Country Risk and Vulnerability Assessment

BENIN

Table of Contents

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
AfDB	African Development Bank
AU	African Union
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CPIA	Country Policy and Institutional Assessment
CRA	Conflict Risk Assessment
CRVA	Country Risk and Vulnerability Assessment
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DFID	United Kingdom Department for International Development
DPA	ECOWAS Directorate of Political Affairs
DPKRS	ECOWAS Directorate of Peacekeeping & Regional Security
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Monitoring Group
ECOWARN	ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Network
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECPF	ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework
EWD	ECOWAS Directorate of Early Warning
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGM/C	Female genital mutilation/cutting
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDP	Gross domestic product
GIS	Geographic Information System
GPI	Gender parity index
GSDRC	Governance and Social Development Resource Centre
ICAF	Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IFIs	International financial institutions
ILO	International Labor Organization
IOF	International Organisation de la Francophonie
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IncReps	ECOWARN's Incident Reports
KII	Key Informant Interview
LEPI	Liste Electorale Permanente Informatisée
MEND	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RAVIP	Recensement Administratif à Vocation d'Identification de la Population
REWARD	Reacting to Early Warning and Response Data in West Africa
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SD	Standard Deviation
SitReps	ECOWARN Situation Reports
SNA	Stakeholder Network Analysis
UN	United Nations

USAID   United States Agency for International Development
WTO   World Trade Organization

Message from the President of the ECOWAS Commission

The 15 Member-States of the ECOWAS Community represent a thriving region of the world, with a population of approximately 366 million and a rich human and topographical diversity. From the coastline to the mountain peaks of Fouta Djallon, across the Sahara and the mangroves of the Niger Delta, ECOWAS is home to diverse families, communities, and nations.

Over the last decade, the region has witnessed significant progress in lifting the standard of living for millions. However, along with the richness of natural resources, human capital and great opportunity, there are also challenges to contend with such as natural disasters, pandemics, ethno-sectarian tensions, and security threats caused by extremism and terrorism.

Global developments and changes such as advances in technology, human migration and climate change, have added new levels of complexity, presenting new challenges for strategic planning and preparedness as we look ahead to the future.

This is where Early Warning plays a critical role in helping ECOWAS to understand the changing dynamics so as to strengthen decision making and early response at the regional and national levels. The Country Risk and Vulnerability Assessments (CRVAs) serve as an important resource in this regard. These reports are useful for strengthening the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework action plans as well as to serve as reference materials for an in-depth understanding of the human security dynamics in our Member States, and for our partners across the region.

I therefore invite national stakeholders, all ECOWAS institutions and our partners to make use of these reports for the entrenchment of peace and progress for the benefit of the Citizens of ECOWAS.

Jean-Claude Brou
President of the ECOWAS Commission

Statement from the Vice President of the ECOWAS Commission

ECOWAS takes pride in finalizing this CRVA report which aims to identify structural vulnerabilities, event driven risks and existing resilience factors in each Member State of the Community. Indeed, this is a remarkable feat towards boosting the African Peace and Security Architecture of the African Union, with ECOWAS setting the pace for the development of an African-owned data set that can be tapped into to enhance human security analysis and accurate forecasting to assist policymakers to make informed decisions on pressing issues in the region. This information can be used as a baseline for ECOWAS and its partners to inform early warning and response efforts, particularly in this time when Early Warning and Response Mechanism is being deployed at the National level.

The CRVA research leverages ECOWARN data—gathered by Field Monitors—to establish a country baseline for monitoring patterns and trends across human security pillars. By comparing ECOWARN data to other data sets, and complementing quantitative data with qualitative findings, the assessments also help the Early Warning Directorate of ECOWAS to gather more robust data that is rich, reliable and empirical. The resulting findings are more representative in terms of geography, time, and theme for each country and needs to be updated periodically.

ECOWAS will consolidate this achievement by applying the knowledge and skills embodied in the CRVA Manual. My conviction for this emanates from the fact that the training of all EWD staff in the development of the CRVA Index, which marks the climax of transfer of knowledge and skills from the USAID REWARD technical staff to ECOWAS, will allow ECOWAS to independently conduct future CRVAs. Already, the EWD has initiated a process to put to practice the defined methodological framework to conduct Regional Risk and Resilience Assessment in the Lake Chad Basin, thereby serving as the first pillar in implementing the decision of the joint ECOWAS and Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) to engage communities in peacebuilding processes.

We hope the Member States of our Community take ownership of this report and anchor development and peace initiatives upon it, in addressing the risks and vulnerabilities in their communities. As we decentralize Early Warning and Response to the ECOWAS countries, the Commission stands ready to accompany each Member States in the implementation of the actionable recommendations embodied in the CRVA report.

Finda Koroma
Vice President, ECOWAS Commission

Preface

The ECOWAS Early Warning Directorate has made giant strides in the practice of data driven early warning, through the qualitative and quantitative analysis of incidents and situations from multiple sources, with the added benefit of original data generated through the ECOWARN system. Indeed, the Center's state-of-the-art technological tools places it at a vantage position to monitor and analyze risks and vulnerabilities in the ECOWAS region, cutting across the key areas of human security.

ECOWAS has played, and continues to play, a critical role in the monitoring of threats to human security across the region including the Sahelo-Saharan, Mano River, Gulf of Guinea, Lake Chad and Senegambia conflict systems to improve response for the prevention and management of conflict escalation.

Beyond a narrow focus on violent conflict alone, and consistent with its mandate to promote the socioeconomic and political integration of the sub-region, ECOWAS applies a human security lens with a view towards enhancing the well-being of the population in accordance with the ECOWAS Vision 2020. Thus, this report highlights risks, structural vulnerabilities and resilience factors across five dimensions (demographic, economic, security, governance and rule of law) at the national and sub-national levels.

Each CRVA report represents a myriad of perspectives and experiences from affected stakeholders including community leaders, civil society, administrative officials, security agents, traditional and religious leaders, just to mention a few. In this way, the CRVA report serves as a strategic document to provide an overview of the human security challenges in each ECOWAS member state as well as the social and institutional resilience factors that can help manage those challenges.

We hope that this report will be useful for strategic planning in addressing issues of human security as well as to provide insights to a multitude of stakeholders including policy and decision makers in the public and private sectors for conflict-sensitive engagement within the region.

Dr. Abdou Lat Gueye
Director, ECOWAS Early Warning

Executive Summary

From 2016 to 2019, ECOWAS collected quantitative and qualitative data in Benin to better understand the structural vulnerabilities that exist, and how those vulnerabilities affect the everyday lives of individuals and communities. This research was done in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Reacting to Early Warning and Response Data in West Africa (REWARD) project, as part of a broader assessment of the entire West African region. As part of this process, a series of focus group discussions and interviews were conducted in December 2017 in Benin to contextualize the findings and to learn more about resilience factors that mitigate risk and promote human security. The purpose of this report is to summarize these insights and perspectives, so that national stakeholders can build on their successes, and also to serve as a baseline for ECOWAS's monitoring of patterns and trends. The report provides an overview of national and subnational vulnerabilities, risks, and resilience factors, as well as conclusions and recommendations.

The CRVA was conducted by ECOWAS to update and expand upon the Conflict Risk Assessment (CRA) 2013-2014 country reports. To better understand the sub-national patterns and trends, the research design began with a desktop study involving a social network analysis based on a survey of peace and security actors in the country and a scoping of experts to be consulted during the fieldwork. This was followed by a Geographic Information System (GIS) analysis of patterns and trends in escalation dynamics and a quantitative analysis of relative structural vulnerabilities by country and human security pillar.

In Benin, moderate levels of vulnerability were found in Economics/Resources, Politics / Governance, and Population/Demographics, while lower levels of vulnerability were found in Rule of Law and Security.

Challenges included dependence on the Nigerian economy, youth unemployment, economic marginalization of women, regional disparities in infrastructure and service provision, environmental degradation, and demographic and migration pressures. Perceptions of corruption, bias toward the wealthy and politically connected within the justice system, controversies over recent political and economic reforms, as well as criminality and farmer-herder conflicts were also identified as negatively impacting human security in Benin.

However, there were strong social and institutional resilience factors for effective dispute resolution and peacebuilding in Benin. NGOs, civil society organizations, women's groups, and the media have played critical roles in awareness-raising, advocacy and peacebuilding initiatives. Religious leaders, council of elders, and other leaders have also proven effective in mitigating risks and vulnerabilities identified in this report. Non-state security actors such as neighborhood watch groups were viewed as contributing positively to security in the country. Finally, in a challenging economic environment, the Nigerian market and the informal sector have proven vital in securing livelihoods.

The following report aims to provide an overview so that regional and national stakeholders can have a clear picture of the challenges faced by the country, as well as the capacities that can be leveraged and built upon for the promotion of sustainable human security in Benin.

Though risk/incident data naturally fluctuates and may therefore have changed since the publication of this report, the structural vulnerabilities are reflective of medium- and long-term trends. These reports focus on the identification of structural vulnerabilities and resiliencies, and how they may impact upon events and developments as they occur.

Introduction

Research Process

The CRVA assesses structural vulnerabilities, event-driven risks, and social and institutional resilience factors according to five human security pillars as identified by ECOWAS in a 2016 scoping paper.[1] The pillars are: 1) Economics and Resources, 2) Politics and Governance, 3) Population and Demographics, 4) Rule of Law, and 5) Security. Findings in this report describe how risks flow from vulnerabilities in the context of Benin both within and across the five pillars. In recognition of the fact that violent conflict has underlying social, economic, political, and security drivers but expresses itself differently depending on the context, a holistic human security framework was used in this assessment, and will be used for the CRVAs in all ECOWAS member states. Furthermore, the analysis also breaks out gender considerations and external factors as cross-cutting issues that need to be understood for effective early warning and response.[2]

As shown in the graphic below, the research was conducted in three main phases: Desktop Study, Field Research, and Analysis and Validation.

Phase 1: Desktop Study

The Desktop Study included a preliminary assessment of structural vulnerabilities, event-driven risks, and social and institutional resilience factors.

For the assessment of structural vulnerabilities, the research used data from dozens of sources, including ECOWARN Situation Reports (SitReps). Drawing on these pre-existing data sets,[3] a CRVA Index was created to measure the relative levels of vulnerability across five human security dimensions in Benin.

Desktop Study | Field Research | Analysis/ Validation

Stakeholder Mapping Survey — Quantitative Baseline Study — Country Scoping Workshop — Field Research — Participatory Analysis — CRVA Report and Follow-up — Joint analysis and planning

---
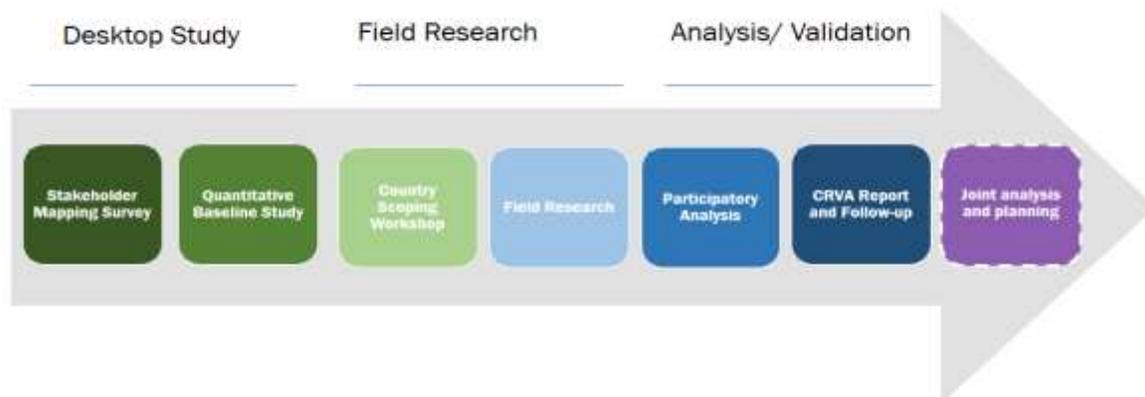
[1] The EWD Scoping Paper was developed by ECOWAS to help inform the CRVA process, with the human security pillars identified based on best practice approaches such as ECOWARN guidelines and the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID) framework.
[2] EWD Scoping Paper on "Risk Assessment of Five ECOWAS Pilot Countries: Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau, and Burkina Faso"
[3] Data sources used in the development of the CRVA Index include Global Integrity, the Economist Intelligence Unit, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Transparency International, Freedom House, Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Database, World Bank, the Center for Security Studies ETH Zurich, Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index, Political Terror Scale, United Nations Refugee Agency, Uppsala University, UN Statistics, and Institute for Economics and Peace.

For the assessment of event-driven risks, event data, including from ECOWARN's Incident Reports (IncReps), was triangulated against data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) to estimate the locations and type of conflict issues at the sub-national level over time. Using multiple sources allowed for cross-validation, the filling of gaps, and the ability to identify trends in indicators and sub-indicators using queries and key word searches.

For the assessment of social and institutional resilience factors, a survey was deployed to all of ECOWAS's in-country contacts to learn more about the peace and security actors working to manage and reduce risks and vulnerabilities in the country. Respondents (including representatives of religious institutions, public sector actors, civil society, youth groups, and development actors, among others) were also asked to name organizations that they have partnered with in the last two years on issues of peace and security. Data was then uploaded to a Stakeholder Network Map for quantitative analysis and to identify leverage points, spheres of influence, and social capital. Based on this analysis, key technical experts were identified and were contacted for the next phase of the research.

Phase 2: Field Research

The Field Research began with a scoping workshop in Cotonou. Using the Stakeholder Network Map, highly-networked technical experts were convened in a workshop to validate the initial desktop findings and suggest a way forward for the qualitative analysis in the field. The Scoping Workshop was also used to tailor and sensitize the broader research questions and the Key Informant Interview (KII) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) instruments and questionnaires based on local context. Additionally, the Scoping Workshop also served to attain references and contacts for key actors and stakeholders in the field who would be consulted over the course of the next two weeks during the KIIs and FGDs. Thus, the desktop study

phase informed the research questions that needed further context and validation in the field, as well as the sample of respondents to be engaged (what was asked, where, and to whom).

A team of experts and researchers then conducted an in-country assessment between December 4 and December 13, 2017 with participants from the departments of Alibori, Borgou, Littoral and Plateau. The team traveled to the various hotspots identified in the desktop study and validated in the Scoping Workshop to interview key stakeholders affected by violence and with knowledge of local context and capacities. This team included representatives from the ECOWAS Directorates of Early Warning (EWD) and Political Affairs (DPA), as well as participants from USAID and affiliated experts. The KIIs and FGDs conducted during this in-country assessment collected qualitative data and information regarding various perspectives on structural vulnerabilities, event-driven risk factors, and social and institutional resilience factors relating to the different conflict issues across the country. These transcripts have been collated, streamlined to reduce repetition and vagueness, and categorized for analysis and prioritization during Phase 3.

Phase 3: Analysis and Validation

After the quantitative, GIS, and survey data was validated and contextualized in the field, and the qualitative data was collected, organized and summarized, this report was drafted and was then validated by ECOWAS and USAID. This report will serve as a baseline and resource for more targeted early warning products and analysis/planning towards strategic and operational prevention of human insecurity within the country of Benin as well as associated conflict systems more broadly.

Terminology and Conceptual Definitions

In this CRVA report:

"Vulnerability" is defined as any structural factor that has the potential to be a conflict driver. These can include such things as youth unemployment, poverty, inequality, climate, patronage, demographic factors, etc.

"Risk" is defined as any event-driven factor that has the potential to be a conflict trigger. Risk factors can include specific controversies or events such as disasters or elections that may occur.

"Resilience" is defined as any social or institutional factor that has the potential to help mitigate or manage risks and vulnerabilities. These include political, cultural, and community leadership with significant social capital to influence conflict dynamics in a constructive way, including public sector, private sector, religious institutions, civil society, opinion leaders, development workers, etc. Resilience factors can include institutions that play a stabilizing role in the short, medium, or longer term.

The CRVA analysis was conducted according to the framework depicted in the figure below, whereby event-driven risk factors flow out of the structural vulnerabilities (per the red downward arrow) while social and institutional resilience factors mitigate and prevent those risks and vulnerabilities (per the green upward arrow).

For ECOWAS, this framework is useful in that it is aligned with the existing ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF), which is a strategic tool to strengthen the human security architecture in West Africa. Key to the ECPF are the categories of *"Operational Prevention,"* or measures applicable in the face of crisis, and *"Structural Prevention,"* or measures that ensure that crises do not arise or re-occur. The CRVA framework is aligned with the ECPF such that identified Vulnerability Factors are to be mitigated by Structural Prevention measures, and Risk Factors are to be mitigated by Operational Prevention measures. This alignment is important for the utility and actionability of this report by users in West Africa.

Economics and Resources	Population and Demographics	Politics and Governance	Security	Rule of Law
Structural and Contextual Vulnerability Factors				
Event-Driven Risk Factors				
Social and Institutional Resilience Factors				

Literature Review

A Human-Centric Approach to Early Warning

In academic literature, the human security lens to conflict early warning is a change from the more state-centric approaches that were in vogue throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Historically, early warning was focused on prevention and mitigation of conflict between states. In the post-Cold War period with a surge in intra-state conflict, early warning was focused on identifying the drivers and impacts of civil conflict on states. At that time, analysis focused on terminology of state "collapse" and "failure," emphasizing impacts to neighboring countries or regions, and perpetuating a comparative paradigm of poverty and limited economic growth and conflict in contrast to more developed countries.[4]

However, as a more interconnected human and global security approach emerged in the 2000s, conceptions of state fragility and conflict analysis evolved in both development aid and policy approaches. As the Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC) describes, "At a very broad level, fragility is the result of a dynamic interplay between internal factors (including violent conflict, poverty, economic and structural conditions, weak formal institutions), and external factors (including international political economy, regional and global insecurity)."[5] While not discounting the role of the state as a key vehicle for managing and preventing conflict, the human-centric approach looks first and foremost at the impact of demographic, economic, political, and security conflict drivers on individuals and communities as well as the role that a wide variety of social and
institutional factors play in preventing conflict. Thus, the human security framework provides a holistic approach to understanding different threats that affect individuals' lives, whether this is through conflict, health, food, environment, or other social, political or economic factors.

The United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security outlines a human-centric approach to security in five principles: 1) *People-centered*, with a focus on protecting basic human freedoms; 2) *Multi-sectoral*, encompassing a broad understanding of threats and causes of insecurity; 3) *Comprehensive*, taking into account different types of individuals' security from economic to social; 4) *Context-specific,* emphasizing the need to analyze specific conflict contexts and root causes of insecurity; and 5) *Prevention-oriented,* highlighting locally tailored risk prevention and mitigation measures through early warning mechanisms.[6] This focus on cross-cutting issues and situation-specific analysis and response are central to the CRVA process and broader objectives of integrated conflict early warning and response by ECOWAS and its partners. For the CRVAs, this involves identifying conflict risks, vulnerabilities and resiliencies across the human security pillars of Population and Demographics, Politics and Governance, Security, Economics and Resources, and Rule of Law.

Many indices and development frameworks have emerged for measuring resilience and fragility, from the Fund For Peace's *Fragile States Index*[7] to the African Development Bank (AfDB) and World Bank's *Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA)*[8] and Mo Ibrahim Foundation's *Index of African Governance*.[9] Today, leading international development actors and multilateral agencies such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the AfDB have also produced strategies,

---

[4] "Defining and measuring state fragility: a new proposal", Ferreira, I., The Annual Bank Conference on Africa, June 2015

[5] "Topic Guide on Fragile States", Mcloughlin, C., Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC), August 2009

[6] "Human Security in Theory and Practice", Human Security Unit, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations, January 2009

[7] Fragile States Index, The Fund for Peace

[8] Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA), World Bank and African Development Bank (AfDB)

[9] Ibrahim Index of African Governance, Mo Ibrahim Foundation

practice areas, and tools, which seek to address the drivers of fragility. The AfDB, for example, has a 2014-2019 Strategy for *Addressing Fragility and Building Resilience in Africa*, with a focus on building member state capacities and focusing on "fragile situations rather than fragile states alone."[10]

As the AfDB Strategy notes, however, "there is no single solution and no predefined 'toolbox' for addressing fragility."[11] Older academic and policy conceptions of "state failure" used analysis centered on "traditional, state-centric conceptions of security that focused primarily on the safety of states from military aggression," as outlined in a 2009 paper by the United Nations Human Security Unit. Newer models of analysis have taken on a broader human security lens, which was in "response to the complexity and the interrelatedness of both old and new security threats – from chronic and persistent poverty to ethnic violence, human trafficking, climate change, health pandemics, international terrorism, and sudden economic and financial downturns. Such threats tend to acquire transnational dimensions and move beyond traditional notions of security that focus on external military aggressions alone."[12]

Thus, a human-centric approach, as opposed to a state-centric approach, is important for analyzing risks and vulnerabilities to society for robust early warning and response mechanisms. Human security provides a holistic approach to understanding different threats which affect individuals' lives, whether through conflict, health, food, environment, or other social, political, or economic factors. As such, the CRVAs seek to draw upon the more dynamic and interrelated aspects of risk and vulnerability, which look at capacities and pressures within a society with a view to identifying structural vulnerabilities, resiliencies and risks

across key human security pillars. As defined by the United Nations General Assembly, "human security is an approach to assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood, and dignity of their people."[13] This approach is also in line with the ECOWAS Vison 2020 which seeks to promote peace, prosperity, and cohesion across the region,[14] and includes a focus on strengthening many human security aspects within member states.

Research Questions

Based on the initial desktop findings, the team developed a set of framing questions broken out by the five human security pillars. These framing questions were not asked verbatim in the field, but rather informed the design of KII and FGD instruments. These instruments included simple, open-ended questions intended to prompt a discussion where respondents could express their opinions, experiences, and perceptions about the ways in which they had been impacted by vulnerabilities, risks, and resilience factors in Benin.

Economics and Resources: To what extent has volatility in commodity prices negatively impacted the most vulnerable groups? To what extent has the recent economic recession in Nigeria impacted Benin? Has this been a driver of food insecurity or conflict? Are there disparities between urban and rural areas in terms of service provision? What role do women play in the economy? What role do youth play in the economy? What role do illicit economic activities (including cross-border smuggling) play in the local and national economy? What role does natural resource management and land tenure play in social cohesion? To what extent have the

---

[10] "Addressing Fragility and Building Resilience in Africa, 2014 – 2019", AfDB
[11] Ibid.
[12] "Human Security in Theory and Practice", Human Security Unit, OCHA, United Nations, January 2009

[13] General Assembly resolution 66/290, October 2012
[14] ECOWAS Vision 2020: Towards a Democratic and Prosperous Community, ECOWAS, June 2010

effects of climate change impacted the economy and food security?

Population and Demographics: What role do women play in social, economic, and political life? What role do youth play in social, economic and political life? Is a disproportionately large population of disenfranchised youth putting a strain on urban resources or public services? To what extent does the North-South divide affect social cohesion? How would you characterize relationships between ethnic and religious groups? To what extent does geography (ex: rural vs urban areas, north vs. south) affect access to social services and infrastructure? How effective is family planning in terms of access and policy? How prevalent is early marriage?

Politics and Governance: What role do women play in politics and decision-making? What role do youth play in politics and decision-making? What role do civil society groups, the media and social movements play in politics? To what extent do perceptions of corruption and nepotism in government erode the legitimacy of state institutions and electoral process? Are there political tensions or concerns around the legislative elections in 2019 or the presidential elections in 2021?

Rule of Law: To what extent is the judiciary independent of the executive? What role does the judiciary play as regards questions of justice and impunity? Is there access to justice and legal services throughout the country? Is there reliance on alternative/traditional dispute resolution mechanisms? To what extent do communities rely on police and security forces to provide justice? To what extent are women's rights protected in practice?

Security: What role do the security forces play in managing or worsening political unrest and criminality? Are they legitimate, representative, and professional? Are there other conflict drivers such as land disputes, succession or inheritance,

or resource competition? What role do communities or non-state actors play in security provision? Are there political, communal or sectarian tensions that could pose a threat to security? To what extent have illicit markets (e.g. drug trafficking) contributed to issues of criminality and violence? Are there cross-border, maritime, or transnational threats?

Description of the Sample

Data collected and analyzed for this research included hundreds of ECOWARN SitReps, ECOWARN IncReps, ACLED event data, and a scoping survey, as well as transcripts and notes from FGDs and KIIs in the field. Other sources, integrated to form a vulnerability index (the CRVA Index), included Global Integrity, the Economist Intelligence Unit, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Transparency International, Freedom House, Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Database, World Bank, Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index, Political Terror Scale, United Nations Refugee Agency, Uppsala University, UN Statistics, and Institute for Economics and Peace. A complete breakdown is included in Appendix A.

Data Analysis

ECOWARN data shows that vulnerability in Benin has stayed relatively steady as measured by taking a monthly average of the SitReps overall score from 2010 to 2017. In October 2010, dozens were killed in the worst flooding the country had experienced in decades. Then in 2016 and 2017 there was an increase in fatalities connected to farmer/herder violence.

The heatmap above shows hot spots of human security incidents between 2015 and 2018.

The map shows the locations where fieldwork was conducted in December 2017.
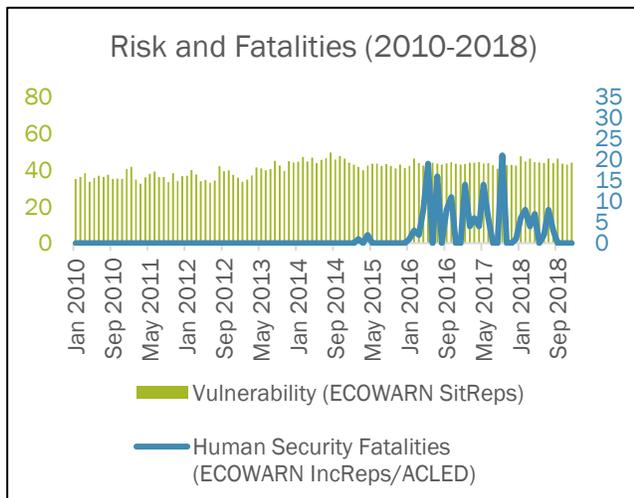
The graph above shows the trends in risk layered against vulnerability. The y axis on the left (0-80) shows the level of vulnerability with a score of over 60 reflecting higher levels of vulnerability. The y axis on the right (0-35) shows the number of conflict fatalities by month.

The CRVA Index, as seen in the below graph, indicates that in Benin the human security pillars that exhibit the most severe levels of vulnerability are Economics & Resources and Population & Demographics. These findings were contextualized by respondents in the field who emphasized economic pressures as key to the promotion of sustainable peace in Benin. In general, security and rule of law were relatively strong, compared to other countries in the region. In the graph below, the lower the score on the y axis (0-10), the more vulnerable the human security pillar.

Relative Vulnerability by Human Security Pillar
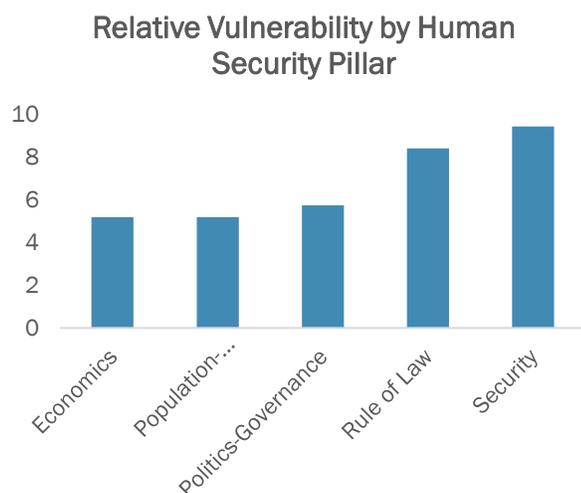
In the last two years, GIS event data shows hotspots, patterns, and trends at the sub-national level, including incidents involving famer/herder clashes in Alibori and Plateau departments, a kingship dispute in Borgou, and flooding in Mono, Alibori, and Plateau. Field research was undertaken to qualify and contextualize these findings through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This report seeks to layer, triangulate, and juxtapose quantitative, GIS, and qualitative data in a way that is accurate, meaningful, and representative. However, limitations to this analysis include the two- year date range for the event/GIS data and the seven-year date range for the ECOWARN SitReps. If there are conflict cycles that fall outside those parameters, there will be constraints on the ability to analyze those patterns in this report. Furthermore, this research sought to ensure representativeness in the sample of stakeholders engaged through KIIs (24 prominent individuals) and FGDs (12 focus group discussions). To the extent that these stakeholders were representative, they added vital contextualization and validation of the desktop research.

Scope and limitations also apply to the use and purpose of the study. The CRVA reports support the objectives of ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF). In particular, the CRVA reports identify vulnerabilities across the human security pillars in order to inform structural prevention. Structural prevention, as defined in the ECPF, comprises "political, institutional (governance) and developmental reforms, capacity enhancement and advocacy on the culture of peace." While this report can also be used to inform operational prevention, which includes "early warning, mediation, conciliation, preventive disarmament and preventive deployment using interactive means such as good offices and the ECOWAS Standby Force," it seeks primarily to identify the key areas of structural vulnerability at the national and sub-national levels for strategic planning by ECOWAS and other partners in the peace and security space. However, inasmuch that operational prevention can be informed by patterns and trends in the event-driven risk factors highlighted in this report, the CRVA should serve as a baseline analysis of dynamics that are closely monitored over time. Thereby, in addition to informing strategic planning on structural vulnerability issues, the CRVA will also inform early warning products such as weekly, monthly, and quarterly situation reports that inform analysts and potential responders as to heightened conflict risk across one or more indicators, and propose recommendations on response. The CRVA reports can also be used as a foundation to inform more detailed case studies around identified risks, vulnerabilities and resiliencies for a country of interest or concern.

While many reports that seek to identify structural vulnerabilities and resilience factors focus almost exclusively at the national level, ECOWAS seeks to support a more decentralized early warning and response infrastructure across the region. As such, the CRVA reports also take into consideration dynamics at the sub-national level. These sub-national factors are critical to consider as they help analysts and potential responders understand the context in which specific events (risks) are occurring, which may be markedly different from the national context. A mapping of sub-national level risks, vulnerabilities, and resiliencies can also help inform strategies for engaging at the local level for structural prevention. In particular, as defined by the ECPF, taking "measures to ensure the crises do not arise in the first place or, if they do, that they do no re-occur."

Finally, as also noted in the ECPF, conflict in West Africa tends to be highly interconnected, which often leads to cycles of violence that cross borders and can keep countries emmeshed for decades. The CRVA reports, covering all fifteen member states of ECOWAS, are also useful in helping to inform and understand the dynamics of specific regional conflict systems, such as those that occur across the Mano River and Sahel. These regional conflict systems are influenced and interconnected not only historically and culturally, but also share many of the same structural vulnerabilities that give rise to risks and the eventual outbreak of violence, decade after decade. Thus, the CRVA reports present an opportunity to view not only the specific national and sub-national factors that lead to structural vulnerability and heightened risk, they also help highlight the nature of regional conflict systems, and the need for a holistic and systemic lens in both analysis and response.

Country Background

Benin, formerly known as Dahomey, gained independence from France in 1960 and, for the first 12 years of independence, experienced significant political volatility. After a series of military coups and counter-coups, Mathieu Kérékou seized power in 1972 and transformed the country into a socialist state.[15] The Marxist People's Revolutionary Party became the sole political party and Kérékou was named president in 1980.

Following a nationwide economic decline in the late 1980s, and two further attempted coups and increasing domestic discontent, Kérékou organized a National Conference with politicians and civil society in 1990 and moved the country toward democracy.[16] The country's first multiparty elections were held in 1991 and Kérékou was defeated in the presidential elections by Nicéphore Soglo. Kérékou returned to power in the 1996 elections, however, and was re-elected for a final term in 2001, although some opposition groups boycotted the 2001 elections.[17]

Presidential elections were again held in 2006, and Thomas Boni Yayi was elected president. Yayi was re-elected in 2011, although the opposition issued allegations of electoral fraud.[18] While Yayi was praised for implementing some anti-corruption measures, his presidency also saw several high-profile political scandals. In 2010, lawmakers threatened to impeach Yayi for his alleged involvement in a Ponzi scheme.[19] Another controversy occurred in 2012, when Yayi accused prominent businessman and former ally Patrice Talon of attempting to poison him.[20] In 2013, a French court refused to extradite Talon, and in May 2014, Yayi dropped the charges.[21] Political tensions also emerged ahead of the 2016 elections due to concerns about Yayi's intentions to change the constitution to run for a third term; in the end, however, Yayi stepped down after the constitutionally-mandated two terms.[22]

In March 2016 Patrice Talon was elected president with 65 percent of the vote.[23] During the campaign Talon promised to tackle corruption and encourage economic growth. He also stated that he will not stand for reelection in 2021.[24]

Today, Benin is considered to be one of the most politically stable and democratic states in the region. Levels of political violence remain low, and transfers of power have been peaceful since the first multiparty elections in 1991. While there is a wider regional risk of terrorism and concerns about the potential for spillover of insecurity from Nigeria, Benin's security situation has remained largely stable in recent years.

Benin's key challenges today include encouraging equitable and sustainable economic growth while contending with a growing population and climatic pressures. Benin's economy is largely informal and dependent on trade with neighboring Nigeria, leaving the country vulnerable to exogenous

---

[15] "Mathieu Kérékou, Dictator Who Ushered In Democracy in Benin, Dies at 82", Roberts, S., *New York Times*, October 2015.

[16] "The National Conference Phenomenon in Francophone Africa", Robinson, P., *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* June 2010.

[17] "Benin finally votes for president", CNN, March 2001.

[18] "Beninese people protest against alleged election fraud, 2011", Global Nonviolent Action Database, February 2011.

[19] « Benin president accused of role in Ponzi scheme », *Reuters*, August 2010.

[20] "Benin President Boni Yayi 'poison plot': Three charged", *BBC,* October 2012.

[21] "Benin Country Report", Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI), 2016.

[22] "Third term doubts overshadow Benin legislative vote", Lewis, D., *Reuters,* April 2015.

[23] "Here's why Benin's election was a step forward for African democratic consolidation. And why it wasn't.", Roberts, T., *Washington Post*, March 2016.

[24] "Businessman sworn in as Benin's president", *Reuters,* April 2016.

shocks and the effects of regional insecurity.[25] The recent recession in Nigeria has impacted cross-border trade with Benin, driving up prices and impacting employment in Benin.[26] The lack of development and formal employment opportunities, coupled with increasing pressure for land and resources stemming from demographic pressures and the effects of climate change, could pose challenges to security and social cohesion in the future.

[25] "The World Bank In Benin: Country Overview", World Bank, April 2018.

[26] "Nigeria recession deals blow to smuggling hub Benin", Carsten, P., *Reuters*, March 2017.

National-Level Vulnerabilities, Risks and Resiliencies

Based on desktop research using the ECOWARN and ACLED data sets, surveys of peace and security actors in key regions in Benin, field research that included KIIs and FGDs, and participatory analysis by the CRVA field research team, the following national-level risks, vulnerabilities, and resilience factors were identified:

Structural Vulnerabilities	
	Economics and Resources • Lack of economic diversity, leading to a dependence on subsistence agriculture • Exposed to vulnerability in the Nigerian economy • Porous borders • Informal trade • Regional disparities in development and infrastructure • Unemployment and underemployment, especially for youth • Inadequate economic empowerment of women • Fluctuation of the Naira **Population and Demographics** • High rate of youth unemployment • Population growth • North-South divide • Youth bulge • Low rate of family planning • Occurrence of early marriage • High rates of teenage pregnancy • High illiteracy • Land tenure issues • Climate change **Politics and Governance** • Underrepresentation of women and youth in political decision-making • North-South divide • Manipulation of regional identities by politicians • Perceptions of nepotism and corruption **Rule of Law** • Poor access to justice • Lack of popular knowledge of legal provisions • High cost of legal services • Lack of resources in the judicial system

	• Perceptions of executive interference, corruption and bias in the judicial system • Underrepresentation of women in the justice system • Overcrowded and under resourced prison system **Security** • Perceptions of corruption among security forces • Lack of resources for security forces • Porous borders • Transhumance • High rates of youth unemployment and poverty
Event-Driven Risks	**Economics and Resources** • Illicit economic activity and cross-border smuggling • Economic recession in Nigeria and neighboring countries • Border closure between Benin and Nigeria • External shocks to Nigerian economy • Outbreak of crop diseases and pest infestation • Food insecurity • Inflation **Population and Demographics** • Natural disasters, such as flooding and unpredictable rainfall patterns • Disease outbreak • Migration for opportunities abroad • Rural to urban migration • Disparity in development • Land-based conflict • Environmental degradation • Consistent coastal erosion **Politics and Governance** • Insufficient communication around the use of new voter identification cards (RAVIP vs. LEPI) • Perceived manipulation of ethnic identities **Rule of Law** • Incidents of corruption within the judicial system • Incidents of mob justice • Incidents of impunity **Security** • Gender-based violence (GBV) • Criminality, such as drug trafficking and cross-border smuggling

	• Inter-religious conflicts • Resource-based conflicts, particularly between herders and farmers • Terrorism • Maritime insecurity
Social and Institutional Resilience Factors	**Economics and Resources** • Subsidies for agriculture • Economics reforms • Fight against corruption • Vibrant informal sector • Cross-border economic activities • Re-exportation economic system • Micro-finance schemes **Population and Demographics** • Implementation of city planning measures • Culture of religious tolerance • Social cohesion between ethnic groups **Politics and Governance** • Civil society organizations (CSOs) and media outlets • Successful political transitions **Rule of Law** • Local and traditional leaders involved in dispute resolution • Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms • Existent legal provisions to strengthen the rule of law **Security** • Joint patrol of gendarmerie and the police • Sanctioning of security officers found guilty of misconduct • ECOWAS Maritime Security Architecture • Community policing • Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in the Lake Chad Basin • *"Agence Béninoise de Gestion Intégrée des Espaces Frontaliers"*

Economics and Resources (Most Vulnerable Pillar)

Vulnerabilities	• Lack of economic diversity, leading to a dependence on subsistence agriculture • Exposed to vulnerability in the Nigerian economy • Porous borders • Informal trade • Regional disparities in development and infrastructure • Unemployment and underemployment, especially for youth • Inadequate economic empowerment of women • Fluctuation of the Naira
Risks	• Illicit economic activity and cross-border smuggling • Economic recession in Nigeria and neighboring countries • Border closure between Benin and Nigeria • External shocks to Nigerian economy • Outbreak of crop diseases and pest infestation • Food insecurity • Inflation

Vulnerabilities and Risks

Benin's economy is largely informal, with an estimated 90 percent of the labor force engaged in the informal sector.[27] The economy relies heavily on re-export and trade with Nigeria, and agricultural production, particularly cotton.[28] Cotton is the most important cash crop in Benin, accounting for approximately 35 percent of export revenues.[29] In coastal areas, fishing is also an important industry. GDP growth in 2016 was 3.98 percent, and has averaged around 4-5 percent over the last several decades.[30] The economy slowed following the global financial crisis in 2008, but has mostly recovered since then.[31] This reliance on Nigeria and fluctuating commodity prices leaves Benin vulnerable to exogenous shocks and spillover effects from instability in neighboring countries. Fieldwork participants discussed Benin's economic ties to Nigeria, stating

that the recent economic recession in Nigeria has had a negative impact on Benin.

Fieldwork participants highlighted youth unemployment and underemployment as ongoing economic vulnerabilities. Interviewees stated that the large informal sector and limited formal employment opportunities have directly contributed to the prevalence of youth unemployment. Furthermore, a lack of training and resources hinders self-employment. Additionally, fieldwork participants reported that the weak labor market in Benin has led youth, especially educated youth, to migrate elsewhere in search of improved economic opportunities.

Benin faces challenges related to the provision of social services and infrastructure development. Respondents reported that populations in the north of the country generally have lower access to

---

[27] "The World Bank In Benin: Country Overview", World Bank, April 2018.
[28] Ibid.
[29] "Integrated Production and Pest Management Programme in Africa: Benin", UN Food and Agriculture Organization.

[30] "GDP growth (annual %): Benin", World Bank, 2016.
[31] "Benin Country Report", Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI), 2016.

infrastructure and social services than those in the south. Specifically, interviewees highlighted poor road infrastructure, power outages, and an under-resourced education system as ongoing vulnerabilities. Additionally, participants highlighted disparities between rural and urban areas, stating that rural areas have higher rates of poverty, food insecurity, and lower access to basic social services.

"When it comes to economics, people say that unemployment is a time bomb. There is a lot of people who are informally employed. They may have a master's degree but no formal employment. They say 'tomorrow will be better.' They say they are 'in waiting.' I tell them to stop waiting and that tomorrow will never come. Start planning and investing now, instead of just taking it day by day."

- Interviewee, National Agency for Employment

Poverty remains widespread in Benin, with 40 percent of the population living below the poverty line in 2015.[32] An estimated one-third of families are considered food insecure, and 45 percent of children under the age of five suffer from malnutrition.[33]

Benin has made impressive strides in increasing school enrollment since the 1990s and had a 95 percent primary school net enrollment rate in 2015.[34] Gender gaps persist, however, with a female primary school net enrollment rate of 88 percent in 2011 compared to 99 percent for males.[35] The gender gap further widens in secondary and tertiary education.[36] Fieldwork

participants noted that there are educational disparities between rural and urban communities and between regions, both for boys and for girls. Rural communities have a higher percentage of students out of school than urban communities, and Alibori and Atacora regions have the lowest percentages of female school enrollment.[37] Women in Benin are mostly engaged in agricultural production and the informal sector, which offer lower wages and limited labor protections. Women also face barriers to land ownership under customary law and to accessing credit and financial services.[38]

Benin is also vulnerable to illicit economic activities, namely drug trafficking and money laundering.[39] Benin serves as a transit point for cocaine from South America, as well as heroin and methamphetamine.[40] Interviewees reported that porous borders have allowed for cross-border smuggling to flourish, especially along the border with Nigeria. For example, the rising price of gasoline in Benin has led to an increase in the smuggling of gasoline from Nigeria.

Benin is particularly vulnerable to cycles of flooding and drought. In 2010, severe flooding affected nearly two-thirds of the population, destroyed thousands of homes, and killed more than 50 people.[41] Flooding has been exacerbated by deforestation in the country, spurred by population growth requiring resources for firewood, farmland, and housing.[42] Benin has one of the highest annual deforestation rates in the world, and has lost nearly one-third of its forest cover since 1990.[43]

[32] "The World Bank In Benin: Country Overview", World Bank, April 2018.
[33] "Benin", World Food Programme, 2017.
[34] "School enrollment, primary (% net): Benin", World Bank, 2016.
[35] "School enrollment, primary, female: Benin", World Bank, 2016.
[36] "Benin Country Report", Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI), 2016.

[37] "Adolescents and Youth Country Profile", UN Population Fund, 2014.
[38] "Social Institutions & Gender Index", OECD, 2014.
[39] "Benin", U.S. Department of State.
[40] Ibid.
[41] "Benin suffers worst floods since 1963", Smith, D., *The Guardian*, October 2010.
[42] "Benin", Mongabay, February 2006.
[43] Ibid.

Urbanization has also contributed to severe pollution in Cotonou and other large cities.[44]

The effects of climate change, including increasing temperatures, changes in rainfall patterns, sea level rise, and coastal erosion, pose a threat to Benin's economy and population. As a large proportion of the population and economic activity are based in southern coastal regions, sea level rise could negatively affect Benin's economy and force migration.[45] Fieldwork participants noted that the country is vulnerable to climate pressures and reported that flooding has destroyed crops. Additionally, interviewees reported that rainfall patterns fluctuate, negatively impacting agriculture. Finally, due to Benin's reliance on agriculture, changes in rainfall and temperature could negatively impact agricultural outputs, threatening food security and livelihoods throughout the country.[46]

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

Despite the vulnerabilities and risks detailed above, fieldwork participants identified resilience factors that have helped mitigate economic risks and vulnerabilities. Interviewees highlighted the importance of initiatives to address youth unemployment and microfinance initiatives. While economic dependence on Nigeria was cited as a vulnerability, some participants stated that the Nigerian market can be a source of resilience, as it has provided livelihoods in the informal sector.

---

[44] "Cotonou's overlooked killer: air pollution", IRIN, October 2008.
[45] "Climate Change Adaptation: Benin", UN Development Programme.

[46] "Climate Change Profile: Benin", Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment, July 2015.

Population and Demographics (Second Most Vulnerable Pillar)

Vulnerabilities	- High rate of youth unemployment - Population growth - North-South divide - Youth bulge - Low rate of family planning - Occurrence of early marriage - High rates of teenage pregnancy - High illiteracy - Land tenure issues - Climate change
Risks	- Natural disasters, such as flooding and unpredictable rainfall patterns - Disease outbreak - Migration for opportunities abroad - Rural to urban migration - Disparity in development - Land-based conflict - Environmental degradation - Consistent coastal erosion

Vulnerabilities and Risks

Benin is an ethnically and religiously diverse country with a population of more than 10.8 million people.[47] The largest ethnic groups are the Fon (38 percent), Adja (15 percent), Yoruba (12 percent), Bariba (9 percent) and Fulani (8 percent).[48] According to the 2013 census, 48 percent of the population is Christian, 27 percent is Muslim, 12 percent practice Voodoo, and the remaining population practice other religions, including indigenous religions.[49] However, in practice there is significant overlap between these religious traditions, creating a "common cultural ground" in Benin.[50] There is also a north-south divide in Benin, geographically, economically, and socially. More than two-thirds of the population lives in the richer coastal south, while the north (where the Bariba and Fulani ethnic groups primarily live) is more sparsely settled. Muslim communities are found primarily in the north, while the south is largely Christian.[51] Fieldwork participants reported that relationships between ethnic and religious groups in Benin have historically been positive.

> *"This competition between North and South goes back a long time. It is in our blood. On the other hand, we are very religiously tolerant. We don't have the phenomenon of religious tension."*
>
> *- Interviewee, National Agency for Employment*

---

[47] "Population, total", World Bank, 2016.
[48] "Benin", CIA World Factbook.
[49] "International Religious Freedom Report for 2016", U.S. Department of State, 2016.
[50] "Beneath the Apparent State of Affairs: Stability in Ghana and Benin", Knoope, P., Chauzal, G., Clingendael Institute, January 2016.
[51] "International Religious Freedom Report for 2016", U.S. Department of State, 2016.

Benin's urban population has grown steadily over the past several decades, from 34 percent of the population in 1990 to 44 percent in 2016.[52] While a majority of the population continues to live in rural communities, fieldwork participants cited rural to urban migration as an ongoing demographic vulnerability. Migration to urban areas, specifically to Cotonou, has led to overcrowding and has put pressure on social services. There are also continued disparities between urban and rural communities. For example, rural areas have lower rates of school attendance, higher rates of early marriage and pregnancy, and more limited access to clean water and sanitation.[53,54]

Fieldwork participants highlighted Benin's large youth population as a demographic vulnerability. Benin has a large and growing youth population: forty-two percent of the population is under the age of 15.[55] The average annual population growth rate between 2010-2016 was 2.7 percent.[56] Some respondents stated that the growing youth population has led to overcrowding in schools, causing the quality of education to suffer. Additionally, interviewees stated that youth unemployment is an ongoing concern and has contributed to increasing criminality.

The total fertility rate is 4.5 children per woman.[57] Interviewees reported family planning is underutilized due to cultural and religious taboos. In 2015 Benin had a maternal mortality rate of 405 deaths per 100,000 births.[58] This number is below-

average for the region and has steadily decreased since the late 1990s.

Female life expectancy at birth is 62 years, compared to 59 years for men.[59] Early marriage is common, both due to financial pressures and social norms, although the rate is below the regional average.[60] As of 2012, 31.9 percent of women age 20-24 were married before the age of 18.[61] Early marriage is most prevalent in the northern regions of Alibori and Atacora and the southern region of Zou, while rates are lowest in the southern regions of Plateau, Ouémé and Littoral.[62] Fieldwork participants stated that early marriage is particularly prevalent in rural areas, citing poverty as a key driver. Teenage pregnancy was also reported to be a demographic vulnerability during the fieldwork and has reportedly led to increasing rates of child abandonment.

Key health concerns in Benin include respiratory infections, malaria, birth complications, malnutrition, meningitis and HIV/AIDS, which had an adult prevalence rate of 1.1 percent in 2015.[63,64] Healthcare coverage is relatively good in Benin, at 77 percent, although urban areas have a higher concentration of healthcare facilities than rural areas.[65] Benin has an estimated 1.7 doctors per 10,000 people.[66] Benin was not affected by the 2014-2015 Ebola epidemic. In 2016 and 2017, Benin experienced outbreaks of Lassa fever.[67]

[52] "Urban population (% of total)", World Bank, 2015.
[53] "Benin Water and Sanitation Profile", USAID.
[54] "Adolescents and Youth Country Profile: Benin", UN Population Fund, 2014.
[55] "World Population Dashboard: Benin", UN Population Fund, 2017.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] "Maternal mortality ratio (modeled estimate, per 100,000 live births)", World Bank, 2015.
[59] "World Population Dashboard: Benin", UN Population Fund, 2015.

[60] "Youth in Benin Stand Up To Child Marriage On Day Of The African Child 2017", Newlands, A., Girls Not Brides, June 2017.
[61] "Women who were first married by age 18 (% of women ages 20-24), World Bank, 2012.
[62] "Adolescents and Youth Country Profile", UN Population Fund, 2014.
[63] "Benin: Data", UNAIDS, 2016.
[64] "Benin: WHO statistical profile", World Health Organization, January 2015.
[65] "Health Financing Profile: Benin", USAID, February 2016.
[66] "Health workforce, Benin", World Health Organization.
[67] "Lassa Fever – Benin, Togo and Burkina Faso", World Health Organization, March 2017.

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

Fieldwork participants identified social and institutional resilience factors that help mitigate demographic vulnerabilities and risks in Benin. Interviewees reported that there is good social cohesion and tolerance between ethnic and religious groups throughout the country. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) have been involved in sensitization and awareness-raising campaigns around social issues such as female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C). NGOs have also spearheaded initiatives to address youth unemployment.

Politics and Governance (Third Most Vulnerable Pillar)

Vulnerabilities	• Underrepresentation of women and youth in political decision-making • North-South divide • Manipulation of regional identities by politicians • Perceptions of nepotism and corruption
Risks	• Insufficient communication around the use of new voter identification cards (RAVIP vs. LEPI) • Perceived manipulation of ethnic identities

Vulnerabilities and Risks

Benin had a voter turnout rate of 66.13 percent in the 2016 presidential elections and 65.91 percent in the 2015 parliamentary elections.[68] Benin has had multiple successful transitions of power since the early 1990s. Elections have historically been peaceful in Benin, although controversy surrounded the 2011 presidential elections. In 2011, the Independent Electoral Commission of Benin introduced a new electronic voting system which some alleged kept more than one million Beninese from registering to vote.[69] After popular protests and pressure from international actors, including ECOWAS, the elections were postponed for a week.[70] Opposition groups contested the election outcomes, in which President Yayi was reelected in the first round, but ultimately accepted the results. In 2016, Patrice Talon was elected president and the political transition was also peaceful. The second-place candidate, Lionel Zinsou, conceded and former president Yayi did not attempt to extend his mandate for a third term.[71] The next elections are expected to take place in 2019 (legislative) and 2021 (presidential).

While political transitions have been historically peaceful, fieldwork participants reported that tensions rise during election periods. Additionally, interviewees discussed the introduction of new identification cards, *Recensement Administratif à Vocation d'Identification Personnelle* (RAVIP), which will be used in the 2019 legislative elections, expressing concerns about the potential for voter fraud.

Fieldwork participants also discussed the role of regional identities in politics. While the North-South divide was not highlighted as a source of immediate tension, some participants stated that it does affect politics. Some politicians have reportedly manipulated these divisions in the lead-up to elections.

As of 2015, only six of the 83 members (7.2 percent) of the National Assembly were women.[72] This number has actually decreased from 2011 – in 2011 there were eight women in the National Assembly.[73] In addition, there are only three female cabinet ministers (out of 21) and one regional prefect.[74] Unlike other countries in the region, there is no gender quota in place to promote women's participation in politics. Fieldwork participants reported that women are historically underrepresented in political decision-making in Benin. Women in politics face harassment,

[68] "Benin", Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2016.
[69] "Beninese people protest against alleged election fraud, 2011", Global Nonviolent Action Database, April 2011.
[70] Ibid.
[71] "Benin's landmark elections: An experiment in political transitions", Songwe, V., Brookings Institute, March 2016.

[72] "Women in Parliament in 2015", Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2015.
[73] Ibid.
[74] "Benin 2016 Human Rights Report", U.S. Department of State, 2016.

economic barriers, and intimidation. While women are engaged in political activism, they rarely hold official positions.

Freedom House categorizes Benin as "Free" – it is one of only three countries in the region with this designation - with a score of 82/100.[75] Corruption remains a persistent issue, however; Transparency International ranked Benin 85th out of 176 countries in the 2017 Corruption Perceptions Index.[76] Many Beninese feel that corruption worsened during the Yayi presidency. A 2014/2015 Afrobarometer survey reported that 74 percent of respondents felt that corruption had increased "somewhat" or "a lot" over the previous year.[77] The government is taking some action to address corruption, and although anti-corruption measures are generally poorly enforced, there have been several high-profile examples of increased accountability. In 2015, for example, Benin's minister for energy and water resigned after a corruption scandal involving millions of dollars of foreign aid money.[78] In addition, the government passed an anti-corruption law in 2011 and created the National Anti-Corruption Authority in 2014.[79]

Key human rights issues include excessive use of force by security forces, cases of arbitrary arrest and detention and poor prison conditions, including overcrowding and lack of sanitation.[80] In 2016 there were some restrictions imposed on political protests and demonstrations by opposition political groups.[81] Child abuse is also a concern, particularly the practice of *vidomegan*, in which children (mostly girls) from poor families are placed in the home of wealthier families and often face forced labor and exploitation.[82] Journalists enjoy relative freedom of expression, although media outlets are sometimes shut down and journalists face prosecution for libel. Reporters Without Borders ranked Benin 84th out of 180 countries in the 2018 World Press Freedom Index.[83]

Finally, Interviewees stated that there has been controversy over the dismissal of several mayors and recent economic reforms implemented by the Talon administration. Participants reported perceptions that the government does not adequately consider the impacts of such reforms on local communities.

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

Fieldwork participants noted several sources of social and institutional resilience that mitigate political vulnerabilities in Benin. Interviewees stated that Benin has a history of peaceful elections and that despite low-level tensions, most people expect the upcoming legislative elections to be peaceful. Civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations have been engaged in civic education initiatives and have played a key role in mitigating political tension and election violence.

[75] "Freedom in the World 2017, Benin", Freedom House, 2017.
[76] "Corruption Perceptions Index 2017", Transparency International, February 2018.
[77] "PP41: Efficacy for fighting corruption: Evidence from 36 African countries", Isbell, T., Afrobarometer, 2017.
[78] "Benin minister resigns in scandal over missing aid millions", *Reuters*, May 2015.

[79] "Panorama de la corruption et de la lute contre la corruption au Benin", Transparency International, June 2014.
[80] "Benin 2016 Human Rights Report", U.S. Department of State, 2016.
[81] "Benin 2017/2018", Amnesty International.
[82] "Benin 2016 Human Rights Report", U.S. Department of State, 2016.
[83] "Benin", Reporters Without Borders, 2017.

Rule of Law (Fourth Most Vulnerable Pillar)

Vulnerabilities	- Poor access to justice - Lack of popular knowledge of legal provisions - High cost of legal services - Lack of resources in the judicial system - Perceptions of executive interference, corruption and bias in the judicial system - Underrepresentation of women in the justice system - Overcrowded and under resourced prison system
Risks	- Incidents of corruption within the judicial system - Incidents of mob justice - Incidents of impunity

Vulnerabilities and Risks

Fieldwork participants reported low levels of trust in the judicial system due to perceptions of corruption and executive interference. While the law and constitution provide for an independent judiciary, the government is responsible for naming judges at the Public Prosecutor's Office which makes them susceptible to influence.[84] In addition, there were concerns raised in June 2013 about the impartiality of the Constitutional Court after several allegedly politically biased appointments by President Yayi. However, the Court demonstrated its independence in 2014 when it maintained the two-term limit for the presidency.[85]

As noted above, corruption remains a concern in the country, and this has contributed to impunity and a lack of accountability in the judicial system. For example, there are reports of bribes being paid to influence judicial outcomes[86] and corruption and abuses by security forces are rarely punished.[87]

Fieldwork participants also reported that a lack of access to the justice system, especially for vulnerable populations, is an ongoing vulnerability. The high cost of hiring a lawyer and a lack of popular knowledge of laws and legal rights are barriers to justice for the Beninese population. Interviewees reported perceptions that the justice system is biased toward the wealthy.

Accountability is also undermined by the judicial system's lack of resources. Many of the courts have a backlog and are understaffed.[88] Fieldwork participants also reported that the prison system is overcrowded and under resourced, contributing to poor prison and detention conditions, which UN representatives recently called "inhumane and shocking."[89] In addition to overcrowding, concerns within the prison system include lack of sanitation and access to medicine, and limited access to food and water.[90]

---

[84] "Benin 2016 Human Rights Report", U.S. Department of State, 2016.

[85] "Benin Country Report", Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI), 2016.

[86] "Benin Corruption Report", GAN Business Anti-Corruption Portal, August 2016.

[87] "Benin 2016 Human Rights Report, U.S. Department of State, 2016.

[88] "Benin Country Report", Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI), 2016.

[89] "Benin prisons: Urgent steps needed to alleviate suffering in detention, UN experts say", UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, January 2016.

[90] "Benin 2016 Human Rights Report, U.S. Department of State, 2016.

Security forces, including the police and gendarmerie, also suffer from a lack of training and equipment.[91] Security forces have been implicated in cases of excessive force against protestors and unlawful killings.[92]

Beninese law includes multiple provisions to promote gender equality, and in 2012 a national law on the prevention and punishment of gender-based violence was passed.[93] However, fieldwork participants reported that women in Benin continue to face discrimination in a number of areas, as weak enforcement of laws and cultural stigmas and practices perpetuate gender disparities. For example, gender-based violence is widespread yet enforcement of existing domestic violence and rape laws is weak due to a lack of training for police, corruption, and social stigma.[94] Reliance on customary law, particularly in rural areas, also excludes many women from inheriting and owning land.[95] In addition, as many women work in informal sectors, they do not benefit from the labor protections that exist in Beninese law.[96] Women also remain underrepresented in the judiciary, although their level of representation is greater than in political positions.[97] In 2007 an estimated 21 percent of active magistrates were women.[98] Currently two of the seven members of Benin's Constitutional Court are women.[99] In addition, a woman (Conceptia Ouinsou) served as

"Benin is a patriarchal society where even though rights/laws exist for women, they are not enforced or are not respected. Thus, the rights are provided for the development of women but struggle to be put into practice. Respect for the rights of the Beninese citizen is virtual, it is a situation where he has no assurance with respect to the recognition of his rights. In addition, the laws are not popularized in Benin to allow citizens to know their rights."

- Journalist, Cotonou

president of the Constitutional Court from 1998 to 2008[100] and the High Court of Justice has had two female presidents since 1993. In 2010 around 14 percent of lawyers in Benin were women.[101]

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

Fieldwork participants identified resilience factors in the area of Rule of Law, most notably alternative or traditional mechanisms of dispute resolution. Interviewees reported that religious leaders, council of elders, and other local leaders are involved in dispute resolution at the community level. Traditional and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms provide justice in cases where access to the formal judicial system is not available.

---

91 "Benin 2016 Human Rights Report, U.S. Department of State, 2016.
92 "Benin 2017/2018", Amnesty International.
93 "Social Institutions & Gender Index: Benin", OECD, 2014.
94 "Benin 2016 Human Rights Report, U.S. Department of State, 2016.
95 "Social Institutions & Gender Index: Benin", OECD, 2014.
96 Ibid.
97 "Gender and the Judiciary in Africa: From Obscurity to Parity?" p. 108-119, Bauer, G. and Dawuni, J. 2015.

98 "Gender and the Judiciary in Africa: From Obscurity to Parity?" p. 108-119, Bauer, G. and Dawuni, J. 2015.
99 "Les Membres", The Constitutional Court of Benin.
100 "The Consequences of Appointment Policies for Court Legitimacy in Benin: A Network Analysis Approach", GIGA, February 2016.
101 "Gender and the Judiciary in Africa: From Obscurity to Parity?" p. 108-119, Bauer, G. and Dawuni, J. 2015.

Security (Least Vulnerable Pillar)

Vulnerabilities	• Perceptions of corruption among security forces • Lack of resources for security forces • Porous borders • Transhumance • High rates of youth unemployment and poverty
Risks	• Gender-based violence (GBV) • Criminality, such as drug trafficking and cross-border smuggling • Inter-religious conflicts • Resource-based conflicts, particularly between herders and farmers • Terrorism • Maritime insecurity

Vulnerabilities and Risks

Benin has not experienced widespread violent conflict, unlike some neighboring countries. However, land- and resource-based conflicts are a recurrent issue. Communal violence occurs between farmers and herders, as well as within families (cases of disputed inheritance) and farming communities over land ownership.[102] Fieldwork participants reported that conflicts between herders and farmers are often related to the movement of herders across the borders from Niger and Nigeria, stating that disputes peak during the transhumance seasonal period. "Corridors" have been created in some areas to provide a space for herders to move their livestock, but they are not always respected, leading to conflict.

As population growth and climate change increase pressure on available land, particularly in the heavily-populated south of the country, these conflicts could become more prominent. In recent years piracy in the Gulf of Guinea has also become a concern for Benin.[103] A significant percentage of Beninese government revenue is derived from trade at the port of Cotonou; thus, maritime insecurity is both a security concern and an economic threat.[104]

Fieldwork participants identified criminality and illicit trade as key ongoing security concerns throughout Benin. Cross-border smuggling of goods, especially drugs and gasoline from Nigeria, has grown because of porous borders. Interviewees also noted a rise in incidents of armed robbery and petty theft, citing youth unemployment, the growth of ghettos, and the phenomenon of street children as drivers of criminality.

Additionally, interviewees reported low confidence in security forces due to a lack of resources, a lack of professionalism, and perceptions of corruption and complicity with criminals. Furthermore, interviewees stated that security forces are often concentrated in urban areas, meaning that many local communities rely on community watch and self-defense groups.

Levels of political violence remain low, and Benin has not experienced a terrorist attack in recent

---

[102] "Benin: Food Security and Land Governance Factsheet", Land Governance for Equitable and Sustainable Development.

[103] "Piracy in West Africa", Ben-Ari, N., AfricaRenewal, December 2013.

[104] "Maritime Piracy in West Africa", Mensah, M., *Wall Street International, February 2016.*

years. However, participants expressed concern about the potential for spillover from ongoing insecurity in neighboring Nigeria and Niger; or retaliation for Benin's involvement in regional security initiatives. In 2013 the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) threatened to attack Benin after a militant leader was arrested in Cotonou.[105] Benin is also involved in the regional fight against Boko Haram and has contributed troops to the Multinational Joint Task Force,[106] and is contributing troops to the peacekeeping mission in Mali.[107]

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

Fieldwork participants identified a number of social and institutional resilience factors that help mitigate security risks in Benin. Interviewees reported that self-defense groups and local

"The Beninese borders are porous and the risk of insecurity with the presence of Boko Haram next door is great. Benin is in a position of vulnerability facing the extremist threat."

- Journalist, Cotonou

neighborhood watch groups contribute positively to security in the country, especially in rural areas. Additionally, fieldwork participants reported a high level of social cohesion between communities and groups and a history of peaceful elections. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) have been involved in conflict resolution and peacebuilding throughout Benin and contribute positively to security throughout the country.

---

[105] "MEND Threatens Benin Republic with Attacks Over Asari Dokubo's Arrest, Demands His Release", Abusidiqu Blog, November 2013.

[106] "Benin to deploy troops to anti- Boko Haram task force", *Reuters*, March 2016.
[107] "Benin Country Report", Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI), 2016.

External Factors

Benin is an active member of the United Nations, African Union, ECOWAS, World Trade Organization (WTO), Organization of Islamic Cooperation, International Organisation de la Francophonie (IOF), African Petroleum Producers Association, and the Niger Basin Authority.

In the area of economics, Benin is particularly dependent on the economy of neighboring Nigeria. The economic recession in Nigeria, as a result of low oil prices since 2015, has severely impacted the Benin economy, sharply decreasing cross-border trade between the two countries. A downturn in the Nigerian economy increases unemployment, poverty, and food insecurity in Benin. The reliance on subsistence agriculture is also problematic for Benin, as changing climatic conditions have brought infrequent rainfall and increased flooding, adversely affecting cropping patterns and overall yields. The World Bank Group, including the International Finance Corporation and the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, have been actively involved in fifteen projects across Benin, spending over $715 million to strengthen governance and public-sector capacity, work towards sustainable growth and competitiveness in the economy, and improve access to social services across the country.[108] The International Monetary Fund has also been working to diversify and strengthen the economy as well.[109]

Benin is an important contributor to international peacekeeping efforts within the ECOWAS region, the African Union, and the United Nations. Currently, Benin contributes 916 soldiers to UN peacekeeping efforts around the world.[110] The largest and most pressing external security concern for Benin is the spillover of extremist violence and ideology from neighboring Burkina Faso, Niger, and Nigeria. Benin has particularly porous borders and has seen continued farmer-herder conflicts as Nigerien and Nigerian herders pass through farms bordering Benin, despite the existence of established transhumance corridors to alleviate the potential for conflict.

Furthermore, regional patterns of migration affect Benin. As of July 2017, Benin was hosting nearly 1,000 refugees, a majority of whom were from Central African Republic.[111] Benin has also experienced significant out-migration; an estimated 4.4 million Beninese (nearly half the population) live outside the country.[112] Nearly 70 percent of these emigrants live in Nigeria.[113]
Finally, Benin is vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including increasing temperatures, changes in rainfall patterns, sea level rise and coastal erosion, pose a threat to Benin's economy and population. As a large proportion of the population and economic activity are based in southern coastal regions, sea level rise could negatively affect Benin's economy and force migration.[114]

---

[108] "The World Bank in Benin", World Bank.
[109] "IMF Concludes 2017 Article IV Consultation with Benin", International Monetary Fund, December 2017.
[110] "Summary of Troop Contributing Countries By Ranking", United Nations, November 2017.
[111] "Operational Portal Refugee Situations, Benin", UNHCR, August 2017.

[112] "Benin Remains a Country of Emigration and Destination, IOM Migration Profile Confirms", International Organization for Migration, April 2012.
[113] Ibid.
[114] "Climate Change Adaptation, Benin", UN Development Programme.

Gender Considerations

Over the past few decades, the government of Benin has made efforts to pass legislation regarding issues of discrimination of women, prevention of gender-based violence (GBV) and promotion of women's equality and empowerment. The 1990 Constitution of Benin outlaws the discrimination of women and states that men and women are equal in terms of social issues and economy,[115] and Benin had signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).[116] The Personal and Family Code of 2004 outlines further protections for women, allowing women to divorce their husbands, outlawing levirate marriage and polygamy, allowing widows to inherit property and requiring both parties to be 18 at the time of marriage.[117] OECD's Strategic Guidelines for Development, which Benin assumed in 2006, and Benin's 2009 National Policy for Gender Promotion have both shown further action towards promoting equality and eliminating discrimination against women.[118]

In practice, however, many of these laws protecting women are not enforced, and women in Benin still face significant challenges in the political, economic and social spheres. Benin received a score of 3.77 out of 10 for gender indicators in the CRVA Index, which is below the regional average of 4.49. Fieldwork participants highlighted underrepresentation in politics and decision-making, economic marginalization and limited access to resources and gender-based violence (GBV) as key issues in Benin. Participants also confirmed that, though laws are in place to protect and empower women, weak enforcement of these laws has allowed customary law to take precedence and issues such as GBV and early marriage persist.

Underrepresentation in politics and decision-making was one of the primary issues discussed by fieldwork participants, with many saying that women, along with youth, are often involved in activism but rarely hold positions of power. Currently, the government of Benin has no gender quota and data indicates that female representation in the National Assembly continues to stagnate. In 2015, six out of 83 (7.2 percent) members of the National Assembly were women, down 0.1 percent from 1996.[119,120] Furthermore, only three out of 21 cabinet ministers are women, and just one regional prefect.[121] While representation in the judiciary is higher (21 percent of magistrates were women in 2007), women are still underrepresented.[122] Participants in the Women's FGD in Kandi reported that, not only is there lack of support for women in politics, but often women who become involved in politics face intimidation and sometimes kidnapping.

Women are vital contributors to the Beninese economy, making up 70.0 percent of the labor force and actively engaging in agriculture, domestic work and informal trade.[123] However, due to socio-economic constraints such as limited access to resources such as credit and financial services, land, and education, they constitute an untapped economic force. According to fieldwork participants, women also often face pressure from their families and husbands to stay home, limiting their ability to be active in the economy. While 40.5 percent of the formal economy consists of women, most women work in the informal sector, leaving them unprotected by existing Labor Codes.[124] Participants reported that the informal sector can

---

[115] "Social Institutions & Gender Index: Benin", OECD, 2014.
[116] "8. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women", UN Treaty Collection, December 1979.
[117] "Social Institutions & Gender Index: Benin", OECD, 2014.
[118] Ibid.
[119] "Women in Parliament in 2015", Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2015.

[120] "Women and human development in Benin", UNDP, 1998.
[121] "Benin 2016 Human Rights Report", U.S. Department of State, 2016.
[122] "Gender and the Judiciary in Africa: From Obscurity to Parity?" p. 108-119, Bauer, G. and Dawuni, J. 2015.
[123] "Table 5: Gender Inequality Index", UNDP, 2015.
[124] "Social Institutions & Gender Index: Benin", OECD, 2014.

be unpredictable, often leaving women without a secure source of income. For example, in Borgou Department, women were disproportionately affected when roadside vendors were evicted, and in Littoral, the majority of market traders in the informal sector are women. Interviewees also reported that, despite current laws allowing women to own and inherit property, customary law does not allow women to inherit land. Though the government has created the Access to Land Project to ensure tenure of land to women, currently women own only 13 percent of land and their plots are on average smaller than those owned by men.[125] Women also face challenges with access to credit and financial services,[126] as often receiving credit or loans require land ownership.[127] Only 26 percent of bank loans were reported to have gone to women.[128]

To mitigate the lack of access to credit, participants reported that microcredit is available and a helpful alternative. In fact, around 60 percent of available microcredit goes to women.[129] However, participants reported in some instances women are not given adequate time to repay the loan. *Tontines* were also cited as an alternative to credit. The Women's FGD in Parakou noted that women in this region "organize themselves in association to work for their own financial autonomy by daily *tontines*". However, these women also reported that, while financial autonomy gives women more personal and familial autonomy, they still "often encounter opposition from their husbands who often discharge their family responsibilities on women". Lower levels of education also act as a barrier for women. While women and men enroll in primary education in similar rates (with a gender parity index of 0.9), the gap widens in secondary and tertiary education; women are enrolled in

secondary education at a gross percentage of 46.8, compared to men at 66.7 percent.[130] Participants felt that early marriage and poverty contribute to lower levels of education for women in Benin.

Respondents reported that women face social issues as well, such as early marriage, limited access to family planning and health services, polygamy and levirate marriage, teenage pregnancy and GBV and female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). In 2012, 31.9 percent of women aged 20-24 were married before the age of 18,[131] despite existing laws setting the legal age at 18. Participants also reported that men often make health decisions for their wives. Respondents noted that much of the family planning that does take place is done in secret by women due to social taboos. While most women reported having knowledge of family planning, only 14 percent of women reported using any form of contraception.[132] FGM/C continues to be practiced as well, though participants reported that NGOs and CSOs have been raising awareness about it. An estimated 13 percent of women have undergone FGM/C.[133]

Participants noted that alternative dispute resolution (ADR) is often used for the enforcement of women's rights, as laws pertaining to women are often disregarded. Though Benin passed a new law in 2012 to combat violence against women and rape, cultural norms, social stigma, and a lack of training for officials result in higher rates of GBV.[134] Around 75 percent of women have experienced GBV, and more than 40 percent have been victims of sexual violence.[135] Fieldwork participants reported that there is a strong culture of silence, resulting in many incidents going unreported.

125 Ibid.
126 "Benin 2016 Human Rights Report", U.S. Department of State, 2016.
127 "Social Institutions & Gender Index: Benin", OECD, 2014.
128 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
130 "World Development Indicators", World Bank, 2017.
131 Ibid.

132 "Enquête Démographique et de Santé", Benin Demographic and Health Surveys, 2013.
133 "Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A statistical overview and exploration of the dynamics of change", UNICEF, July 2013.
134 "Social Institutions & Gender Index: Benin", OECD, 2014.
135 "Benin women make strides against violence", USAID, 2017.

Sub-National Level Vulnerabilities, Risks and Resilience Factors: Observations by Region

Alibori Department

The Alibori department, located in the far north-east of Benin, has a population of 868,046 according to 2013 census data.[136] It shares borders with the departments of Atakora and Borgou, as well as international borders with Nigeria, Niger and Burkina Faso. The Bariba, Peuhl, and Dendi constitute the main ethnic groups in the Alibori department.[137] Agriculture, trade and the service industry are the primary economic activities.[138]
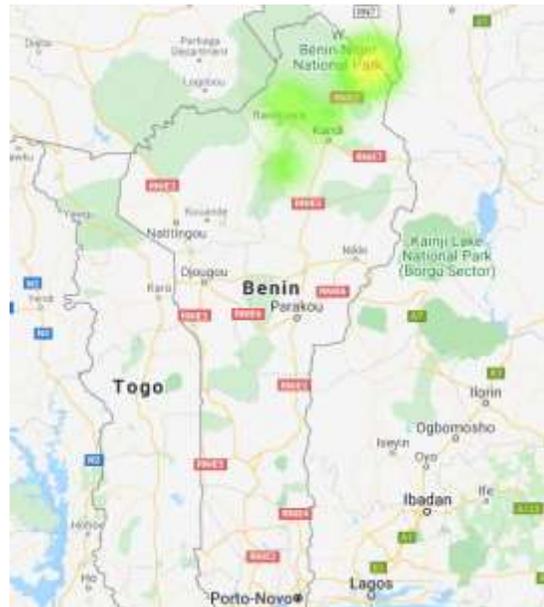
Structural Vulnerabilities	- Economic dependence on agriculture and the Nigerian economy - Inadequate infrastructure and access to quality public services - Rural-urban divide and regional disparities in development and infrastructure - Economic marginalization of women - Environmental degradation and climate change - High rate of youth unemployment - Population growth and a large youth population - Underutilization of family planning - North-South divide - Under-representation of women and youth in political decision-making - Perceptions of executive interference, corruption and bias in the judicial system - Poor access to justice and lack of popular knowledge of laws - Porous borders - Gender-based violence (GBV) - Perceptions of corruption and ineffectiveness among security forces

---

[136] "Benin Data Portal", Institut National de la Statistique et de l'Analyse Economique (INSAE) du Benin.
[137] "Principaux Indicateurs RGPH 2013 – Benin", INSAE Benin, 2013.
[138] "Employment and Labour Force Statistics of Benin, 2012", INSAE Benin, 2012.

Event-Driven Risks	• Economic recession in Nigeria and neighboring countries • Food insecurity • Natural disasters, including flooding • Criminality, including drug trafficking and cross-border smuggling • Inter-religious conflicts • Land-based conflicts, particularly herder-farmer conflicts • Elections
Social and Institutional Resilience Factors	• NGOs and civil society organizations • Religious leaders, councils of the wise, and other local leaders involved in dispute resolution • Community watch and hunting groups

Economics and Resources

The economy of the Alibori department is largely dependent on agriculture, including the production of cotton, cashews, shea, and other crops. Much of the region's economic activities take place in the informal sector, and farmers in the area are also highly dependent on cross-border trade and the sale of products in Nigerian and Nigerien markets. Fieldwork participants reported that producers in the Alibori department have been negatively impacted by the recent economic recession in neighboring Nigeria, which has driven up prices and affected the ability of farmers to sell their crops.

"Nigerians used to come to buy our agricultural products, but they very rarely come nowadays. Market women are reduced to storing the grain they bought cheaper. They are waiting for the lean period to sell these products at a higher price."

- Development Worker, Kandi

Interviewees also reported that the Alibori department, and the north of Benin more generally, has a lower level of access to infrastructure and social services compared to communities in the south of the country. Participants particularly noted the poor state of the department's roads, as well as frequent power cuts and an inadequate education system. Some schools in the region reportedly lack sufficient tables and chairs to accommodate students or do not have enough teachers. One interviewee noted that some communities have started to recruit their own teachers, who are then paid by the parents of the students, to compensate for this deficit. The cost of school fees has also contributed to a high rate of school dropouts, particularly among girls, whose education is often considered less valuable. There is also notable inequality between rural and urban areas in the department, with rural areas experiencing higher rates of poverty and lower access to services and infrastructure.

Youth unemployment was also a key vulnerability identified by fieldwork participants. Interviewees reported that unemployment among youth is driven by a lack of formal employment and entrepreneurship opportunities as well as low levels of education and the absence of government programs for vocational training or employment support. Unemployment has also reportedly contributed to rising rates of criminality and drug use among youth and respondents expressed concern that grievances around unemployment could make youth more susceptible to recruitment by extremist groups.

Women in the Alibori department play only a marginal role in the local economy and are primarily relegated to the domestic realm. Interviewees reported that women and girls face high levels of pressure from their families and husbands to remain in the home, and participants in the Women's Focus Group Discussion (FGD) noted that even those women who do work (mostly in informal trade) still "depend on the goodwill of men." Women's economic empowerment is also curtailed by their inability to inherit land under customary law. However, several interviewees reported that this issue is slowly improving thanks to sensitization activities carried out by NGOs.

Finally, the Alibori department is vulnerable to climate pressures, environmental degradation and natural disasters, particularly flooding. Interviewees reported multiple cases of flooding destroying crop fields in recent years, as well as decreasing crop yields due to changing rainfall patterns. Given the importance of agriculture in the local economy, these pressures have negatively impacted livelihoods and food security in the department, particularly for women and other vulnerable populations.

Population and Demographics

The Alibori department is ethnically mixed, with the 2013 census reporting that the population is 37.1 percent Bariba, 26.5 percent Peuhl, and 20.1 percent Dendi, with smaller populations of the Yoruba, Gua, Otamari, Fon and other ethnic groups.[139] An estimated 81.3 percent of the population practices Islam, while the rest of the population practices Catholicism, other forms of Christianity, Voodoo, or traditional religions.[140] While fieldwork participants reported that relationships between ethnic and religious groups are generally peaceful, some incidents of inter-

religious conflict have been reported in the department. For example, participants in the Men's FGD cited the example of a 2013 conflict between Muslims and Christians in the town of Same over the construction of a church. In addition, regional identities and the North-South divide continue to be a salient cultural reference point, often contributing to an 'autochthone[141] versus immigrant' rhetoric that privileges northerners in the control of land and political positions, among other things.

"If you're from the South and you come the North, you will always be a foreigner. Even if you stay for 20 years. You will never have a right to the land and won't be the proper owner. If they then sell the land, their children will still lay claim to it and say that their parents shouldn't have sold it."

– Youth focus group discussion, Kandi

Population growth and the region's large youth population was a primary vulnerability highlighted by fieldwork participants in the Alibori department. The Alibori and Atacora departments have the highest total fertility rates in Benin, with an average of 5.8 children per woman.[142] Interviewees noted that family planning is widely underutilized (only 9.1 percent of women in the Alibori department reported using any form of contraception in 2013)[143] due to cultural norms and religious beliefs. Some participants reported that women exchange tips or information on family planning, but this is done in secret without the knowledge of the husbands due to social taboos. In addition to the health impacts of the region's high birth rate (such as maternal mortality or deaths due to clandestine abortions), fieldwork participants noted that the growing youth population

---

[139] "Principaux Indicateurs RGPH 2013 – Benin", INSAE Benin, 2013.
[140] Ibid.
[141] A French term referring to indigenous, local or native populations

[142] "Enquête Démographique et de Santé", Benin Demographic and Health Surveys, 2013.
[143] Ibid.

constitutes an economic vulnerability and has contributed to a growth in criminality.

In addition to the underutilization of family planning, fieldwork participants reported that population growth in the region is driven by a high level of teenage pregnancies and early marriages. 30.7 percent of girls ages 15-19 in the Alibori department were pregnant or had already given birth as of 2013, and the average age of marriage among women ages 20-49 was 18.5 years old.[144] Interviewees noted that early marriage is often driven by poverty, and contributes to a higher rate of school dropouts among girls.

Politics and Governance

Although regional identities were not highlighted as an immediate source of tensions, fieldwork participants reported that the North-South divide and the rhetoric of 'autochthone versus immigrant' affect politics in the Alibori department. Several interviewees expressed the sense that being a "son of the soil" supersedes merit and qualifications in voting and the awarding of political positions. Others reported that these divisions are manipulated by politicians during election periods to mobilize voters.

Political violence was not a major concern among interviewees; however, it was noted that local tensions do rise ahead of elections. Participants also expressed concern that the introduction of the Administrative Census to Identify the Population (Recensement Administratif à Vocation d'Identification de la Population - RAVIP), which would replace the Electronic Permanent Electoral List (Liste Electorale Permanente Informatisée – LEPI), in November 2017 could lead to confusion or controversy around voter registration ahead of the 2019 legislative elections.

Additional issues highlighted by fieldwork participants included controversy over the president's dismissal of several mayors, a move

which some view as being politically motivated, and the new administration's ongoing fight against corruption.

Women and youth are also underrepresented in political decision-making in the Alibori department. Fieldwork participants reported that women who get involved in politics face intimidation, harrassment or even kidnapping, as well as a lack of financial support for their campaigns. While youth are often mobilized during campaign periods, they rarely hold formal political positions. As participants in the Youth FGD described, "Youth are eager to be involved in politics, but they are always told that they are too young. But how long should they wait? Youth are only there to support politicians, to mobilize the base. [The politicians] say 'this is your role, you cannot be a candidate.' They make false promises: 'If you support me, I'll give you this.' But then they win, and you never see them anymore."

Rule of Law

Fieldwork participants reported a low level of trust in the judicial system, largely due to perceptions of executive branch interference, corruption, and bias toward the wealthy or politically connected. Interviewees also emphasized that vulnerable populations face poor access to justice due to the high costs of hiring a lawyer and a lack of popular knowledge of laws and legal rights. In addition, the incomplete dissemination, implementation and enforcement of laws, particularly those relating to women's rights, is an ongoing concern. As a result,

"The more you know an 'important someone,' the more quickly your case will be resolved. The justice of the strongest is that which applies. Justice is not done as it should be. It all depends on your relationships."

- Business Owner, Kandi

---

[144] Ibid.

many people reportedly turn to alternative mechanisms of dispute resolution, such as mediation by religious and traditional leaders, village conciliation committees, or councils of elders to resolve conflicts.

Security

Key security concerns identified by fieldwork participants in the Alibori department include criminality (particularly armed robbery), drug use and trafficking, cross-border smuggling, land-based disputes over inheritance or land sales, and conflicts between herders and farmers. Many interviewees attributed the rise in criminality and drug use to the region's high rate of youth unemployment and a lack of security forces in rural areas. The country's porous borders also facilitate smuggling, particularly of gasoline from Nigeria. Interviewees warned that the widespread use of smuggled and adulterated gasoline often leads to fires and health problems.

Conflicts between herders and farmers, which often involve herders crossing the border from Niger or Nigeria, are the major source of insecurity in the Alibori department, according to interviewees. As participants in the Youth FGD described, "It has really become a war in Benin between Peulhs and farmers in Ségbana and Kandi. It's like a type of ethnic conflict now. The Peulh are always ready to use force. When they do, people in the village mobilize. They don't know which Peulh committed the act of violence, so they attack any Peulh." In July 2016, ECOWARN data reported clashes between herders and farmers in the Malanville district of the Alibori department which caused at least seven fatalities. Interviewees noted that these clashes are often exacerbated by the non-existence of other routes or the failure to respect established transhumance corridors.

Although the Alibori department has not experienced any acts of terrorism, fieldwork participants also expressed a high level of concern around the potential for the spillover of conflicts or radical ideologies originating in Burkina Faso, Niger or Nigeria due to the region's porous borders. The potential spread of the type of ideology espoused by Nigeria's Boko Haram terrorist group was considered to be of particular concern, especially given the prevalence of youth unemployment. However, one interviewee noted that local imams who are involved in explaining concepts such as jihad are an effective deterrent to radicalization.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is also reportedly widespread in the Alibori department. A 2009 study by the Benin Ministry of Family and National Solidarity found that up to 70 percent of women in Benin have experienced some form of GBV in their lifetime. Fieldwork participants reported that, despite the prevalence of GBV, there is a strong culture of silence which deters many women from reporting incidents or seeking justice. As one lawyer interviewed in Kandi stated, "There are many cases of women being beaten. They cannot complain for fear of losing their homes. In my NGO, there are cases we meet, and they are asked to report to simply raise the awareness of husbands, but they refuse even that."

"In Alibori, the power of men over women is accepted to the point where any resistance of the woman is often sanctioned by sometimes fatal physical violence. A gentleman, waiting for his meal in the field, realized, when his children came to join him for field work, that the food remains of the previous day were heated and given to his children for breakfast with no part left for him. Angered, he left the field and went to his home to claim his pittance. Despite the explanations of his wife arguing that the remains of the previous day were not enough for all, the man rushed on his wife and beat her to the point of breaking a rib. Without medical care, the lady died on the third day."

– Women's focus group discussion, Kandi

Finally, fieldwork participants expressed a relatively low level of confidence in local security forces, reporting that security forces are often concentrated in urban areas, lack adequate means, and respond reactively to incidents rather than being proactive. Interviewees also reported perceptions of corruption and complicity between the police and criminals. As a result, many local communities reportedly rely on community watch and hunting groups to augment security forces and ensure security. While these groups are generally viewed as contributing positively to security, some respondents voiced concern around cases of excessive force or abuse of local populations by these groups.

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

Despite the vulnerabilities and risks detailed above, fieldwork participants in the Alibori department identified several important social and institutional resilience factors. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) are actively involved in awareness-raising and advocacy activities in the department, including around social issues such as female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C) and improving women's access to land. In particular,

"The role of civil society is crucial in Benin. She is very well listened to. For example, during the past communal elections, Social Watch has resolved the political tension by bringing political actors together and reconciling them."

- Development Worker, Kandi

the NGO Social Watch was identified by multiple participants as playing an important role in peacebuilding and conflict resolution in the area. Participants in the Men's FGD cited the examples of Social Watch mediating a conflict between Muslims and Christians in the town of Same over the construction of a church in 2013, as well as a 2015 dispute over an imamate in Tchourou. Social Watch has also reportedly held political dialogues and established civic participation cells in Kandi, which raise awareness around issues of peace and security in the area. In addition, religious leaders, conciliation courts, councils of elders or sages, and other local leaders are key actors in mediating disputes in the region. Finally, neighborhood watch and hunting groups, who often collaborate with local police, are generally viewed as contributing positively to security in the Alibori department.

Borgou Department

The second most populous region in Benin with 1,202,095 people, the Borgou department shares borders with the Alibori, Collines, Atakora and Donga departments as well as an international border with Nigeria.[145] The department comprises several ethnic groups, including the Bariba and Peuhl.[146] The main economic activities in Borgou include agriculture, primarily the production of cassava, yam and maize, trade and services, and skilled manual work.[147]

Structural Vulnerabilities	• Economic dependence on the informal sector and the Nigerian economy
	• Rural-urban disparities in development and infrastructure
	• Environmental degradation and climate change
	• High rate of youth unemployment
	• Population growth and a large youth population
	• Underutilization of family planning
	• Prevalence of early marriage, polygamy and teenage pregnancy
	• North-South divide
	• Under-representation of women and youth in political decision-making
	• Perceptions of executive interference, corruption and bias in the judicial system
	• Gender-based violence (GBV)
	• Perceptions of corruption and ineffectiveness among security forces
Event-Driven Risks	• Food insecurity
	• Economic recession in Nigeria and neighboring countries
	• Criminality, including cross-border smuggling
	• Land-based disputes, including herder-farmer conflicts
	• Chieftaincy disputes
	• Rising tensions ahead of elections

---

[145] « Benin Data Portal », Institut National de la Statistique et de l'Analyse Economique (INSAE) du Benin.
[146] "Principaux Indicateurs RGPH 2013 – Benin", INSAE Benin, 2013.
[147] "Employment and Labour Force Statistics of Benin, 2012", INSAE Benin, 2012.

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors	• Peaceful inter-religious coexistence • Religious leaders, councils of the wise, and other local leaders involved in dispute resolution • Civil society groups and media outlets • Microfinance and tontine programs • Initiatives to address youth unemployment • Community watch and hunting groups

Economics and Resources

The economy of the Borgou department is largely dependent on agriculture and small-scale trade and, as is the case throughout Benin, much of this economic activity takes place in the informal sector. Fieldwork participants reported that the predominance of the informal sector is due in part to taxation and administrative hurdles to register businesses in the formal sector. Interviewees also reported that the local economy has recently been impacted by the government's ordered eviction of informal roadside vendors in public spaces. Participants in the Women's Focus Group Discussion (FGD) reported that this move has particularly affected women, who are often engaged in petty trade, while others noted that the decision has led to an increase in unemployment and crime.

"Most young people work in the informal sector. You couldn't stop the informal sector, the country would collapse. The government knows it, the mayor knows it."

- Youth focus group discussion, Parakou

Due to the department's proximity and shared border with Nigeria, cross-border trade (including the smuggling of gasoline) is crucial to the regional economy. This dependence also increases the Borgou department's vulnerability to external shocks, such as the recent economic recession in Nigeria. As one government official in Parakou said, "The proximity of Nigeria has too much influence on the country. When Nigeria coughs, Benin has a cold." Fieldwork participants reported that the economic recession has had a severe negative impact on the Borgou department, with the decrease in cross-border trade contributing to increased poverty, unemployment and food insecurity in Benin.

A key economic vulnerability identified by fieldwork participants was the region's high rate of youth unemployment. Interviewees in the Youth FGD ascribed the prevalence of youth unemployment to a lack of employment opportunities in the formal sector, inadequate training for professional life, and barriers to self-employment such as administrative hurdles and limited access to capital. As a result, many youth in the Borgou department work in the informal sector or migrate to Nigeria in search of increased economic opportunities.

Additional concerns highlighted by fieldwork participants include disparities between rural and urban areas in terms of infrastructure and social services, an inadequate health system, and food insecurity. These issues have reportedly contributed to an increase in migration to urban areas, which in turn depletes the rural labor force needed for agricultural production.

Women in the Borgou department are most often engaged in agricultural production, small-scale businesses, and petty trade in the informal sector. As noted above, women's presence in the informal sector, which also offers lower wages and fewer labor protections, can increase their vulnerability to shocks such as economic recession. Women in

Benin often face barriers to accessing credit and financing, so fieldwork participants reported that women in the Borgou department have benefited from microfinance programs, *tontines*, and other financing schemes aiming to increase women's economic autonomy.

"Most of our sisters and mothers organize themselves into associations to work for their own financial autonomy by daily tontines (100FCFA). This self-sufficiency is a way for women to get out of poverty, but they often encounter opposition from their husbands who often discharge their family responsibilities on women, who are often victims of physical violence. Financial autonomy allows women to free themselves from the domination of men."

- Women's focus group discussion, Parakou

Finally, the Borgou department is vulnerable to environmental degradation and the effects of climate change. Fieldwork participants reported that logging operations outside of Parakou have contributed to deforestation, while soil degradation and decreased rainfall negatively impacted the production of yams (an important cash crop for the department) and other agricultural products this year.

Population and Demographics

The population of the Borgou department is predominantly made up of the Bariba (37.6 percent) and Peuhl (33 percent) ethnic groups, with smaller populations of the Yoruba, Gua, Otamari, Fon and other groups.[148] A majority (69.8 percent) of the population practices Islam, while 15 percent are Catholic and the remainder practice other forms of Christianity, Voodoo, or other religions.[149] Fieldwork participants reported that

relations between ethnic and religious groups in the Borgou department have historically been peaceful. However, as in many parts of Benin, regional identities and the North-South divide can be a source of division in the Borgou department, particularly during election periods. Interviewees also cited examples of regional identities affecting marriages and business arrangements, as well as politics.

"I have one of my elder sisters here who married a Fon, a man from the South. They did a traditional marriage up here but when they went to the South the man's parents didn't accept the marriage. They told him to take a second wife from the South. The new wife threw out my sister's luggage. And now my sister the first wife had to go back to the North."

- Youth focus group discussion, Parakou

A key demographic concern identified by fieldwork participants was the region's large and growing youth population. As of 2013, the department's total fertility rate of 5.2 children per woman was slightly above the national average (4.9 children).[150] Fieldwork participants reported that family planning services are available in the region but are often underutilized due to religious and cultural norms. As one government official in Parakou described, "In our mosques, if you have 2 or 3 children, you are told that the Muslim religion recommends that a woman make more children, or that God has given her more potential than that. Women are under pressure to take medication to have more children." According to the 2013 Demographic and Health Survey, 17.6 percent of women ages 15-49 in the Borgou department reported using any form of contraception, which is the second-highest rate in the country.[151] Population growth is also driven by

---

[148] "Principaux Indicateurs RGPH 2013 – Benin", INSAE Benin, 2013.
[149] Ibid.

[150] "Enquête Démographique et de Santé", Benin Demographic and Health Surveys, 2013.
[151] Ibid.

the department's relatively high rate of polygamous marriages; as of 2013, 28.5 percent of women ages 15-49 in the Borgou department were in a polygamous marriage with one co-wife, and 9.4 percent were in a marriage with two or more co-wives.[152]

In addition to population growth, the department's prevalence of early marriage, particularly in rural areas, and teenage pregnancy were identified as demographic vulnerabilities. Nearly one in five (18.6 percent) girls ages 15-19 in the Borgou department were pregnant or had already given birth as of 2013, and the average age at first marriage was 18.7 years for women and 25 years for men.[153] Fieldwork participants noted that early marriage is often driven by financial pressures. As interviewees in the Youth FGD explained, "At a certain age, women start to develop a lot of needs and their parents can't fulfill them, their pocket money doesn't cover it. This can sometimes create a need for women to get married."

Politics and Governance

Key political vulnerabilities reported by fieldwork participants included the predominance of regional identities and nepotism along family and regional lines in politics. Tensions between northerners and southerners are particularly prevalent during election periods, when politicians use regional identities as a tool to mobilize voters. However, while tensions may rise during election periods, the risk of political violence is low, according to interviewees. As one participant in the Men's FGD said in describing tensions around elections, "one can often hear harsh words, but it does not degenerate in general."

In June 2017, however, the city of Parakou was the site of a violent dispute over the traditional chieftaincy when two rival kingship candidates, one of which was supported and installed by the mayor, claimed the throne. ECOWARN data reported at least two fatalities caused by the conflict, which was confirmed by interviewees in Parakou. Although no additional violence has been reported, the dispute continues to contribute to tension in the area. One local leader interviewed in Parakou reported that "I am chief griot but because of this, I have not put my feet in either palace since then."

Fieldwork participants also voiced a sense of dissatisfaction with recent reforms implemented by the Talon administration and expressed the perception that the government does not adequately consider the social impacts of these reforms or solicit community input. As one interviewee in the Men's FGD stated, "The real problem with this government is that it does not listen and it makes arbitrary decisions." Fieldwork participants particularly highlighted the dismissal of mayors, the removal of informal vendors from public roadways, and the cancellation of the student exams known as the *concours* as issues causing debate and controversy.

> *"The new president stopped the 'concours' due to problems with cheating. The fact that the 'concours' were cancelled really shocked a lot of people. They were stunned. This provoked a lot of rumors. "*
>
> *- Youth focus group discussion, Parakou*

Finally, women and youth remain underrepresented in political decision-making in the Borgou department, and interviewees expressed the sense that these groups are mobilized for votes during campaign periods and subsequently ignored. Women are reportedly involved in political activism and youth are active during election periods, but rarely hold positions of political power. One interviewee from Guéma, a neighborhood of Parakou, reported that "of the

---

[152] Ibid.

[153] Ibid.

nine district delegates, seven are men, two are women and three are young."

Rule of Law

Fieldwork participants in the Borgou department expressed a relatively low level of confidence in the judicial system, citing perceptions of executive branch influence, corruption and bias toward the wealthy. As interviewees in the Men's FGD described, "In Benin, before the justice system, the strongest wins. When the defendant is illiterate in French, the interpreters who do the appeal are not sincere in their translation. They are often corrupt and say things to the detriment of the weaker (illiterate). Illiterates are even afraid of lawsuits and hesitate to go to court." In addition, fieldwork participants reported that women's rights are poorly defended in practice, despite the existence of national gender laws. As a result, many people in the Borgou department often prefer to seek justice through alternative or traditional mechanisms of dispute resolution, such as mediation by religious leaders, before turning to the justice system.

Security

The primary security concern identified by fieldwork participants in the Borgou department was criminality, mostly incidents of petty theft and armed banditry. Drug use, conflicts between herders and farmers in rural areas, and disputes over the sale of land to multiple people were also highlighted as risks in the region. Land disputes are particularly prevalent in urban areas, where population growth is exacerbated by a lack of available land for construction and cultivation. Women in the department also reportedly face high rates of gender-based violence (GBV).

In addition, fieldwork participants cast doubt on the professionalism and effectiveness of local security forces. Interviewees particularly cited the slow response time of police, which was attributed to a lack of adequate resources, and reported that security forces are often complicit in corruption and criminality. As a result, local communities have formed neighborhood watch groups or civilian security brigades to augment security forces in the area. These groups, which incorporate traditional hunters' groups in some communities, reportedly enjoy broad community support and collaborate with the police in their operations.

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

Despite the concerns discussed above, fieldwork participants in the Borgou department identified a number of social and institutional resilience factors which help mitigate conflict risks and vulnerabilities. Interviewees particularly highlighted the department's history of peaceful coexistence between religious groups. Religious leaders, councils of elders and other local leaders are also involved in dispute resolution at the local level. Media outlets and the activities of civil

society groups help to calm societal tensions and provide information and sensitization to local communities. Interviewees also highlighted the importance of initiatives to address youth unemployment, such as   The National Agency for the Promotion of Employment, and microfinance or *tontine* initiatives intended to increase women's economic empowerment. Finally, local neighborhood watch groups or civilian security brigades reportedly contribute positively to security in the region.

Littoral Department

Located along the coast of the Gulf of Guinea and to the south of the Atlantique and Ouémé departments, the Littoral department is the site of Cotonou, Benin's largest city. Home to the Fon, Adja, and Yoruba ethnic groups, Littoral had a population of 678,874 persons as of 2013.[154] Unlike other departments where agriculture is the principal economic activity, Littoral's primary industry is the trade and services sector.[155] Other key economic activities include skilled manual work, professional management, and technician work.[156]

Structural Vulnerabilities	• Youth unemployment • Economic dependency on the Nigerian economy • Dominance of informal economy • Internal migration from rural to urban areas • Limited provision of social services (health, education, clean water) • Population growth • Inequality • Lack of employment opportunities • Lack of access to the judicial system • Perceptions of executive interference, corruption, and bias in the judicial system • Overcrowded and under resourced prison system • Porous borders
Event-Driven Risks	• Poverty • Food insecurity • Economic recession in Nigeria • Incidents of cross-border smuggling • Incidents of corruption • Criminality • Elections • Voter fraud

---

[154] 2014 FICHE DE DONNÉES SUR LA POPULATION
[155] "Employment and Labour Force Statistics of Benin, 2012", INSAE Benin, 2012.
[156] Ibid.

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors	• Civil society organizations • Trade unions • The Constitutional Court • Security groups in neighborhoods and villages

Economics and Resources

Fieldwork participants cited unemployment, poverty, inequality, and inflation as key economic vulnerabilities in the Littoral department. Participants stated that the dominance of informal employment in the department is an ongoing vulnerability due to the fact that taxes cannot be collected on informal trade. During the Women's Focus Group Discussion (FGD), participants stated that women play a central role in the economy and that the majority of market traders are women. Interviewees also highlighted a lack of employment opportunities, especially for youth. Participants in the Youth FGD added that a lack of adequate resources has prevented youth from initiating income-generating activities.

Rural to urban migration was also cited as a vulnerability during the fieldwork. Participants stated that because of the influx of people into urban areas, fewer people work in agriculture, resulting in an increase in food prices. This, coupled with price increases of other basic commodities, has exacerbated poverty.

"The development of the activity of motorcycle taxis does not suit the national economy because able-bodied workers leave agriculture to come to the city to drive motorcycle taxis."

- Men's focus group discussion, Cotonou

Fieldwork participants expressed mixed feelings about microcredit loans. Specifically, participants in the Women's FGD stated that, while women are often the beneficiaries of microcredit schemes, they are often not given enough time to pay back loans.

Benin's economic relationship with Nigeria was discussed throughout the fieldwork. Interviewees noted that Benin's economy is closely linked to the Nigerian economy and affected by fluctuations of the Nigerian naira. Additionally, the border between Nigeria and Benin is reportedly porous, making it difficult to regulate the flow of goods. During a Key Informant Interview (KII), one fieldwork participant specifically reported that the high price of gasoline in Benin has caused an increase in the smuggling of gasoline from Nigeria.

Interviewees cited perceptions of corruption within customs controls and the taxation system as an ongoing concern in the Littoral department. For example, during the Men's FGD, one participant stated that there have reportedly been incidents where large houses are taxed less than smaller houses. During one KII, a women's group leader reported that corruption and embezzlement have allegedly led to land conflicts.

Population and Demographics

The population of the Littoral department is predominantly made up of the Fon (56.5 percent) and Adja (17.7 percent), and Yoruba (10.9 percent) ethnic groups.[157] An estimated 51.2 percent of the population practices Catholicism and an estimated 16.9 percent of the population practices Islam, while the rest of the population practices other forms of Christianity, traditional religions, and Voodoo.[158] Fieldwork participants cited rural to urban migration, youth unemployment and high

---

[157] "Principaux Indicateurs RGPH 2013 – Benin", INSAE Benin, 2013.
[158] Ibid.

population growth as key demographic vulnerabilities in the Littoral department.

Interviewees emphasized that migration from rural to urban areas, specifically to Cotonou, the largest city in Benin, is an ongoing concern. This has led to overcrowding, resulting in low access to suitable housing and quality healthcare in urban areas.

Fieldwork participants also discussed the youth bulge, stating that schools are overcrowded, causing the quality of education to suffer. Additionally, the growing population has damaged the standard of living for the average citizen due to overcrowding, lack of economic opportunity, and poor provision of social services. Youth unemployment was also cited as a key vulnerability with participants reporting that many students graduate from university and find that there are few job opportunities.

Fieldwork participants stated that the prevalence of teenage pregnancy is an ongoing concern. During the Men's FGD, participants stated that teenage pregnancy has led to child abandonment because of poverty and high medical expenses. Interviewees stated that better access to family planning would help decrease rates of teenage pregnancy.

Politics and Governance

During the fieldwork, participants highlighted perceptions of corruption and nepotism as key political vulnerabilities. During the Men's FGD, participants reported that businessmen interfere in politics, allegedly using money to purchase votes and gain power.

Interviewees stated that there is some anxiety in the lead-up to the 2019 legislative elections. Fieldwork participants reported that voting access has been a concern, but also noted that civil society organizations have been active in efforts to improve voter access. Voter fraud was noted as another area of concern. Interviewees discussed

the creation of a new "all purpose" ID card, the Recensement Administratif à Vocation d'Identification Personnelle (RAVIP), stating that there are concerns it will lead to fraud. Several fieldwork participants stated that there is concern foreigners will vote in the upcoming elections. Furthermore, interviewees reported that there has been little education about the new identification method, causing confusion among the general population. During one KII, a journalist stated that there has been a lack of planning for the 2019 elections, and there are concerns that the elections will be delayed.

Finally, fieldwork participants stated that women

> *"There is an abuse of the citizen by judicial police officers. If the citizen does not know his rights, he can be easily manipulated by the judicial police officers and find himself easily in prison where one loses all dignity."*
>
> *- Journalist, Cotonou*

and youth have historically been underrepresented in politics. During a KII, a civil society leader stated that though women and youth make up a large part of the electorate they are rarely considered in political decisions. Participants in the Women's FGD highlighted these concerns, stating cultural stigmas prevent women from pursuing careers in politics.

Rule of Law

During the fieldwork, participants reported limited access to justice and perceptions that justice is only available to the wealthy as key vulnerabilities. Additionally, interviewees highlighted perceptions that the judiciary is not independent because the executive appoints prosecutors. Fieldwork participants also stated that there is a low level of knowledge about laws and rights among the general population, which allegedly makes them vulnerable to manipulation by judicial police

officers. Interviewees stated that people do not trust the police due to perceptions of corruption. While there are laws that exist to protect women, fieldwork participants reported that they are rarely enforced. Finally, prisons are reportedly overcrowded and under resourced, and there are no reintegration programs for those released after serving time.

Security

Fieldwork participants highlighted illicit economic activity, especially drug trafficking, and criminality, such as banditry and petty crime, as key concerns undermining security in the Littoral department. During one KII, a civil society leader stated that the growth of ghettos and the phenomenon of street children has increased the circulation of drugs and small arms and has led to the growth of other illicit economic activity. Furthermore, interviewees reported that increased poverty and unemployment have led to an increase in crime and theft.
Fieldwork participants highlighted porous borders, both with Nigeria and Togo, as an ongoing security concern. While Cotonou has not seen any major terrorist attacks, interviewees expressed concerns about Boko Haram's presence in Nigeria and the potential for extremist violence in the future.

Finally, interviewees stated that a lack of training and resources for security forces is an ongoing security vulnerability, noting that there is a lack of trust in police and security forces. Some participants also reported perceptions that law enforcement is complicit in criminal activity.

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

Despite the vulnerabilities and risks identified above, several institutional and social resilience factors were identified during the fieldwork. Civil society was highlighted as playing a key role in mitigating political tension and election violence by creating platforms for dialogue and promoting peace. Interviewees also noted that the strength of the media has been a source of resilience in the area of politics. Additionally, fieldwork participants identified trade unions as a source of economic resilience. In the area of security, self-defense groups were noted as a resilience factor.

Plateau Department

The Plateau department, located in the southeast of Benin, has a population of 624,146 according to 2013 census data.[159] It shares borders with the departments of Collines, Atakora, and Ouémé, as well as an international border with Ogun State, Nigeria. The Fon and Yoruba constitute the main ethnic groups in the Plateau department.[160] Agriculture, trade, and the service industry are the primary economic activities.[161]
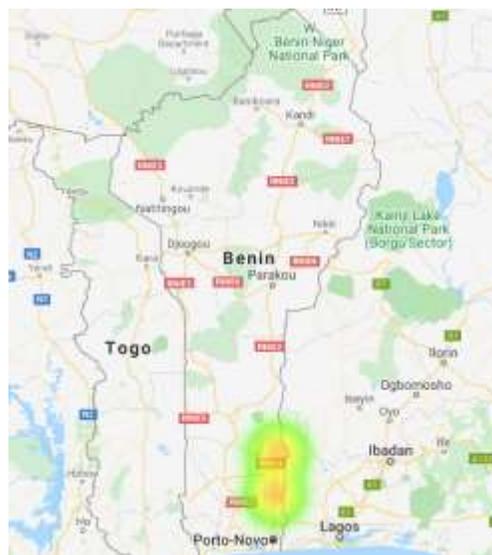
Structural Vulnerabilities	
	• Economic dependence on agriculture and the Nigerian economy
	• Unemployment
	• Porous borders and informal trade, including petrol from Nigeria
	• Rural-urban divide and regional disparities in development and infrastructure
	• Unpredictable rainfall patterns impact agriculture
	• Under-representation of women in political decision-making
	• Poor access to justice and lack of popular knowledge of laws
	• Underutilization of family planning
	• Gender-based violence (GBV)
	• Early marriage
	• Perceptions of ineffectiveness among security forces due to lack of resources
	• Perceptions of corruption

Event-Driven Risks	
	• Economic recession in Nigeria and neighboring countries
	• Fluctuation of the Naira
	• Food insecurity
	• Natural disasters, including flooding and bushfires
	• Criminality, including drug trafficking and cross-border smuggling
	• Low-level communal, ethnic and religious tensions
	• Significant risk regarding herder-farmer conflicts
	• Elections
	• Migration of educated youth for opportunities abroad or to Cotonou

---

[159] "Benin Data Portal", Institut National de la Statistique et de l'Analyse Economique (INSAE) du Benin.
[160] "Principaux Indicateurs RGPH 2013 – Benin", INSAE Benin, 2013.
[161] "Employment and Labour Force Statistics of Benin, 2012", INSAE Benin, 2012.

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors	• NGOs and civil society organizations • Religious leaders • Security forces • Civil liberties including freedom of speech and assembly

Economics and Resources

The economy of the Plateau department is largely dependent on agriculture, principally cassava and yam, but also other crops including cotton and pineapple. As in other regions of the country, much of Plateau's economic activity is in the informal sector and relies heavily on cross-border trade, especially to and from Nigeria. This informal trade includes the sale of agricultural products in Nigeria and the importation of gasoline which is widely sold in glass bottles at the roadside, as well as other products such as electronics and motorcycles. The recent economic recession in Nigeria, and sharp fluctuation in the naira severely impacted prices and income for Plateau residents. Also, while informal trade provides an important source of income and employment, its predominance reduces state revenue, and consequently the state's ability to provide infrastructure, and essential services. It also creates opportunities for corruption and patronage networks that undermine transparency and the functioning of government.

Educated youth frequently leave the weak labor market in Plateau for opportunities elsewhere, both in Cotonou and abroad. This reduces human capital, further weakening the provision of public services and the economic development of the region. Fieldwork participants reported that although services such as education, health, and water/sanitation are available in the population centers of Plateau, they are often lacking in the more rural areas of the department.

Respondents also highlighted the reliance of farmers on predictable weather patterns for planting and harvest. When it rains in the off-

season, as it did in late 2017, it kills crops and reduces the harvest. Other environmental pressures include natural disasters such as flooding or bushfires, such as the June 2017 flooding that damaged fields in Pobè.

Population and Demographics

The largest ethnic groups in Plateau are the Fon and Yoruba. Respondents noted that there tends to be good social cohesion among all the different ethnic groups, though there was some low-level tension reported with the Nago in the towns of Plateau, possibly making it harder to find work there for those of a different ethnicity. Serious tensions have increased between local farmers and nomadic herders, whose cattle sometimes damage or eat crops, especially corn. This has led to lethal clashes in recent years and has also complicated the relationship between farmers and local Fulani who are often unassociated with the nomadic Fulani coming over the border from Nigeria.

An estimated 19 percent of the population practices Islam, while the rest of the population practices Catholicism, other forms of Christianity,

"I have my granary in the field and when they come they might let their cows hit it with their heads against the granary like this and then they break it open and eat the corn. Then the farmers come and chase their cows. This is a very serious problem. To solve this problem, they set up the 'corridor' but no one wants to follow it."

– Woman farmer in Ketou, Plateau

Voodoo, or traditional religions.[162] Fieldwork participants reported that relationships between religious groups are generally peaceful. However, there is some tension during the Oro festival, which is a Yoruba tradition in which women are not permitted to leave their homes for a period of several days. Muslim women, however, must leave their homes to go pray, which causes tension. During the field research, some non-Muslim women also reported feeling annoyed by the practice, though they said it was a "sensitive" issue.

Although not as severe as in the northern part of the country, fertility rates are high and contraceptive use is low in Plateau department (5.3 children per woman and 15 percent of women use any form of contraception).[163] Fieldwork participants noted that the growing youth population constitutes an economic vulnerability and has contributed to a growth in criminality. Participants noted a significant amount of early marriage, often due to poverty, leading to pregnancy and school dropouts.

Politics and Governance

Political vulnerabilities were not highlighted as a major concern by fieldwork participants. Participants emphasized a strong democratic tradition in Benin and the guarantee of civil liberties, including freedom of speech. However, they did mention the reality of corruption in the context of the informal cross-border trade, as well as corruption in the civil service. Although there was some concern about potential confusion around the use of the new identification cards, *Recensement Administratif à Vocation d'Identification Personnelle* (RAVIP) in the next elections, in general people expected the upcoming elections to be peaceful as usual. The youth offered a contrarian view to this consensus

however, saying that political polarization was high and could lead to conflict in the coming election.

Rule of Law

Fieldwork participants mentioned access to justice as the main vulnerability in this pillar, both due to the expense as well as the proximity of legal services. However, they said that the traditional courts are very good and very accessible. Participants mentioned the trafficking of children by families due to poverty as a concern.

Security

The primary security concern in Plateau was rising conflict between nomadic herders and local farmers. ECOWARN data shows this issue spiking in 2017 in Plateau, during which over a dozen people were reportedly killed in such clashes. One farmer explained that the conflict is not between famers and local Fulani, who make up 0.2 percent of the population in Plateau, according to 2013 data,[164] and have lived side by side with their neighbors for decades. However, when clashes occur between farmers and nomadic Fulani, it can lead to distrust and violence even between neighbors. "Corridors" have been established for the herders to move their cattle, but these are sometimes not respected, which can lead to disputes, especially during the peak seasonal transhumance period.

Other security concerns mentioned by participants include criminality and domestic violence. Although not a violence issue, several people also mentioned that land disputes occur when someone sells the same plot of land to multiple clients. Participants cited the public security forces (gendarmes and police), including the national hotline for cases of emergency, as resilience factors. However, many people also said that the

---

[162] "Principaux Indicateurs RGPH 2013 – Benin", INSAE Benin, 2013.
[163] "Benin Data Portal", Institut National de la Statistique et de l'Analyse Economique (INSAE) du Benin.

[164] "Principaux Indicateurs RGPH 2013 – Benin", INSAE Benin, 2013.

security forces generally come very late when there is a problem, and may not have the resources or capacity to address the issue.

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

The vulnerabilities described above are mitigated by important social and institutional resilience factors. These include a strong democratic tradition, a history of peaceful elections, and a high level of social cohesion between communities and groups. Participants also mentioned civil society and traditional structures as being important. Civil society organizations help raise awareness about legal rights, civic education, and resources for people in need. Traditional structures offer leadership and alternative dispute resolution in cases where access to courts may be difficult. In a difficult economic environment, participants mentioned the Nigerian market and the informal economy as a resilience factor for livelihoods. This should be taken into consideration as policymakers seek to advance a reform agenda regularizing such practices.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Due to widespread poverty and a largely informal economy, Benin's major vulnerabilities are economic. The country's economy is heavily dependent on agriculture and trade with Nigeria. Due to porous borders and its close geographic proximity to Nigeria, informal trade and smuggling across the Benin-Nigeria border has flourished. While these activities provide a livelihood for a large portion of the population, the government cannot collect taxes on informal trade with the consequence that infrastructure and social services suffer. Additionally, low state revenue can lead to incidents of corruption and impunity among state officials.

Porous borders are also linked to security concerns in Benin, namely conflict between farmers and herders and the potential spillover of extremist violence from Niger and Nigeria. Pastoral issues peak during the transhumance seasonal period. Though "corridors" have been established to allow herders to move their livestock, they are not always respected, which sometimes triggers conflict. Despite these tensions, Benin is largely resilient in the area of security. The country has not seen a major terrorist attack in recent years, though the fieldwork revealed that there is concern about violence from extremist groups such as Boko Haram spreading to Benin. Criminality and illicit economic activity are also included as major security concerns for Benin.

In response to some of these issues, the Beninese government has embarked on an ambitious reform agenda across all the human security pillars. These include electoral reforms, customs and border control reforms, and security sector reforms. While these reforms may address or mitigate vulnerabilities in the long-term, in the short-term they could lead to social disruption. For example, the introduction of new identification cards, the *Recensement Administratif à Vocation*

d'Identification Personnelle (RAVIP), has led to confusion and concerns about voter fraud. While such initiatives provide an opportunity for transparency, reforms should be communicated clearly to avoid confusion and discord. Similarly, the social implications of economic reforms must be considered before they are instituted. While formalizing sectors of the economy could provide increased state revenue, these actions could adversely affect income for a significant portion of the population.

Looking to the future, Benin continues to face key challenges in reducing poverty, improving social services and infrastructure, and addressing its dependency on agriculture and the Nigerian economy. As the government embarks on further reforms, engaging local communities will be critical to sustainable development in Benin.

Economics and Resources
- Support the regulation of environmentally detrimental practices; strengthen environmental protection laws; implement emergency response plans for natural disasters
- Promote civic engagement and public education around government reform agendas
- Support and expand microfinancing and vocational training, particularly targeting youth and women
- Implement economic diversification reforms
- Promote and integrate the growth of small-scale industries nationwide
- Strengthen capacity for border security and custom services
- Reinforce agricultural production capacity

Population and Demographics

- Invest in rural development to improve infrastructure and service provision
- Standardize curriculums; fully fund rural schools to ensure that they have adequate supplies and staff; promote initiatives for girls' education
- Support CSO initiatives for culturally-sensitive promotion of family planning

Politics and Governance

- Sensitize the public on implementation of the *Recensement initial Administratif à Vocation d'Identification de la Population* (RAVIP) ID card
- Promote civic engagement and public education around government reform agendas
- Strengthen good governance and institutions
- Promote inter/intra community dialogue to strengthen social cohesion

Rule of Law

- Encourage and expand initiatives to involve religious leaders or community leaders in dispute resolution

- Support initiatives to raise awareness around gender-based violence (GBV), with particular emphasis on outreach to women
- Provide legal aid services to improve access to justice
- Strengthen the principle of separation of powers
- Promote gender sensitive policies to ensure a higher representation of women in the justice system

Security

- Promote collaboration between defense and security forces
- Support bi- and multi-lateral training programs to enhance the capacity of the security forces
- Promote trust-building between local communities and security forces
- Popularize and add resources to the "Ligne Verte" hotline to better support victims of violence and abuse
- Work with regional and international partners to address larger regional trends of insecurity and trafficking networks
- Organize a multi-stakeholder forum to explore potential solutions to transhumance-related conflicts
- Strengthen capacity for border security and custom services

Appendix A: Data Sample

Phase	Dimension	Source	Metric	Sample
Phase 1: Desktop	Resilience	SNA	Survey	35 Peace/Security Actors
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	ECOWARN	SitReps	1022 reports
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	Global Integrity	In practice, the agency/agencies mandated to organize and monitor national elections is/are protected from political interference	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	Global Integrity	In practice, the agency/agencies mandated to organize and monitor national elections make/s timely, publicly available reports before and after a national election.	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	EIU Democracy Index	Electoral process and pluralism	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	EIU Democracy Index	Political Participation	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	EIU Democracy Index	Functioning of Government	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	IDEA	Average Voter Turnout Parliamentary	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	Transparency International	Corruption Perception	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	BTI	Political and Social Integration	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	Freedom House	Political Rights	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	Mo Ibrahim Index	Personal Safety	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	UN, ECOWAS, AU	Peace Operations	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	ACLED	Conflict Fatalities per capita	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)

Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	UPPSALA	Presence/Conflict with Non-State Armed Groups	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	PTS	Political Terror Scale – Amnesty	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	PTS	Political Terror Scale – State	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	PTS	Political Terror Scale – HRW	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	UNHCR	Refugees by country of origin per capita	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	UNHCR	Refugees by country of origin (difference 2015-2014) per capita	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	UNHCR	IDPs by Country of Asylum per capita	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	UNHCR	IDPs by country of asylum (difference 2015-2014) per capita	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	Global Integrity	In practice, the independence of the judiciary is guaranteed.	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	Global Integrity	In practice, national-level judges give reasons for their decisions/judgments.	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	Global Integrity	In practice, allegations of corruption against senior level politicians and/or civil servants of any level are investigated by an independent body.	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	Global Integrity	In practice, the body/bodies that investigate/s allegations of public sector corruption is/are effective.	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	Global Integrity	In practice, the mechanism for citizens to report police misconduct or abuse of force is effective.	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	WB Human Rights and Law Report	% of Women on Constitutional Court	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)

Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	WB – Women, Business, and Law	Does the law mandate equal remuneration for work of equal value?	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	WB – Women, Business, and Law	Does the law mandate nondiscrimination based on gender in hiring?	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	WB – Women, Business, and Law	Is dismissal of pregnant workers prohibited?	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Gini coefficient	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Gini WYD	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Income Share Held by Highest 10%	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Population with Improved Sanitation (Urban-Rural Difference)	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Population with Improved Water Source (Urban-Rural Difference)	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	UN Stats	Children under 5 moderately or severely underweight, percentage	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Depth of the food deficit (kilocalories per person per day)	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Prevalence of Underweight, weight for age (% of children under 5)	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	GDP per capita, PPP (current international $)	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	UN Stats	Literacy, 15-24, Women	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	School enrollment, primary and secondary (gross), gender parity index (GPI)	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Employment to population ratio, ages 15-24, female (%) (modeled ILO estimate)	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)

Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	UN Stats	Median Age	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Population Growth	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	UN Stats	Prevalence of underweight, weight for age, female (% of children under 5)	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Maternal mortality ratio (modeled estimate, per 100,000 live births)	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Contraceptive prevalence, any methods (% of women ages 15-49)	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Life expectancy at birth, female (years)	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	WB – Women, Business, and Law	Percentage of women aged 20-24 years old who were married or in a union before age 18	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Risk	ECOWARN	IncReps	181 (after reducing for duplicates and relevance)
Phase 1: Desktop	Risk	ACLED	Incidents	143
Phase 2: Field Research	Risk and Vulnerability	Focus Group Discussions	Broken out by Men, Women, and Youth	12
Phase 2: Field Research	Risk and Vulnerability	Key Informant Interviews	Prominent individuals and local experts, including gvt officials	24

Appendix B: Vulnerability Index

Index Data Sources

Based on the five human security pillars, a series of indicators were identified based on relevance and measurability. Data sources were then identified from recognized institutions such as the World Bank, United Nations, as well as universities, research institutions, and think tanks. A full list of data sources is attached in *Appendix A.* During selection and testing of the index, the availability of data was assessed to ensure an even distribution of scores.

Process: Calculating the Scores

The index is scored on a scale of 1-10, with 1 representing the highest level of vulnerability, and 10 the lowest level of vulnerability. Each raw data set is normalized and scaled, before being integrated into the indicator and pillar scores.

1. Normalization

An index, by definition, integrates and compares data sets with very different curves and distribution. As a first step, therefore, it is necessary to normalize the data so that it can be properly compared. Without framing the data within the context of the wider group of numbers, its meaning can become skewed. Therefore, the process of finding the mean and calculating the Standard Deviation (SD) of the data set, then using those elements to approximate a normal distribution, can be used to provide this meaning.   The Gaussian normalization formula is outlined below.

Where μ is the mean

σ^2 is the variance

$$f(x, \mu, \sigma) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}\,\sigma}\, e^{-\frac{(x-\mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}}$$

SD is the quantity calculated to indicate the extent of deviation for a group of numbers as a whole. Normal distribution is then used to find how the variables are approximately normally distributed. In the context of this tool, it will help to understand where countries sit in relation to each other within the group distribution of a particular data set.

For raw data sets that have gaps (e.g. data is unavailable for some countries but not others), country data points are left blank. This ensures countries are not provided with an artificial score, where data does not exist.

2. Scaling

To create an index where countries are scored within a defined range, the data sets must be scaled so the scores can be integrated. This process of scaling transforms the normalized data into a number between 1 and 10, with 10 representing the lowest level of vulnerability. The below formula was applied to standardize the distribution values from [min, max] to [MIN, MAX], matching the new scale of values both for the highest and lowest edges of the distribution.

$$X = MIN + \frac{(MAX - MIN)}{(max - min)} \times (x - min)$$

3. Aggregation

Each indicator may be made up of either one or multiple data sources. In cases where multiple data sets were used to make up the one indicator, the data sets were each scaled to preliminary index scores (1-10), as outlined in the above steps. The average was then taken of these scores to reach a final index score for that indicator. This process was repeated at the pillar level, first averaging, then scaling the indicator scores.

Appendix C: Additional References

Barma, N.H., Huybens, E. & Viñuela, L. 'Institutions Taking Root: Building State Capacity in Challenging Contexts', World Bank Group, September 2014 http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/book/10.1596/978-1-4648-0269-0

Brookings Institute, 'Benin's Landmark Elections: An Experiment in Political Transitions', 2016. https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2016/03/22/benins-landmark-elections-an-experiment-in-political-transitions/

CARE International, 'An Assessment of Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies in Southern Benin', 2011 https://www.alnap.org/help-library/an-assessment-of-gender-based-violence-in-emergencies-in-southern-benin

Clingendael Institute, 'Beneath the Apparent State of Affairs: Stability in Ghana and Benin', 2016. https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/Ghana%20Benin%20-%20January%202016.pdf

Kodila-Tedika, O., Simplice, A. 'State fragility, rent seeking and lobbying: evidence from African data', International Journal of Social Economics, 2016, Vol. 43: Issue 10 http://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/abs/10.1108/IJSE-11-2014-0234

Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment, 'Climate Change Profile: Benin' https://ees.kuleuven.be/klimos/toolkit/documents/684_CC_benin.pdf

NZAID 'Conflict-Risk Assessment Guideline' 2008 http://www.gaportal.org/resources/detail/nzaid-conflict-risk-assessment-guideline

OECD ' States of Fragility 2016: Understanding Violence', 2016 http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/development/states-of-fragility-2016_9789264267213-en#page1

Stroh, A. 'The Consequences of Appointment Policies for Court Legitimacy in Benin: A Network Analysis Approach' https://www.giga-hamburg.de/sites/default/files/publications/wp281_stroh.pdf

USAID 'Benin Youth Assessment Report' 2011 http://www.youthpolicy.org/national/Benin_2011_Youth_Assessment_Report.pdf

USAID 'Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework (ICAF)', 2008 https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/187786.pdf

Woolcock, M. 'Engaging with Fragile and Conflict-Affected States ', Harvard Kennedy School, August 2014 https://www.wider.unu.edu/publication/engaging-fragile-and-conflict-affected-states

Appendix D: Matrix of Vulnerabilities, Risks, Resilience Factors, and Recommendations by Human Security Pillar

BENIN	Vulnerabilities	Risks	Resiliencies	Recommendations
Economics & Resources	➤ Lack of economic diversity (dependence on subsistence agriculture) ➤ Exposed to vulnerability in Nigerian economy ➤ Inadequate economic empowerment of women ➤ Porous borders ➤ Informal trade ➤ Regional disparities in development and infrastructure ➤ Fluctuation of the Naira	➤ Illicit economic activity/cross-border smuggling ➤ Economic recession in Nigeria ➤ Migration for opportunities abroad ➤ Border closure between Nigeria and Benin ➤ External shocks to Nigerian economy ➤ Natural disasters especially drought and flood ➤ Outbreak of crop diseases /pest infestation ➤ Food insecurity ➤ Inflation	➤ Civil society organizations (CSOs) and media outlets ➤ Local and traditional leaders involved in dispute resolution ➤ Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms ➤ Culture of religious tolerance ➤ Social cohesion between ethnic groups ➤ Subsidies for agriculture ➤ Economic reforms ➤ Fight against corruption ➤ Vibrant informal sector ➤ Cross border economic activities ➤ Re-exportation economic system ➤ Micro-financing schemes	➤ Support the regulation of environmentally detrimental practices; strengthen environmental protection laws; implement emergency response plans for natural disasters ➤ Promote civic engagement and public education around government reform agendas ➤ Support and expand microfinancing and vocational training, particularly targeting youth and women ➤ Economic diversification reforms ➤ Promote and integrate the growth of small scale industries nationwide ➤ Strengthen capacity for border security and custom services ➤ Reinforce agricultural production capacity
Population & Demographics	➤ Youth bulge ➤ Youth unemployment ➤ Low rate of family planning ➤ High illiteracy ➤ Early marriage ➤ Migration for opportunity abroad	➤ Natural disasters/flooding /drought ➤ Food insecurity ➤ Disease outbreak ➤ Criminality	➤ Implementation of city planning measures	➤ Invest in rural development to improve infrastructure and service provision ➤ Standardize curriculums; fully fund rural schools to ensure that they have adequate supplies and staff; promote initiatives for girls' education

	➢ Population growth ➢ Land tenure ➢ Climate change	Rural/urban migration ➢ Disparity in development ➢ Land based conflict ➢ Environmental degradation ➢ Teenage pregnancy ➢ Consistent coastal erosion		➢ Support CSO initiatives for culturally-sensitive promotion of family planning
Politics and Governance	➢ Perceptions of nepotism and corruption ➢ Underrepresentation of women and youth in political decision-making	➢ Insufficient communication around the use of new voter identification cards (RAVIP vs LEPI) ➢ Perceived manipulation of ethnic identities	➢ Successful political transitions ➢ Vibrant CSOs ➢ Strong social cohesion due to inter community and religious influence	➢ Sensitize the public on implementation of the *Recensement initial Administratif à Vocation d'Identification de la Population* (RAVIP) ID card ➢ Promote civic engagement and public education around government reform agendas ➢ Strengthen good governance and institutions ➢ Promote inter/intra community dialogue to strengthen social cohesion
Rule of Law	➢ Poor access to justice ➢ Ignorance of legal provisions ➢ high cost of legal services ➢ Lack of resources in the judicial system/prison system	➢ Perceived corruption within government ➢ Mob justice ➢ Impunity	➢ Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms ➢ Vibrant CSOs ➢ Existence of policies to strengthen the rule of law	➢ Encourage and expand initiatives to involve religious leaders or community leaders in dispute resolution ➢ Support initiatives to raise awareness around gender-based violence (GBV), with particular emphasis on outreach to women ➢ Provide legal aid services to improve access to justice ➢ Strengthen the principle of separation of powers ➢ Promote gender sensitive policies to ensure a higher representation of women in the justice system
Security	➢ Perceptions of corruption among security forces ➢ Lack of resources for security forces ➢ Transhumance ➢ Porous borders	➢ Criminality such as drug trafficking/ cross-border smuggling	➢ Joint patrol of Gendarmerie and police ➢ Sanctioning of security officers found guilty of misconduct	➢ Promote collaboration between defense and security forces ➢ Support bi- and multi-lateral training programs to enhance the capacity of the security forces ➢ Promote trust-building between local communities and security forces

		➢ Gender-based violence (GBV) ➢ Resource-based conflicts, particularly between herder-farmer ➢ Terrorism ➢ Maritime insecurity	➢ ECOWAS Maritime Security Architecture ➢ Community policing ➢ Joint Multinational Taskforce in Lake Chad Basin ➢ *"Agence Béninoise de Gestion Intégrée des Espaces Frontaliers"*	➢ Popularize and add resources to the "Ligne Verte" hotline to better support victims of violence and abuse ➢ Work with regional and international partners to address larger regional trends of insecurity and trafficking networks ➢ Organize a multi-stakeholder forum to explore potential solutions to transhumance-related conflicts ➢ Strengthen capacity for border security and custom services