



WORKING  
PAPER N° 3

# STRENGTHENING THE RESILIENCE AND HUMAN SECURITY OF VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES: LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE LAKE CHAD BASIN

DECEMBER 2024

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**DISCLAIMER:**

This working paper was produced for review by the REcAP Network. It was prepared by an independent research team under the working paper on 'Building Multi-Stakeholders' Collaborative Partnership for the Prevention of Conflict and Violent Extremism in the Sahel'. The authors bear sole responsibility for the contents of this report, and its views do not necessarily represent those of the REcAP Network.

## **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>ACLED</b>	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organisation
<b>IDP</b>	Internally displaced person
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>ISWAP</b>	Islamic State's West Africa Province
<b>KII</b>	Key informant interview
<b>LCBC</b>	Lake Chad Basin Commission
<b>PEDRO</b>	Political Economy Dynamics of Regional Organisations
<b>REcAP</b>	Research and Action for Peace network
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme

THE HUMANITARIAN SECURITY ISSUES FACING THE LCB REGION ARE AT A TURNING POINT. DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS NEED TO BE SCALED UP IMMEDIATELY IN ORDER TO BOOST RESILIENCE IN THE AREA, ASSIST INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES IN RECOVERING AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, AND PREVENT THE SITUATION FROM GETTING WORSE. BUILDING ON LESSONS LEARNT, THIS PAPER ASSESSES THE CURRENT SITUATION AND SHOWCASES THE ADVANCES ALREADY ACHIEVED IN TACKLING THE CRISIS.

It also establishes strategies aimed at developing a more unified and cooperative approach and at strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities in the face of these human security challenges. The paper first discusses the context of the current crisis, emphasising the role of anthropogenic climate change in fuelling its underlying factors. It then presents a theoretical framework for human security, situating the LCB case study within the wider body of literature in order to demonstrate how this framework can be applied to this particular regional context. This is followed by a section detailing the paper's methodology and use of the "threshold approach", after which the study's key theoretical and practical findings are discussed. Lastly, in light of both the findings of the research paper and the regional context, this paper makes several recommendations and conclusions aimed at tackling the region's pressing humanitarian challenges.

## CONTEXT

In recent decades, the effects of climate change on human communities have drawn attention across Africa. Over the past 10 years in particular, there has been growing apprehension regarding the impacts of climate change on conflict, peace, and security in the continent<sup>1</sup>. This paper investigates the degree to which the effects of climate change, specifically relating to natural resources, are contributing to certain conflicts in the LCB region<sup>2</sup>. The following section establishes the relationship between the effects of climate change, insecurity, and local conflicts by placing a human security lens on many of the challenges specific to the LCB region.

The findings demonstrate that the livelihoods of vulnerable people in the LCB region are being undermined by restricted access to environmental assets such as pasture, water, and arable land, as a result of the region's exceptional vulnerability to the impacts of climate change<sup>3</sup>. This has contributed to exacerbating several of the human security challenges the region was already facing, as communities try to cope with risks including extreme scarcity, armed robbery, kidnapping, highway robbery, and cattle rustling<sup>4</sup>. These factors have also intensified the already protracted regional conflict situation, as well as community-level conflicts. Although each of these aspects of human security presents its own challenges, this paper's findings indicate that concern over the rise in violent extremist insurgency<sup>5</sup> is paramount and has led to serious disruptions in state functioning and its ability to ensure the security of the population<sup>6</sup>.

THIS PAPER INVESTIGATES THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE, SPECIFICALLY RELATING TO NATURAL RESOURCES, ARE CONTRIBUTING TO CERTAIN CONFLICTS IN THE LCB REGION.

<sup>1</sup> UNDP, *Conflict Analysis in the Lake Chad Basin 2020–2021: Trends, developments and implications for peace and stability*, UNDP, 2022 - <sup>2</sup> Maystadt, J. F., Ecker, O., and Mabiso, A., *Extreme weather and civil war in Somalia: Does drought fuel conflict through livestock price shocks?*, LICOS Centre for Institutions and Economic Performance discussion paper 326/2013, 2013 - <sup>3</sup> Ibid - <sup>4</sup> Reports and policy documents, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs - <sup>5</sup> Oginni, O. S., *Civilian loyalty and agency in insecure spaces: A study of armed conflicts in the Lake Chad Basin region*, unpublished PhD thesis, Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, 2024 - <sup>6</sup> Ibid

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD SECURITY, AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The LCB region faces exceptional vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, with temperatures over the next decade projected to rise at a rate 1.5 times faster than the global average<sup>7</sup>. The area's long dry season and the severe flooding it experiences during the rainy season already place the region at high risk of diminished agricultural productivity and exacerbated food scarcity. Periods like the 2022 rainy season, which brought unprecedented levels of flooding affecting more than 1.4 million individuals across the LCB region, have already begun to reflect the anticipated escalation of these existing risks. Environmental vulnerabilities are, in turn, exacerbated by longstanding institutional vulnerabilities including underdevelopment, poverty, limited livelihood opportunities, gender-based inequalities, high unemployment rates, and an absence of opportunities for young people, all of which have fuelled migration and the growth of violent extremism in the region.

While some institutional measures have been taken to mitigate the impacts of climate change on Lake Chad and its surrounding areas, questions regarding their efficacy remain. Primary among these measures is the creation of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) which functions as a diplomatic body responsible for regulating the use of water and other natural resources within the Chad Basin<sup>8</sup>. The LCBC is made up of representatives of eight countries – namely Algeria, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Libya, Niger, Nigeria, and Sudan – selected on the basis of their proximity to Lake Chad<sup>9</sup>. Established on 22 May 1964, the LCBC's primary objectives are running Lake Chad (including its communal water reserves) sustainably, maintaining the surrounding ecologies, advancing collaboration between the neighbouring nations, and fostering long-lasting harmony, protection, and sustainable development in the region<sup>10</sup>. A consolidation process was initiated in 2000 with the goals of reorganising the LCBC, defining its vision, developing a strategy, and providing opportunities for capacity building and political engagement<sup>11</sup>.

Since its inception, the LCBC has faced multiple challenges in carrying out its mission, many of which are a direct result of climate change impacts in the region. Firstly, critical levels of water scarcity make it extremely difficult to preserve and manage available freshwater resources, which inhibits longer-term preparedness and crisis mitigation. Secondly, the severity of ecosystem degradation within Lake Chad, coupled with the rapid rate of decrease in water levels, leaves restoration projects with little opportunity to effectively restore current damage. Thirdly, many challenges require multiple, simultaneous interventions to combat a single issue. These dual interventions, including the implementation of both dune fixation and revegetation programmes to combat desert encroachment into the Lake, require a level of resources and organisational infrastructure that the Committee cannot currently sustain. Further organisational challenges can be seen in the LCBC's research and data collection functions. Although the consistent and accurate monitoring of various data points are crucial to the effective management of the basin, as well as the implementation of its programmes, the LCBC has encountered numerous issues in collecting, organising, storing, and disseminating key data through the appropriate channels. Lastly, the member countries' lack of cooperation in various areas, including around updating and harmonising regional agreements, hinders the LCBC's ability to ensure effective and sustainable management of the basin's water resources.

SINCE ITS INCEPTION, THE LCBC HAS FACED MULTIPLE CHALLENGES IN CARRYING OUT ITS MISSION, MANY OF WHICH ARE A DIRECT RESULT OF CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS IN THE REGION.

<sup>7</sup> UNDP, Conflict analysis in the Lake Chad Basin, op. cit. - <sup>8</sup> UNDP, 4th Lake Chad Basin Governors' Forum Concludes with Commitments to Scale Up Joint Stabilisation, Recovery and Resilience Efforts in the Lake Chad Basin, UNDP, 7 July 2023 - <sup>9</sup> Usigbe, L., Drying Lake Chad Basin gives rise to crisis, Africa Renewal, 24 December 2019 - <sup>10</sup> European Council on Foreign Relations, Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), 2016- <sup>11</sup> Galeazzi, G., Medinilla, A., Ebiede, T. M., and Desmidt, S., Understanding the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC): Water and security at inter-regional cross-roads, in Political Economy Dynamics of Regional Organisations (PEDRO), 2017

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

The LCB region is home to a population of over 30 million individuals, but the population density is relatively low, apart from in urban areas in Nigeria. The region also boasts a rich cultural diversity, with over 70 ethnic groups residing in the vicinity of the lake. Most of these groups are concentrated on the south bank, where the population density is over 100 inhabitants per square kilometre<sup>12</sup>. Climate change and conflict exacerbate the socio-economic and demographic challenges faced by these populations.

The region's socio-economic development metrics reveal various challenges. The area is known for its elevated poverty rates and inadequate availability of necessary social services<sup>13</sup>. For more than three decades, both economic activity and domestic earnings have been declining. Moreover, the area is experiencing rapid population growth compared to other regions globally, with an average fertility rate of approximately five children per woman<sup>14</sup>. The communities surrounding the lake are significantly behind in terms of socio-economic standards compared to other regions in the countries bordering the lake. For example, in north-east Nigeria, which borders the lake to the south-west, the poverty rate is estimated to be over 70%, nearly double the rate in the rest of that country<sup>15</sup>.

## MIGRATION AND INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

The scale of the human security crisis in the LCB region constitutes one of the most severe human-centred disasters that the world has encountered<sup>16</sup>. Across the four countries, there is a population of over 17 million individuals residing in the impacted regions, of which the most affected are the Lac region of Chad, the Far North Region of Cameroon, the Diffa region in Niger, and north-eastern Nigeria<sup>17</sup>. A remarkable 10.7 million individuals (including more than 6 million children) are in a critical state requiring urgent humanitarian assistance to ensure their survival<sup>18</sup>. In January 2024, the four countries contained a total of 6,032,932 individuals who had been impacted by various crises<sup>19</sup>. Among these individuals, 12.8% (775,089 people) were resident in Cameroon, while 288,334 were resident in Chad. Additionally, 513,149 individuals were in Niger, while the majority (comprising 73.9%, a staggering 4,456,360 individuals) were resident in Nigeria. More recently, the region has seen a rise in the number of returnees from abroad, with an increase of 4.0% between December 2023 and January 2024, as well as a decline in the number of refugees, with a decrease of 9.0% during the same period<sup>20</sup>.

Many of the observed patterns of forced migration and displacement can be attributed to the continuing violent confrontation between the state military and non-state armed groups, which has been ongoing since 2014. The repeated attacks and incursions carried out by violent extremist groups in the area, such as Boko Haram and Jama'atu Ahlis-Sunna, as well as Salafi jihadists, have also been a major driving factor, particularly with regard to internal displacement<sup>21</sup>.

ACROSS THE FOUR COUNTRIES, THERE IS A POPULATION OF OVER 17 MILLION INDIVIDUALS RESIDING IN THE IMPACTED REGIONS, OF WHICH THE MOST AFFECTED ARE THE LAC REGION OF CHAD, THE FAR NORTH REGION OF CAMEROON, THE DIFFA REGION IN NIGER, AND NORTH-EASTERN NIGERIA.

<sup>12</sup> Ngom, M., et al., *Demographic Dynamics and the Crisis of Countries around Lake Chad*, United Nations Population Fund, 2022. - <sup>13</sup> Granguillhome Ochoa, R. et al., *Lake Chad Regional Economic Memorandum: Development for Peace*, World Bank, 2021. - <sup>14</sup> & <sup>15</sup> Ibid - <sup>16</sup> Olorok, F., *Lake Chad Basin crisis: Group tasks youths on peaceful coexistence*, Punch, 2022, 24 February 2022 - <sup>17</sup> Kumar, R., *Civilian counterterrorism forces and the fight against extremism: A review of Nigeria, Somalia, and Burkina Faso*, Counter Extremism Project, May 2023 - <sup>18</sup> UNDP, *Conflict analysis in the Lake Chad Basin*, op. cit. - <sup>19</sup> *West and Central Africa – Lake Chad Basin Crisis Monthly Dashboard 60* (January 2024), *Displacement Tracking Matrix*, 27 March 2024 - <sup>20</sup> Ibid - <sup>21</sup> Sempijja, N., Mora Brito, P., and Moutaouakil, Z., *Countering the Islamic State in the Lake Chad Basin: A case for a security-development-governance nexus?*, *Cogent Social Sciences*, 9 (1), 2023

## HEALTH SECURITY

Rising health insecurity and climatic variability have increased the number of people in the LCB region experiencing food insecurity, infectious disease, malnutrition, trauma, and other health issues<sup>22</sup>. Malaria and other infectious diseases are prevalent in the region, and skyrocket during the rainy season between June and October, which is also a period when persistent hunger worsens. Every year, many patients die because of outbreaks of malaria, severe starvation, and inadequate medical care. As with the other human security factors discussed, health security issues have been exacerbated by the presence of armed groups<sup>23</sup>.

In January 2019, groups escaping from Rann, Borno State, Nigeria, following a brutal attack on the town by non-state actors, sought shelter in Bodo, Cameroon, only to be afflicted by a widespread cholera outbreak and other diseases<sup>24</sup>. Already in 2018 in Nigeria, healthcare providers were specifically being targeted by the armed group. In this context, healthcare workers have occasionally reduced their activities in order to protect patients from the risk of violence<sup>25</sup>. Similarly, in August 2019, an attack in Niger's Diffa province disrupted the work of healthcare workers, negatively impacting patients<sup>26</sup>. Furthermore, the prevailing security situation endangers individuals who need to travel in search of medical assistance.

Thus, the health security situation in the region, as well as the available solutions to address them, are inextricably tied to the threat posed by armed groups. In Niger, over 60% of those who have been forced to flee have sought refuge in informal settlements with challenging living conditions and insufficient access to suitable housing, clean water, nourishment, sanitation, and healthcare facilities. The security situation in Cameroon continues to be highly unstable. The Far North Region of Cameroon frequently experiences attacks and suicide bombings, necessitating emergency surgical operations. Currently, over 10 million people across the region are in need of life-saving aid, but the delivery of aid, and access to conflict-affected regions, is severely impeded by the ongoing security challenges<sup>27</sup>.

**ALREADY IN 2018 IN NIGERIA, HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS WERE SPECIFICALLY BEING TARGETED BY THE ARMED GROUP.**

## ARMED GROUPS

**OVER RECENT YEARS, BOTH BOKO HARAM AND MILITARY OFFICIALS HAVE INFLICTED VIOLENT ATTACKS ON NUMEROUS CIVILIAN COMMUNITIES.**

The primary security concern that continues to affect communities in the LCB region is the violence caused by insurgencies of non-state actors such as Boko Haram, together with intercommunal conflicts as a result of the scarcity of natural resources. The example of Cameroon is particularly illustrative: since mid-2021, tensions between communities (fishermen, farmers, and herders) have been fuelled by the scarcity of resources, resulting in 112 individuals being burned and over 150 being wounded or killed in 2021. As a result of this situation, around 36,000 Cameroonians from the Far North Region sought refuge in Chad between 2021 and 2022<sup>28</sup>. Over recent years, both Boko Haram and military officials have inflicted violent attacks on numerous civilian communities<sup>29</sup>. Between 2011 and 2023, Boko Haram wreaked havoc in Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria, resulting in a very high number of fatalities<sup>30</sup>. Nigeria, in particular, bore the brunt of the terrorist group's assaults, with the north-eastern states experiencing the highest death toll. One incident that garnered significant global attention was the abduction of 276 girls from a secondary school in Borno in 2014<sup>31</sup>. In April 2021, more than 100 girls remained missing, while six were tragically presumed dead<sup>32</sup>. Unfortunately, there has been a decline in the availability of humanitarian aid for these affected vulnerable populations in the LCB region<sup>33</sup>. One reason for this is the presence of barriers to immigration and a rise in assaults against aid workers. Possible measures for improving the protection of civilians include the provision of additional human rights training to military personnel and assisting communities in developing resilience strategies<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> OCHA, *Lake Chad Basin: Humanitarian Snapshot (as of 23 May 2024)*, ReliefWeb, 23 May 2024 - <sup>23</sup> MSF, *Lake Chad crisis: Over 10 million people heavily dependent on aid for survival*, 14 January 2022 - <sup>24</sup> Ibid - <sup>25</sup> Oginni, S. O., Opoku, M. P., and Nketsia, W., *Crisis at the intersection of four countries: Healthcare access for displaced persons in the Lake Chad Basin region*, *Ethnicity & Health*, 27 (7), 2021, pp. 1698–1717 - <sup>26 & 27</sup> Ibid - <sup>28</sup> UNHCR, *Cameroon and Chad Emergency*, UNHCR Supplementary Appeal, January 2022 - <sup>29</sup> ACLED, *A Decade After Chibok: Assessing Nigeria's Regional Response to Boko Haram*, 16 April 2024 - <sup>30</sup> Sasu, D. D., *Deaths Caused by Boko Haram in Nigeria 2023, by State*, Statista, 5 September 2023 - <sup>31 & 32</sup> Ibid - <sup>33</sup> Afro News, *Chad: The Lake Chad Basin is a security nightmare – 5 Guidelines for finding solutions*, Afro News, 8 October 2017 - <sup>34</sup> Ibid.

**BETWEEN JANUARY 2017 AND DECEMBER 2019, 1,385 CHILDREN WERE RECRUITED AND USED BY BOKO HARAM.**

There has also been a notable rise in the enlistment of young and unemployed people into non-state armed opposition factions due to the escalating insecurity surrounding their means of subsistence<sup>35</sup>. Between January 2017 and December 2019, 1,385 children were recruited and used by Boko Haram<sup>36</sup>, resulting in confirmed human rights violations that impacted 3,601 boys and girls<sup>37</sup>. The inability of 1.76 million IDPs<sup>38</sup> to return to their communities to farm has further contributed to official concerns, voiced by Governor Babagana Zulum of Borno State, about the rising numbers of Boko Haram recruits in IDP camps<sup>39</sup>. Recruitment is particularly prevalent among youths, who generally face limited livelihood opportunities, and who are also alienated from politics. Young men are at heightened risk of joining non-state armed factions, whereas women and girls are at heightened risk of gender-based sexual assault and violence (including forced marriage) perpetrated by extremist organisations.

## CONCLUSION

The security crisis in the LCB region cannot be solely attributed to terrorist insurgency; climate change is playing a significant role in exacerbating the situation. As discussed above, all of the risks that the LCB region currently faces are interconnected. Although the ongoing conflict in the LCB region was instigated by violence associated with armed groups in the area, the crisis is deeply rooted in long-standing challenges to achieving growth and progress. Furthermore, extensive disparities and years of political neglect have fostered a deep-rooted feeling of isolation and distrust, causing rifts between different communities and their leaders. Climate change has not only exacerbated these challenges but has also made the path to recovery all the more difficult<sup>40</sup>.

Authorities in the countries of the LCB region have yet to implement mechanisms to resolve these types of armed conflict effectively. In fact, many government authorities have even played a significant role in actively fuelling armed conflicts in the region. According to Lamarche, who quotes humanitarian workers and IDPs, some high-level officials in Cameroon and Chad have been arming herders to enable them to perpetrate violence in order to secure water points and pastures for their cattle. These officials have also been acquiring large herds of cattle from these deals<sup>41</sup>. In order to address this, the LCBC has developed the Regional Strategy for Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience, specifically targeting the crisis-affected areas of the LCB region<sup>42</sup>. This serves as the "unifying strategy to align local, national and regional-level actors' actions along the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to simultaneously address the impacts of the crisis and promote recovery"<sup>43</sup>.

Similar to the LCBC's Regional Strategy, this paper aims to create a viable and comprehensive framework for tackling the complex, interconnected challenges of the LCB region. The primary emphasis is on empowering communities by implementing practical and reproducible models, through a prevention-focused programme, in order to: (i) reduce the number and severity of armed conflicts; (ii) prevent gender-based violence in communities at high risk of conflict; (iii) reduce youth involvement in violent extremism; (iv) enhance climate change resilience and adaptation; and (v) improve the management of natural resources.

**THE SECURITY CRISIS IN THE LCB REGION CANNOT BE SOLELY ATTRIBUTED TO TERRORIST INSURGENCY; CLIMATE CHANGE IS PLAYING A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN EXACERBATING THE SITUATION.**

<sup>35</sup> Vivekananda, J., and Born, C., Lake Chad Region Climate-related security risk assessment, Expert Working Group on Climate-Related Security Risks, 2018 - <sup>36</sup> Ibid - <sup>37</sup> Kaijo, S., and Kaina, H. M., Experts: Boko Haram recruiting children as soldiers, suicide bombers, *Voice of America*, 4 September 2020 - <sup>38</sup> Ibid - <sup>39</sup> Maiduguri, N. M., Boko Haram recruiting IDPs, Zulum warns, *The Guardian Nigeria*, 24 August 2020 - <sup>40</sup> Lamarche, A., Responding to Chad's Displacement Crisis in the Lac Province and the Implementation of the Kampala Convention, Refugees International Report, 2022 - <sup>41</sup> Ibid - <sup>42</sup> [Strategic Summary Territorial Action Plan: Regional Strategy for Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience, African Union, 2022](#) - <sup>43</sup> [IOM, Lake Chad Basin Crisis Response Plan 2022, IOM, 22 February 2022](#).

## THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

The concept of human security emerged in the early 1990s as part of a comprehensive approach to human development<sup>44</sup>. It aimed to redefine the relationship between security and development by shifting the focus from states to individuals and communities. Since then, there has been extensive discussion of various aspects of human security, particularly its connection to broader concepts of development<sup>45</sup>. This paper contributes to this debate by addressing two main objectives. Firstly, it offers a clear understanding of the distinctions between human security, human vulnerability, and development, while also highlighting their synergies and contributions to overall well-being<sup>46</sup>. Secondly, it creates a structure for implementing a development-focused strategy for human security that can guide research and policy agendas<sup>47</sup>.

This paper addresses security concerns by unpacking the concept of human security and identifying the entities to which it pertains. The paper also addresses the sources of human insecurity and proposes ways to overcome its associated challenges. The analysis establishes a standpoint that strikes a balance between comprehensive human security approaches – encompassing a wide range of economic, political, social, and environmental factors impacting human well-being, livelihoods, and dignity – and narrower approaches that prioritise survival and protection against violence. It will become evident that these approaches are not as polarised as is frequently depicted. Reconciling these two viewpoints improves the chances of securing wide international agreement, which is crucial for the advancement of an effective human security framework<sup>48</sup>.

The paper further contends that individuals' security and their growth and maturation are distinct but interrelated concepts. People's safety can be perceived comparatively, whereas growth is the result of a gradual progression. Safety is both shaped by and shapes the processes of development. Obstacles to development result in human vulnerabilities; hence, improving human development will enhance human security. Simultaneously, the attainment of human development is made more difficult by the absence of the fundamental prerequisites for human security<sup>49</sup>. In situations with a significant level of human insecurity, individuals tend to prioritise their efforts towards their fundamental survival and safety and safeguarding their means of living. Consequently, they are left with limited or no opportunities to expand their options and abilities or to participate in activities that would enhance their overall well-being and improve their quality of life<sup>50</sup>. Human security serves as a complement to human development by allowing individuals and populations to address and cope with specific uncertainties; it is thus essential, yet not sufficient, for achieving the latter.

According to this conceptualisation, human security holds the promise of tackling various urgent security and development issues worldwide through a unified concept and framework. Nonetheless, to fully harness this potential, it is crucial to define the security-development nexus within a distinct set of perspectives, interactions, and activities that encompass the human security approach to development. This delineation should complement the corresponding delineation of human development rather than replicating it<sup>51</sup>. This objective can be accomplished by placing human security threats in context, and focusing solely on specific contingencies based on their potential or actual consequences. This approach, developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and known as the "threshold" approach, distinguishes between threats that fall within the scope of human security and those that do not<sup>52</sup>. Some analysts have proposed emphasising the "abruptness" and "intensity" of the risks contained in the initial UNDP framework. This paper proposes that, although this viewpoint is valuable as a starting point, it lacks sufficient depth. Therefore, it is imperative not only to provide

context about what vulnerability means, but also to establish benchmarks for the level of vulnerability to harm experienced by populations facing different types of deprivation and exclusion.

The human security approach offers a fresh perspective on the variety of issues facing the African continent in the twenty-first century and how local communities are addressing them. This multifaceted analytical framework can help stakeholders to evaluate, create, and implement integrated solutions to a wide range of complex issues that call for the combined efforts of the REcAP project and its partners.

These human security challenges are particularly reflected in the LCB region. As discussed in the previous section, the inhabitants of the region have become increasingly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change and ongoing conflicts, many of which are associated with or attributed to violent extremist factions<sup>53</sup>. These two developments have significantly contributed to the surge in requirements for humanitarian assistance throughout the area. Moreover, these trends are becoming increasingly interconnected as the impacts of anthropogenic climate change intensifies the competition for resources between communities, leading to the escalation of violence<sup>54</sup>.

Although it is understandable that global actors and local authorities have prioritised their interests, focus, and assets towards addressing the safety threats posed by non-state actors<sup>55</sup>, this single-issue view fails to recognise the nexus between climate change, intercommunal violence, and the forced relocation of non-combatant communities<sup>56</sup>. This paper's analysis reveals that natural-resource-induced conflicts were already occurring throughout the LCB region before the emergence of insurrectionary groups. These conflicts primarily revolved around land and water, and often involved multiple livelihoods, such as herding, fishing, and farming. At first, the occurrence of these conflicts decreased as extremist groups and insurgencies gained momentum. However, the scarcity of resources caused by climate change led to a resurgence in armed factions and intercommunal conflicts in 2021, resulting in the displacement of communities and individuals.

<sup>44</sup> Owen, T., *Human Security: A contested concept*, in J. P. Burgess (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of New Security Studies*, London, Routledge, 2010, pp. 39–49 - <sup>45</sup> Rhyerson, C., and Acharya, A., *Human Security Research: Progress, Limitations and New Directions*, Centre for Governance and International Affairs, University of Bristol, Working Paper No. 11-08, 2008 - <sup>46</sup> Galeazzi, G., Medinilla, A., Ebiede, T. M., and Desmidt, S., *Understanding the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC): Water and security at inter-regional cross-roads*, in *Political Economy Dynamics of Regional Organisations (PEDRO)*, 2017 - <sup>47</sup> Maystadt, J. F., Ecker, O., and Mabiso, A., *Extreme weather and civil war in Somalia: Does drought fuel conflict through livestock price shocks?*, op. cit. - <sup>48</sup> Ibid - <sup>49</sup> UN, *2022 Special Report on Human Security*, Human Development Reports, 3 February 2022 - <sup>50</sup> *Lasting Peace in Africa Unattainable without Ambitious Climate Action at All Levels*, Assistant Secretary-General Tells Security Council, United Nations, 12 October 2022 - <sup>51</sup> Jamison, A. S., Liuzza, C., Henisz, W. J., and Meskell, L., *Who protests whom in challenges to the liberal international order? Liberalization, economic deprivation, and the targeting of political and economic actors at world heritage sites*, *Political Economy of International Organization*, 2023 - <sup>52</sup> UNDP, *Conflict analysis in the Lake Chad Basin*, op. cit. - <sup>53</sup> IOM, *Lake Chad Basin Crisis Response Plan 2022*, op. cit. - <sup>54</sup> Lamarche, A., *Climate-fueled violence and displacement in the Lake Chad Basin: Focus on Chad and Cameroon*, *Refugees International*, 27 April 2023 - <sup>55</sup> Ibid - <sup>56</sup> Toledo, G. M., Niemann, H., Scheffran, J., and Wiener, A., *Conceptualizing Strategic Narratives: The Peace Movement as a Strategic Respondent to COVID-19*, *Center for Sustainable Science Research Working Paper No 7*, 2022

## METHODOLOGY

Two methods were utilised for data collection. The first approach involved gathering primary data from the 13 most vulnerable communities in the eight regions or states (see Figure 1) in the countries of the LCB experiencing human insecurity disruptions: Darak, Fotokol, Kousséri, Makari, and Mora (Cameroon); Baga Sola, Bol, and Guitte (Chad); Bosso and N'Guigmi (Niger); and Baga Kawa, Shiwari, and Ngadda (Nigeria). The team conducted key informant interviews (KIIs) with 12 people, including religious leaders, local authorities, representatives of local partner organisations, and other relevant stakeholders such as community representatives of national and international organisations working in the target region in the fields of human security, peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and violent extremism. Three out of the 12 key informants interviewed were from each of the countries targeted in the study respectively. The KIIs provide perspectives from individuals who possess in-depth knowledge or experience in enhancing the resilience and human security of vulnerable communities in the Lake Chad Basin. This valuable information highlights the strategic significance and practical implications of possible measures targeting human security, and showcases their contribution to making well-informed and effective decisions. Additionally, the team organised eight

focus group discussions with various small groups, including herders, farmers, fishermen, and youth and women's groups. In this paper, these groups are organised according to their livelihoods in order to facilitate access to collected data. The discussions were used to gain deeper insights into local perceptions of vulnerability and human insecurity at the community level and to inform possible future actions. In addition to the researcher from the Nkafu Policy Institute, several local researchers were employed in vulnerable communities of the LCB region to gather data and explore alternative methods of enhancing resilience in these communities, based on lessons learnt with the use of face-to-face interviews. Finally, 40 participants from the four countries in the LCB region were surveyed, geographically distributed as follows: 13 from Cameroon, 11 from Chad, 9 from Niger, and 7 from Nigeria. 15 (37.5%) were women and 25 (62.5%) were men, and their ages ranged from 18 to 60<sup>57</sup>. The researcher also employed the resilience matrix to compile and present the resilience capacities identified in the research<sup>58</sup>. This matrix categorises the responses of individual, family, and community actors according to perceptions of violent extremism, peacebuilding, and conflict prevention.

**FIGURE 1. THE EIGHT AFFECTED STATES, REGIONS, AND PROVINCES IN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN REGION<sup>59</sup>**



<sup>57</sup> Even though the survey is not based on a representative sample, it provides insight into the reality of improving the resilience and safety of at-risk communities in the Lake Chad Basin. The research team gathered existing data from various published sources, including books, journals, reports, newspapers, online platforms, government databases, commercial databases, and academic resources such as research studies, journals, and doctoral theses, as well as personal resources. Additionally, this method entailed obtaining data from unpublished sources such as diaries, letters, reports, records, and personal documents on the subject of increasing the resilience and safety of vulnerable communities in the Lake Chad Basin area - <sup>58</sup> Linkov, I., Trump, B. D., and Hynes, W., *Resilience strategies and approaches to contain systemic threats*, SG/NAEC, 5, 2019 - <sup>59</sup> UNDP, *Conflict analysis in the Lake Chad Basin*, op. cit.

## 2

### DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

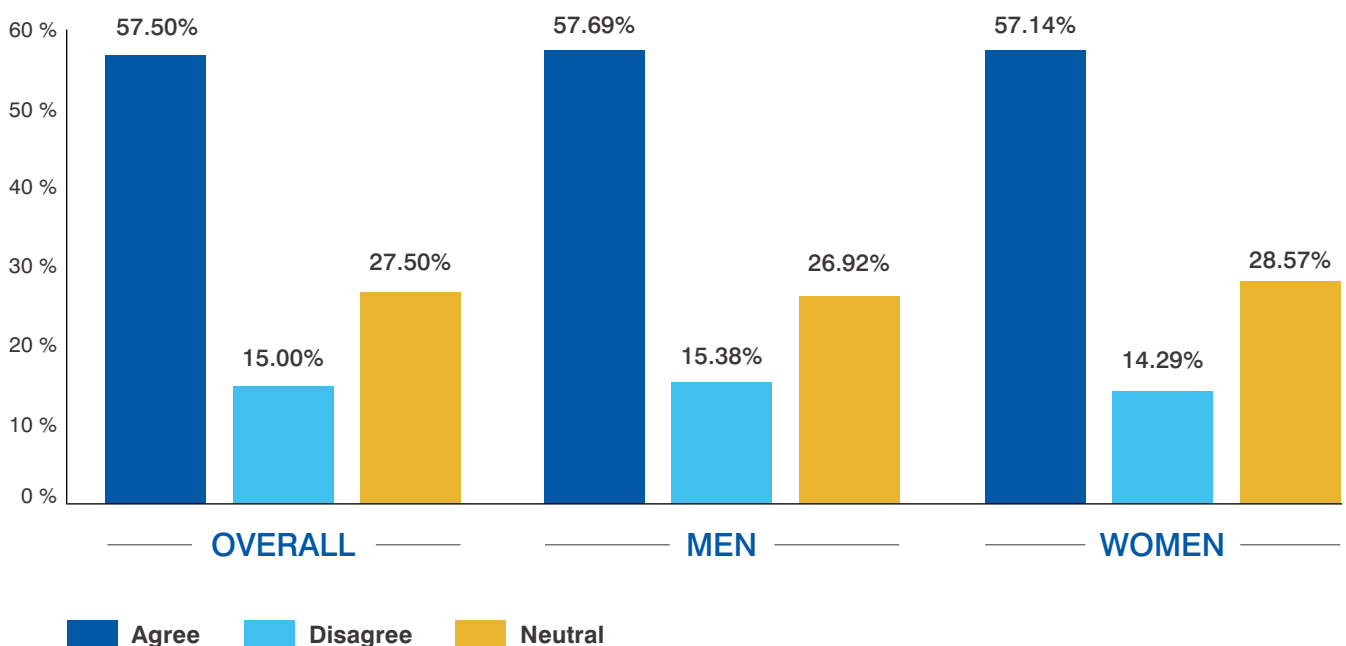
#### IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATURAL RESOURCE SCARCITY ON HUMAN INSECURITY IN THE LCB REGION

THE RESEARCH EXAMINED PERCEPTIONS OF THE HUMAN SECURITY CHALLENGES POSED BY CLIMATE VARIATION AND NATURAL RESOURCE SCARCITY. THE SURVEY RESULTS INDICATE A RELATIVELY EQUAL DISTRIBUTION BETWEEN THE GENDERS WITH REGARD TO THE SCARCITY OF NATURAL RESOURCES, SUCH AS WATER AND PASTURE. ALL THE RESPONDENTS AGREED THAT THE SCARCITY OF NATURAL RESOURCES IS A CAUSE OF HUMAN INSECURITY AMONG VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES IN THE LCB REGION.



Regarding the effect of climate change on human security in the LCB region, 58% of the respondents agreed that climate change is a cause of human security challenges in their community, while 15% disagreed and 28% were neutral. According to the survey results, 57% of female participants acknowledged climate change as a factor contributing to human insecurity within their community, while 14% expressed disagreement and 29% remained neutral on the issue. Among male respondents, 58% considered that climate change is a cause of human security challenges in their community, 15% disagreed, and 27% were neutral (see Figure 2). This data suggests that both male and female respondents believe that climate change is impacting human security in the communities in the LCB region and have significant first-hand experience of its ramifications for natural resources and their management. This analysis demonstrates a shared concern regarding the impacts of climate change and emphasises the need to take appropriate steps to ensure human security.

**FIGURE 2. RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT “CLIMATE CHANGE IS A CAUSE OF HUMAN SECURITY CHALLENGES IN YOUR COMMUNITY” (OVERALL AND BY GENDER)**

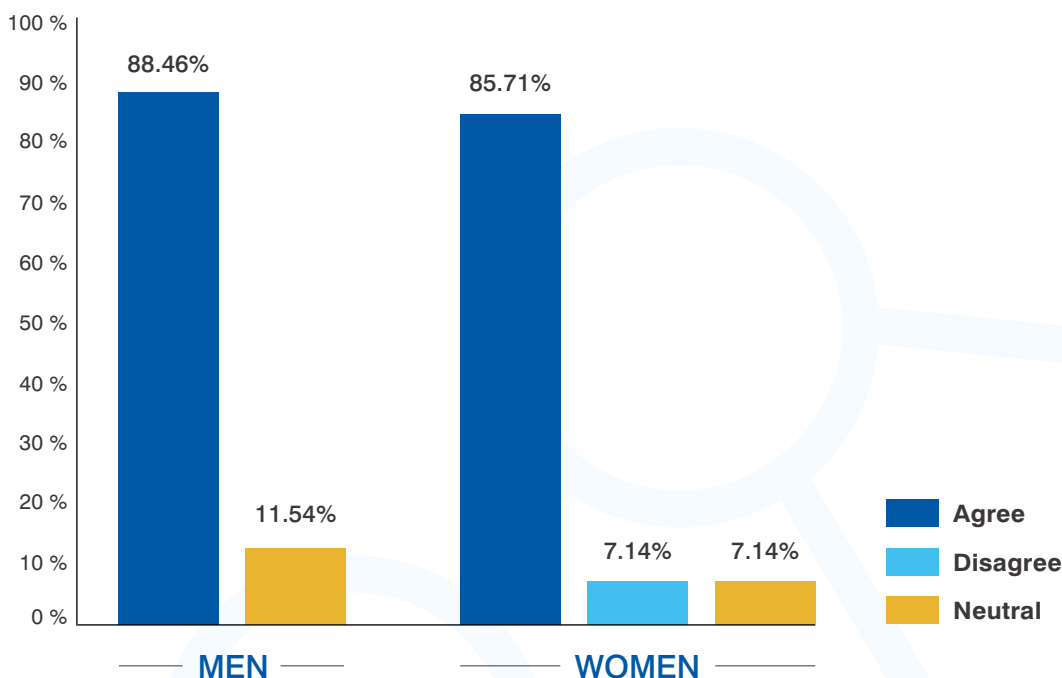


Based on the results from Figure 2, it can be concluded that the impacts of climate change on natural resources have been one of the root causes of human insecurity in the LCB region. Policymakers and other relevant parties must take proactive measures to support residents in the Lake Chad Basin region in developing strategies to mitigate these consequences. The survey's findings reflect a need for concerted action to develop capacity building and sensitisation to the needs of vulnerable communities in order to enhance their resilience to climate-related crises.

## THE CHALLENGES OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM FOR HUMAN INSECURITY IN THE LCB REGION

According to the analysis presented in Figure 3, both women (86%) and men (88%) respondents believe that violent extremism plays a role in human insecurity in their communities, underscoring the need to address violent extremism as a major factor contributing to human insecurity in the LCB region.

**FIGURE 3. RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT “VIOLENT EXTREMISM IS A CAUSE OF HUMAN SECURITY CHALLENGES IN YOUR COMMUNITY” (BY GENDER)**



The LCB region serves as a notable illustration of the adverse effects of climate variability. During the 1960s, Lake Chad covered an area of more than 26,000km<sup>2</sup><sup>60</sup>. However, over the years, it has experienced a significant reduction in size, dwindling to less than 1,500km<sup>2</sup> by 1997 and further diminishing to 1,350km<sup>2</sup> by 2014<sup>61</sup>. The prolonged exhaustion of the lake has had significant consequences for the nearby communities which heavily depend on it for their economic survival, resulting in a rise in violent conflict and human insecurity. According to a municipal councillor and classroom teacher in Guitte, Chad, “addressing the root causes of violent extremism should be the international community’s primary focus in the Lake Chad Basin, rather than simply fighting against it. By adopting a bottom-up approach and addressing the human security challenges, we can effectively reduce the occurrence of violent extremism<sup>62</sup>.”

“ BY ADOPTING A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH AND ADDRESSING THE HUMAN SECURITY CHALLENGES, WE CAN EFFECTIVELY REDUCE THE OCCURRENCE OF VIOLENT EXTREMISM.”

<sup>60</sup> Frimpong, O. B., Climate change and violent extremism in the Lake Chad Basin: Key issues and way forward, Wilson Center, 2020 - <sup>61</sup> Ibid - <sup>62</sup> Interview with a local authority, Guitte, Chad, January 2024.

## THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN RESILIENCE BUILDING IN THE LCB REGION

**TABLE 1: PERCEPTIONS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS REGARDING STRENGTHENING THE RESILIENCE AND HUMAN SECURITY OF VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES**

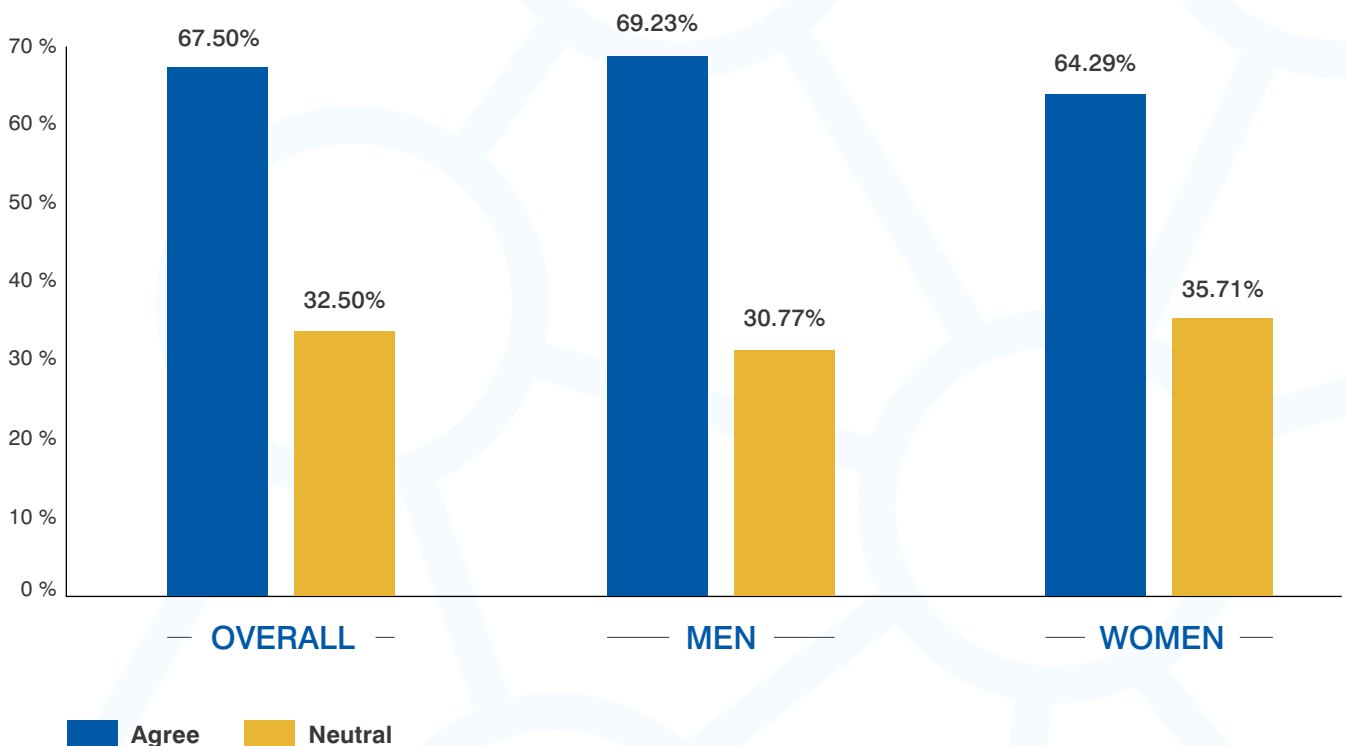
Statement	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Assistance from CSOs is helping the local community to cope with the human security challenges	Agree	38	95
	Disagree	1	2.50
	Neutral	1	2.50
Climate change is the cause of human security challenges in your community	Agree	23	57.50
	Disagree	6	15.00
	Neutral	11	27.50
Experience-sharing and lessons learnt will help improve the coping capacities of vulnerable communities to address human security in the Lake Chad Basin	Agree	35	87.50
	Neutral	5	12.50
Improved livelihood opportunities will strengthen vulnerable community's resilience to human security concerns in the local communities	Agree	39	97.50
	Neutral	1	2.50
Intercommunal dialogue can help strengthen the coping capacity in vulnerable communities	Agree	37	92.50
	Neutral	1	7.50
Scarcity of natural resources (water and pasture) is the cause of human security challenges in your community	Agree	40	100.00
The government is doing much to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities	Agree	12	30.00
	Disagree	12	30.00
	Neutral	14	35.00
	Strongly disagree	2	5.00
The local community is doing much to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities	Agree	33	82.50
	Neutral	7	17.50
Training and capacity building can help strengthen local communities to cope with the challenges of human security among vulnerable communities	Agree	27	67.50
	Neutral	13	32.50
Violent extremism is the cause of insecurity in your community	Agree	35	87.50
	Disagree	1	2.50
	Neutral	4	10.00

One of the goals of the research was to measure the perceptions of various communities of the role played by the national governments of their respective countries in establishing coping mechanisms to enhance human security in the LCB region. The data reveals that 30% of the respondents agreed that their respective governments (in Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria) had been providing support to vulnerable communities to help them cope with human security challenges (see Table 1). In general (across the four countries, and among both men and women), the findings indicate a belief that government efforts to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities are insufficient. A respondent in Nigeria gave the opinion that “many African governments, particularly those in the Lake Chad Basin region, prioritise traditional military security over a people-centred approach to national security. Without robust advocacy efforts from civil society, these governments are unlikely to shift their focus towards human security.”<sup>63</sup> Another objective of the research was to investigate the involvement of vulnerable communities in addressing human security challenges within their own countries. The findings reveal that a significant proportion of the respondents – 82.50% – acknowledged that local communities in their nations had been actively developing resilience-focused strategies to effectively tackle human security challenges (see Table 1). Consequently, the research suggests that humanitarian aid provided to local communities is more likely to directly impact human security challenges in the region than aid provided for government interventions that fail to take a human-centred approach.

## CAPACITY BUILDING AND EXPERIENCE SHARING AS MEANS OF BUILDING RESILIENCE IN THE LCB REGION

The survey also aimed to gauge the respondents’ views on the impact of capacity building in bolstering their community’s ability to tackle human security challenges, particularly among vulnerable groups. The findings reveal that 64% of women and 69% of men acknowledged the potential of training and capacity building in strengthening a local community’s resilience against these challenges (see Figure 4). This indicates that significant proportions of both genders recognise the advantages of investing in initiatives that enhance their skills and knowledge. It stresses the importance of implementing training programmes that emphasise the empowerment of vulnerable populations through community engagement, leadership development, and skills acquisition in areas such as conflict resolution, disaster preparedness, and human rights advocacy. Consequently, stakeholders must commit resources and collaborate to enhance the capacity of vulnerable communities in the LCB region and facilitate the exchange of experiences.

**FIGURE 4. RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT “TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING CAN HELP LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO COPE WITH THE CHALLENGES OF HUMAN SECURITY” (OVERALL AND BY GENDER)**



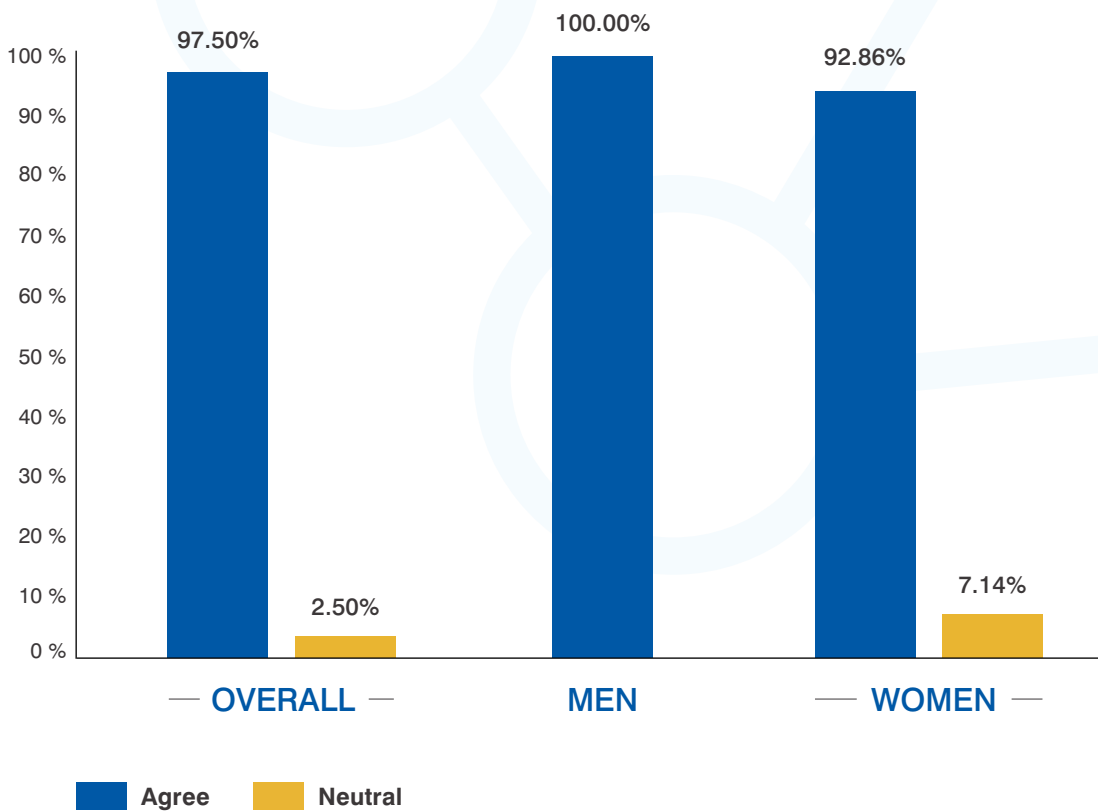
<sup>63</sup> Interview with a woman fisher, Schiwari, Nigeria, January 2024

## ENHANCING LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES TO OVERCOME HUMAN INSECURITY IN THE LCB REGION

Figure 5 shows the survey's outcomes regarding the influence of enhanced livelihood opportunities on the resilience of vulnerable communities in local areas. According to the findings, 93% of women agreed with the statement, while 7% remained neutral. Conversely, all the male respondents (100%) agreed with the statement. The overall data demonstrate that 97.50% of the respondents agreed with the statement, while only 2.50% remained neutral.

93% OF WOMEN  
AGREED WITH THE  
STATEMENT, WHILE 7%  
REMAINED NEUTRAL

**FIGURE 5.** RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT “IMPROVED LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES WILL STRENGTHEN VULNERABLE LOCAL COMMUNITIES’ RESILIENCE TO HUMAN SECURITY CONCERNS” (OVERALL AND BY GENDER)



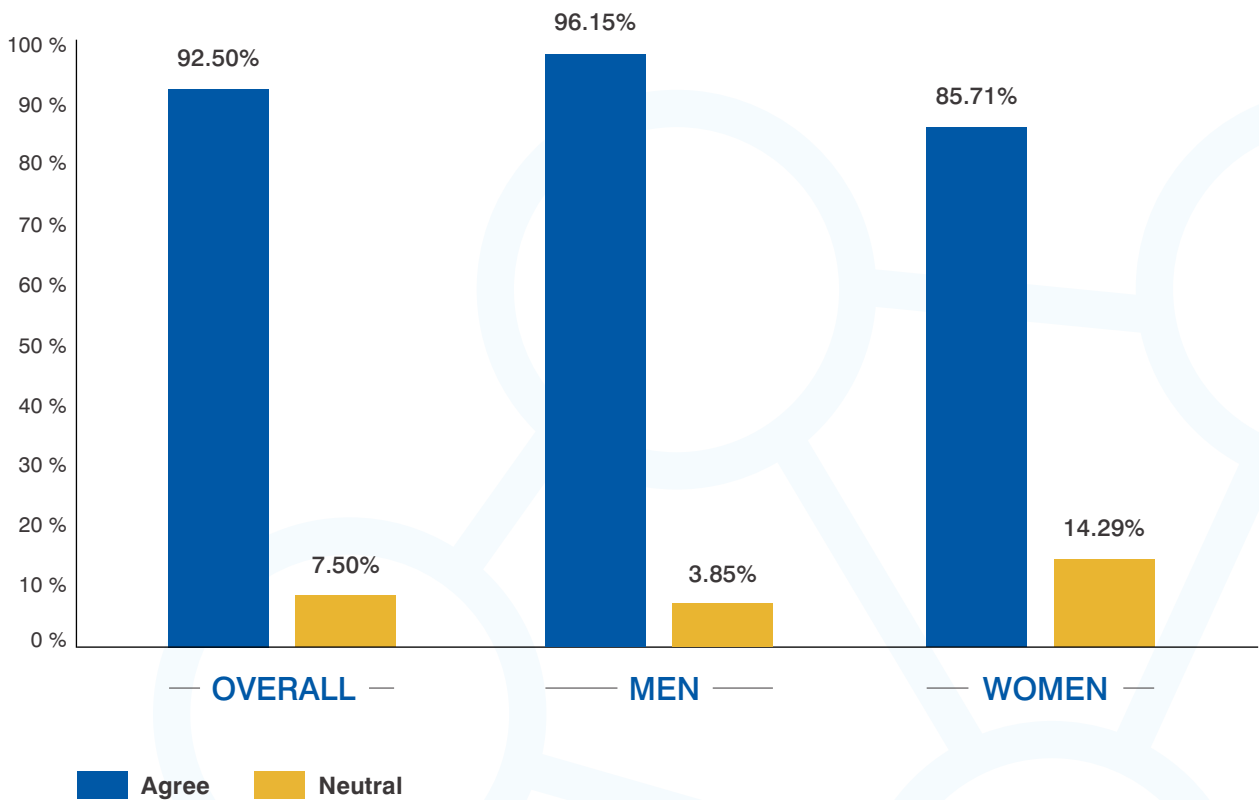
These results indicate a substantial level of agreement between women and men regarding the potential for improved livelihood opportunities to bolster the resilience of vulnerable communities in the face of human security concerns.

## THE USE OF INTERCOMMUNAL DIALOGUE TO STRENGTHEN COPING CAPACITY IN VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

Figure 6 shows the survey respondents' perceptions of whether intercommunal dialogue can enhance the resilience of vulnerable communities. The findings reveal that significant majorities of women (85.71%) and men (96.15%) believe that intercommunal dialogue can indeed strengthen the coping capacity in vulnerable communities, with 14.29% of women and 3.85% of men expressing neutrality towards this concept.

**WOMEN (85.71%) AND MEN (96.15%) BELIEVE THAT INTERCOMMUNAL DIALOGUE CAN INDEED STRENGTHEN THE COPING CAPACITY IN VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES**

**FIGURE 6.** RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT “INTERCOMMUNAL DIALOGUE CAN HELP TO STRENGTHEN THE COPING CAPACITY IN VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES” (OVERALL AND BY GENDER)

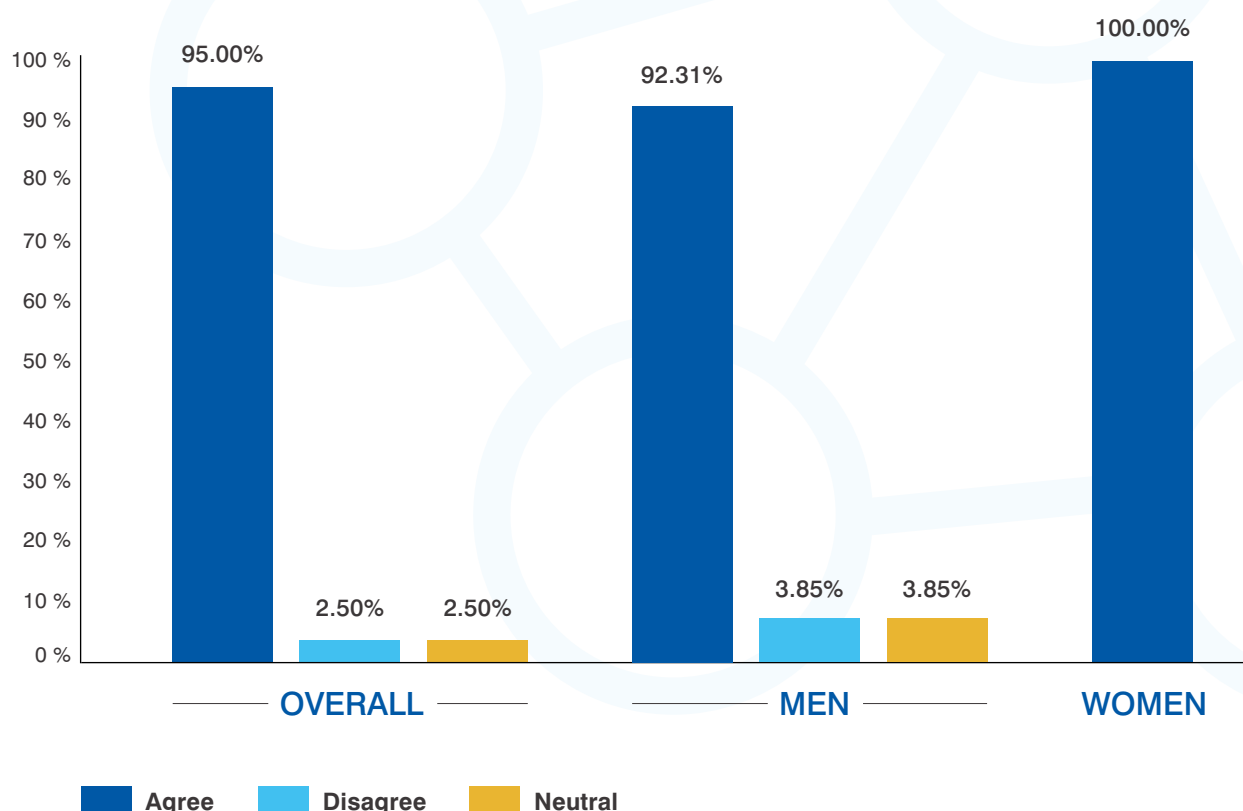


Overall, 92.50% of the respondents considered that intercommunal dialogue could contribute to enhancing the coping capacity of vulnerable communities within the LCB region.

## THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN ADVANCING HUMAN SECURITY IN THE LCB REGION

The primary objective of the research was to examine the perspectives of marginalised individuals in the four nations concerning the role played by civil society organisations (CSOs) in advancing human security in LCB communities. The findings reveal that 95% of the survey respondents agreed that CSOs have made substantial contributions in supporting vulnerable communities across the four countries in the LCB region to address and alleviate human security issues, while 2.5% disagreed and another 2.5% were neutral (Figure 7). The distribution of opinions by gender indicates unanimous agreement among female respondents and a 92% agreement rate among male respondents. Additionally, small percentages of male respondents (4% in each case) expressed neutrality or disagreed with the statement (see Figure 7).

**FIGURE 7. RESPONSES TO THE STATEMENT “ASSISTANCE FROM CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IS HELPING THE LOCAL COMMUNITY TO COPE WITH HUMAN SECURITY CHALLENGES” (OVERALL AND BY GENDER)**



The findings indicate that men and women residing in the vulnerable communities of the four countries studied agree that CSOs have been instrumental in addressing human security challenges in the region. This positive perception highlights the unity and collaboration that exists within the community and emphasises the importance of engaging local communities in addressing their security challenges. A civil society actor in Mora, Cameroon, stressed the critical role that CSOs play in complementing government efforts towards peace and security<sup>64</sup>. He mentioned the importance of CSOs in anticipating, preventing, and resolving conflicts thanks to their expertise and their close work with communities. This collaborative approach is already being implemented in the LCB region to support vulnerable communities in overcoming their challenges. Therefore, policymakers and other stakeholders should collaborate closely with CSOs to mitigate the human security challenges faced by these vulnerable communities.

**THIS POSITIVE PERCEPTION HIGHLIGHTS THE UNITY AND COLLABORATION THAT EXISTS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY AND EMPHASISES THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGING LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN ADDRESSING THEIR SECURITY CHALLENGES**

<sup>64</sup> Interview with a local authority, Guitte, Chad, January 2024.

## BUILD LOCAL RESILIENCE THROUGH MULTI-FACTOR CAPACITY BUILDING

To ensure a comprehensive approach that prioritises individuals, it is crucial to enhance resilience by bolstering coping capacities and minimising vulnerabilities. It is imperative to focus on enhancing four distinct capacities that enable communities to increase their resilience to various shocks and pressures:

- 1• The first is absorptive capacity, which is the ability to proactively undertake shielding and defensive measures, as well as effectively managing and adapting to unexpected disruptions and pressures, such as by implementing early harvesting strategies.
- 2• The second capacity is the crucial ability to make deliberate small amendments to how we live in preparation for or in reaction to a changing environment. Examples include efforts to diversify income sources, promoting the use of drought-resistant seeds, mapping out agro-ecological zones, and offering specialised weather- and climate-related services for agriculture.
- 3• The third capacity is the ability to deliberately bring about significant changes aimed at mitigating or eliminating the underlying factors that contribute to risk, vulnerability, poverty, and inequality, including the reduction of political marginalisation.
- 4• The fourth capacity is the enhancement of decision-making abilities in women's and youth groups. This is achieved through the development of leadership capacity, which encompasses a blend of professional expertise and life skills. This holistic approach aims to empower individuals by equipping them with the necessary tools to make informed decisions in various aspects of their lives. By combining professional and life skills, women's and youth groups can strengthen their decision-making powers and effectively navigate the challenges they encounter.



To fully leverage absorptive capacities, it is imperative to provide sustained assistance that prioritises resilience, recovery, and development in the medium and long term. Simultaneously, efforts should be made to enhance adaptive and transformative capacities.

## ENHANCE LOCAL AGENCY THROUGH TARGETED AID AND ASSET RESTORATION

Strengthening the coping capacities of individuals is a crucial way of bolstering community resilience. In communities where factors of instability persist, such as insecurity and a lack of support from local authorities, the main priority should be to help restore people's means of living and ensure the availability of essential social services, specifically focusing on education, healthcare, water, sanitation, energy, and agro-meteorological information. This type of aid aims to fortify resilience against unforeseen shocks and facilitate recovery; by restoring social unity and community leadership, it will permit the sustainable handling and utilisation of valuable resources such as arable land, pasture, and aquatic resources in the LCB region. In this regard, it will be indispensable to restore access to assets that contribute to increased productivity, augment the production of goods and the provision of services, create job prospects, and enhance earnings.

The data gathered from this research suggest that it may be helpful to develop strategies to address the challenges faced by women in accessing and owning land, such as enabling them to work together with local and traditional leaders to find ways to improve access to land and restock livestock. These efforts should particularly target IDPs and returnees. Additionally, providing agricultural inputs such as seeds and livestock can enhance productivity. Short-term employment opportunities through cash-for-work initiatives can also be implemented to create income-generating activities. Establishing social safety nets, such as cash transfers, can support vulnerable populations. Furthermore, providing weather-

and climate-related services, such as predicting severe hydrometeorological events and offering customised data for agriculture, livestock, and fisheries, can help people to make well-informed choices. Restoring access to essential services (such as delivery systems) and rehabilitating small community infrastructure is crucial. Lastly, it is essential to address the specific needs of vulnerable women as expressed by the women themselves, ensuring that their voices are heard, and their concerns are adequately addressed.

There is a need to put in place programmes that strive to open up opportunities beyond agriculture and encourage the development of fresh and alternative economic opportunities. Stakeholders and development partners should provide support for agro-processing and to enhance the value of the commodities produced by arable farming, animal husbandry, and fishing<sup>65</sup>. Additionally, bio-enterprises should be implemented within urban settings and technology should be used to connect stakeholders and boost marketing opportunities for the goods and services produced by the vulnerable communities in the LCB region. Various factors have diminished income and asset levels, including dependence on inefficient pastoralism and farming practices, the depletion of arable land resources, inefficient distribution channels, insufficient physical and financial resources, and limited entrepreneurial capacity<sup>66</sup>. These factors ultimately undermine resilience.

## FACILITATE RECONCILIATION AND SOCIAL COHESION

The social fabric in the LCB region has been severely disrupted by the crisis, primarily due to the continuing infringement of human rights, such as instances of sexual and gender-related violence. To facilitate the peaceful reintegration of affected individuals into society, it will be imperative to implement comprehensive reconciliation programmes and establish mechanisms for justice, particularly for those seeking redress. It should be acknowledged that not all individuals may be able to return to their communities of origin, which therefore necessitates alternative solutions for their reintegration.

Regrettably, certain members of society, particularly women, girls, and boys, face stigmatisation as a result of treatment they have been subjected to, and roles they may have been required to fulfil by warring factions in the vulnerable communities in the LCB region. This includes victims of rape, as well as individuals who have been required to cook for the extremists or act as errand boys, spouses, or spies. This exacerbates the challenges these individuals face in rebuilding their lives and reintegrating into society.

Furthermore, conflicts often arise when the land and other resources that people rely on for their livelihoods are threatened, regardless of whether this threat is real or perceived. This is an example of the complex dynamics that are fuelling the continuation of conflict in the LCB region. Addressing these underlying issues and promoting sustainable resource management will be crucial in promoting lasting peace and stability within the region.

Securing the rights of individuals to land ownership has the potential to make a direct contribution to the process of peacebuilding, especially among vulnerable communities in the LCB region. It is crucial to identify sustainable, strategic, and comprehensive solutions that take into account the socio-cultural differences between the impacted communities, including IDPs, refugees, and residents. By ensuring that non-displaced populations receive an equal level of services, the risk of conflict and alienation can be reduced. To cultivate trust and bridge gaps between marginalised communities and other stakeholders (such as donors, the governments of member states, and the African Union), it is essential to ensure that dialogue processes are inclusive, involving multiple actors<sup>67</sup>. This is particularly important for establishing a constructive relationship between local authorities and governments, on the one hand, and communities, on the other, as it will help to address feelings of abandonment and the negative impacts of repressive security measures.

**IT SHOULD BE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT NOT ALL INDIVIDUALS MAY BE ABLE TO RETURN TO THEIR COMMUNITIES OF ORIGIN, WHICH THEREFORE NECESSITATES ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR THEIR REINTEGRATION.**

<sup>65</sup> Sharma, H. K., and Kumar, N., *Agro Processing: Scope and Importance*, in H. K. Sharma and N. Kumar (eds), *Agro-Processing and Food Engineering*, Singapore, Springer, 2022, pp. 1–22. <sup>66</sup> Gatdet, C., *The pastoralism system in South-Western Ethiopia: The practices, constraints, and determinants in Itang Special district, Gambella Region*, *Cogent Food & Agriculture*, 9 (2), 2023, 2273627. <sup>67</sup> UNDP, *Conflict Analysis in the Lake Chad Basin*, op. cit.

Local communities must be consulted on the best way to reintegrate individuals. Ideally, initiatives that foster social solidarity and peacebuilding should be created and executed at the regional level – or, at the very least, include regional consultations. These programmes should also incorporate key initiatives within the local community. The first Lake Chad Basin Governors’ Forum, which took place in Maiduguri, Nigeria, in 2016 provided an opportunity to exchange knowledge and experiences regarding reintegration, reconciliation processes, and social cohesion. The gathering aimed to establish regional collaboration around stabilisation, peacebuilding, and sustainable development efforts in the area affected by Boko Haram<sup>68</sup>. Various topics concerning the region were discussed, and potential solutions were explored. The 150 participants pledged to use the Governors’ Forum as a means for active involvement<sup>69</sup>.

Efforts towards social unity and harmony must also encompass both displaced persons and host communities, as well as individuals who have left violent extremist groups. Given the prevalence in the LCB region of people who have experienced trauma, it is essential to include psychosocial counselling services as part of social cohesion and reconciliation efforts.

## ADOPT AN INTEGRATED TRANSBOUNDARY STRATEGY FOR PRESERVING BIODIVERSITY

IT IS THEREFORE CRUCIAL TO ADOPT AN INTEGRATED TRANSBOUNDARY STRATEGY FOR PRESERVING BIODIVERSITY, PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE WATER AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, AND FOSTERING THE GROWTH OF NEIGHBOURHOODS.

The UN Security Council is cognisant of the negative consequences of climate change and environmental deterioration – such as insufficient access to water, land degradation, and lack of access to sufficient and nutritious food – on the stability of the LCB region<sup>70</sup>. It is therefore crucial to adopt an integrated transboundary strategy for preserving biodiversity, promoting sustainable water and natural resource management, and fostering the growth of neighbourhoods. The ongoing conflict in the LCB region has played a significant role in the further deterioration of natural resources that have already been made vulnerable by climate change<sup>71</sup>.

The existence of asylum seekers and IDPs in a particular area puts additional strain on local livelihoods. To ensure recovery and resilience in the aftermath of a crisis, it is crucial to consider both environmental protection and livelihood considerations during emergency interventions. A study conducted by the LCBC reveals that the degradation of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems in the LCB region is primarily being caused by insufficient investment in the management of biological resources, insufficient understanding of environmental issues, and unpredictable economic and political circumstances<sup>72</sup>. Therefore, the LCBC Member States and their allies must place the highest level of importance on the enhancement of natural resource management and investments aimed at rehabilitating degraded land. This can be achieved through initiatives such as reopening water channels, planting trees, and implementing improved agronomic practices.

In order to tackle the obstacles raised by climate variability, it is crucial to implement a strategy that assists in directing efforts to shift agri-food systems towards environmentally friendly and climate-resilient practices. Additionally, it is essential to improve weather- and climate-related services in the region, so as to provide tailored and easily understandable information and services to end users<sup>73</sup>. These measures will not only help to mitigate hydrometeorological risks, but also enable communities to tackle the adverse effects of climate fluctuations<sup>74</sup>. By encouraging a shift towards sustainable farming practices, it will be possible to effectively support the most vulnerable populations and offer numerous options to address the structural weaknesses and obstacles faced in the LCB region. These solutions encompass various elements, including resolving conflicts within communities, ensuring financial and employment sustainability, rehabilitating natural resources to combat climate change, and promoting food and nutritional diversity<sup>75</sup>.

The findings from this research suggest that, in order to enhance resilience in the LCB region, it is crucial to address cross-cutting themes that specifically target the most vulnerable individuals, such as IDPs and refugees, as well as host communities. It is essential to prioritise the well-being of adolescent girls and youth, as they are particularly vulnerable in every community. It is imperative to ensure that efforts are undertaken in a manner that does not further harm a population or increase its vulnerability. Within the LCB region, programmes should address the timing and processes involved in the return of displaced individuals to their homes, the potential risks of humanitarian dependency, and concerns regarding land allocation.

<sup>68</sup> UNDP, *Lake Chad Basin Governors’ Forum for Regional Cooperation on Stabilization, Peacebuilding, and Sustainable Development in the region affected by Boko Haram*, UNDP, 10 July 2018. - <sup>69</sup> Ibid - <sup>70</sup> UN, *With Climate Crisis Generating Growing Threats to Global Peace, Security Council Must Ramp Up Efforts, Lessen Risk of Conflicts, Speakers Stress in Open Debate*, UN, 13 June 2023. - <sup>71</sup> Ibid - <sup>72</sup> Ndimiele, P. E. et al., *Fostering international and trans-boundary cooperation in the management of Lake Chad fisheries, wildlife and flora: The role of a trans-boundary Ramsar conservation area, Aquatic Living Resources*, 37 (6), 2024. - <sup>73</sup> *A Blueprint for Strengthening Food System Resilience in West Africa: Regional Priority Intervention Areas*, World Bank and FAO, 2021. - <sup>74</sup> Chitadze, N. (ed.), *World politics and the challenges for international security*, Hershey, PA, IGI Global, 2022. - <sup>75</sup> Ibid

For IDPs and refugees, it is crucial to prioritise sustainable solutions. However, any returns must be voluntary and based on plausible and trustworthy reports of the situation in the potential returnees' home territory. This guarantees that displaced communities will have the necessary information to make informed decisions regarding their return to their homes. Furthermore, proper preparation is required for the designated return area to welcome back the returnees. This includes ensuring protection, restoring essential services, reinstating governmental management at the local level, and providing livelihood opportunities. Failing to meet these fundamental conditions will only lead to further displacement, as a secondary or tertiary consequence. Until these conditions are met, there are various opportunities to support medium-term strategies aimed at reducing the vulnerability of displaced populations and enhancing their resilience, particularly in terms of livelihoods.

Ultimately, the essence of these efforts lies in strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities to human security shocks, by reinstating individuals' and organisations' sense of empowerment and self-worth, as well as their capacity to adjust to evolving situations.

## 4

## CONCLUSION

The human security crises in the LCB region have presented both significant challenges and potential opportunities for various actors, including both state and non-state entities, to address a range of concerns. These challenges, which include climate change complexities, intercommunity conflicts, and violent extremism, were not entirely new but have been exacerbated by unprecedented occurrences in the LCB region. It is imperative to enhance the alignment between political determination and the utilisation of public funds for human security initiatives in the LCB region. CSOs have a significant role to play as intermediaries for citizen engagement and deliberation, thereby helping citizens cope with matters that affect them. Moreover, CSOs serve as a crucial voice that holds government officials accountable and ensures transparency in policy execution in affected communities. In addition, community leaders must prioritise and amplify collective needs rather than focusing solely on their own individual requirements. This paper has examined the implications of these challenges for vulnerable communities, as well as the ability of those communities to cope with and adapt to them. Collaboration between impacted communities, states, regional and international actors, civil society groups, and the private sector is essential for achieving stability, recovery, and resilience in the LCB region through the exchange of experiences and lessons learnt<sup>76</sup>.

**THESE CHALLENGES, WHICH INCLUDE CLIMATE CHANGE COMPLEXITIES, INTERCOMMUNITY CONFLICTS, AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM, WERE NOT ENTIRELY NEW BUT HAVE BEEN EXACERBATED BY UNPRECEDENTED OCCURRENCES IN THE LCB REGION.**

<sup>76</sup> UNDP, Conflict Analysis in the Lake Chad Basin, op. cit.

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Graphic design: Studio Ctrl A

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Funded by the European Union

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Implemented by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the REcAP Network project has been designed to respond to capacity gaps and limitations to collaboration between peacebuilding experts, policymakers and practitioners and to improve the impact, progress, and sustainability of peacebuilding research, policy and practice.

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