustainable basis, increasing capacities to safeguard and sustainably manage the hydrological, biological and cultural resources, and addressing the root causes of gender inequality and human rights violations. With respect to economic empowerment, measures could include access to financing for business recovery and development (credits and grants); diversification and development of agricultural, livestock and fisheries value chains; food conservation, transformation and commercialization, including across borders; strengthening of agricultural extension services and skills training programmes; and rehabilitation of priority economic infrastructure to facilitate economic recovery (notably roads, markets and water/irrigation systems, as well as electricity, renewable energy, automatic weather stations networks, and land and productive assets for women and youth groups). Regarding service provision, priority should be accorded to strengthening and expanding institutional service delivery systems, including through the rehabilitation of infrastructure, review of the administrative mapping and re-staffing and allocation of financing for adequate and high-quality service delivery. Strengthening locally accessible and affordable health, water, sanitation, education and weather/climate infrastructure and services





will help people recover from the crisis and strengthen their ability to withstand future shocks and take advantage of opportunities for transformation, particularly through the provision of education through teaching and training in host communities and camps for IDPs. Reversing the breakdown caused by the long-term crises that have affected the management of land, lake resources and climate change impacts would help the recovery of the lake ecosystem for both human and biodiversity resilience.

Additional investments will likely be required in areas of protracted displacement, both to provide additional absorptive capacities to host communities and to enable IDPs to generate income, pending their return. The processes described above should streamline opportunities to strengthen peaceful coexistences and social cohesion between groups and stakeholders (e.g., jointly-led, mutually beneficial economic initiatives between divided communities).

## LONGER-TERM RESPONSE: LONG-TERM TRANSFORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT

While medium-term interventions can help strengthen the resilience of local economies and institutional capacities, these will not be sustainable over the long term without a focus on core underlying structural constraints and deficiencies, the root conflict drivers and system building. Four priorities in particular will be essential to enabling sustainable long-term recovery and mitigating structural issues that directly impact the resilience of livelihoods and local economic and social systems.



## TRANSFORMATIONAL ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

The priority is to promote transformational economic development in the LCB, in line with the region's potential, with a focus on expansion, modernization and growth of the agricultural and livestock sectors with consideration of smallholder farmers. This will enable the region's populations to move beyond subsistence-level production. Such development will necessitate significant investments in economic infrastructure, the development of agri-business value chains with a focus on achieving larger scale production, the promotion of regional and cross-border trade and private sector development. It must leverage conflict-sensitive, holistic, multi-stakeholder approaches that promote inclusivity and collaboration and are responsive to contextual considerations. There are positive examples from the LCB (in Niger and Chad) and in

the greater Sahel area (Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali) that can be expanded or replicated. There is also inadequate economic vision to absorb the large number of youth in the LCB region who do not want to return to farming. With almost two-thirds of the rapidly growing population under 25 years old, solid economic diversification and innovative cash transfer schemes would be essential to drive economic development in the region. These will require different trainings and education in diverse fields for women and youth to acquire the skill sets to participate in nonagricultural employment. In addition, support for stopping the degradation of Lake Chad must be considered. For instance, young people should be trained in green economy activities that have strong connections to regional and international trade.



## GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Addressing historical governance weaknesses will require a substantial investment in local institutions with a focus on strengthening policy, regulatory and oversight capacities; quality social service delivery planning and management; and investments in expanding and strengthening institutional capacities and governance at local levels. Such capacity building should focus on development planning, budget/resource management, service delivery and accountability mechanisms for the duty bearers to respect and implement basic human rights. All four countries have different governance systems and specificities of each need to be considered in the implementation of decentralization/local development programmes. In Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad, local development plans have been or are being developed in/updated in the LCB regions and should be used to increase the volume of public and private investments and to coordinate development at the local level. Enhanced social protection schemes with elements of crisis transformation could also be developed to **reinforce** the social contract between the state and citizens. Reinforcing and encouraging youth and women's participation in decision making, both at community and regional levels, will prevent the sense of exclusion and marginalization that has been exploited by Boko Haram for recruitment. Land management and planning, combined with inclusive governance over the use of shared natural resources in transboundary areas, have helped regional integration. It is also critical to facilitate local planning processes in order to resolve questions about land allocation for housing (urbanization) and agricultural/livestock production and to reflect the changes in demographics. This strategy can be used to encourage the four countries to develop common

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