



Country Risk and Vulnerability Assessment

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ECOWAS COMMISSION
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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
AfDB	African Development Bank
ANDDH	Clinique Juridique of the Association Nationale de Défense des Droits humain
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
AREN	The Association for the revitalization of Livestock in Niger
AU	African Union
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CNCCAI	Commission Nationale pour la Collecte et de Contrôle des Armes Illicites
CNDH	National Commission on Human Rights
CNDP	National Council of Political Dialogue
CPIA	Country Policy and Institutional Assessment
CRA	Conflict Risk Assessment
CRVA	Country Risk and Vulnerability Assessment
CSI	Centre de Santé Intégré
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DFID	United Kingdom Department for International Development
DPA	ECOWAS Directorate of Political Affairs
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
FDS	Forces de Défense et de Sécurité
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGM/C	Female genital mutilation/cutting
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDP	Gross domestic product
GIS	Geographic Information System
GSDRC	Governance and Social Development Resource Centre
GSIM	Group to Support Islam and Muslims
HACIA	High Authority for Fighting Corruption
ICAF	Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework
IDPs	Internally displaced persons
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IFIs	International financial institutions
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IncReps	ECOWARN's Incident Reports
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
IOF	International Organisation de la Francophonie

IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISGS	Islamic State in the Greater Sahara
ISWAP	Islamic State West African Province
KII	Key Informant Interview
MINUSMA	UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MJRN	Movement for Justice and Rehabilitation of Niger
MNJ	Movement of Nigeriens for Justice
MNJTF	Multi-National Joint Task Force
MNSD	National Movement for the Society in Development
MODEN/FA	Nigerien Democratic Movement for an African Federation
MUJAO	Movement for the Unity and Jihad in West Africa
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PNDS	National Party for Democracy and Socialism
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
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization
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 Niger to better understand the structural vulnerabilities that may 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 January 2018 in Niger 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 Niger, high levels of vulnerability were found in the areas of Economics/Resources, and Population/Demographics, while moderate levels

of vulnerability were found in Politics/Governance, Rule of Law, and Security.

Challenges included food insecurity, dependence on subsistence agriculture, population growth, internal and external migration, and the political and economic implications of the 2018 Finance Law. Insecurity has further exacerbated economic vulnerabilities throughout Niger, especially the presence of Boko Haram in the Diffa region, and extremist violence along the shared borders with Mali and Algeria. In addition to extremist violence, criminality, illicit economic activity, porous borders, and conflict between farmers and herders continued to undermine peace and human security in Niger.

However, there were also strong social and institutional resilience factors for peacebuilding, economic growth, and good governance in Niger. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) were noted to be involved in initiatives to alleviate poverty and improve food security. Additionally, NGOs have invested in basic social services, as well as spearheading awareness-raising campaigns around issues such as family planning, early marriage, and migration. Traditional and religious leaders have contributed positively to security by spreading peacebuilding messages to local communities. Self-defense groups, vigilante groups, and village monitoring groups also played an important role in the maintenance of peace and security for communities throughout the country.

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 Niger.

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 Niger 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

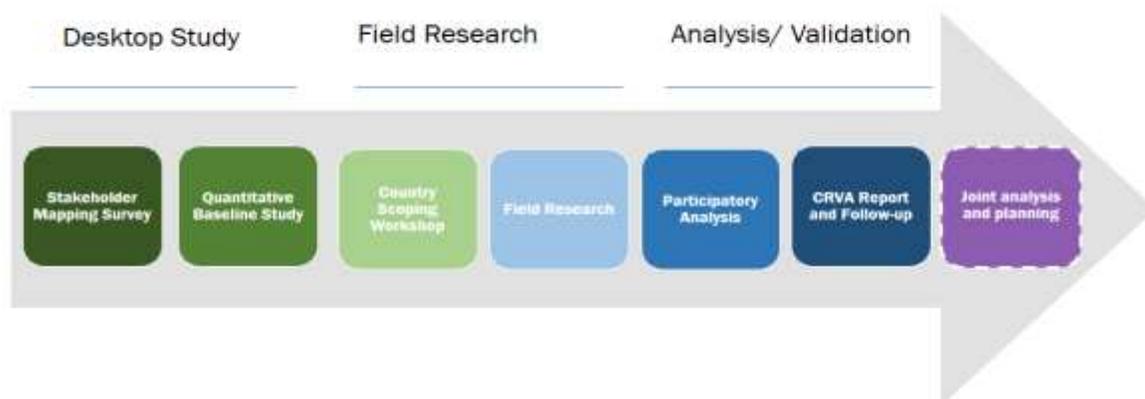
understood for effective early warning and response.²

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 Niger.



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 Niamey. 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 January 23 and January 29, 2018 with participants from the regions of Diffa, Tahoua, Tillabéri, Agadez, Zinder and the capital district, Niamey. The team interviewed key stakeholders from the various hotspots identified in the desktop study and validated in the scoping workshop who have been affected by violence and have knowledge of local context and capacities. The fieldwork team included representatives from the ECOWAS Directorates of Early Warning (EWD), Political Affairs (DPA) and Peacekeeping & Regional Security (DPKRS), 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 under headings 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 Niger 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.



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

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

agencies such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the AfDB have also produced strategies, 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 Vision 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 Niger.

Economics and Resources: To what extent has volatility in commodity prices negatively impacted the most vulnerable groups? Has this been a driver of food insecurity or conflict? To what extent have domestic, regional or international events (e.g. insecurity in Nigeria) affected the economy? To what extent is food insecurity a concern? In what ways do climate change or environmental pressures affect local communities? 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

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

economy? What role do illicit economic activities (including smuggling and arms or drug trafficking) play in the local and national economy? What role does natural resource management and land tenure play in social cohesion?

Population and Demographics: What impact(s) has migration (both internal and to Europe) had on Niger? 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? Are there tensions or conflicts between religious or ethnic groups? To what extent does geography (ex: rural vs urban areas, or 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, gender-based violence and female genital mutilation (FGM)?

Security: What role do the security forces play in managing or worsening 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? What have been the impacts of insecurity in the broader region (e.g. extremist group activity in neighboring Mali or the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria) on local communities? To what extent is radicalization and extremism a concern, particularly among youth?

Politics and Governance: What role(s) do women and youth play in politics and decision-making? What role(s) 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? To what extent has the frequent political turnover in recent decades impacted perceptions of state legitimacy? Are there concerns around future elections?

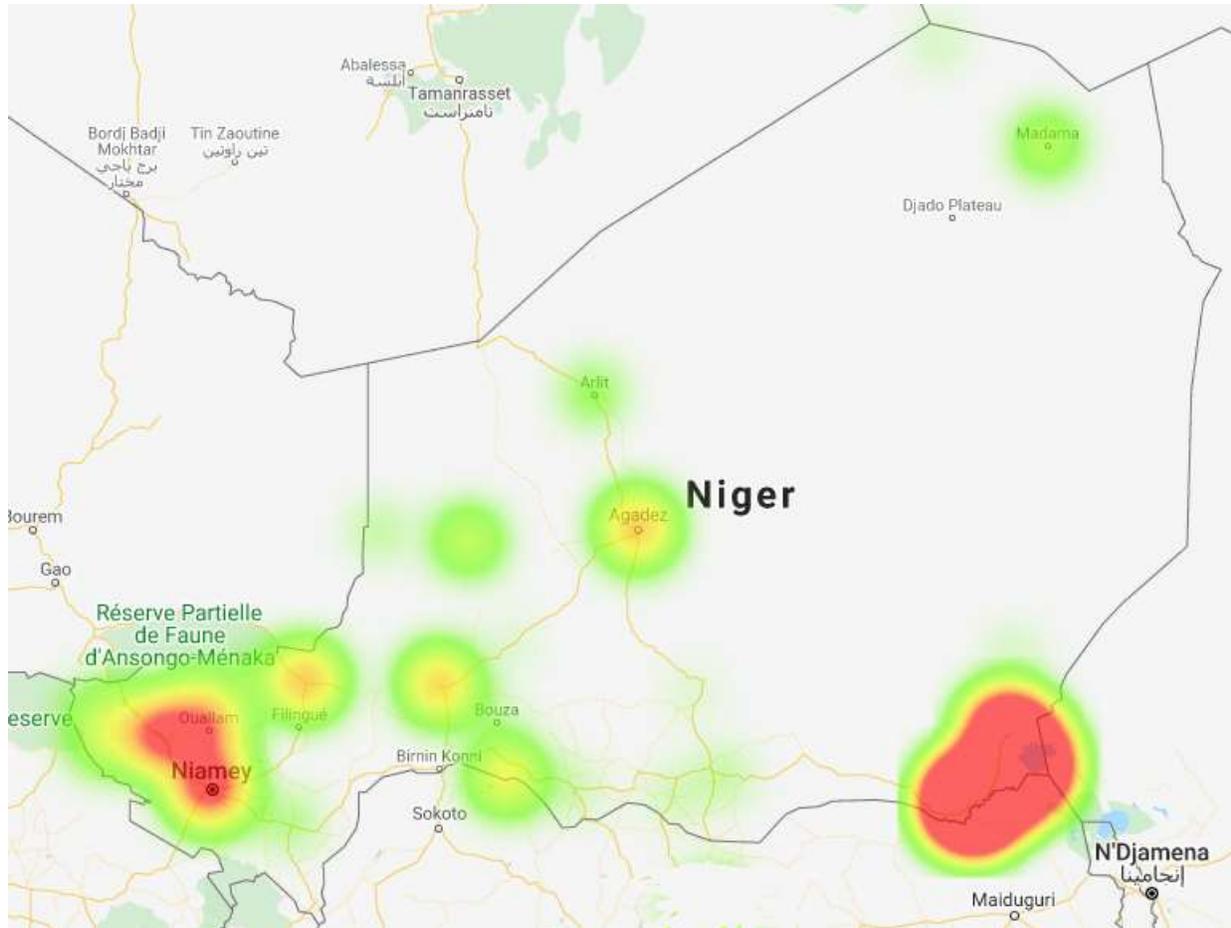
Rule of Law: To what extent is the judiciary independent of the executive? What role does the judiciary play as regards questions of justice and impunity? Is there access to legal and judicial services throughout the country? To what extent do communities rely on police and security forces to provide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

Description of the Sample

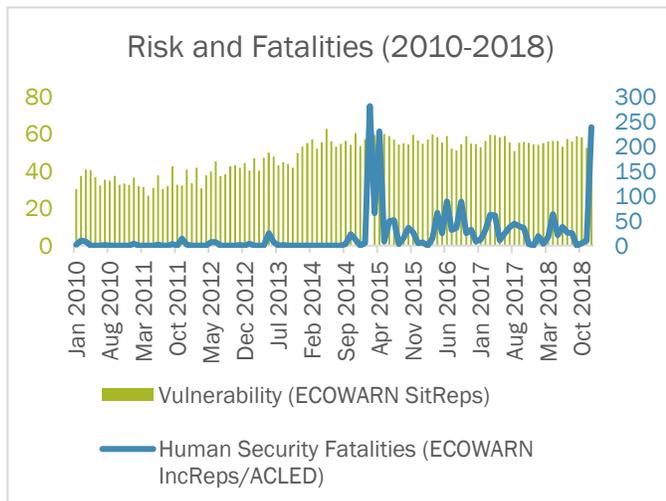
Data collected and analyzed for this research included hundreds of ECOWARN SitReps, ECOWARN IncReps, ACLED event data, and a scoping survey, as well as transcripts and notes from FGDs and KIIs in the field. Other sources, integrated to form a vulnerability index (the CRVA Index), included Global Integrity, 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 Niger increased in mid-2014 and has remained elevated, as measured by taking a monthly average of the SitReps overall score from 2010 to 2017. Data for trends dating back to 2012 show a significant spike in reported conflict fatalities in the first quarter of 2015 and from the first to the third



The heatmap of event data above shows hot spots of human security-related fatalities between 2015 and 2018.



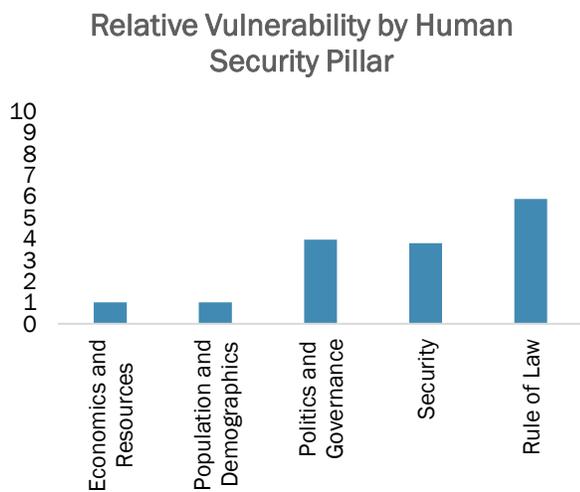
The graph above shows the trends in risk layered against vulnerability. The y axis on the left (0-80) shows the level of vulnerability with a score of over 60 reflecting higher levels of vulnerability. The y axis on the right (0-300) shows the number of human security fatalities by month.



The map above shows the locations where fieldwork was conducted in January 2018.

quarter of 2016. The sharp increase in violence at the beginning of 2015 was due to multiple attacks launched by Boko Haram/Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in the Diffa region along the Niger-Nigeria border and counter-insurgency operations by Nigerian security forces. Reported fatalities decreased toward the end of 2015, despite Boko Haram’s continued presence in the Diffa region. Reported conflict fatalities again spiked in the third quarter of 2016 due to fighting between Boko Haram/ISWAP and Nigerian military forces; multiple attacks were carried out in Diffa in June and July of 2016.

The CRVA Index, shown below, indicates that in Niger the human security pillars that exhibit the most severe levels of vulnerability are Economics and Resources and Population and Demographics. These findings were contextualized by respondents in the field who emphasized food insecurity, poverty, and population growth as key ongoing concerns. In the CRVA Index graph above, the lower the score on the y axis (0-10), the more vulnerable the human security pillar.



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 (3 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

Since gaining independence from France on 3rd August 1960, Niger has endured a high degree of political turbulence, which has negatively impacted multiple aspects of life in the country. From 1960-1974, the country was governed under single party rule, led by Hamani Diori. Diori's government was relatively successful, until severe droughts and oil shocks caused food shortages in the early 1970s, casting doubt on Diori's leadership capabilities. Diori was ousted in a military coup led by Lt. Col. Seyni Kountché in 1974 that toppled the government and scrapped the constitution.¹⁵ Kountché's military government lasted until 1987, when he died in office. Kountché was succeeded by Colonel Ali Saibou, who steered the country toward a civilian government. The National Sovereign Conference in 1990 led to the establishment of an interim civilian government from 1991-1993, followed by multiparty elections in 1993.¹⁶

The 1993 multiparty elections resulted in a tense, gridlocked democratic government, with President Mahaman Ousmane and Prime Minister Hama Amadou unwilling to work together. An early election was called for in 1995, but was halted by another military coup in January 1996 led by Colonel Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara.¹⁷ Maïnassara forced both the President and Prime Minister to resign and won elections that were held in July 1996.¹⁸ In 1999, Maïnassara was assassinated and Maj. Daouda Malam Wanké took power, steering the country to a new constitution and elections in late 1999.¹⁹

Mamadou Tandja of the National Movement for the Society in Development (MNSD) was elected president in 1999 and was reelected in 2004.

However, food shortages caused by drought and rising food prices, and a 2007 rebellion led by the Tuareg ethnic group under the banner of the Movement of Nigeriens for Justice (MNJ), contributed to dissatisfaction and cast doubt on President Tandja's ability to effectively govern. Despite term limitations on the presidency and a ruling against him by the Constitutional Court, in 2009 Tandja announced his intention to seek a third term and dissolved both the National Assembly and the Constitutional Court.²⁰ In February 2010, Col. Salou Djibo led a military coup and removed Tandja from office, a move which resulted in the African Union suspending Niger's membership.²¹ Djibo eventually moved the country toward civilian rule and introduced a new constitution.

The presidential election of March 2011 was won by Mahamadou Issoufou of the National Party for Democracy and Socialism (PNDS) and was widely viewed as being free and fair. President Issoufou won the 2016 election as well, but under circumstances in which the opposition candidate, Hama Amadou, campaigned from a jail cell under dubious evidence of participating in a baby trafficking scheme. Presidential elections are next expected in 2021, and if President Issoufou peacefully hands over power after the next election, it will be the first such transfer in Niger's history.

The backdrop of decades of political uncertainty, combined with wider trends of regional political and economic instability, has made it difficult for Niger to establish legitimate long-term economic plans that can allow the country to surmount many of the difficult issues it faces. The country lacks a

¹⁵ "Niger Profile", BBC, February 2018

¹⁶ "Historical Dictionary of Niger", Idrissa, A. and Decalo, S., 2012

¹⁷ "Niger Profile," BBC, February 2018

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ "Historical Dictionary of Niger", Idrissa, A. and Decalo, S., 2012

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ "Niger Profile", BBC, February 2018

diverse economic portfolio, relying on the export of uranium and petroleum and subsistence agriculture in a context of increasing desertification.²² The changing climatic conditions are only increasing food insecurity throughout the country, an issue which has plagued the country for decades.

Furthermore, Niger faces significant demographic pressures as the country is home to the largest and youngest youth bulge in the world, with a median age of just 14.8 years old.²³ With limited economic opportunities and rising insecurity in the region, there are legitimate concerns around the potential for future youth radicalization and involvement in criminality. Women in Niger also face substantial discrimination and inequalities in nearly every aspect of their lives, from inheritance to employment to personal and political decision-making. Niger has the highest rate of early marriage in the world²⁴, and a total fertility rate of 7.6 children per woman.²⁵ Women and girls also have significantly lower rates of literacy and

education and are underrepresented in the formal economy and in political institutions.²⁶

Finally, wider regional trends of insecurity are placing greater pressure on Niger's security apparatus, particularly in border regions. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and al-Mourabitoun (now known as the Group to Support Islam and Muslims - GSIM),²⁷ and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) are a threat along the borders of Burkina Faso, Mali, Libya and Algeria, while Boko Haram/Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) is a persistent threat along the Nigerian border. Attacks by these groups have contributed to a growing refugee and IDP crisis in the country, with hundreds of thousands of people displaced. While Niger has thus far demonstrated laudable resilience to these and other threats, growing security risks coupled with significant demographic, environmental and economic pressures pose a serious challenge to the country's future stability and security.

²² "Country Overview", World Bank, December 2017

²³ "Human Development Report 2016", UN Development Programme, 2016

²⁴ "Ending Child Marriage: Progress and Prospects", United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF, 2014

²⁵ "Enquête Démographique et de Santé et à Indicateurs Multiples du Niger 2012", Institut National de la Statistique et ICF International, 2013

²⁶ "Social Institutions and Gender Index: Niger", OECD

²⁷ "A Rose By Any Other Name is Still AQ : Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin", Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium (TRAC)

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 Niger, 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 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increases in the price of basic goods• Over reliance on subsistence agriculture and livestock herding• Economic dependence on high-value extractives, such as uranium and petroleum• Suspension of economic activities in some regions due to security concerns, particularly in the Lake Chad Basin• Poor governance and management of natural resources• Youth unemployment• Food insecurity• Climate change
	Population and Demographics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Population growth• Underutilization of family planning due to cultural barriers• Youth bulge• Poor urbanization and pressures on urban services and infrastructure• Inadequate social services, particularly healthcare and sanitation• High rate of child marriages• High illiteracy rate
	Security <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tensions between farmers and herders over access to natural resources (water and land)• Growing threat of terrorism• Porous borders• Growth of illicit economic activities, especially drug and human trafficking• Trans-national threats• Arms proliferation
	Politics and Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Perceptions of corruption• Low levels of popular trust in the political system

- Perceived lack of judicial and legislative independence from the executive
- Underrepresentation of women and youth in political decision-making
- Legacy of military coup d'états
- Perceptions of bad governance
- Perceptions of limited space for the opposition in governance matters
- Contentious electoral management institutions

Rule of Law

- Low levels of judicial and legislative independence
- Perceptions of corruption and bias within the judicial system
- Slow judicial processing times

Event-Driven Risks

Economics and Resources

- Rising prices due to the 2018 Finance Law
- Disrupted trade and supply routes
- Natural disasters and effects of climate change, such as drought, flooding and changing rainfall patterns
- Conflicts between farmers and herders over water and land access
- Illicit economic activities
- Animal disease outbreaks affecting livestock and pest infestation of crops

Population and Demographics

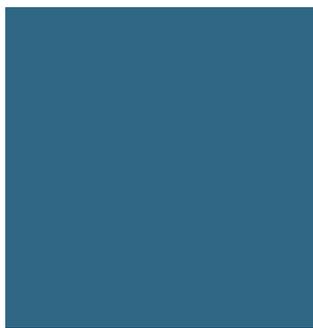
- Tensions or conflicts between ethnic groups
- Disease outbreak
- Health concerns affecting women and girls, such as Vesico Vaginal Fistula (VVF)
- Refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs)

Security

- Attacks by armed groups, particularly Boko Haram and other extremist groups, such as Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM) and Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS)
- Radicalization
- Herder-farmer conflicts
- Rising levels of criminality
- Human rights violations resulting from the state of emergency in the Diffa, Tillabéri, and Tahoua regions
- Presence of foreign security forces

Politics and Governance

- Protests, particularly around the 2018 Finance Law
- Electoral violence



Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

- Arrests of high-profile politicians
- Suppression of civil liberties
- Suppression of freedom of expression

Rule of Law

- Incidents of corruption
- Violations of civil rights

Economics and Resources

- Availability of micro-credit programs for women and youth
- Ongoing economic reforms
- Support from international NGOs

Population and Demographics

- Culture of religious tolerance
- Strong policies against female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C)
- Vibrant NGO community

Security

- Neighborhood watch groups
- The National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH)
- Counter-insurgency measures
- Programs to counter violent extremism
- State of emergency as a measure to stabilize the Diffa region
- Presence of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF)
- Security collaboration between Niger and bi- and multi-lateral partners

Politics and Governance

- Presence of NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs)
- The role of community radio stations in providing civic education and raising awareness around governance issues
- Inter-faith dialogue
- The role of the high authority for the fight against corruption
- Equal pay for men and women
- Free medical services for pregnant women and children
- Youth parliament platform
- Ombudsman

Rule of Law

- Traditional chiefs, religious leaders and community leaders involved in dispute resolution
- Existence of the customary law
- Ombudsman

Economics and Resources (Most Vulnerable Pillar)

Vulnerabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increases in the price of basic goods • Over reliance on subsistence agriculture and livestock herding • Economic dependence on high-value extractives, such as uranium and petroleum • Suspension of economic activities in some regions due to security concerns, particularly in the Lake Chad Basin • Poor governance and management of natural resources • Youth unemployment • Food insecurity
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rising prices due to the 2018 Finance Law • Disrupted trade and supply routes • Effects of climate change, such as drought and changing rainfall patterns • Conflicts between farmers and herders over water and land access • Illicit economic activities • Animal disease outbreaks affecting livestock and pest infestation of crops

Vulnerabilities and Risks

According to the CRVA Index, Niger’s most vulnerable category is Economics and Resources, with a score of 1.0/10.

During the fieldwork, interviewees cited Niger’s reliance on subsistence agriculture and livestock herding as a key economic vulnerability. Additionally, Niger’s export profile lacks diversity²⁸ and is dependent on high-value extractives like uranium and petroleum.²⁹ This lack of diversity leaves the Nigerien economy highly vulnerable to shocks in the regional and global markets. For example, the recent downturn in global oil prices, the flow of refugees into the country, and increased domestic spending on security and humanitarian assistance have all affected the stability of the Nigerien economy.³⁰ Niger’s GDP growth rate in

2016 was 5 percent, but this rate has fluctuated between -0.713 and 11.814 percent over the last ten years due to volatility in global commodity prices as well as changes in the regional and domestic political and security environments.³¹

Economic productivity remains low because of the country’s dependence on subsistence agriculture. The agricultural sector makes up 40 percent of GDP and is an income source for over 80 percent of the population.³² Niger’s agricultural productivity has been negatively impacted by repeated droughts, flooding, infrequent rainfall, rising temperatures, and growing desertification. As a result, poverty levels are high: 73.5 percent of Niger’s population lives in severe, multidimensional poverty,³³ and 85.1 percent of Nigeriens are classified as working poor by the United Nations Development Programme.³⁴

²⁸ “African Economic Outlook 2017: Entrepreneurship and Industrialization”, African Development Bank, 2017

²⁹ Atlas of Economic Complexity, Center for International Development at Harvard University

³⁰ “IMF Country Report No. 17/59”, International Monetary Fund, February 2017

³¹ “GDP Growth (annual %)", World Bank Group

³² “IMF Country Report No. 17/60”, International Monetary Fund, February 2017

³³ “Human Development Report 2016”, UN Development Programme, 2016

³⁴ “Niger Human Development Report Country Profile”, UN Development Programme

Furthermore, Niger has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the world at 2.6 percent,³⁵ which indicates that many Nigeriens are underemployed and meeting their needs by also participating in the informal economy.³⁶

The country has seen periods of severe food insecurity as recently as 2005 and 2010,³⁷ and food security continues to be a pressing concern. Nearly 20 percent of Nigeriens cannot meet their food needs, which has resulted in 3 million food insecure people, half of whom are considered chronically food insecure. As a result, 42.2 percent of children under the age of five are chronically malnourished.³⁸ Fieldwork participants reported that prices of basic goods, such as millet and rice, have risen in recent years, meaning many households cannot afford to purchase sufficient quantities of food. Additionally, refugee flows stemming from deteriorating security conditions in neighboring countries such as Nigeria have placed additional pressure on food resources in Niger.³⁹

According to the fieldwork, insecurity, especially the Boko Haram insurgency in Diffa, has exacerbated food insecurity and poverty. The state of emergency, which was put in place in 2015, has reportedly had a significant negative impact on the economy due to the suspension of key economic activities. For example, fishing and pepper cultivation have been largely halted and six local markets have been closed in Diffa. Furthermore, local populations have been banned from accessing certain areas of Lake Chad since May 2015, a measure put in place to prevent Boko Haram from using fishing as a source of income and using the water bodies to carry out attacks. Local populations in Diffa relied on Lake Chad for fishing and livestock grazing. Interviewees reported that if herders enter the military zones around Lake

Chad, they risk arrest or death because security forces assume they are members of Boko Haram.

The 2018 Finance Law, which was approved by the National Assembly on 26 November 2017, was also highlighted as a key concern during the fieldwork. The law reportedly raises taxes on services such as transportation, property taxes for renters and landlords, commercial taxes and levies for government administrative services, which in turn negatively impact prices of basic commodities and imported products. Interviewees reported that the law has put additional hardship on vulnerable households, while telephone companies and the oil sector stand to reap massive benefits from such measures.

“The new law on finance voted by the parliament in 2017 is likely to put so much pressure on the households. For instance, the transport fare from Agadez to Niamey used to be 21000 CFA. As of 19 January 2018, the same price went up to 27000 CFA. This could affect the price of everything in the country starting with food items.”

- Regional peacebuilding organization representative, Agadez

Gender inequality remains high in Niger, and the country ranks 157th out of 188 nations on the UNDP’s Gender Inequality Index.⁴⁰ In addition, the African Development Bank (AfDB) calculates women’s development as being 24 percent lower than men’s.⁴¹ The areas of education and employment are particularly impacted by gender-based disparities and discrimination. Nigerien women ages 15-24 have a literacy rate of only 17.1 percent compared to 36.4 percent for men. In

³⁵ “Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate)” World Bank Group

³⁶ “Labour Market Profile: Niger”, Danish Trade Council for International Development and Cooperation, 2015

³⁷ “Niger Food Security Brief May 2014”, USAID Famine Early Warning Systems Network, May 2014

³⁸ “Niger Country Overview”, World Food Programme

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ “Human Development Report 2016”, UN Development Programme, 2016

⁴¹ “African Economic Outlook 2017: Entrepreneurship and Industrialization”, African Development Bank, 2017

addition, the mean years of schooling for women is only 1.1 years, while for men it's 2.3 years.⁴² Furthermore, the primary school dropout rate for girls is 35.4 percent compared to 14.1 percent for boys.⁴³ Women in Niger are also economically underrepresented: women have a labor force participation rate of 40.2 percent compared to 89.4 percent for men.⁴⁴

A lack of economic opportunities for youth was also cited as an ongoing concern in Niger by fieldwork participants. While youth have been involved in entrepreneurship, difficulty accessing credit has prevented the growth of such initiatives.

Niger has one of the lowest economic inequality rates in Sub Saharan Africa with a GINI score of 33.99,⁴⁵ namely because per capita GDP is much lower than other countries in the region.⁴⁶ The country has an unemployment rate of only 2.6 percent,⁴⁷ but has a working poor rate of 85.1 percent.⁴⁸ The absence of real economic inequality is more indicative of Niger's slow economic growth, lack of economic diversity, and low incomes than it is a statement about Niger's economic equality. In addition, disparities between urban and rural areas are pronounced. For example, as of 2014, nationwide access to electricity was only 14.3 percent,⁴⁹ with a 53.5 percent urban⁵⁰ and 5.4 percent rural split.⁵¹ Much of Niger's population continues to live in rural areas. The urban population represents only 19.01 percent of the population⁵² and has a growth rate of 5.2 percent,⁵³ slightly faster than the 80.99 percent of the population which is rural⁵⁴ and growing at a rate of 3.4 percent.⁵⁵

⁴² "Human Development Report 2016", UN Development Programme, 2016

⁴³ "Gender and WFP Niger": Knowledge Series – Policy Briefs", World Food Programme, November 2016

⁴⁴ "Human Development Report 2016", UN Development Programme, 2016

⁴⁵ "GINI index (World Bank estimate)", World Bank Group

⁴⁶ "GDP per capita (current US\$)", World Bank Group

⁴⁷ "Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate)" World Bank Group

⁴⁸ "Niger Human Development Report Country Profile", UN Development Programme

⁴⁹ "World Development Indicators", World Bank Group

Illicit economic activities in Niger include human trafficking, drug trafficking and smuggling. The most pressing issue has been migrant smuggling, but this has recently tapered due to the government's increased efforts to shut down migrant routes and capture smugglers. The government has seized more than 100 vehicles related to migrant smuggling and repatriated over 7,000 migrants. It has also seized 20 kg of methamphetamines, 22 kg of cocaine, 87 kg of gold, 114 fake passports, USD 1,000,000, EUR 585,000, and CFA 32,000,000 in undeclared bills at the Niamey and Bamako airports since 2014.⁵⁶ The country also has a considerable problem with counterfeit cigarette sales, which is reported to be highly lucrative as a means to funding other illicit activities.⁵⁷ Fieldwork participants reported that drug trafficking is a key ongoing concern. In border regions, the illegal sale of petrol is reportedly common, especially along the shared border with Nigeria.

As noted above, the extractives industry plays a key role in the Nigerien economy. The government of Niger has done due diligence in legislating the actions of the mining sector, but it has often failed to follow through on regulation and distribution of the profits. Article 95 of the Niger Mining Code of 1993 states that 15 percent of profits from a mining operation must be given to the local community from which it was extracted, for the purposes of development. However, no development programs have been established to capture the profits for local development and there

⁵⁰ "Access to electricity, urban (% of urban population)", World Bank Group

⁵¹ "Access to electricity, rural (% of rural population)", World Bank Group

⁵² "Urban population (% of total)", World Bank Group

⁵³ "Urban population growth (annual %)", World Bank Group

⁵⁴ "Rural population (% of total population)", World Bank Group

⁵⁵ "Rural population growth (annual %)", World Bank Group

⁵⁶ "Sahel Programme Progress Report June 2017: Results and Activities", United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, June 2017

⁵⁷ "Regional Programme for West Africa, 2016-2010", United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2016

is little transparency as to where the profits have gone. Fieldwork participants reported that poor natural resource management has been a concern throughout Niger. Regarding oil production in Diffa, royalties have reportedly not been paid to the Regional Council by the national government since 2013, which has further exacerbated poverty and fueled grievances in the region. Interviewees reported that local communities rarely benefit from the exploitation of the country's other natural resources, such as gold and uranium.

Environmental pressures pose some of the greatest risks to stability in Niger. The World Risk Report ranks Niger as the 12th most susceptible country in the world to natural disasters, and the 4th highest in lacking the adaptive capacity to fix these problems.⁵⁸ Niger has experienced five severe climate-related food and nutrition crises since 2000^{59,60} due to rising temperatures, infrequent rainfall, increased erosion risks, and declining resilience of forests.⁶¹ Between 1990 – 2015, Niger experienced a -41.3 percent forest growth.⁶² Floods are also a recurring issue in southern Niger and are projected to increase in both frequency and intensity as climate conditions continue to change.⁶³ International partners and the Nigerien government have been working together over the last decade to build up resiliency through community based adaptation projects⁶⁴ and notably the 2014-2018 SNRRC national strategy to reduce the risks of natural disasters in the country.⁶⁵ The country also has a National Action Plan for the Control of Desertification and

Management of Natural Resources to promote environmentally friendly mining and industrial operations, although it is unclear whether these plans have resulted in changes to mining operations. The country's largest uranium mining operation now hosts a city of 80,000 people and has not received an environmental impact assessment to understand the potential harmful effects of the mining operation on the city.⁶⁶ Niger's economic stability and potential for future growth will largely depend on its ability to adapt to climate change and growing environmental pressures.

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

Despite low economic productivity, the international community, namely the IMF⁶⁷ and the African Development Bank,⁶⁸ remains optimistic about the medium and long-term economic projections for Niger. The country has received praise from the IMF for its 3N “Nigeriens Nourishing Nigeriens” national food security initiative for improving rural irrigation systems for farmers.⁶⁹ Additionally, in the last year, Niger has climbed 44 places on the World Bank Group's Ease of Doing Business Index's “starting a business” indicator, creating a pathway for more citizens to enter the formal economy. Overall, Niger climbed eight places in the Ease of Doing Business Index, now ranking 150th out of 190 countries.⁷⁰

⁵⁸ “World Risk Report 2016”, United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security, 2016

⁵⁹ “Niger Country Overview”, World Food Programme

⁶⁰ Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT), Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, Université catholique de Louvain

⁶¹ “Community-Based Adaptation: Niger”, UN Development Programme

⁶² “Niger Human Development Report Country Profile”, UN Development Programme

⁶³ “Climate Change Knowledge Portal: Niger Dashboard”, World Bank Group

⁶⁴ “Community-Based Adaptation: Niger”, UN Development Programme

⁶⁵ “IMF Country Report No. 17/60”, International Monetary Fund, February 2017

⁶⁶ “Mining industry and sustainable development: time for change”, Carvalho, F. P., *Food and Energy Security* 2017; 6(2): 61-67

⁶⁷ “IMF Country Report No. 17/59”, International Monetary Fund, February 2017

⁶⁸ “Niger Economic Outlook”, African Development Bank, 2018

⁶⁹ “IMF Country Report No. 17/59”, International Monetary Fund, February 2017

⁷⁰ “Doing Business 2017”, World Bank Group, 2017

According to interviewees, NGOs have been key contributors to resolving food insecurity by working to fill the gap between low incomes and rising commodity prices. Furthermore, NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs) have also engaged in food distribution and the donation of livestock and off-season crops to farmers. They have also funded development initiatives. Women's *tontine* groups (informal collective savings funds) have reportedly been a source of economic resilience by providing access to credit with low to no interest.

Fieldwork participants also reported that CSOs have played a role in land and resource management by overseeing the sale of land and

“Non-state structures such as NGOs provide support in several areas, including whistle-blowing, budget monitoring, civic education, and support to the education system, such as access and quality. For example, the Nigerien Organization of Innovative Educators (ONEN) participates in the supervision of students who have encountered difficulties in their school curriculum.”

- Men's focus group discussion, Niamey

making recommendations to government regarding economic concerns.

Population and Demographics (Second Most Vulnerable Pillar)

Vulnerabilities

- Population growth and underutilization of family planning
- Large youth population
- Urbanization and pressures on urban services and infrastructure
- Inadequate social services, particularly healthcare and sanitation
- High rates of child marriage
- High illiteracy rate

Risks

- Tensions or conflicts between ethnic groups
- Disease outbreak
- Health concerns affecting women and girls, such as Vesico Vaginal Fistula (VVF)
- Refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs)

Vulnerabilities and Risks

Niger's demographic makeup is dominated by the Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups in the south of the country,^{71,72} the Djerma in the west,⁷³ and the Tuareg in the north and northwest.⁷⁴ Approximately 97 percent of Niger's population lives in the southern regions of the country. The Agadez region in the north of the country is home to only three percent of the population, despite occupying 53 percent of the land area.⁷⁵ Although Niger is officially a secular state, the vast majority of the population practices Islam, with only one percent of the population practicing Christianity.⁷⁶ Relationships between religious groups have historically been peaceful, although the publication of cartoons perceived to be offensive to Islam in French publication *Charlie Hebdo* in January 2015

led to riots and the burning of Christian churches in Zinder and Niamey.⁷⁷

Niger has also experienced periods of ethnic conflict involving the Tuareg, a semi-nomadic group of people that have traditionally moved between northeastern Mali, northern Niger, southern Algeria, and southern Libya. Groups of Tuareg led insurgencies in Niger in 1990⁷⁸ and 2007, and have also engaged in numerous insurgencies in neighboring Mali, with spillover effects in Niger.⁷⁹ In addition, members of the Buduma and Bororo Fulani ethnic groups face discrimination in Niger due to their perceived support of Boko Haram.⁸⁰ This perception is largely due to both ethnic groups having historically resided in the Lake Chad basin where Boko Haram has established itself.^{81,82} However, some Buduma youth have reportedly helped Boko Haram by acting as guides, boatmen,

⁷¹ "Ethnic Groups of Africa and the Middle East: An Encyclopedia", Shoup, J. A., 2011

⁷² "Zarma people", Encyclopedia Britannica

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ "Ethnic Groups of Africa and the Middle East: An Encyclopedia", Shoup, J. A., 2011

⁷⁵ "Enquête Démographique et de Santé dans les Zones d'Intervention du Programme de Coopération de l'UNICEF au Niger, 2012", Institut National de la Statistique and ICF International, 2012

⁷⁶ "Enquête Démographique et de Santé et à Indicateurs Multiples du Niger 2012", Institut National de la Statistique et ICF International, 2013

⁷⁷ "Niger 2017 Crime and Safety Report", Bureau of Diplomatic Security, U.S. Department of State, 2017

⁷⁸ "Agreement Establishing Permanent Peace Between the Government of the Republic of Niger and the 'Organisation de la Résistance Armée (ORA)'", Peace Accords Matrix Project, University of Notre Dame, 1995

⁷⁹ "In Niger, Intervention Likely in Potential Tuareg Rebellion", Stratfor, April 2012

⁸⁰ "Niger 2016 Human Rights Report", U.S. Department of State, 2016

⁸¹ "Wodaabe", Art and Life in Africa, University of Iowa

⁸² "Niger and Boko Haram: Beyond Counter-Insurgency", International Crisis Group, February 2017

buying goods and services, and a few have directly fought for Boko Haram.⁸³ Worsening ethnic tensions related to Boko Haram activity was reported by fieldwork participants in the eastern part of the country, such as the Diffa region, but participants in the western part of the country, such as the Tahoua region, did not express similar concerns.

Niger has a small resident immigrant population, and the foreign nationals it does host are predominantly refugees or economic migrants seeking better opportunities. As of December 2017, Niger was hosting more than 165,000 refugees, with a majority (65 percent) coming from Nigeria and nearly 35 percent coming from Mali.⁸⁴ Due to attacks by Boko Haram in the Diffa region, which is also home to the majority of Nigerian refugees, Niger is home to more than 129,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) as well.⁸⁵

In addition to refugee flows, Niger is a key transit country for economic migrants traveling from Central and West Africa to seek better opportunities in Europe. In 2016, over 445,000 migrants transited Niger, most of whom were leaving out of the cities of Arlit or Séguédine in the Agadez region.⁸⁶ While the number of migrants has since decreased, in part due to the closure of traditional migration routes and crackdowns by law enforcement, fieldwork participants in Agadez reported that migrant smuggling continues and is a lucrative enterprise in the region.

In addition to experiencing regional flows of migrants, fieldwork participants noted that the country has seen increasing urbanization, with people moving from rural areas of the country to

the capital and to regional urban centers. Interviewees expressed concern that this phenomenon was beginning to strain the provision of basic services in the country's cities. In addition to rural-urban migration, Niger reportedly experiences seasonal migration due to transhumance and temporary emigration from rural areas during the dry season. Disputes over grazing areas, and especially over water access, related to the transhumance period were cited as a key vulnerability by fieldwork participants.

Fieldwork participants also highlighted the impacts of population growth on Niger. Niger has a high rate of population growth – 3.826 percent⁸⁷ – and the Nigerien population is projected to grow from 20,672,987 in 2016⁸⁸ to 36,000,000 by 2030.⁸⁹ As a result, the median age in Niger is 14.8 years, which is both the largest youth bulge in the world and the youngest.⁹⁰ The youth bulge is complicated by the country's low economic productivity and high rates of poverty and illiteracy, raising concerns around the potential for radicalization, conflict or grievances in the future. Fieldwork participants cited this rapid population growth as a key concern, principally due to the strain that it places on local resources and public services. Schools and health centers throughout the country were reported as being overcrowded and under-resourced, and the water and electricity infrastructure was reported to be overtaxed. Niger has the third-lowest electricity consumption per capita in the world⁹¹ and the tenth-highest transmission and distribution losses.⁹² It also has the second-lowest proportion of people using improved sanitation facilities.⁹³ A driver of population growth in Niger is the country's high fertility rate, which is one of the highest in the world at 7.6 births per woman.⁹⁴ The

⁸³ "Niger and Boko Haram: Beyond Counter-Insurgency", International Crisis Group, February 2017

⁸⁴ "Operational Portal Refugee Situations: Niger", UNHCR

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ "Niger – Flow Monitoring Report", IOM Niger, December 2017

⁸⁷ "Population growth (annual %)", World Bank Group

⁸⁸ "Population, Total", World Bank Group

⁸⁹ "Human Development Report 2016", UN Development Programme, 2016

⁹⁰ "Human Development Report 2016", UN Development Programme, 2016

⁹¹ "Electric power consumption (kWh per capita)", World Bank Group

⁹² "Electric power transmission and distribution losses (% of output)", World Bank Group

⁹³ "Proportion of the population using improved sanitation facilities, total", Millennium Development Goals Database, UN Statistics Division

⁹⁴ "Where We Work: Niger", The DHS Program, USAID

high fertility rate is attributable to a mix of socio-cultural traditions such as the persistence of polygamy, religious beliefs, low education rates, early marriage, and the underutilization of modern contraceptive methods.⁹⁵ Only 13.9 percent of married Nigerien women report using any form of contraception, though this rate varies from a low of 6.5 percent in Tahoua to a high of 33.9 percent in Niamey.⁹⁶ Fieldwork participants similarly reported that the use of family planning and contraceptive methods is higher in urban areas of the country and is sometimes supported by NGOs providing free contraception.

Niger also has the highest prevalence of child marriage in the world, with 77 percent of all Nigerien women between the ages of 20-49 having been married before 18 years old. Of those married before the age of 18, approximately 30 percent were married before the age of 15. The median age of marriage in Niger has fluctuated between 15.6-15.8 years old for over 30 years.⁹⁷ Fieldwork participants reported that the rate of child marriage is increased by the limited educational opportunities available for girls (particularly in secondary school), as well as by cultural and religious norms. Interviewees did also note, however, that both the government and NGOs are working to reduce the rate of child marriage through both direct regulation (a minimum marriageable age) on the part of the government and by increasing educational opportunities, and that these efforts were having some positive effect.

Niger also has a weak healthcare system, which further exacerbates the country's demographic pressures. The country has some of the world's lowest rates of nurses and midwives (0.137)⁹⁸ and physicians (0.019) per 1,000 people.⁹⁹ Only 3.2 percent of Niger's GDP goes towards public health expenditures¹⁰⁰ and 60 percent of all Nigeriens reported going without medical care at least once in 2015. Furthermore, 31 percent of people reported having no nearby (within walking distance) healthcare clinic and another 21 percent expressed difficulty in reaching a health clinic.¹⁰¹ Fieldwork participants reported that those health facilities that were available were often expensive or understaffed; some interviewees reported that community health centers are often staffed only by nurses, with days between appearances by the doctor. In addition, maternal health is a key concern as less than one-third of Nigerien women give birth in health facilities,¹⁰² leading to a maternal mortality rate of 553 per 100,000 live births, which is above the average for Sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁰³ Nigerien women between the ages of 15-49 have a 57 percent chance of dying from maternity-related causes.¹⁰⁴ The health and livelihood of the mother affects the health of the child as well: Niger's under-five mortality rate is 95.5 per 100,000 live births.¹⁰⁵

Key health concerns in Niger include lower respiratory conditions, malaria, malnutrition, birth complications and maternal conditions, stroke, and meningitis.¹⁰⁶ In 2016 Niger experienced an outbreak of Rift Valley fever,¹⁰⁷ and in 2017 the

⁹⁵ "IMF Country Report No. 17/60", International Monetary Fund, February 2017

⁹⁶ "Enquête Démographique et de Santé et à Indicateurs Multiples du Niger 2012", Institut National de la Statistique et ICF International, 2013

⁹⁷ "Ending Child Marriage: Progress and Prospects", United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF, 2014

⁹⁸ "Nurses and midwives (per 1,000 people)", World Bank Group

⁹⁹ "Physicians (per 1,000 people)", World Bank Group

¹⁰⁰ "Human Development Report 2016", UN Development Programme, 2016

¹⁰¹ "Are Africans willing to pay higher taxes or user fees for better health care? Afrobarometer Policy Paper No. 37", Isbell, T., Afrobarometer, December 2016

¹⁰² "Where We Work: Niger", The DHS Program, USAID

¹⁰³ "Human Development Report 2016", UN Development Programme, 2016

¹⁰⁴ "Niger: WHO Statistical Profile", World Health Organization, January 2015

¹⁰⁵ "Human Development Report 2016", UN Development Programme, 2016

¹⁰⁶ "Niger: WHO Statistical Profile", World Health Organization, January 2015

¹⁰⁷ "Niger: Rift Valley Fever (situation as of 28 October 2016)", World Health Organization, October 2016

country experienced an outbreak of Hepatitis E.¹⁰⁸ Fieldwork participants around Lake Chad also expressed that rates of HIV/AIDS infection was an ongoing concern, with rates in that area much higher than in the rest of the country, especially among vulnerable populations such as those displaced by conflict.

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

Despite the above risks and vulnerabilities, fieldwork participants identified a number of social and institutional resilience factors in the area of Population and Demographics. The government has set up the Ministry for Women’s Empowerment and Child Protection, which in August 2016 established a national committee to coordinate actions aimed at ending child marriage.¹⁰⁹ The Ministry also has regional representatives and works to promote female education, the lack of which interviewees identified as a key driver of child marriage. Respondents also reported that

religious leaders have been involved in programs aimed at raising awareness to prevent domestic violence. NGOs were identified by fieldwork participants as a key resilience factor, thanks to their broad array of programs. Respondents noted that civil society organizations and NGOs invest in basic social services, most notably health, education, and clean water. NGOs also educate the population about issues such as family planning, migration, child marriage, and overpopulation. Interviewees cited the example of the community radio station “La Voix du Peuple”, run by the NGO Alternative Espace Citoyen, which hosts programs centered around these issues. Finally, women in Niger were identified by fieldwork participants as an important resilience factor because of their roles as activists and in educating their local communities on the importance and use of family planning. Respondents reported that local women’s groups have been key partners with civil society organizations and NGOs in encouraging the acceptance of contraception and in providing education on women’s health and family planning.

¹⁰⁸ “Disease Outbreak News: Hepatitis E – Niger”, World Health Organization, May 2017

¹⁰⁹ “Child Marriage Around the World: Niger”, Girls Not Brides

Security (Third Most Vulnerable Pillar)

Vulnerabilities

- Tensions between farmers and herders over access to natural resources (water and land)
- Rising levels of criminality
- Presence of extremist groups such as Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and Boko Haram/Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP)
- Porous borders
- Growth of illicit economic activity, especially drug and human trafficking
- Trans-national threats
- Arms proliferation

Risks

- Attacks by armed groups, particularly Boko Haram and other extremist groups, such as Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM) and Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS)
- Radicalization
- Herder-farmer conflicts
- Rising levels of criminality
- Attacks perpetrated by extremist groups
- Human rights violations resulting from the state of emergency in the Diffa, Tillabéri, and Tahoua regions
- Presence of foreign security forces

Vulnerabilities and Risks

Insecurity in Niger is driven by the Boko Haram insurgency in the Diffa region; the Malian conflict on the eastern borders in Tillabéri; the Ansarul Islam in Burkina Faso; conflict between farmers and herders; porous borders; and the steady rise of criminality throughout the country.

Boko Haram (also known as the Islamic State West Africa Province - ISWAP) has remained a consistent threat in the Diffa region along the southern border with Nigeria since 2014, when the group began to push toward the Niger border.¹¹⁰ In 2016, the Diffa

region experienced more than 50 Boko Haram attacks,¹¹¹ some in retaliation to the Nigerien military's involvement in the larger regional effort by the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF)¹¹² to eradicate Boko Haram and other extremist groups.¹¹³ The rise in attacks is also a result of the presence of U.S.¹¹⁴ and French troops to train and professionalize the Nigerien military in order to rebuff attacks from terrorist organizations.¹¹⁵ Fieldwork participants reported that the area around Lake Chad in the Diffa region is especially insecure and that there is little government control along Niger's shared border with Nigeria.

¹¹⁰ "Foreign Travel Advice: Niger", Government of the United Kingdom

¹¹¹ "Amnesty International Report 2016/17: The State of the World's Human Rights", Amnesty International, 2017

¹¹² "African Economic Outlook 2017: Entrepreneurship and Industrialization", African Development Bank, 2017

¹¹³ "Niger Country Overview", World Bank Group, December 2017

¹¹⁴ "Fact Sheet: Security Governance Initiative", the White House Office of the Press Secretary, August 2014

¹¹⁵ "Dossier de Presse: Operation Barkhane", Ministère des Armées, Government of France, December 2017

The Nigerien government has recently taken steps to address terrorist threats and suspects by establishing a specialized judicial center within the High Court, creating a counter-terrorism cell within the police, and writing new legislation to process alleged terrorists in judicial centers located in the territories of their arrest.¹¹⁶ However, these specialized terrorist prosecution mechanisms face frequent staffing and financial shortfalls, rendering them only partially effective. The Nigerien government also declared a state of emergency in February 2015 intending to restrict financial resources from benefitting Boko Haram.¹¹⁷

Insecurity along Niger's shared borders with Mali, Algeria, and Burkina Faso has been another growing security concern in Niger. In recent years, attacks have been carried out by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and al-Mourabitoun (now known as the Group to Support Islam and Muslims - GSIM) in the Tillabéri and Agadez regions, along the borders with the three countries. Interviewees reported that weak border security has allowed these groups to perpetrate attacks and potentially establish new territory in Niger.

Interviewees reported that radicalization is a key risk factor in Niger and that youth are particularly vulnerable. Poverty and a lack of economic opportunity are the main drivers of radicalization, especially in regions such as Diffa, Agadez and Tillabéri. Young men are particularly vulnerable, and many have reportedly joined extremist groups in the northern regions or Boko Haram in the southeast of the country.

In response to the threat of terrorist activity, local vigilante groups often play a role in security provision in Niger, particularly in border areas. For example, local vigilante groups in the Lake Chad Basin have been effective in helping the military

gather intelligence on the movements and activities of Boko Haram. Communities closer to the Nigerian border, such as Toumour and Bagara, have reportedly taken up arms, set up roadblocks and checkpoints, and patrol the area to ensure Boko Haram cannot establish a presence in the Diffa region.¹¹⁸ During the fieldwork, interviewees stated that such groups have been a resilience factor by providing security for local communities. On the whole, however, the government has resisted the urge to arm vigilante groups for fear of creating an uncontrollable armed faction in an already unstable region that would be susceptible to political manipulation.¹¹⁹ Interviewees reported that many armed groups are active in the Diffa region; some are fighting against Boko Haram, while others have reportedly joined forces with the group.

Regarding the *Forces de Défense et de Sécurité* (FDS), fieldwork participants reported mixed perceptions throughout the country. In some regions, including Tahoua, Tillabéri, and Niamey, interviewees stated that security forces have been essential in the maintenance of peace and security, especially in response to extremist threats along the border with Mali. Alternatively, some fieldwork participants reported that the FDS has allegedly detained suspected extremists for extended periods of time and has utilized methods such as torture. In the Diffa region, interviewees reported that the state of emergency has allowed security forces to overstep their mandate and that hundreds of people have been detained.

As of August 2017, Niger was hosting to 163,867 refugees, 106,146 (64.8 percent) of whom are Nigerians. Malians account for 35 percent of all refugees residing in Niger.¹²⁰ Niger's Diffa region has seen a large influx of refugees from the Boko Haram insurgency and has been the target of Boko

¹¹⁶ "Violations and abuses committed by Boko Haram and the impact on human rights in the countries affected": UN General Assembly A/HRC/30/67", UN Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, December 2015

¹¹⁷ "Niger and Boko Haram: Beyond Counter-Insurgency", International Crisis Group, February 2017

¹¹⁸ "Watchmen of Lake Chad: Vigilante Groups Fighting Boko Haram", International Crisis Group, February 2017

¹¹⁹ "Watchmen of Lake Chad: Vigilante Groups Fighting Boko Haram", International Crisis Group, February 2017

¹²⁰ "Operational Portal Refugee Situations: Niger", UNHCR

Haram attacks as well. Boko Haram attacks at the Kabalewa refugee camp in the Diffa region in July 2016 displaced over 16,000 refugees.¹²¹ In addition, more than 150 schools have closed in the Diffa region because of widespread violence.¹²² As of August 2017, the country had over 127,000 IDPs in the Diffa region alone.¹²³ The refugee flow, combined with the rising numbers of IDPs due to extremist violence, has increased the pressure on already limited economic and material resources in the country.

Niger is also a transit point and source country for economic migrants. In 2016, over 445,000 migrants transited Niger, most of whom were leaving out of the northern Nigerien cities of Arlit or Séguédine.¹²⁴ Over 90 percent of migrants interviewed by the IOM in these two cities were migrating due to economic reasons.¹²⁵ Between January and July of 2017, 38,541 people left through Arlit or Séguédine on their way to Libya or Algeria and onward to Europe, 27,520 (71.4 percent) of whom were Nigerien.¹²⁶ Comparatively, between February and December of 2016, 61,658 Nigeriens made the same journey.¹²⁷ The decrease in Nigeriens leaving the country in 2017 is largely due to the increased presence of law enforcement officials in both cities and the closure of traditional migration routes.¹²⁸ Smuggling and human trafficking through the Sahel region represents a significant – and lucrative – form of illicit economy in Niger. A single driver smuggling refugees through the Sahel can reportedly make USD\$4,000-\$5,000 per trip, well above the average Nigerien annual income of USD\$363.¹²⁹

In recent years there has been a growing threat of criminal and gang violence in urban areas, driven by the combination of poor economic opportunities and a large youth bulge. According to UNICEF, Zinder alone had 320 gangs, each with an average of 10-15 members, in 2012.¹³⁰ These gangs are routinely implicated in cases of rape and abductions to intimidate residents and make money.¹³¹ Additionally, according to fieldwork participants the growth of illicit economic activity has been a driver of criminality. Interviewees reported cases of violence between drug dealers, as well as clashes between drug traffickers and security forces.

Finally, land use has also been a source of conflict in Niger due to the multiple and often contradictory land usage systems in place throughout the country. Traditionally, Nigerien land tenure was based on the right of the firstcomer but has slowly evolved to include more practices such as family inheritance of land, renting fields, pledging, and land purchase, particularly in the more fertile south-central region.¹³² The lack of clarity around land tenure has contributed to a rise in low-level land disputes in Niger.¹³³ In some regions, the sale of the same parcel of land to multiple parties has driven small-scale conflicts. Relatedly, fieldwork participants reported that conflict between farmers and herders is driven by access to water and arable land.

¹²¹ “WFP Niger: Country Brief”, World Food Programme, November 2017

¹²² “Lake Chad Basin Crisis: WFP Niger’s Response in the Diffa Region”, World Food Programme, March 2017

¹²³ “Operational Portal Refugee Situations: Niger”, UNHCR

¹²⁴ “Statistical Report : Niger Flow Monitoring Points”, International Organization for Migration, December 2016

¹²⁵ “IOM Niger Strategy 2017-2019”, International Organization for Migration

¹²⁶ “Population Flow Monitoring : Niger Overview”, International Organization for Migration, July 2017

¹²⁷ “Statistical Report : Niger Flow Monitoring Points”, International Organization for Migration, December 2016

¹²⁸ “Population Flow Monitoring : Niger Overview”, International Organization for Migration, July 2017

¹²⁹ “Seeking Alternatives for Niger’s People Smugglers”, Hoffman, M., UNHCR, August 2017

¹³⁰ “Helping youth associated with gangs create a better future for themselves – and their communities”, Prevost, N. and Arnaud, C., UNICEF, October 2013

¹³¹ “Dead Man’s Market and the Boy Gangs of Niger”, Keenan, J., Foreign Policy, March 2016

¹³² “Literature Review of Land Tenure in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali: Context and Opportunities”, Catholic Relief Services, August 2014

¹³³ “Niger – Property Rights and Resource Governance Profile”, USAID, July 2010

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

Despite the risks and vulnerabilities detailed above, fieldwork participants identified a number of social and institutional resilience factors that contribute to peace and security in Niger. Civil society organizations (CSOs) and NGOs have been a resilience factor through peacebuilding initiatives and awareness-raising campaigns. Traditional and religious leaders have played an important role in spreading peacebuilding messages to local communities. Village monitoring groups and self-defense groups have helped to maintain peace and prevent violence throughout the country. State initiatives have also contributed to security by providing citizens with tools to intervene and alert authorities about suspicious situations. The

“The Ministry of the Interior is the main actor for the promotion of peace and social cohesion in the communities through its decentralized representations, such as the governors, prefects, mayors, traditional leaders, supported in the field by internal forces, such as police, guard. and police.”

- Representative of the Ministry of the Interior

Association for the Revitalization of Livestock in Niger (AREN) has contributed to peace through education of pastoralists about established corridors that can be used to avoid conflict with farmers. Protection and escort of convoys along major roadways by the FDS has also served as a deterrent and contributed to security improvement.

Politics and Governance (Fourth Most Vulnerable Pillar)

Vulnerabilities

- Perceptions of corruption
- Low levels of popular trust in the political system
- Perceived lack of judicial and legislative independence from the executive
- Underrepresentation of women and youth in political decision-making
- Legacy of military coup d'états
- Perceptions of bad governance
- Perceptions of limited space for the opposition in governance matters
- Contentious electoral management institutions

Risks

- Protests, particularly around the 2018 Finance Law
- Electoral violence
- Arrests of high-profile politicians
- Suppression of civil liberties
- Suppression of freedom of expression

Vulnerabilities and Risks

According to the CRVA Index, Niger’s fourth-most vulnerable category is Politics and Governance, with a score of 3.95/10.

Across the country, fieldwork participants expressed a general lack of trust in the political system and politicians. In addition to perceptions of widespread corruption, interviewees also reported that the presence of political parties in local communities is weak and that the parties are only present and visible during elections, avoiding engagement with community members in the interim. Additionally, participants reported that local politicians often make promises that they cannot fulfill due to lack of capacity and insufficient financial resources, with the latter often causing the same politicians to rely on private financial assistance to accomplish public improvement projects. Finally, it is widely perceived that the legislature operates at the behest of, and is subservient to, the executive, rather than serving the needs of their constituents.

Participants also highlighted the 2018 Finance Law as a current source of political tensions in the country. In addition to concerns around rising prices and the resulting economic pressures, civil society organizations (CSOs) have reportedly begun calling for protests and demonstrations against the law. Many participants also cited the Finance Law as an example of a lack of legislative independence from the executive, and of the National Assembly not being responsive to the needs of the Nigerien population.

Although the country’s next national elections will not be held until 2021 and President Issoufou has ruled out amending the constitution to allow him to serve a third term,¹³⁴ many fieldwork participants expressed concerns about the organizational architecture intended to support the elections. These concerns included low levels of trust in the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), reservations about the political make-up of the electoral commission (which reportedly lacks opposition parties), and unease about the new biometric electoral system that will be introduced for the 2021 elections. Some interviewees warned

¹³⁴ “Niger President Mahamadu Issoufou rules out bid for third term”, Africa News. April 2017

that if changes are not made to the INEC, opposition parties may boycott the elections, potentially sparking violence. Finally, participants reported that the electoral system is characterized and hamstrung by strong ethnic alliances and disregard for electoral procedures as well as incidents of bribery and vote buying.

The freedom of past Nigerien elections has been debated in the international community, with organizations like Freedom House stating the 2016 elections had numerous electoral irregularities,¹³⁵ while the African Union, which deployed election monitors for the first round of elections, judged that the election was generally free of manipulation, aside from some logistical issues.¹³⁶ The 2016 elections saw the leading opposition candidate, Hama Amadou, jailed during the entire electoral process for charges related to baby-trafficking.¹³⁷ Amadou's party, the Nigerien Democratic Movement for an African Federation (MODEN/FA), boycotted the election, resulting in Issoufou being reelected to another five-year term.

In addition to concerns around future presidential elections, fieldwork participants discussed local and legislative elections. Local elections, originally scheduled for July 2016, were postponed at least four times over the course of the year,¹³⁸ and several fieldwork participants expressed concern about these repeated delays, which have allowed local officials to extend their mandates and serve an additional term.

The electoral controversies seen in 2016 are indicative of the broader governance problems found in Niger since independence in 1960.

¹³⁵ "Freedom in the World 2017: Niger Profile", Freedom House, 2017

¹³⁶ "Missions d'Observation Electorale de l'Union Africaine pour les Elections Generales des 21 Fevrier et 20 Mars 2016 en Republique du Niger: Rapport Final", African Union, June 2016

¹³⁷ "Freedom in the World 2017: Niger Profile", Freedom House, 2017

¹³⁸ "Niger opposition anger over new delay to local elections", News 24, October 2016

Successive governments have consistently struggled to maintain legitimacy because of the amount of political turnover. Since 1993, Niger has had five constitutions and one interim civilian government (1991 - 1993),¹³⁹ ushered in four separate periods of civilian governments (1993 - 1996, 2000 - 2009, 2011 - 2016, 2016 - present),¹⁴⁰ and had multiple periods of military rule (1996 - 1999, 2010 - 2011).¹⁴¹ Fieldwork participants in part attributed the disconnect between the political class and the broader population to this frequent political turnover.

"The political parties make donations in the form of money and gifts to voters and citizens, especially during campaigns to encourage them to vote. This is a form of disguised corruption. It's not possible to avoid nepotism. There are men who are not honest in politics. There is a lot of corruption."

- Civil society representative, Agadez

Government legitimacy is also undermined by reports of widespread corruption. Transparency International ranked Niger as the 112th most corrupt out of 176 countries in the 2017 Corruption Perceptions Index.¹⁴² When citizens were asked by Afrobarometer to identify the most effective way to combat corruption, 33 percent of people said that ordinary citizens can do nothing to combat corruption. Of those same respondents, 38 percent stated that people are afraid of the consequences of reporting corruption, so doing nothing was better than doing something.¹⁴³

¹³⁹ "BTI 2016: Niger Country Report", Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2016

¹⁴⁰ "Freedom in the World 2017: Niger Profile", Freedom House, 2017

¹⁴¹ "BTI 2016: Niger Country Report", Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2016

¹⁴² "Corruption Perceptions Index 2017", Transparency International, February 2018

¹⁴³ "Efficacy for fighting corruption: Evidence from 36 African countries", Isbell, T., Afrobarometer, 2017

Corruption was one of the most frequently cited concerns identified by fieldwork participants, who view corruption as being endemic at both the national and local levels. Participants reported that corruption impacted the provision of basic services, reducing available funding as well as discouraging politicians from focusing on the concerns of the population. In Diffa, fieldwork participants also reported that the high level of spending by the state on security lacks accountability and gives rise to increased corruption. Some respondents even reported that the *Haute Autorité de Lutte contre la Corruption* (Anti-corruption High Authority) is itself perceived as corrupt, inhibiting the country's efforts to effectively fight corruption.

Fieldwork participants also reported that women remain largely underrepresented in political decision-making roles. Niger has implemented at least three laws since 1996 in an attempt to address gender inequalities, while also implementing a gender quota system in 2000 to ensure greater gender equality at the political level. The quota system mandates that at least 10 percent of either sex is represented both in candidate lists and in elected seats, and sets a minimum of 25 percent of either sex for cabinet ministers and other high profile appointed positions.¹⁴⁴ Although the quota system has served to successfully increase women's representation in the National Assembly, rising from 1.2 percent in 1999 to 12.4 percent in 2004,¹⁴⁵ fieldwork participants reported that the quotas are often not respected in practice. Currently, 17 percent of seats in the National Assembly are held by women.¹⁴⁶ Women also remain underrepresented at the local level and within political parties¹⁴⁷ and fieldwork participants stated that women still have

little decision-making power, despite being active as voters.

Finally, fieldwork participants expressed mixed feelings about the role of CSOs and the media in politics and governance. CSOs and NGOs are often viewed as positive forces in the community, playing the role of informing and mobilizing the population about issues affecting them. In addition, interviewees reported that CSOs play a watchdog role and speak out about malpractices in government and the electoral process. Sometimes, however, CSOs become politicized, which undermines their effectiveness and the trust placed in them by the broader public. Views of the media expressed by fieldwork participants were much more mixed; often they are perceived as sources of information and awareness-raising, but they are also believed to engage in self-censorship to maintain access to politicians, rather than holding those politicians accountable.

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

As noted above, many fieldwork participants identified CSOs and NGOs as a key source of resilience in the area of politics and governance. CSOs carry out programs on good governance, civic education and promoting the involvement of women and youth in political processes. One interviewee in Agadez particularly cited the example of the USAID-funded Participatory Responsive Governance program by Counterpart International.¹⁴⁸ In addition, women leaders are reportedly involved in awareness-raising and mobilization activities. Finally, some interviewees cited the media as a source of information and awareness-raising, although others felt that media outlets are politicized or unwilling to hold politicians accountable.

¹⁴⁴ "The Effect of Gender Quota Laws on the Election of Women: Lessons from Niger", Kang, A. *Women's Studies International Forum* 41: 94-102, November 2013

¹⁴⁵ "The Effect of Gender Quota Laws on the Election of Women: Lessons from Niger", Kang, A. *Women's Studies International Forum* 41: 94-102, November 2013

¹⁴⁶ "Women in national parliaments", Inter Parliamentary Union

¹⁴⁷ "The Effect of Gender Quota Laws on the Election of Women: Lessons from Niger", Kang, A. *Women's Studies International Forum* 41: 94-102, November 2013

¹⁴⁸ "Participatory Responsive Governance in Niger 2016-2021", Counterpart International

Rule of Law (Least Vulnerable Pillar)

Vulnerabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low levels of judicial and legislative independence• Perceptions of corruption and bias within the judicial system• Slow judicial processing times
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incidents of corruption• Violations of civil rights

Vulnerabilities and Risks

According to the CRVA Index, Niger is least vulnerable in the area of Rule of Law, although the country's score of 5.81/10 remains below the regional average. Primary vulnerabilities highlighted by fieldwork participants include low levels of judicial and legislative independence, perceptions of corruption and bias toward the wealthy within the judicial system, slow processing times, and poor access to justice for vulnerable populations.

"I am not content with the judges. In my opinion, there is corruption in the justice system and not everyone gets the same chance."

- Civil Society Organization Representative, Agadez Region

Niger has a history of executive branch interference in the judicial process, with judges being moved to low-profile positions after asserting judicial independence, or the executive branch attempting to interfere in high-profile cases dealing with political opponents.¹⁴⁹ Judicial independence is further affected by low salaries, inadequate resources, and staff shortages, which allows space for corruption to grow.¹⁵⁰ Many fieldwork

participants also expressed the perception that the parliament no longer effectively acts as a check on the power of the executive branch, undermining the separation of powers and the rule of law.

Interviewees also highlighted perceptions of judicial bias toward the wealthy, slow processing times and the high cost of hiring a lawyer (which is a barrier for poor and vulnerable populations) as factors undermining the functioning of the judicial system in Niger. Participants emphasized the need for greater popular sensitization around legal rights and the roles and duties of various actors within the judicial system, such as the judicial police.

Fieldwork participants discussed the legal protection of women's rights in Niger, with many stakeholders acknowledging that the legal frameworks have greatly improved in recent years. Niger has taken steps to improve gender inequality, passing at least three laws since 1996 enshrining women's rights into law. It passed the National Policy for the Advancement of Women in 1996, the National Gender Policy in 2008, with a 10-year action plan from 2009-2018,¹⁵¹ and amended the constitution in 2010.¹⁵² However, despite its active legislative portfolio to ensure women's rights, gender-based discrimination continues in Niger due to socio-cultural norms and the reliance on customary law, particularly in rural areas.¹⁵³ For

¹⁴⁹ "Niger 2016 Human Rights Report", U.S. Department of State, 2016

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ "List of issues and questions in relation to the combined third and fourth periodic reports of the Niger: Addendum - Replies of the Niger", UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, April 2017

¹⁵² "Combined third and fourth periodic reports of States parties due in 2012: Niger", UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, October 2015

¹⁵³ "Combined third and fourth periodic reports of States parties due in 2012: Niger", UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, October 2015

example, under customary law men are considered to be the head of household, and inheritance practices (including the transfer of land ownership) privilege male heirs.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, despite the prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV), Nigerien law does not specifically address domestic violence, does not recognize spousal rape, and does not provide a minimum age of consent.¹⁵⁵ Fieldwork participants also noted that many women, particularly in rural areas, are not adequately sensitized as to their rights, and that social stigma continues to deter many women from pursuing cases through the formal justice system, particularly in cases of gender-based violence.

Finally, some interviewees expressed concerns around limitations on certain civil liberties, particularly the right to protest and freedom of expression.

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

Fieldwork participants identified a number of social and institutional resilience factors in the area of Rule of Law. Stakeholders reported that traditional chiefs, religious leaders and other community leaders play a primary role in dispute resolution at the local level, with many people preferring to resolve conflicts through these alternative mechanisms rather than going to the formal justice system. Land commissions also play a role in resolving land disputes. In addition, NGOs reportedly are important actors in facilitating access to justice for vulnerable populations and promoting the protections of women's rights. Finally, several stakeholders highlighted the work of the National Commission of Human Rights (CNDH) in helping to protect the rights of women and children.

¹⁵⁴ "Social Institutions and Gender Index: Niger", OECD

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

External Factors

Niger is a member of a number of international and regional organizations, such as the United Nations, the 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 2017, the World Bank began financing a 5-year economic and social development plan worth \$1.2 billion to strengthen governance, develop human capital and social protection, and boost rural productivity and incomes.¹⁵⁶

In recent years, Niger has been strongly impacted by the movement of jihadist and extremist groups across the Sahel region, as well as insecurity in neighboring countries such as Mali, Libya and Nigeria. Since 2015, regional terror groups such as Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) have moved into the country, finding it to be a “fertile recruiting ground” and an easy transit point for weapons and resources.¹⁵⁷ Particularly in those regions bordering north-eastern Nigeria, Nigeriens have been negatively impacted by insecurity stemming from the Boko Haram insurgency and stifled economic activities. Insecurity in neighboring Nigeria and Mali has also resulted in a large influx of refugees. As of December 2017, Niger was hosting more than 165,000 refugees, 65 percent of whom originated from Nigeria, as well as over 129,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs).¹⁵⁸

Faced with these security challenges, Niger has become an important partner in multiple bi- and

multi-lateral security efforts, including the G5 Sahel Force and the Multinational Joint Task Force to fight against Boko Haram, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), Operation Barkhane, and the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership. French forces involved in Operation Barkhane maintain a presence in Madama, Diffa, and Tillabéri.¹⁵⁹ U.S. Special Operations forces have been stationed in Niger since 2013. In November 2017, the government of Niger gave the U.S. Department of Defense permission to fly armed drones out of Niamey and authorized the construction of a new drone base in Agadez.¹⁶⁰ Niger also contributes a smaller number of troops and police to the UN missions in Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Haiti.¹⁶¹

Given the country’s porous borders and large swaths of unoccupied territory, the illegal trafficking of people, and arms remains an economic and security concern for Niger.¹⁶² Conflicts in the surrounding region such as Libya and Nigeria make Niger’s ungoverned desert areas a transit hub for arms smuggling.¹⁶³ Demand for sex workers in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East make Niger both a source country and a transit point for sex trafficking in West Africa.¹⁶⁴ Human trafficking for the purpose of forced marriages and slave labor remains a concern, and Boko Haram has also been known to forcibly recruit child soldiers from Niger.¹⁶⁵

Niger is also a source country and a transit point for economic migrants traveling to Libya or Algeria and on to Europe. In 2016, over 445,000 migrants transited Niger, most of whom were leaving out of

¹⁵⁶ “Niger Country Overview”, World Bank Group, December 2017

¹⁵⁷ “At the Crossroads of Sahelian Conflicts: Insecurity, Terrorism, and Arms Trafficking in Niger”, De Tésières, S., Small Arms Survey, January 2018

¹⁵⁸ “Operational Portal Refugee Situations: Niger”, UNHCR

¹⁵⁹ “At the Crossroads of Sahelian Conflicts: Insecurity, Terrorism, and Arms Trafficking in Niger”, De Tésières, S., Small Arms Survey, January 2018

¹⁶⁰ “Niger Approves Armed U.S. Drone Flights, Expanding Pentagon’s Role in Africa”, Cooper, H. and Schmitt, E., New York Times, November 2017

¹⁶¹ “Troops and Police Contributors”, UN Peacekeeping

¹⁶² “Trafficking in Persons Report June 2017”, U.S. Department of State, June 2017

¹⁶³ “Measuring Illicit Arms Flows: Briefing Paper”, De Tésières, S., Small Arms Survey, March 2017

¹⁶⁴ “2017 Trafficking in Persons Report” U.S. Department of State

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

the northern Nigerien cities of Arlit or Séguédine.¹⁶⁶ 2017 saw a significant decrease in the number of migrants traveling through Niger, largely due to the increased presence of law enforcement officials in both cities and the closure of traditional migration routes.¹⁶⁷ In 2017, only 169,092 people were observed transiting through Niger.¹⁶⁸

Economically, Niger is also vulnerable to shifts in global commodity prices as the economy remains largely undiversified¹⁶⁹ and dependent on high-value exports such as uranium and petroleum.¹⁷⁰ Given the population's reliance on subsistence agriculture, which is an income source for over 80

percent of the population,¹⁷¹ the country is also highly vulnerable to environmental pressures and the effects of climate change, such as changes in rainfall patterns. Climate change poses a particular threat to food security, as Niger has already experienced five severe climate-related food and nutrition crises since 2000^{172,173} due to rising temperatures, infrequent rainfall, increased erosion risks, and declining resilience of forests.¹⁷⁴ Future environmental shifts may also contribute to increased conflicts between farmers and herders, as decreasing grazing land or water reserves may force herders to migrate to new regions or spur competition for resources.

¹⁶⁶ "Niger – Flow Monitoring Dashboard 6 (December 2017)", International Organization for Migration, January 2018

¹⁶⁷ "Population Flow Monitoring : Niger Overview", International Organization for Migration, July 2017

¹⁶⁸ "Niger – Flow Monitoring Dashboard 6 (December 2017)", International Organization for Migration, January 2018

¹⁶⁹ "African Economic Outlook 2017: Entrepreneurship and Industrialization", African Development Bank, 2017

¹⁷⁰ "Atlas of Economic Complexity 2015", Center for International Development at Harvard University

¹⁷¹ "IMF Country Report No. 17/60", International Monetary Fund, February 2017

¹⁷² "Niger country profile", World Food Programme

¹⁷³ Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT), Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, Université catholique de Louvain

¹⁷⁴ "Community-Based Adaptation: Niger", UN Development Programme

Gender Considerations

Women and girls in Niger continue to face significant discrimination and disparities within the social, political and economic spheres, despite positive steps taken on the part of the Nigerien government and civil society.

Within the economic realm, women's economic empowerment lags considerably behind that of men. Niger ranks 157th out of 188 nations on the UN Development Programme's Gender Inequality Index¹⁷⁵ and the African Development Bank lists women's development as being 24 percent lower than men's.¹⁷⁶ Women in Niger most often work in the informal sector, and women have a labor force participation rate of 40.2 percent compared to 89.4 percent for men.¹⁷⁷ Fieldwork participants reported that women play an important role in agricultural and livestock production, petty trade, and crafts. However, despite their economic contributions, women often lack the agency to make the decisions that will positively benefit their lives. Nearly half (45 percent) of women in Niger lacked the ability to control household resources, were exposed to attitudes that increased their risk of gender-based violence, and were married at an early age,¹⁷⁸ all of which limits women's leverage in household, family and economic decisions.

Women's economic empowerment is also limited by ongoing disparities in education. As of 2012, the literacy rate among adult women ages 15 and above was only 8.9 percent, compared to 23.2 percent among men.¹⁷⁹ Girls also have lower rates of primary and secondary school attendance, and

higher rates of school dropouts.¹⁸⁰ The primary school dropout rate for girls in Niger is 35.4 percent compared to 14.1 percent for boys.¹⁸¹

Women entrepreneurs also reportedly face difficult access to credit and financing.¹⁸² To overcome this barrier, fieldwork participants reported that many women take part in group financing schemes known as *tontines*, in which members contribute a set amount each month and benefit from the fund on a rotating or as-needed basis. NGOs are also reportedly involved in supporting and promoting women's economic empowerment in Niger, including through micro-finance programs.

Nigerien women also face significant social and demographic pressures. Niger has the highest prevalence of early marriage in the world, with 76 percent of women having been married before 18 years old.¹⁸³ According to the 2012 Demographic and Health Survey, the median age at first marriage is 15.8 years for women compared to 24.3 years for men.¹⁸⁴ The regions of Maradi and Zinder have the lowest median age at first marriage (15.4 years) while Niamey has the highest median age (19.5 years).¹⁸⁵

High rates of early marriage have contributed to elevated fertility and maternal mortality rates in the country as well. Niger has one of the highest total fertility rates in the world, at 7.6 births per woman. The high fertility rate is largely attributable to a mix of socio-cultural traditions such as the persistence of polygamy, religious reasons, low education rates, early marriage, and a lack of access to modern contraceptive methods.¹⁸⁶ As of 2012, only 13.9 percent of married women reported

¹⁷⁵ "Human Development Report 2016", UN Development Programme, 2016

¹⁷⁶ "African Economic Outlook 2017: Entrepreneurship and Industrialization", African Development Bank, 2017

¹⁷⁷ "Human Development Report 2016", UN Development Programme, 2016

¹⁷⁸ "Africa Human Development Report 2016 : Accelerating Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Africa", UN Development Programme, 2016

¹⁷⁹ "DataBank: Education Statistics – All Indicators", World Bank Group

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ "Gender and WFP Niger": Knowledge Series – Policy Briefs", World Food Programme, November 2016

¹⁸² "Social Institutions and Gender Index: Niger", OECD

¹⁸³ "UNICEF Data: Monitoring the Situation of Children and Women", UNICEF

¹⁸⁴ "Enquête Démographique et de Santé et à Indicateurs Multiples du Niger 2012", Institut National de la Statistique et ICF International, 2013

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ "IMF Country Report No. 17/60", International Monetary Fund, February 2017

using any form of contraception.¹⁸⁷ Rates of contraceptive use are lowest in the regions of Tahoua (6.5 percent) and Maradi (11.2 percent) and highest in Niamey (33.9 percent).¹⁸⁸ Furthermore, less than one-third of women in Niger give birth in health facilities,¹⁸⁹ leading to a maternal mortality rate of 553 per 100,000 live births, which is above the average for Sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁹⁰ Nigerien women between the ages of 15-49 have a 57 percent chance of dying from maternity-related causes.¹⁹¹ The health and livelihood of the mother affects the health of the child as well: Niger's under five mortality rate is 95.5 per 100,000 live births.¹⁹² Fieldwork participants across the country reported that women have greatly benefitted from free healthcare initiatives, particularly in the area of maternal health.

Politically, women also remain under-represented in decision-making positions, although fieldwork participants reported that women's involvement in politics is slowly increasing. In 2000, the government implemented a gender quota system to promote greater equality within politics. The quota system mandates that at least 10 percent of either sex is represented both in candidate lists and in elected seats, and sets a minimum of 25 percent of either sex for cabinet ministers and other high profile appointed positions.¹⁹³ The quota system has served to successfully increase women's representation in the National Assembly, rising from 1.2 percent in 1999 to 12.4 percent in

2004.¹⁹⁴ Currently, 17 percent of seats in the National Assembly are held by women.¹⁹⁵ Despite these gains at the national level, however, women remain underrepresented at the local level and within political parties.¹⁹⁶

Women in Niger also face a different set of risks stemming from the country's ongoing security challenges. For example, it is estimated that women and children make up around 70 percent of displaced persons in southern Niger,¹⁹⁷ and women face additional economic and security pressures following displacement due to their economic marginalization. Women and girls in the Diffa region have also been abducted and subjected to sexual violence during attacks by Boko Haram members.¹⁹⁸

In recent years, Niger has taken steps to improve gender inequality, passing at least three laws since 1996 to enshrine women's rights into law. The country passed the National Policy for the Advancement of Women in 1996 in response to gender inequality issues raised by a coalition of women protesters in 1991,¹⁹⁹ the National Gender Policy in 2008, with a 10-year action plan from 2009-2018,²⁰⁰ and amended the constitution in 2010.²⁰¹ Many fieldwork participants also highlighted the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection as a source of resilience.

However, despite the government's active legislative portfolio to ensure women's rights are

¹⁸⁷ "Enquête Démographique et de Santé et à Indicateurs Multiples du Niger 2012", Institut National de la Statistique et ICF International, 2013

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ "Where We Work: Niger", The DHS Program, USAID

¹⁹⁰ "Human Development Report 2016", UN Development Programme, 2016

¹⁹¹ "Niger: WHO Statistical Profile", World Health Organization, January 2015

¹⁹² "Human Development Report 2016", UN Development Programme, 2016

¹⁹³ "The Effect of Gender Quota Laws on the Election of Women: Lessons from Niger", Kang, A. *Women's Studies International Forum* 41: 94-102, November 2013

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ "Women in national parliaments", Inter Parliamentary Union

¹⁹⁶ "The Effect of Gender Quota Laws on the Election of Women: Lessons from Niger", Kang, A. *Women's Studies International Forum* 41: 94-102, November 2013

¹⁹⁷ "The Nigerian Refugee Crisis", ACTED, June 2015

¹⁹⁸ "Boko Haram's lesser-known reign of terror in southeast Niger", France 24, January 2018

¹⁹⁹ "Niger women campaign for inclusion in National Assembly, 1991", Global Nonviolent Action Database, Swarthmore College, February 2012

²⁰⁰ "List of issues and questions in relation to the combined third and fourth periodic reports of the Niger: Addendum - Replies of the Niger", UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, April 2017

²⁰¹ "Combined third and fourth periodic reports of States parties due in 2012: Niger", UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, October 2015

being upheld across the country, gender-based discrimination persists, especially in rural areas, due to socio-cultural norms and reliance on customary law. Under customary law, for example, men are considered to be the head of household, and inheritance practices (including the transfer of

land ownership) privilege male heirs.²⁰² Nigerian law also continues to have gaps; for example, statutory law does not specifically address domestic violence, does not recognize spousal rape, and does not provide a minimum age of consent.²⁰³

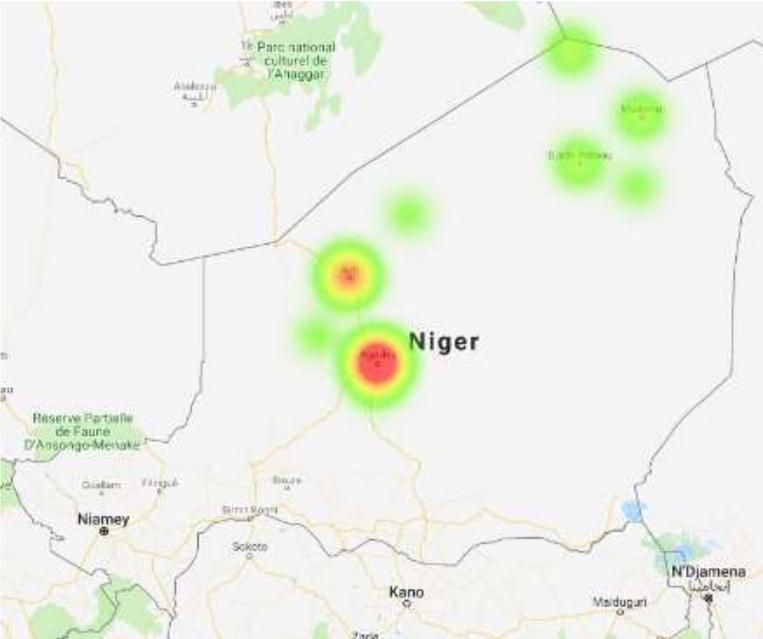
²⁰² “Social Institutions and Gender Index: Niger”, OECD

²⁰³ “Social Institutions and Gender Index: Niger”, OECD

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

Agadez Region

The Agadez region is located in northeastern Niger, bordering Mali and Algeria to the west and Libya and Chad to north and east. Agadez is the largest administrative region in Niger, accounting for 53 percent of the country’s territory, but is home to less than three percent of its population.²⁰⁴ The largest ethnic group represented in Agadez are the Tuareg, a traditionally nomadic people.²⁰⁵ The economy of Agadez is largely dependent on subsistence agriculture and livestock herding²⁰⁶ as well as uranium mining²⁰⁷ and, in more recent years, gold mining.²⁰⁸



Structural Vulnerabilities

- Rising prices of basic commodities
- Inadequate social services, particularly education
- Youth unemployment
- Poor natural resource management
- Climate change and environmental pressures
- High rate of population growth and underutilization of family planning
- Porous borders and expansive territory
- Proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW)
- Perceptions of corruption within the political system
- Underrepresentation of women and youth in political decision-making
- Perceptions of corruption and bias within the judicial system
- Perceived lack of judicial and legislative independence

²⁰⁴ “Enquête Démographique et de Santé dans les Zones d’Intervention du Programme de Coopération de l’UNICEF au Niger, 2012”, Institut National de la Statistique and ICF International, 2012
²⁰⁵ “Tableau de Bord Social”, Institut National de la Statistique, 2013
²⁰⁶ “Annuaire des Statistiques Regionales 2010-2014, Region d’Agadez”, Institut National de la Statistique, 2015
²⁰⁷ “Mining industry and sustainable development: time for change”, Carvalho, F. P., *Food and Energy Security* 2017; 6(2): 61-67
²⁰⁸ “Beyond the ‘Wild West’: The Gold Rush in Northern Niger”, Pellerin, M., Small Arms Survey, June 2017

Event-Driven Risks

- Food insecurity
- Natural disasters and the effects of climate change
- Illicit economic activity, including human and arms trafficking
- Incidents of criminality
- Incidents of herder-farmer conflicts
- Incidents of terrorism
- Incidents of corruption

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

- Civil society organizations (CSOs) and NGOs
- Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and Child Protection
- Humanitarian organizations and government agencies
- *Forces de Défense et de Sécurité* (FDS)
- Women’s organizations
- Traditional and religious leaders
- Media organizations

Economics and Resources

Key economic concerns highlighted by fieldwork participants include rising prices for basic commodities and food insecurity, inadequate social services, youth unemployment, natural resource management, and illicit economic activities.

During the fieldwork, interviewees reported that the prices for basic commodities and foodstuffs such as sugar, oil, millet, maize, rice and fish have increased, affecting food security in the region. As much of the Agadez region is desert and receives little rainfall to support agricultural production,²⁰⁹ the region is highly reliant on imported goods and

consumables from other regions. Therefore, participants expressed concern that a recent increase in transportation costs following the passage of the 2018 Finance Law would further exacerbate food insecurity.

Fieldwork participants also reported that social services, especially education infrastructure, are inadequate in some parts of the region. The quality of schools in the region is reportedly poor, with many schools lacking even basic supplies such as tables, chairs, and textbooks. Other services, especially electricity, are not reliable, according to one interviewee. The region’s health infrastructure also remains inadequate to meet the needs of the growing population. According to one interviewee, the city of Agadez has five health centers, 14 health huts and seven private health facilities for a population of more than 100,000.

Participants also noted that youth unemployment is a key concern in the region. While the number of youth enrolling in technical and vocational training programs has reportedly increased, many youth have dropped out of school and are

“The prices of the common commodities have dangerously increased. For example, prices of millet, maize and rice all increased. Millet used to be less than 500 francs but is now more than 750 francs. Increases in the price of goods contribute to poverty, crime, food insecurity, and begging.”

- Professor, Agadez Region

²⁰⁹ “Niger Food Security Brief May 2014”, USAID Famine Early Warning Systems Network, May 2014

unemployed.²¹⁰ According to one interviewee, poverty is a primary driver of school dropouts because parents cannot afford school fees, textbooks, or supplies.

Natural resource management was also a commonly cited problem among fieldwork participants. Agadez is home to uranium mining operations and significant coal reserves,²¹¹ yet interviewees reported that the royalties from these activities are poorly managed by the government and do not benefit local populations. Similarly, respondents stated that food aid is sometimes mismanaged, stolen, or does not reach local communities.

Agadez is also the site of illicit economic activities, particularly human and arms trafficking. While insecurity has negatively impacted tourism and livelihoods in the region, illicit economic activities have become a lucrative source of income for smugglers and traffickers. A single driver smuggling migrants through the Sahel can reportedly make upwards of \$4,000-\$5,000 per trip, well above the average Nigerien annual income of \$363.²¹² The prevalence of migrant smuggling has also injected much-needed revenue into local economies in Agadez, supporting industries such as transportation, hotels and restaurants. Some experts have noted that efforts to reduce migration through Agadez could inadvertently damage local economies and create grievances.²¹³

The Agadez region is highly vulnerable to natural disasters and the effects of climate change, including changes in rainfall patterns and desertification. Flooding in 2016 affected

thousands of households in the region, killed livestock and destroyed crops.²¹⁴

“There are instances where girls are removed from school to be married away by the parents. ... There are instances where the young girls ran away from home and school just to protect themselves from unwanted marriage proposals arranged by the parents.”

- Peacebuilding organization coordinator, Agadez Region

Finally, fieldwork participants stated that women play an important role in the economy of the region through petty trade and artisan work, such as crafts, jewelry, leather goods, and weaving. As many women and youth lack access to credit and financing, fieldwork participants reported that civil society organizations (CSOs) have provided funding to support small business ventures. Women also frequently form group financing schemes known as *tontines*, in which members contribute money every month and benefit from the fund on a rotating or as-needed basis.

Population and Demographics

A primary demographic concern raised by fieldwork participants in the Agadez region was population growth, which has reportedly placed pressure on infrastructure and resources in the area. The 2016 population of the region was 547,756.²¹⁵ The total fertility rate in Agadez (5.7 children per woman) remains high, although it is below the national average of 7.6,²¹⁶ and family planning services remain underutilized. As of 2012, only 19.4

²¹⁰ “Bilan de l’an 1 de mise en oeuvre du program de Renaissance II”, Government of Niger, March 2017

²¹¹ “Niger: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper”, International Monetary Fund, April 2013

²¹² “Seeking Alternatives for Niger’s People Smugglers”, Hoffman, M., UNHCR, August 2017

²¹³ “Irregular migration and human smuggling networks in Niger”, Molenaar, F., Clingendael, February 2017

²¹⁴ “Bulletin humanitaire : Niger”, OCHA, October 2016

²¹⁵ “Tableau de Bord Social”, Institut National de la Statistique, 2016

²¹⁶ “Enquête Démographique et de Santé et à Indicateurs Multiples du Niger 2012”, Institut National de la Statistique et ICF International, 2013

percent of married women in Agadez reported using any form of contraception,²¹⁷ despite contraception being free at health clinics.

Fieldwork participants also discussed early marriage in the region and reported that, while cases of early marriage continue to occur in rural areas, the phenomenon has decreased overall. As of 2012, the median age at first marriage among women in Agadez was 17.3 years, which is the second-highest in the country.²¹⁸ Some interviewees also expressed concern around issues of teenage pregnancy and the sexual abuse of minors.

Agadez is a key transit point for migrants traveling to Algeria and Libya and on to Europe, and the region has seen significant flows of migrants from within Niger and from the larger West African region. In 2016, over 445,000 migrants transited Niger, most of whom were leaving out of the cities of Arlit or Séguédine.²¹⁹ While the number of migrants has since decreased, due in part to crackdowns by law enforcement and the closure of traditional migration routes,²²⁰ fieldwork participants reported that the smuggling of migrants continues in the region and has, as noted above, become a profitable enterprise.

Security

Fieldwork participants cited porous borders, herder-farmer conflicts, terrorism, drug trafficking, and criminality (particularly theft and armed banditry) as key security issues in Agadez. According to data from the Nigerien Gendarmerie, the Agadez region has reported the highest number of incidents of armed banditry in the country since 2015.²²¹ Given the prevalence of migrant

smuggling in Agadez and its role in the local economy, several fieldwork participants also expressed concern that the government's ban on migrant smuggling (put in place in 2015)²²² have inadvertently contributed to the proliferation of smuggling rings and increased criminality within Agadez, as these rings have organized themselves into gangs to evade authorities and capture. Some respondents indicated that the government's crackdown on migrant smuggling, which is a lucrative business in the region, has also contributed to reduced sources of employment and income.

The Agadez region shares international borders with Mali, Algeria, Libya, and Chad, and fieldwork participants highlighted the challenge of securing the region's expansive territory and borders. Cross-border insecurity, including incursions by terrorist groups, remains a threat in the region, although Agadez has been less affected by terrorist activity than southern Niger. In 2013, terrorist groups later associated with al-Mourabitoun carried out attacks on a military camp and a uranium facility in the Agadez region, killing more than 20 people.²²³ While fieldwork participants expressed mixed opinions on the likelihood of youth radicalization in Agadez, the region remains vulnerable to the larger threat of terrorism in the Sahel.

Conflicts between herders and farmers are also an ongoing security risk. Fieldwork participants reported that conflicts primarily occur as a result of disputes over land or water access. Cases of cattle theft have also been reported in border areas.

As noted above, the Agadez region is a site of drugs and arms trafficking. Fieldwork participants reported cases of drug traffickers clashing with

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ "Niger – Flow Monitoring Dashboard 6 (December 2017)", International Organization for Migration, January 2018

²²⁰ "Population Flow Monitoring : Niger Overview", International Organization for Migration, July 2017

²²¹ "At the Crossroads of Sahelian Conflicts: Insecurity, Terrorism, and Arms Trafficking in Niger", De Tessières, S., Small Arms Survey, January 2018

²²² "Irregular migration and human smuggling networks in Niger", Molenaar, F., Clingendael, February 2017

²²³ "At the Crossroads of Sahelian Conflicts: Insecurity, Terrorism, and Arms Trafficking in Niger", De Tessières, S., Small Arms Survey, January 2018

security forces, as well as violence between drug traffickers. Over the past decade, and particularly since the Libyan government lost control of weapons stockpiles in 2011, Niger has also been a transit point for illicit weapons trafficking.²²⁴ According to data from the Commission Nationale pour la Collecte et de Contrôle des Armes Illicites (CNCCAI) and the National Gendarmerie, the Agadez region saw the country's highest number of seized arms between 2011-2016, including automatic weapons, rockets, mines and hand grenades.²²⁵ While many of these weapons are suspected to have been en route to Mali, the proliferation and circulation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) within the Agadez region continues to pose a threat to security.

Fieldwork participants also reported limited cases of tensions and conflict between the Tuareg and the Toubou ethnic groups, particularly near the border with Chad. A Toubou-led group called the Movement for Justice and Rehabilitation of Niger (MJRN) has also recently formed in the east of the Agadez region, near the Chadian border, and one interviewee noted that this could become a source of insecurity.²²⁶

Finally, Agadez was the site of two armed rebellions by the Tuareg ethnic group in the 1990s and 2000s. While a resurgence of these conflicts was not identified as an immediate threat by fieldwork participants, some interviewees expressed concern that crackdowns on lucrative migrant smuggling routes, as well as the government's closure of the Djado gold mine in April 2017²²⁷ and layoffs by other mining companies in the region, could create renewed economic grievances among former Tuareg fighters who have become central actors in the region's illicit economy.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ "Niger : un groupe armé inconnu menace le pays", Le 360 Afrique, September 2016

Politics and Governance

Fieldwork participants in Agadez reported a general lack of trust in the political system due to widespread perceptions of corruption and unfulfilled campaign promises. As one interviewee stated, "The population has a bad appreciation of the political actors, [and a] lack of confidence due to broken election promises. Politics is the art of lying." Interviewees also raised concerns around the mismanagement of public funds, facilitated by a lack of effective accountability mechanisms for local authorities.

"Women and youth play a large role in participating in the electoral process but their participation at decision-making levels is weak."

- Peacebuilding organization representative, Agadez Region

Women and youth are also underrepresented in formal decision-making positions, despite reportedly being active in electoral processes. An educator from Agadez stated that women are manipulated by politicians during election periods and then dismissed, partially due to a lack of awareness and education.

Rule of Law

Fieldwork participants cited perceptions of corruption within the judicial system, slow judicial processes, and restricted civil liberties as key vulnerabilities affecting the rule of law in the Agadez region. Several interviewees reported that the judicial system is perceived to benefit to the wealthy, while others felt that the executive branch

²²⁷ "Niger's Gold Rush Has Turned Bandits into Barons", Tinti, P., Vice, January 2018

wields too much influence over the judicial and legislative branches. Regarding civil liberties, interviewees reported that freedoms of expression, movement, and assembly are sometimes restricted.

Fieldwork participants also reported that community leaders, such as traditional chiefs, district chiefs, and religious leaders, manage conflict and provide alternative dispute mechanisms at different levels. While these mechanisms are often preferred by local populations, one interviewee noted that this can result in mishandling of gender-based violence (GBV) cases, where social stigmas and norms may pressure cases to be settled out of court.

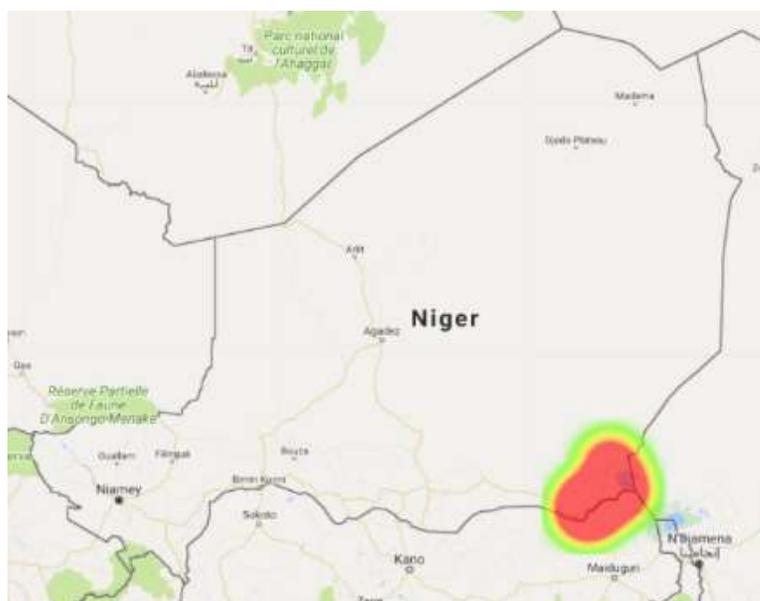
Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

Despite the concerns detailed above, fieldwork participants identified a number of social and institutional resilience factors that help to mitigate risks and vulnerabilities in the Agadez region. Civil society organizations (CSOs) and NGOs reportedly play an important role in peacebuilding, service provision, awareness-raising, and promoting good

governance. In particular, the NGOs Karkara and HED Tamat were identified as organizations contributing to the economic empowerment of women and youth in Agadez. Le Fond Mondial des Droits Humains, Alternative Espace Citoyens Agadez, the Commission Nationale des Droits Humains (CNDH), and Clinique Juridique of the Association Nationale de Defence des Droits humain (ANDDH) have all raised awareness about human and migrant rights in the region. Women's organizations are also fora for support and mobilization, and participants reported that many women's groups have formed *tontines* to promote women's economic empowerment. The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection also has representation in Agadez and ensures the promotion of women and children's rights and schooling for girls. Traditional and religious leaders have been integral in local alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, increasing access to justice, and spreading peacebuilding messages to communities. Finally, interviewees reported that media outlets are important actors in educating citizens on good governance practices and promoting community engagement and mobilization on important issues.

Diffa Region

The Diffa region is located in the eastern-most part of the country, bordering Chad to the east and Nigeria to the south, and is home to approximately 669,307 Nigeriens.²²⁸ The largest ethnic group represented in Diffa is the Kanouri, followed by the Hausas, Toubous, Tuaregs, and the Fulani. Like all of Niger, the region is majority Muslim.²²⁹ The economy of Diffa is largely dependent on subsistence agriculture, livestock herding, fishing, and logging. The Diffa region has also been particularly impacted by the Boko Haram insurgency in recent years, profoundly affecting the lives and economic prospects of Nigeriens in the region.²³⁰



Structural Vulnerabilities

- Increases in the prices of basic goods
- Food insecurity
- Suspension of economic activities, such as fishing and pepper cultivation through imposed security measures by the *Forces de Défense et de Sécurité* (FDS)
- Restricted access by FDS to Lake Chad for local populations
- Climate change and environmental pressures
- Disrupted trade and supply routes
- Perceptions of corruption within the political system
- Delayed local elections
- Lack of transparency around elections
- Ethnic tensions
- Early marriage and forced marriage
- Cultural and social barriers to the use of family planning
- Porous borders
- High youth unemployment
- Regional migration due to the security situation
- Inadequate access to the formal justice system

²²⁸ “Tableau de Bord Social”, Institut National de la Statistique, 2016

²²⁹ “Enquête Démographique et de Santé et à Indicateurs Multiples du Niger 2012”, Institut National de la Statistique et ICF International, 2013

²³⁰ “Comptes Rapides 2016”, Institut National de la Statistique, April 2017

Event-Driven Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food insecurity • Effects of climate change, such as drought, flooding and changing rainfall patterns • Incidents of conflict between farmers and herders • Tensions and conflicts along ethnic lines • Boko Haram insurgency • Cross-border crime including smuggling and trafficking
Social and Institutional Resilience Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGOs and CSOs • Village monitoring groups and self-defense groups • Traditional mechanisms for dispute resolution • Presence of the FDS

Economics and Resources

The economy of the Diffa region is largely reliant on pastoralism and agriculture, including fishing and the production of peppers. Fieldwork participants cited food insecurity, rising prices of basic commodities, and the disruption of economic activities due to the security situation as key economic vulnerabilities in the region.

Fieldwork participants particularly highlighted the negative impacts of insecurity stemming from the Boko Haram insurgency on the economy of the Diffa region. Insecurity has resulted in the economic disenfranchisement of many people in the region, especially women and youth. For example, women who were previously engaged in small business activities and trading can no longer work due to displacement or fear of violence. In addition, the state of emergency in the Diffa region, which has been in place since February 2015, has reportedly negatively impacted the economy. One interviewee reported that the government has closed six local markets and prohibited ranching and fishing in some areas. Pepper cultivation, a major source of income for the region which was referred to as “red gold” by one interviewee, has largely halted. Motorcycle taxis, which were previously a source of employment for youth, and the sale of fuel and urea fertilizer are also now banned or tightly controlled in Diffa, as they were used by Boko Haram insurgents. In addition, local

populations have reportedly not had access to Lake Chad, a primary source of fish for the region, since May 2015. This measure was taken to restrict Boko Haram access to the lake and to prevent the group from using fishing as a means of income but has had negative implications for local populations who relied on fishing for their livelihood. Herders also used the lake region to graze livestock but are now forbidden access. Interviewees stated that cattle naturally return to the lake area; however, if herders enter these military zones to retrieve their livestock, they are assumed to be members of Boko Haram and risk arrest or death.

“They’re between two fires. If they enter a Boko Haram zone, they’re dead. If they enter an army zone, they’re dead. So, some are doing clandestine fishing or herding, because if they stay they’re dead anyway.”

- Regional Peacebuilding Organization Representative, Diffa Region

Food insecurity is a major ongoing economic risk in Diffa. The prices of basic goods, such as millet and rice, have reportedly risen in recent years and many households in the region cannot afford to purchase sufficient quantities of food. In addition, many producers have reportedly left the region due to ongoing insecurity. Furthermore, interviewees

noted that low rainfall has led to low agricultural production and a lack of pasture for livestock. While the prices for basic commodities have risen, livestock prices have fallen. One key informant interview (KII) participant reported that people tried to sell livestock in Nigeria to purchase other products, but there was no demand. As of January 2018, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network classified the food security of the Diffa Region as “Stressed” but projected that the region would enter the “Crisis” category in between February and May 2018.²³¹

Interviewees also reported poor natural resource management as a vulnerability in the region. Regarding oil production in the region, one participant reported that royalties to support the development of the region have not been paid to the Regional Council of Diffa by the national government since 2013, further exacerbating grievances and poverty. Insecurity and the state of emergency have also reportedly exacerbated tensions around land access between farmers and herders, as herders move their livestock in search of grazing land.

Finally, fieldwork participants highlighted the impacts of restrictions on fuel on local populations. Under the current state of emergency, only the governor can authorize the sale of fuel, meaning that petrol can only be purchased from official petrol stations, which are often more expensive and located too far for populations to access. As a result, some farmers are reportedly not able to access their fields, leading to lower crop outputs. This measure has also reportedly increased the market for the illegal sale of fuel, often across the shared border with Nigeria.

Population and Demographics

Regional migration due to the security crisis and population growth were cited as key demographic

vulnerabilities in Diffa. Both migration and population growth have reportedly strained resources in the region, especially water and electricity supplies.

In February 2015, the Diffa region saw the first Boko Haram attacks perpetrated in Niger. As the violence worsened, the numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs), as well as refugees from Nigeria, increased. As of 2016, there were an estimated 108,470 Nigerian refugees and 129,015 IDPs in the Diffa region,²³² mostly located in the refugee camp of Sayam Forage and the IDP camp of Kabelawa.²³³ Many refugees and IDPs have settled along National Route 1, a desert highway outside of the city of Diffa.

Interviewees reported that ethnic tension and conflict is an ongoing concern and is sometimes linked to Boko Haram’s presence in the region. According to one participant, some ethnic groups are accused of association with Boko Haram and are stigmatized because of this. Coexistence between displaced persons and local communities has reportedly become more difficult, especially among certain ethnic groups, including the Fulani, the Arabs, the Boudoumas and the Toubous.

Lack of access to education, especially for girls, was cited as a key concern in the region. During one KII, an interviewee reported that girls do not attend school due to cultural and religious factors, stating that religious leaders sometimes discourage girls’ access to school. Displacement and irregular attendance due to insecurity has also undermined the education system, with an estimated 55 percent of students in the Diffa region out of school as of 2017.²³⁴

Child marriage and forced marriage are also reportedly common, especially because many girls do not go to school. Interviewees did note that

²³¹ “Food Security Outlook – Niger”, Famine Early Warning Systems Network

²³² “Operational Portal Refugee Situations: Niger”, UNHCR

²³³ “Factsheet: Diffa Situation”, UNHCR, August 2016

²³⁴ “Education for protection and development in the Lake Chad Basin crisis”, Schmidt, C., Global Partnership for Education, February 2017

rates of child marriage have significantly decreased because of government and NGO programs designed to promote girls' schooling.

Use of family planning is reportedly low in the region, but fieldwork participants stated that NGOs do provide free contraception to communities. Interviewees also noted that rates of HIV/AIDS infection are an ongoing concern, especially in the Lake Chad area. As of 2016, 48,000 adults and children are estimated to be living with HIV in Niger.²³⁵ Rates are reportedly higher in Diffa than in the rest of Niger, especially among vulnerable populations, due to migration and displacement.²³⁶

Security

Diffa is particularly vulnerable in the area of security due to Boko Haram's continued presence in the region. Fieldwork participants also cited communal conflict and farmer-herder conflict as key risk factors undermining peace and security.

Boko Haram became a key security concern in the Diffa region in 2014, when the group began to push toward the Niger border. Security in Diffa has suffered due to Boko Haram attacks and counter-insurgency measures, especially the state of emergency introduced in February 2015.²³⁷ The area around Lake Chad has been especially insecure. During the fieldwork, participants reported that there is little control over the border region and that porous borders directly contribute to insecurity.

Interviewees reported that radicalization is a key risk factor, stating that youth are especially vulnerable. During one KII, a representative from a regional peacebuilding organization stated that the roots of radicalization are often economic. Young men in Diffa are especially at risk and many have

reportedly joined Boko Haram, motivated by poverty and lack of economic opportunities.

"There is so much ignorance, lack of education, that these discourses can become very appealing, especially in rural areas. They use any means they can, mysticism, whatever. Boko Haram is tricking young people into joining their ranks, with promises of riches and respect."

- Regional Peacebuilding Organization Representative, Diffa Region

Communal conflict is also a key security concern, and has been exacerbated by the Boko Haram insurgency. Conflict between farmers and herders around natural resources is an ongoing security concern, especially pertaining to water access.

Interviewees discussed the *Forces de Défense et de Sécurité* (FDS) and their role in preventing violence, reporting perceptions that there are many cases where they have overstepped their mandate, especially under the state of emergency. For example, one KII participant reported incidents of arbitrary arrest, stating that hundreds of people have been detained. For example, in July 2017 the FDS carried out a security operation and arrested 300 people due to lack of identification documentation.²³⁸ The FDS reportedly fears that everyone is tied to Boko Haram, leading them to act with impunity. Additionally, the effects of FDS operations on civilians is also a risk. One fieldwork participant reported that innocent civilians have been accidentally killed by security forces during counter-insurgency measures. For example, in June 2017, 14 civilians were accidentally killed in Diffa and in July two civilians were accidentally killed by missiles.²³⁹

²³⁵ "Country Factsheet: Niger", UN AIDS, 2016

²³⁶ "Priorities in Child Survival, Education and Protection", UNICEF

²³⁷ "Niger and Boko Haram: Beyond Counter-Insurgency", International Crisis Group, February 2017

²³⁸ "Diffa Operations Update, Niger: July 2017", UNHCR, July 2017

²³⁹ Ibid.

As a result of ongoing insecurity, self-defense groups and village monitoring groups have emerged in the region. Some interviewees reported that such groups have been a resilience factor by providing security for local populations. Other interviewees reported that there are too many armed groups in the region. Some are associated with Boko Haram, while others are fighting against the group. A representative from a regional peacebuilding organization reported that the army has expelled most armed groups from the Lake Chad region but allowed one “self-defense” group to remain. This has raised tensions in the area because communities and other groups also want to benefit from the resources in and around Lake Chad.

Politics and Governance

Fieldwork participants from Diffa region reported a lack of trust in political actors due to perceptions of corruption and a lack of transparency during elections. According to one KII participant, the state of emergency in the region has reportedly allowed high levels of corruption because the state spends money on security without justification or accountability. One fieldwork participant reported that even the High Authority for Fighting Corruption (HACIA) is viewed as being corrupt. Interviewees reported perceptions that elected officials are only working for themselves and have not addressed the issues facing the population of Diffa, especially the security situation. Corruption along the border was also cited as a key concern. During an interview with a representative from a regional peacebuilding organization, a participant stated that border authorities reportedly profit through corruption, allowing transport companies to overfill vehicles and violate regulations.

While the next Nigerien elections will not be held until 2021, participants highlighted concerns that

the region will not be prepared. Local elections scheduled for 2016 were reportedly not held, allowing some mayors to serve an additional term. Interviewees also emphasized the need for transparency around elections, stating that political patronage has increased.

Women have begun to play a larger role in politics and decision-making in the region. Niger does have a gender-quota system, which mandates that at least 10 percent of either sex is represented in candidate lists and elected seats.²⁴⁰ Fieldwork participants stated that the quota has allowed women to participate as candidates, members of parliament and local councilors, but noted that there are no women mayors in Diffa.

Rule of Law

Lack of access to justice and perceptions of corruption within the judiciary are key vulnerabilities in Diffa. Fieldwork participants reported that there are no lawyers in the region and that administrative decisions are made by the military due to the state of emergency. Perceptions of corruption also undermine the rule of law. For example, one KII participant stated that the population believes that money is all that is required to free a convicted criminal.

Interviewees also discussed traditional mechanisms for dispute resolution, stating that local chiefs often play a role in mediation and reconciliation between aggrieved parties. Furthermore, local chiefs are involved in mitigating conflict between communities.

Civil liberties are reportedly limited in the region. For example, public gatherings have been banned. One KII participant reported that people censor themselves out of fear of being accused of association with Boko Haram.

²⁴⁰ “The Effect of Gender Quota Laws on the Election of Women: Lessons from Niger”, Kang, A. *Women’s Studies International Forum* 41: 94-102, November 2013

Finally, fieldwork participants reported that positive changes have been made regarding the treatment of women and youth within the judicial system. Juvenile courts are now used to try minors. Abuse of minors is prosecuted, and corporal punishment is banned in schools.

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

Fieldwork participants identified institutional and social resilience factors that help mitigate the vulnerabilities and risks detailed above. Interviewees reported that religious leaders have been involved in sensitization programs to prevent domestic violence. NGOs were also discussed positively throughout the fieldwork. Some of the negative effects of the economic crisis have been alleviated by the assistance of NGOs that have

provided money and materials to communities in the region. NGOs also provide support to the population through the donation of livestock, off-season crops and the distribution of seeds and food. They have also assisted in funding development initiatives. Local CSOs have played a role in land and resource management by overseeing the sale of land and ensuring that rights to land are respected. CSOs then make recommendations to the government relating to socioeconomic issues in the region. Regarding security, village monitoring groups and self-defense groups have assisted in the preservation of peace in some communities in Diffa. Interviewees also stated that traditional leaders can promote peace by denouncing youth who have joined Boko Haram.

Niamey Region

The capital city of Niamey is the smallest administrative region in Niger, but it is home to approximately 1,164,680 Nigeriens²⁴¹ and accounts for 39 percent of the urban population.²⁴² Niamey is situated within the Tillabéri region, located in the southwestern part of the country. The largest ethnic group represented in Niamey is the Hausa, followed by the Djerma-Songhaï and the Fulani.²⁴³ The country is majority Muslim, with 99 percent of the population practicing the religion.²⁴⁴ Niamey's economy is largely dependent on agriculture,²⁴⁵ construction, manufacturing, and food processing.²⁴⁶



Structural Vulnerabilities

- Perceptions of executive influence and control over the judicial and legislative systems
- Rising prices for basic goods
- Large informal sector
- Rural to urban migration, especially during the lean season
- Limited access to credit
- Perceptions of corruption
- Underrepresentation of women and youth in politics and decision-making
- Underutilization of family planning
- Perceptions of corruption within the judicial system

Event-Driven Risks

- Elections
- Tensions over the 2018 Finance Law
- Criminality, including drug trafficking and prostitution
- Land Disputes
- Influx of migrants from rural areas

²⁴¹ "Tableau de Bord Social", Institut National de la Statistique, 2016

²⁴² "Enquête Démographique et de Santé dans les Zones d'Intervention du Programme de Coopération de l'UNICEF au Niger, 2012", Institut National de la Statistique and ICF International, 2012

²⁴³ "Tableau de Bord Social", Institut National de la Statistique, 2013

²⁴⁴ "Enquête Démographique et de Santé et à Indicateurs Multiples du Niger 2012", Institut National de la Statistique et ICF International, 2013

²⁴⁵ "Annuaire Statistique Regional de Niamey", Institut National de la Statistique, 2015

²⁴⁶ "Niger 2017", African Economic Outlook, 2017

- NGOs and women’s groups
- Progressive gender policy
- Culture of religious tolerance

Economics and Resources

Much of the discussion by fieldwork participants centered around the 2018 Finance Law, which was approved by the National Assembly in late November 2017. The law has been a significant source of conflict since its introduction in September 2017, giving rise to multiple major protests in the capital. Participants in both the Men’s and Youth focus groups discussions (FGDs), along with several of the key informant interviews (KIIs), echoed the concerns expressed at those protests, saying that the law would increase or has already increased prices of basic goods, including rice, millet, sugar, and gasoline.

The economy in Niamey is dominated by the informal sector, which accounts for 76 percent of total employment in the city.²⁴⁷ Participants in the Youth FGD and two of the KII respondents observed that this was especially true for women and youth, with the former primarily operating small businesses out of the home. Participants in the Men’s FGD mentioned a surge of young private entrepreneurs, though also noted that this development is held back by a difficulty in accessing credit, a concern that was echoed by members of the Youth FGD.

“The role played by young people in the economy is negligible while that played by women is insufficient.”

- Youth focus group discussion, Niamey

An additional concern that was frequently mentioned was the perception that drug trafficking is widespread in Niamey, with multiple participants stating that it even occurs in schools. Respondents also reported that prostitution, including of underage girls, is an ongoing concern in Niamey.

Finally, members of the Men’s and Youth FGDs, as well as an interviewee in one of the KIIs, mentioned that land disputes occur in Niamey, principally arising from the same plot of land being sold to multiple people.

Population and Demographics

Fieldwork participants noted that while the Niamey Capital District is not a major destination for migration, it does play a significant role as a transit hub for migrants from Central and West Africa, primarily en route to the Agadez region and then onto northern Africa and Europe. Participants in the Women’s FGD also noted that migration from rural areas of the country to Niamey has put pressure on the city. This sentiment was echoed by one respondent in a KII, who added that the phenomenon worsens during the lean season (the period between harvests, lasting from May to August).

Fieldwork participants expressed the common opinion that early marriage is not as prevalent in Niamey as in other parts of the country. The median age at first marriage in the capital is 19.5 years for women and 28.7 years for men, which is the highest in the country.²⁴⁸ Respondents expressed mixed views about the prevalence of violence against women; members of the Men’s FGD believed it was very rare. Members of the

²⁴⁷ “The Informal Economy in African Cities: Key to Inclusive and Sustainable Urban Development”, Chen, M. A., OECD, April 2017

²⁴⁸ “Enquête Démographique et de Santé et à Indicateurs Multiples du Niger 2012”, Institut National de la Statistique et ICF International, 2013

Women's FGD, on the other hand, expressed the belief that violence against women in all forms was rising. In a 2012 survey by USAID, 55.3 percent of women and 33.5 percent of men in Niamey believed that there are reasons to justify a husband beating his wife, the fourth highest among the country's eight regions.²⁴⁹

Finally, while health and family planning services are reportedly available in Niamey, participants in the Women's FGD felt that health services were insufficient for the number of people in the city and that the clinics were often expensive. Interviewees also noted that cultural and religious norms can often deter women from utilizing family planning services. As of 2012, 33.9 percent of married women aged 15-49 used any form of contraception, the highest in the country, and the total fertility rate was 5.3 children per woman, the lowest in the country.²⁵⁰

"There are political measures relating to population growth, but people do not respect them – husbands and religion do not let [women] benefit."

- Women's focus group discussion, Niamey

Security

The most commonly cited security concerns among fieldwork participants included conflict between political parties, armed banditry, drug trafficking, and land conflict. Interviewees generally agreed that religious intolerance is rare in Niamey and several respondents asserted that radicalization does not exist in Niamey. Most participants also expressed trust in the *Forces de Défense et de Sécurité* (FDS) and credited them with maintaining peace in the city. However, members of the Women's and Youth FGDs also noted that there are

cases of abuse by security forces, including beatings during protests and abuses in detention centers. One additional concern that was mentioned was that traditional leaders need to do more to empower the community.

Politics and Governance

In addition to the concerns surrounding the 2018 Finance Law, fieldwork participants frequently expressed skepticism of politicians and the broader political system, as well as concerns about the upcoming elections. The perception that corruption is endemic was mentioned frequently throughout the FGDs and the KIIs and often cited as a problem affecting the provision of basic social services. In a 2016 report by the global corruption watchdog Transparency International, Niger was ranked as the 75th most corrupt country in the world.²⁵¹ Participants expressed an array of concerns around the upcoming general elections, including about the composition of the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) and the National Council of Political Dialogue (CNDP). Opposition parties have boycotted the CENI and the CNDP, expressing concerns that the membership of the CENI has been unduly tilted toward the ruling party, sidelining opposition parties and independent parties in a way inconsistent with the Nigerien electoral code.²⁵² Interviewees also expressed that the frequent political turnover of the last decade has contributed to the decline in trust of politicians and a disconnect between the political class and common Nigerien citizens.

Fieldwork participants expressed differing opinions about the level of participation in politics and governance by women and young people. The most common opinion was that despite the law reserving

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ "Corruption Perceptions Index 2017", Transparency International, February 2018

²⁵² "L'opposition boycotte la CENI au Niger", Idrissa, A., VOA Afrique, November 2017

20 percent of elected positions and 25 percent of nominated positions for women, the quotas are not respected and both women and youth are routinely marginalized in decision-making.

Rule of Law

Interviewees in Niamey expressed several key concerns surrounding the judicial system, highlighting perceptions of corruption within the judiciary, slow judicial proceedings due to lack of qualified staff, and lack of access to justice due to high costs. In addition, multiple respondents expressed the belief that the judiciary is subject to interference by the executive, though not to the same degree that the legislature is, with that body being viewed as almost entirely subservient to the executive. Traditional alternatives to the judicial system, such as mediation by traditional chiefs, are free, but members of the Women’s FGD did not find them to always be effective.

An additional concern raised by fieldwork participants was that political rights and civil liberties have been worsening recently. Most notably, the right to protest has been restricted, both through limiting permits for marches and through crackdowns by the security services on protesters themselves. This concern was also raised surrounding the freedom of opinion and expression more generally, and according to Freedom House the country has experienced a worsening of political rights in the last two years.²⁵³ In addition, an interviewee in one KII expressed the concern that members of the ruling party are not held legally accountable.

“Of the eight marches for which civil society requested permission in 2017, only two were accepted and took place.”

- Civil Society Leader, Niamey

²⁵³ “Freedom in the World 2018”, Freedom House, 2018

²⁵⁴ “Social Institutions and Gender Index: Niger”, OECD

Finally, several conventions have been ratified providing for the protection of women and children, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Optional Protocol on Violence Against Women.²⁵⁴ Though the Nigerien government has passed several laws and set up a Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Child Protection, fieldwork participants stated that enforcement has thus far been lacking.

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

In addition to the identified vulnerabilities and risks, fieldwork participants also noted several sources of social and institutional resilience. Gender policies at the national level – such as the gender quota law requiring that at least 10 percent of elected positions be held by either gender – have begun to improve the condition of Nigerien women. Nongovernmental groups, from international NGOs to women’s *tontine* groups (informal collective savings funds), also play a crucial role in a wide array of areas, including facilitating access to judicial services, providing access to credit, and serving as a check on governmental abuse and corruption. Finally, there is little interreligious tension in Niamey, with one respondent explicitly mentioning the European Union-funded REVE project²⁵⁵ as having made a significant positive impact in this area.

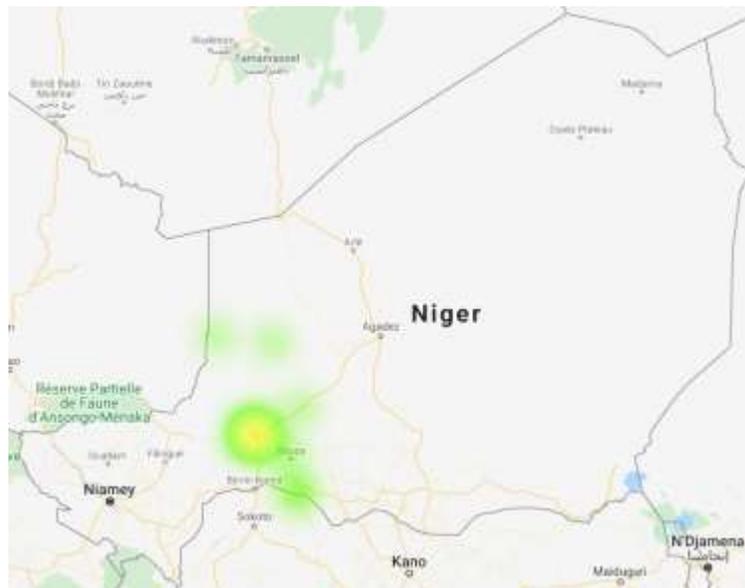
“Non-state actors raise awareness and the civic education of communities and put in place conflict prevention and management mechanisms.”

- Regional Peacebuilding Organization Representative, Niamey

²⁵⁵ “Promoting Religious Harmony in Niger”, European Union, October 2016

Tahoua Region

The Tahoua region is located in the western half of the country, bordering Mali to the west and Nigeria to the south, and is home to approximately 3,839,457 Nigeriens.²⁵⁶ The largest ethnic groups represented in Tahoua are the Hausas, Tuareg, Arabs, and Djerma - Songhaï.²⁵⁷ The country is majority Muslim with 99 percent of the population practicing the religion.²⁵⁸ The economy of Tahoua is largely dependent on subsistence agriculture and livestock herding.²⁵⁹



Structural Vulnerabilities

- Food insecurity
- Inadequate social service delivery
- Perceived corruption
- Growing illicit economy
- Increasing criminality
- Drug trafficking
- Human trafficking
- Presence of Group of Support to Islam and Muslims (GSIM) and Islamic State In the Greater Sahara (ISGS)
- Poor oversight by Land Management Commission
- Youth bulge
- Demographic pressures on city centers
- Inadequate access to education systems
- Inadequate access to healthcare system
- Violence against women and girls
- Early marriage
- Inadequate economic development initiatives for youth
- Judicial interference

²⁵⁶ “Tableau de Bord Social”, Institut National de la Statistique, 2016

²⁵⁷ “Tableau de Bord Social”, Institut National de la Statistique, 2013

²⁵⁸ “Enquête Démographique et de Santé et à Indicateurs Multiples du Niger 2012”, Institut National de la Statistique et ICF International, 2013

²⁵⁹ “Annuaire Statistique Regional de Tahoua 2010-2014”, Institut National de la Statistique, November 2015

Event-Driven Risks

- Elections in 2021
- Finance Law of 2018
- Infrequent rainfall
- Resurgence of Rift Valley epidemic
- Farmer-herder conflicts
- Continued health center strikes
- Political composition of the CENI

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

- AREN (Association of Pastoralists)
- Strong security forces
- Security forces, community, and vigilante group information sharing and integrated patrolling units
- DAN BANGA vigilante group
- Traditional dispute resolution systems
- NGOs filling service delivery gaps and raising awareness about specific issues

Economics and Resources

A key challenge in Tahoua rests on the region's dependence on subsistence agriculture and livestock herding amidst growing food insecurity, partly as a result of the 2018 Finance Law. Among

“Despite a good crop season, it was surprising to note an increase in commodity prices compared with 2016. For example, the price of millet, which is the staple food, has increased from 10,000 francs to 22,000 francs during the harvest. This affects the population that does not have good incomes because of the lack of economic activity other than agriculture. Even if the off-season cultivation is developing to mitigate the exodus, this situation is a source of food insecurity because people do not have the means to survive. It also leads to conflict, especially with respect to off-season cultivation. The land used for this type of crop is highly coveted by farmers and pastoralists returning from transhumance.”

- Teacher, Tahoua Region

other issues, the law raises taxes on staple foods such as rice or millet, adversely affecting the poorest communities in Tahoua.²⁶⁰ Respondents expressed outrage at the new law because residents were expecting lower food costs this year as a result of the strong 2017 harvest. Interviewees cited price increases on staple goods ranging from 2,000 – 10,000 CFA Francs depending on the item and the location where it was purchased. The increase in price for staple goods has lowered the purchasing power of households in the region. Further compounding household economic pressures was the 2016 Rift Valley epidemic affecting livestock in the region, forcing families to sell off livestock before they lost too much value and ultimately lowering return on investment for families in the region. In response, the government has set up food distribution centers where residents can buy food for moderate prices in lean seasons.

Service delivery in Tahoua was described as being only “functional” among fieldwork participants because, while the government provides access to health, education, electricity, and education, these

²⁶⁰ “Niger: Anti-budget protest march planned in Niamey February 11 /update 2”, GardaWorld, February 2018

services are often lacking, infrequent, or hindered by infrastructure problems. NGOs were frequently cited as being crucially important to helping the government and communities fill service provision gaps. Respondents indicated that NGOs spend a large share of their budgets ensuring that service delivery is sufficient for the residents of Tahoua.

The informal economy of Tahoua is dominated by women and youth-owned small businesses, as well as a growing illicit economy. The illicit economy is largely dependent on fuel and goods smuggling from Nigeria and Algeria, money laundering, and drug and human trafficking. Smuggled goods make up 90 percent of goods bought in Tahoua, according to one key informant interview (KII). Drugs have become more common in the region, with prescription drugs and other illegal substances such as Tramadol, Chica, and Dissolution sold at coffee shops frequented by the youth population. Human trafficking has also become more pronounced in the region due to the influx of migrants seeking routes to Europe.

As noted above, NGOs have been vital to supporting the economic capacity of Tahoua according to fieldwork participants. Respondents cited NGOs as being active in bolstering civil society capacity, including support for agricultural and livestock initiatives, food distribution, school supplies, microfinancing and developmental action plans, and environmental restoration and reforestation.

Finally, Tahoua faces difficult environmental conditions with increasing desertification, infrequent rainfall, and flooding all adversely affecting the agricultural yield of the region. These difficult environmental conditions have changed crop planting patterns and limited the amount of pastureland available for pastoralists. However, the Food for Work program implemented by the NGO Collectif des Organisations pour la Défense du Droit à L'Énergie (CODDAE), which provides food in

exchange for land recovery through reforestation in order to combat increasing desertification, was specifically cited among fieldwork participants as improving the agricultural and environmental conditions of the region.

Population and Demographics

“Violence against women is real and frequent. Women refuse to complain because they have children with their husbands and their family, and their religion dissuade them.”

- Interviewee, Tahoua Region

The Tahoua region enjoys strong ethnic cohesion between the Hausa, Tuareg, Fulani, and Arab ethnic groups, but has seen growing demographic pressures as a result of increasing urbanization, particularly driven by the migration of youth from rural areas. Increasing urbanization has begun to strain the delivery of education, health, and family planning services, as well as reducing the amount of arable land for urban residents to grow food.

According to fieldwork participants, education has been particularly negatively impacted by a lack of government funding. Participants stated that teachers do not regularly receive their salaries. Demographic pressures have compounded the problem, with classrooms swelling in size to 45 students in some cases.

Women and girls continue to face considerable challenges in the Tahoua region. Over 74 percent of women in the Tahoua region are married before the age of 18, while 29 percent are married before the age of 15.²⁶¹ Respondents cited poor education and religious reasons for high rates of early marriage in Tahoua. Additionally, respondents claimed that a “triangle of shame” exists between the departments of Konni,

²⁶¹ “Adolescents and Youth Dashboard – Niger”, United Nations Population Fund

Tchintabaraden, and Abalak in which it is common for chiefs to take a fifth wife as a slave for their four other wives. Violence against women also continues to be a problem in the Tahoua region with fieldwork participants citing forced or early marriage, poverty, and ignorance as the major contributing factors to the problem.

Health services are severely underfunded by the government in the Tahoua region. Community health centers around the region are frequently only staffed by nurses, forcing residents to wait days for the doctor to rotate to their local community health center, according to respondents. Some health centers have recently been on strike due to government funding being five months behind. Interviewees reported that family planning use is low in the region because of cultural and religious factors. CSOs were cited among fieldwork participants as filling a crucial gap in society by supporting women's groups, girl's education, family planning, and other health services.

Security

The *Forces de Défense et de Sécurité* (FDS) are well-regarded among residents in the Tahoua region because they are perceived to be responsive to the growing extremist threat from the Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS). However, respondents also acknowledged that FDS has been known to use heavy-handed tactics such as holding and torturing suspected extremists for days

“The northern part of the region is the most affected by insecurity with sporadic AQIM raids and kidnappings. The FDS plays an important role in the fight against insecurity, especially with mixed patrols composed of all security services. These patrols have done much to reduce banditry in the region.”

- Teacher, Tahoua Region

without due process. Community and vigilante groups also have a prominent role in the security apparatus within the Tahoua region, cooperating with the FDS to share intelligence, conduct patrols, and promote education initiatives to prevent youth from becoming radicalized for economic reasons. Economic development initiatives have been created at the local level to target youth populations in the hopes of ensuring that economic pressures are not driving youth to join extremist groups.

Fieldwork participants reported that insecurity has slowly been growing in Tahoua as a result of increased activity along the border of Mali and Libya by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Movement for the Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO). Borders were the most cited security vulnerability among respondents because of the ease with which AQIM and MUJAO can exploit weak border security for attacks or to establish new territory. Additionally, refugee camps across the border in Mali represent an easy target for AQIM and MUJAO, as well a potential recruiting ground, a concern expressed by interviewees.

The growth of the illicit economy and increased insecurity in Tahoua have also led to increased criminality throughout the region. Demographic pressures in cities and the inability of youth to find employment opportunities were cited as the major contributing factors to the growth of criminality in the region. Respondents said that arms and drug trafficking has increased, as well as abductions and attacks on market days. Conflict has also broken out between rival drug traffickers, according to fieldwork participants.

Finally, the region continues to see small-scale conflicts related to land use. Respondents reported that it is common for the land commissions to sell the same land multiple times, causing small-scale conflicts throughout the region. Farmer-herder conflicts are also common in the Tahoua region. Fieldwork participants noted that an association of pastoralists, the Association pour la

Redynamisation de L'Élevage au Niger (AREN), is working to educate pastoralists about established corridors that can be used to avoid conflict with farmers.

Politics and Governance

Political participation in the Tahoua region reportedly suffers from a lack of public trust in political parties and individual politicians because of decades of political instability and failed promises. Participants perceived the legislature as operating at the behest of the executive branch, instead of serving their constituencies. Corruption and nepotism were also regularly cited problems, with interviewees stating that natural resource and financial management functions were particularly affected. Specifically, it was noted that corruption prevents social services at the commune level from receiving enough funding to be adequate for the population. The Finance Law of 2018 has only compounded the problem, according to those interviewed, further eroding public trust because of perceived increases in governmental salaries while the price of staple goods continues to increase to

“The management of the communes is deplorable because of the non-repayment of state subsidies to the communes. Municipal resources are very low and service providers are affected by payment delays. In addition, there are cases of misappropriation of funds by the presidents of the councils with the complicity of the representatives of the state like the prefects. For example, in 2015 in a commune in the Tahoua region, after accusation by civil society, it was found that the mayor of the commune had embezzled a substantial amount of money. After a brief imprisonment, the same mayor was released and reinstated.”

- Teacher, Tahoua Region

unaffordable levels for residents of the Tahoua region.

Elections were also a source of concern among fieldwork participants because violence tends to spike during electoral periods. Respondents felt unease about the new biometric systems that will be deployed for the 2021 elections and the political make-up of the electoral commission (CENI), as it currently lacks opposition parties. Participants fear that without changes to the CENI, the opposition parties will boycott the elections and send the country into conflict.

“Women and young people are active in politics; on the other hands, we do not let women take part in decisions. Men make important decisions late at night when women are no longer there. There aren't many young people in politics because they're considered too young.”

- Interviewee, Tahoua Region

Women and youth have continued to have a larger role in politics since the implementation of gender quotas in 2001. The quota system ensures some level of representation but, in reality, respondents stated that women and youth still do not have decision-making power in politics. Youth are regularly used as organizers during campaigns but are never given the opportunity to work in the government, a source of frustration among KII respondents.

CSOs and the media have differing relationships with the public in the Tahoua region. CSOs are viewed as positive forces in the community, and are involved in educating, mobilizing, and raising awareness about specific issues affecting the broader community. Conversely, many fieldwork participants perceived the media as contributing to weak governance, noting that they engage in self-censorship in order to maintain access to

politicians instead of holding politicians accountable.

Rule of Law

According to interviewees, the judiciary in the Tahoua region lacks judicial independence because justice is often politicized for the gain of the executive branch. The court systems are often slow despite the opening of mobile court units intended to increase access to justice and reduce the wait time. The judicial police were viewed by many fieldwork participants as being corrupt, as tending to abuse their power, and as operating under opaque guidelines unknown to the public.

“Justice is marked by two things: the fear of justice and its independence. The parliament is not so independent, and this is because of the 2018 finance law vote which was against poor citizens.”

- Development Worker, Tahoua Region

Traditional dispute resolution systems are widely used in the Tahoua region as the first step in trying to resolve conflicts. Respondents reported that women in particular use traditional dispute

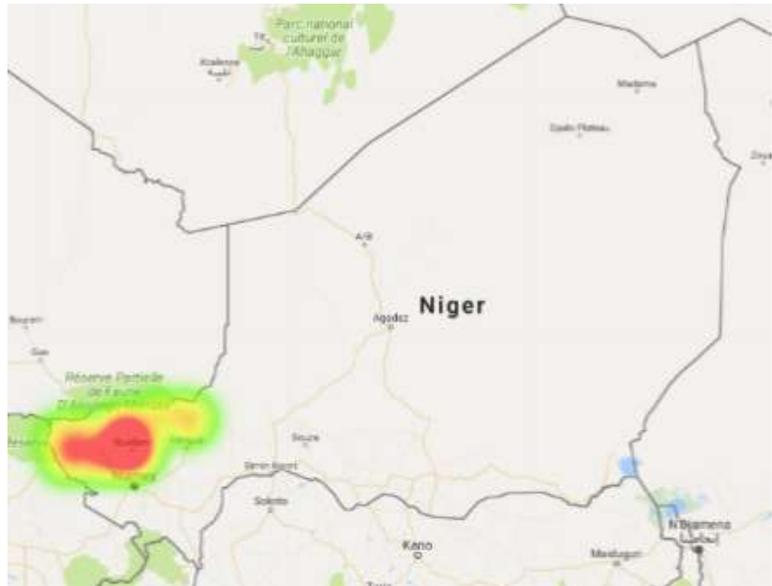
resolution systems, because of the perceived neutrality and access afforded by chiefs and religious leaders that are not available in the court system.

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

AREN (the association of pastoralists) was cited by fieldwork participants as a source of resilience for working with pastoralists to ensure that designated corridors for transhumance were used to avoid conflict with farmers. In addition, participants noted that strong security forces are keeping AQIM and MUJAO mostly in Mali and Libya, except for occasional attacks in Niger. Security forces are effective at keeping extremist groups outside Tahoua and have increased cooperation with communities and vigilante groups. Information sharing and integrated patrol units are increasing the effectiveness of border security. Dan Banga was noted as an important and influential vigilante group providing protection to local communities from potential extremist threats in northern Tahoua. In the area of Rule of Law, traditional dispute resolution systems in Tahoua are providing residents with a trusted, equitable, and accessible form of justice. Finally, interviewees noted that NGOs are playing a vital role in filling service delivery gaps and raising awareness about specific issues within the community.

Tillabéri Region

The Tillabéri region is located in southwestern Niger, bordering Mali to the north, Burkina Faso to the west, and Benin to the south. The region is home to approximately 3,155,731 Nigeriens.²⁶² The largest ethnic groups represented in Tillabéri are the Hausas and Djerma-Songhaï.²⁶³ The country is majority Muslim, with 99 percent of the population practicing the religion.²⁶⁴ The economy of Tillabéri is largely dependent on agriculture, livestock herding, fishing, and tourism.²⁶⁵



Structural Vulnerabilities

- Rising prices of basic commodities
- Lack of access to healthcare
- Low level tensions surrounding land tenure
- Poor natural resource management
- Early marriage
- Lack of access to health centers, especially in rural areas
- Population growth
- Trends of youth migration to urban areas and other West African countries
- Underutilization of family planning
- Gender-based violence (GBV)
- Perceptions of corruption within the political system
- Delayed local elections
- Weak presence of political parties in communities
- Lack of confidence in the formal judicial system

Event-Driven Risks

- Food insecurity
- Illicit economic activity, including drugs, arms, and human trafficking
- Incidents of farmer-herder conflict
- Terrorist attacks

²⁶² “Tableau de Bord Social”, Institut National de la Statistique, 2016

²⁶³ “Tableau de Bord Social”, Institut National de la Statistique, 2013

²⁶⁴ “Enquête Démographique et de Santé et à Indicateurs Multiples du Niger 2012”, Institut National de la Statistique et ICF International, 2013

²⁶⁵ “Annuaire des Statistiques Régionales 2010-2014, Région de Tillabéri”, Institut National de la Statistique, 2015

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

- Civil society organizations (CSOs) and NGOs
- The National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH)
- Micro-credit programs for women and youth
- Community radio stations

Economics and Resources

The primary economic activities of Tillabéri are agriculture (especially rice and vegetables), livestock farming, and trading. Fieldwork participants reported that rising prices of basic commodities, especially millet and maize, and food insecurity are major economy vulnerabilities in the region.

According to fieldwork participants, food insecurity is a major concern in the region and has led to famine, malnutrition, and the mass exodus of young people. The rising cost of millet and maize is one of the drivers of food insecurity, because many people survive on these two goods. Low rainfall due to climate change has also led to decreased production of agricultural products. Interviewees reported that people are resistant to adopting new farming methods to adapt to these environmental pressures. For example, one key informant interview (KII) participant reported that many are reluctant or cannot afford to buy varieties of millet and maize that are more resistant to the effects of climate change.

Women and youth play an important role in economic development in the region according to stakeholders. Women often maintain small businesses and work in agricultural production to support their families. During a KII with an NGO representative, the participant noted that the phenomenon of migration out of Niger has left many women to support their families in the absence of their husbands. Youth are also actively engaged in the economy by driving taxis, making and selling bricks, and selling fruits and vegetables.

Illicit economic activity is reportedly prevalent in Tillabéri, especially fuel smuggling from Nigeria

and Algeria. Fieldwork participants also reported incidents of drug, arms, and human trafficking, as well as smuggling of other goods such as gold. One KII participant reported that Tillabéri's proximity to the conflict in Mali has led to a proliferation of illicit economic activity, especially in trafficking of arms and drugs.

Fieldwork participants also reported that land tenure issues are a concern in the region and primarily involve conflicts over inheritance or the boundaries of fields or gardens. Furthermore, conflict between farmers and herders over water access is an additional driver of tension. Interviewees noted that land tenure issues are often exacerbated by illiteracy and rapid population growth. These conflicts are primarily resolved at the community level.

Finally, fieldwork participants reported that natural resources in the region are managed poorly. Interviewees cited deforestation and the disappearance of water sources and wildlife as key concerns. In addition, natural resource management reportedly lacks adequate transparency.

Population and Demographics

Fieldwork participants reported that migration and population growth are key demographic vulnerabilities in Tillabéri. Young people reportedly migrate out of the region in search of improved economic opportunities in countries such as Libya, Côte d'Ivoire, and Algeria. Rural to urban migration is also common, with people moving from rural areas to large cities such as Filingue and Niamey.

Population growth and overpopulation are also key demographic vulnerabilities, resulting in overcrowded schools and health centers, and

overtaxed water and electricity infrastructure. According to one NGO representative, other factors that contribute to an inability to access to social services are poverty, distance, lack of transportation, lack of staff and lack of trust in services.

Regarding the health system, interviewees reported that there are health centers in the region, but high prices often cause people to purchase medicine on the street rather than in clinics. Furthermore, some villages have no health centers or easily accessible clinics. In larger villages there are Integrated Health Centers (CSI: *Centre de Santé Intégré*) and in cities there are regional hospitals. Other public services, such as education and water, are reportedly present and functioning in the region, but interviewees reported some gaps. For example, during one KII, a participant stated that schools lack basic resources such as school supplies and lesson materials.

Fieldwork participants also reported that family planning is not widely practiced in rural areas of Tillabéri due to a lack of education, illiteracy, and cultural factors. During a KII with an NGO representative, the participant stated that in the context of polygamous marriages, women will sometimes compete to have more children. Women in urban areas have better access to health centers than women in rural areas and generally practice family planning. Maternal and infant mortality rates are reportedly high due to the lack of affordable and accessible healthcare.

Early marriage is reportedly common in the region, and interviewees reported that many girls drop out of school early to get married. According to one KII participant, parents prefer to marry off their daughters because of the degradation of the education system, as well as other factors such as poverty, ignorance and unemployment. Violence against women is also reportedly widespread; interviewees cited domestic violence, forced labor and polygamy as key concerns.

Security

Fieldwork participants cited porous borders with Mali and Burkina Faso, criminality, and terrorism as key issues undermining security in Tillabéri.

Terrorism was cited as a key risk factor in the region, especially along the border with Mali. Terrorist-related violence has had a negative impact on the economic development of the region due to closures of local markets, especially markets located in close proximity to the Malian border. Fieldwork participants also cited youth as a vulnerable population, stating that many young people have been recruited by extremist groups. According to one KII participant, the rural commune of Abala has been the center of terrorist attacks in Tillabéri due to its close proximity to Mali.

In addition to terrorist activity across the Niger-Malian border, interviewees reported incidents of violence between Tuareg and Fulani communities. According to a lawyer from Tillabéri, there are armed groups organized along ethnic lines in the region.

Interviewees also reported that illicit economic activity, especially arms trafficking, is connected to region's porous border with Mali. The illegal circulation of arms has driven armed banditry of youth according to one fieldwork participant.

Farmer-herder conflicts were cited as a security concern in the region. Conflicts occur over access to shared resources, such as land and water. According to one fieldwork participant, Abala is a zone of transhumance, with herders from Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin, and Nigeria passing through this area. Interviewees reported that there was a government initiative in 1961 to designate areas for grazing but stated that it has not been updated since then. The law is reportedly not respected and conflict between landowners, herders, and farmers is common.

Fieldwork participants reported that *Forces de Défense et de Sécurité* (FDS) play a vital role in the protection of the region and the maintenance of order. However, during one KII, a representative from a regional peacebuilding organization noted that police forces lack the necessary equipment to be fully effective. Communities also play a vital role in security according to fieldwork participants. For example, inter-community fora on security have been established in the region.

Politics and Governance

Fieldwork participants reported that perceptions of corruption and nepotism have undermined political legitimacy in the region and have caused mistrust to grow between the population and political actors.

Though there are more than 100 political parties in the country, interviewees reported that their presence is weak in local communities. Many fieldwork participants expressed that political parties do not engage with communities and are only present and visible during election periods.

“There is a weak presence of political parties in the town. It’s as though the leaders are not too motivated. The parties are not really involved in the life of the community as they should be.”

- Lawyer, Tillabéri Region

Additionally, fieldwork participants expressed concern about the organization of future elections, highlighting the need for greater transparency. During one KII, a journalist stated that if elections are not transparent, citizens will not trust the results, potentially leading to political tensions. Another key concern in Tillabéri is the ongoing delay in holding local elections, which has resulted in local leaders continuing to extend their mandates. Other vulnerabilities related to future elections include low levels of trust in the electoral

commission and concerns about the establishment of a biometric file of voters.

According to fieldwork participants, women actively participate in the electoral process and are involved in decision-making at the local level. While women still do not have equal representation in government, there are reportedly three women communal councilors in Abala out of 13. Niger does have a gender quota law requiring that at least 10 percent of either sex is represented in candidate lists and elected seats, and interviewees reported that this law has helped to increase the number of women in government.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) play an important role in politics according to fieldwork participants, but can sometimes become politicized. CSOs raise public awareness of policy and educate people about their rights.

Rule of Law

Fieldwork participants reported that the population of Tillabéri lacks confidence in the judicial system due to perceptions of corruption, ineffectiveness and slow processing times. Furthermore, interviewees stated that the judicial system is not viewed as being independent from the executive branch and that the population largely believes that justice is only accessible for the wealthy.

In addition, interviewees reported that citizens have not been adequately educated about their legal rights. Staff of the judicial system do not have proper training or knowledge the country’s legal texts and therefore are not able to properly educate the population.

Fieldwork participants also reported that it is more difficult to seek justice in the formal system. One participant cited an example of a disagreement between two neighboring herders over a donkey. When the case was sent to the formal judicial system, the scope of the problem grew, as well as the fines. Finally, the case was transferred to the appeals court in Niamey, even though it was

originally a small disagreement. In lieu of the formal justice system, traditional chiefs, tribal chiefs, township chiefs, village chiefs, and district chiefs frequently facilitate alternative dispute and conflict resolution mechanisms. Additionally, the Land Commission, the Rural Code, the National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH) all reportedly help to provide justice to local populations.

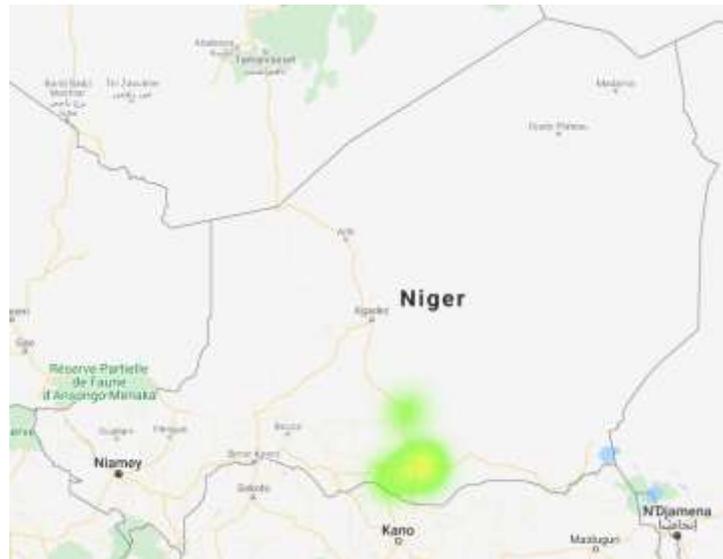
Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

Despite the vulnerabilities and risks detailed above, fieldwork participants in Tillabéri identified a number of sources of social and institutional resilience. Civil society organizations and NGOs play an important role in economic development by investing in basic social services, namely health, education and water. NGOs were also cited as an important source of economic resilience through food distribution and the donation of livestock and off-season crops to farmers. State initiatives and NGOs also play a role in awareness-raising around security, which has provided citizens with tools to intervene and alert authorities to suspicious situations. Fieldwork participants also cited awareness-raising campaigns and trainings to combat radicalization as resilience factors. These

initiatives also include frameworks for dialogue between refugee communities in the region and local communities. Regarding demographic pressures, NGOs educate the population about family planning, migration, early marriage and overpopulation. For example, fieldwork participants cited a community radio station “La Voix du Peuple” from the NGO, Alternative Espace Citoyen, that hosts programs around these issues. Similarly, NGOs such as PLAN Niger, OXFAM, and Eau Vive Internationale work to improve social services in the region. According to interviewees, these organizations have improved water access by building wells. They also provide micro-credit to women and youth. Sources of political resilience were identified during the fieldwork, such as the creation of a youth council, which has reportedly made decision-making more organized and inclusive. In Abala, a federation of women called Haske Karkara was also created, which includes all women from different political parties. Finally, in the area of rule of law, the National Commission of Human Rights (CNDH) was cited as a resilience factor. The CNDH educates Nigerien citizens on their rights and are represented at the local level. Traditional chiefs and other community leaders also act as mediators in their communities, and interviewees reported that their decisions are respected.

Zinder Region

The Zinder region is located along the southern border in the eastern region of the country, bordering Nigeria to the south, and is home to approximately 4,132,321 Nigeriens.²⁶⁶ The largest ethnic groups represented in Zinder are the Hausa and Kanouri, followed by the Fulani.²⁶⁷ The country is majority Muslim, with 99 percent of the population practicing the religion.²⁶⁸ The economy of Zinder is largely dependent on subsistence agriculture, livestock herding,²⁶⁹ oil drilling, refining, and mining.²⁷⁰



Structural Vulnerabilities

- Youth unemployment
- Rising cost of goods
- Inadequate funding for public improvement projects
- Migration into region
- Perceived corruption in national and local leaders
- Low adherence to electoral codes and term limits
- High infant and maternal mortality
- Low representation of women in political leadership

Event-Driven Risks

- Climate strains on agriculture
- Local level electoral violence
- Conflict between farmers and herders
- Terrorist activity near Nigerian border

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)
- Local female-led health education and activism

²⁶⁶ “Tableau de Bord Social”, Institut National de la Statistique, 2016

²⁶⁷ “Tableau de Bord Social”, Institut National de la Statistique, 2013

²⁶⁸ “Enquête Démographique et de Santé et à Indicateurs Multiples du Niger 2012”, Institut National de la Statistique et ICF International, 2013

²⁶⁹ “Annuaire des Statistiques Régionales 2010-2014, Région de Zinder”, Institut National de la Statistique, 2015

²⁷⁰ “Niger 2017”, African Economic Outlook, 2017

Economics and Resources

According to fieldwork participants, food insecurity is a key concern in Zinder. The issue of malnutrition among children was also highlighted by interviewees. Respondents attributed food insecurity to an increase in the price of consumer goods and the cost of transportation. Additionally, all respondents reported that local food sources, including farming, fisheries, and livestock, have recently been strained by drought. Interviewees also highlighted demographic pressures such as migration from neighboring countries, including Algeria and Libya, as strains on local food resources.

NGOs were cited by fieldwork participants as key contributors to mitigating food insecurity and financial strains in the region. Interviewees cited that many local community members cannot meet their financial needs through labor and that non-state actors have played a critical role in filling this gap.

Participants also reported the existence of natural resources such as petroleum, gold, and uranium in the Zinder region, but stated that local communities lack a way to access or adequately benefit from these natural resources. Respondents stated that community resources including, but not limited to, these natural resources were controlled by local officials such as the town hall and traditional chiefs.

Interviewees reported that the local population has become increasingly involved in informal and small-scale businesses as a response to the financial strains of climate change and demographic pressures cited above. Participants also described an active illicit economy in Zinder consisting of drug trafficking, drug use, and the sale of stolen items.

Respondents had differing descriptions of women's role in the economy of Zinder. One civil

“There’s an increase in the price of basic goods like beans, peanuts, etc. Due to the droughts and its effects, the population is financially strained. There’s also the problem of climate change, which is an impediment to agricultural, fisheries, and livestock.”

- Civil Society Representative, Zinder Region

society representative cited women as key contributors in agriculture, ranching, and artisan work. In contrast, during a KII with an academic consultant, the participant described women's economic role in the regional economy as primarily consisting of small-scale business while noting their lack of economic resources.

“The impact of demographic pressure creates a mismatch between basic social services and needs. Public policy can no longer meet the needs of this growing population.”

- Academic Consultant, Zinder Region

Respondents also expressed differing opinions on the economic role of youth. A civil society representative described regional youth as key productive members of Zinder's economy who lack economic opportunity. Conversely, an academic consultant saw youth in the region as largely unproductive and lacking the desire to contribute to the region economically.

Population and Demographics

Fieldwork participants highlighted the strain of population growth on local resources as a key concern. Interviewees pointed to both migration and high regional fertility rates as key contributing factors to the reported growth in population and subsequent strain on local resources.

Fieldwork respondents discussed both internal rural to urban migration and migration flows through Zinder to other countries in the region. Some interviewees highlighted the movement of migrants through Zinder on the way to Libya and described the region as a key passageway. Other participants discussed migration from rural areas to urban centers as well as migration to neighboring regions and countries during the dry season. Interviewees noted a high level of population movement in the Matamaye department and a large movement of women and children in Goure and Tanot. Respondents pointed to unemployment, food insecurity, and the growing population density of Zinder as key concerns related to migration.

Respondents also reported a rise in regional fertility rates, to 7.5 children per woman. Interviewees also reported a high level of infant and maternal mortality in the region. Women were credited with the spread of awareness and social acceptance of family planning methods in Zinder. Participants noted that early marriage does exist in local communities, but the government had taken measures to address this issue by instituting a 15-year minimum age limit for women and an 18-year minimum age limit for men to be married.

Politics and Governance

Fieldwork participants raised concerns about perceptions of corruption, both among local leadership and at the national level. Respondents cited the multiple corruption charges against mayors and cases of food aid theft by local distributors as examples of corruption in local government. Interviewees also pointed to local officials' focus on political party priorities over local

“Corruption exists in such a way that each person must look out for themselves.”

- Civil Society Representative, Zinder Region

community needs. KII participants expressed a belief that corruption had kept the president from focusing on local issues such as healthcare and education.

Participants also conveyed the perception that local administrators and elected officials were largely unresponsive to the grievances of local communities and often failed to provide basic services such as sanitation. Interviewees reported that local officials often made promises to voters that they could not fulfill due to a lack of capacity and financial resources. KII participants reported that this lack of funding for local projects often led local officials to rely on private financial assistance to accomplish public improvement projects. It was also noted that local leaders are sometimes hesitant to pursue public improvement projects due to a local political climate that is reportedly resistant to change.

Fieldwork participants described legislative representatives as largely unpopular and unresponsive to the desires of their constituents. Respondents expressed that many legislators spend most of their time in Niamey rather than spending time in Zinder, further exacerbating this sense of disconnect. Interviewees also reported that parliament is not independent from the executive branch.

“Most of the members of parliament elected sit in Niamey with occasional visits to their regional base. So, this creates a leadership vacuum within their constituents. As a result, local communities struggle to voice their grievances.”

- Academic Consultant, Zinder Region

Fieldwork participants described the electoral system as flawed due to strong ethnic alliances and a disregard for electoral procedures by both local officials and the voting public. Interviewees

reported that local elections had not been held in six years and that as a result local officials have continued to extend their terms in office. Participants also reported that the public lacks faith in the electoral commission and cited a lack of adherence to local electoral codes as an ongoing concern.

Both women and youth are poorly represented in political leadership, according to KII interviewees. A quota exists for women in political leadership, but it is reportedly not followed. According to participants, youth are primarily used as a means of voter mobilization and are more vulnerable to exploitation by political candidates if unemployed.

Security

Interviewees reported that the Nigerian security forces play a central role in securing borders as well as maintaining security in local villages. Respondents also reported the activity of the “brigades” in the region whose objective is to ensure the overall protection of civilians, the safety of humanitarian workers and development partners in the region. However, KII participants also reported that a lack of communication between the population and these security forces limits their effectiveness.

Tensions between farmers and herders were reported as the most common source of conflict within local communities. These conflicts reportedly center around the availability and ownership of land and issues related to transhumance. Climate change and a scarcity of natural resources were also identified by KII participants as contributors to conflicts between farmers and herders.

Religiously motivated violence was also identified as a security risk by respondents. Interviewees highlighted the central role of religion in the lives of many people in the Zinder region. Participants also noted that international events such as the *Charlie*

Hebdo attack in France could be potential triggers for local religiously-motivated violence.

“Religion carries a lot of weight in Zinder. The issue with ‘Charlie Hebdo’ created tensions where people went on rampage to burn churches, public building, banks etc. So, you understand how religion can be used to create mayhem in the region.”

- Academic Consultant, Zinder Region

Respondents also identified areas near the Nigerian border as a security hot spot. Interviewees pointed to terrorist activity and the risk of local unemployed youth being radicalized as a security risk. Though KII participants reported that local security forces had been effective in providing security in the area, they also believed that this border region of Zinder was still at a higher risk of terrorist attacks and violence.

Participants also saw electoral violence as a security risk in Zinder. Interviewees reported that several factors contributed to local electoral violence. These reported contributing factors included high levels of ethnocentrism in politics, a public distrust of the electoral commission, and a disregard by local administrators and voters for the established electoral codes.

Rule of Law

Interviewees reported that the effectiveness of the judicial system in Zinder was limited by the availability of legal services and by a lack of understanding among the public of their rights and legal procedures. Respondents cited a fear of the justice system, the high cost of legal services, and a lack of understanding as reasons why the public does not see the judicial system in Zinder as accessible.

Crime in Zinder was reported to include drug trafficking and arms trafficking, which was described as being on the rise among youth. Respondents also cited a rise in gang activity. Participants believed that the ability of the justice system to address these crimes in Zinder was limited because, at the time, the chief prosecutor of Zinder was in prison on corruption charges.

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

NGOs and humanitarian workers were cited as a primary source of resilience and a key partner in alleviating food insecurity. Interviewees reported

that the groups play a large role in filling the gap left by inadequate income and a rising price of basic goods. It was also noted that development organizations have aided unemployed youth. Women in Zinder were also identified by respondents as a key resilience factor in Zinder because of their roles as activists and in educating their local communities on issues such as family planning. Participants reported that these local groups of women have been central partners with CSOs in encouraging the acceptance of family planning measures and providing education on women's health.

Conclusion and Recommendations

As one of the least developed countries in the world, Niger faces significant challenges across a spectrum of human security issues. According to the CRVA Index and fieldwork findings, the country is particularly vulnerable in the areas of economics, demographics, and security. Fieldwork findings suggest that the major drivers of insecurity are the Boko Haram insurgency in the Diffa region, extremist violence in the north and northwestern regions, conflicts between farmers and herders over land and water access, and rising criminality and illicit economic activity. Youth radicalization has become an increasing concern and is driven by poverty and a lack of economic opportunity. Insecurity in parts of Niger has been a key driver of economic instability and has led to an increasing IDP population.

Security and economic instability are inextricably linked in Niger. The government's introduction of a state of emergency in Diffa in 2015 and in Tillabéri and Tahoua in 2017 has resulted in the suspension of key economic activities which are essential to livelihoods. For example, a lack of access to Lake Chad was cited as a central concern for fieldwork participants in the Diffa region, where fishing, pepper cultivation, and livestock herding have either been halted or severely hindered. Supply and trade routes in parts of the country have also been disrupted due to insecurity. Additionally, a high rate of youth unemployment has raised concerns about the increasing risk of radicalization, especially of young men in regions such as Agadez and Diffa.

Demographic pressures are also particularly salient in Niger, especially youth unemployment and rapid population growth, as well as internal and external migration. The country's large youth bulge could, if not managed carefully, become a risk in the future. Niger is a key transit country for economic migrants traveling from West and Central

Africa to North Africa and Europe. Migrant smuggling is a lucrative enterprise in the country, according to fieldwork participants. In addition to migrant smuggling, other illicit economic activities have grown, especially drug, human, and arms trafficking.

Environmental pressures and climate change also pose a significant risk to Nigerien stability, particularly regarding food security. Rising temperatures, unpredictable rainfall, erosion, and flooding have the potential to have severe negative impacts on agriculture, potentially exacerbating the country's economic prospects.

Regarding politics, Niger's key challenges involve widespread perceptions of corruption, a general lack of trust in the political system, and delayed local elections. Additionally, the 2018 Finance Law has had both political and economic repercussions. The law has reportedly led to rising prices of basic commodities, negatively affecting the poorest of the Nigerien population while also triggering protests in the capital. Fieldwork participants expressed the opinion that the law demonstrates both executive interference in the legislative branch and a lack of responsiveness to the basic needs of the Nigerien population.

Despite these concerns, Niger does have many social and institutional resiliencies that mitigate the risks stemming from the vulnerabilities detailed above. CSOs have actively carried out programs on good governance and civic education, as well as promoting women and youth involvement in politics. NGOs have played an essential role in filling economic gaps in Niger and building the resilience of local communities to food insecurity through the distribution of seeds, food, livestock, and off-season crops. Government initiatives, such as the establishment of the Ministry for Women's Empowerment and Child

Protection, have successfully begun to address issues such as child marriage, female education, and family planning. Finally, the Nigerien security forces, self-defense groups and village monitoring groups have filled gaps in security and helped maintain peace and security in communities across the country. CSOs and NGOs have also been active in this area through the implementation of peacebuilding initiatives and awareness-raising campaigns.

Looking forward, Niger continues to face key challenges in addressing Boko Haram's presence in Diffa, the growth of extremist violence in the northeast, and continued criminality and illicit economic activity. As Niger seeks to address these security concerns, ensuring sustainable solutions to the country's economic vulnerabilities, especially food insecurity and alleviating poverty, will be critical for building a more stable and prosperous country.

Economics and Resources

- Help local farmers to invest in more mechanized and climate-adaptive approaches for agricultural production, such as the government's 3N (*les Nigériens Nourrissent les Nigériens* – Nigeriens feed Nigeriens) program. Promote initiatives within government, civil society, development partners, and the private sector to enhance preparedness for the threats of climate
- Improve and expand access to credit and financing for women and youth entrepreneurs
- Invest in infrastructure development in rural and underserved areas
- Create and promote alternative livelihood programs, particularly in the Diffa and the Agadez regions to combat illicit economic activities. such as Agadez
- Invest in initiatives to expand girls' education

Population and Demographics

- Support government, civil society organizations, NGOs and INGOs in raising awareness on issues of family planning and child marriage
- Invest in social services and infrastructure in rural and underserved areas. Support initiatives to enhance the human and technical capacity of the healthcare system
- Support vocational training and job creation initiatives for the country's large and growing youth population
- Support and sustain inter-group dialogue across political, ethnic and religious lines to promote social cohesion
- Invest in initiatives to expand girls' education

Security

- Strengthen collaboration between national, regional and international partners in addressing larger regional trends of insecurity
- Support bi- and multi-lateral training assistance programs, to enhance the institutional and operational capacity of the security forces.
- Provide humanitarian assistance to refugees and IDPs,
- Work with displaced populations, local communities and security forces to promote trust and encourage relationship-building.
- Promote community policing and cross border cooperation between security and defense forces and the local population to improve security

Politics and Governance

- Establish a national education campaign to encourage women and youth to run for

office, led from the top of the government and the leadership of political parties.

- Adopt best practices from other African countries on increasing political representation of women
- Support civic education programs, particularly those targeting youth and women, run by CSOs and government.
- Support local and national transparency and anti-corruption initiatives, particularly around management of royalties from mining, oil and other natural resources.
- Reform and strengthen electoral management bodies

Rule of Law

- Support initiatives on sensitization and education of civic and legal rights, particularly for women and youth.
- Provide training on gender-based violence (GBV) and women's rights to religious, traditional and local leaders involved in alternative dispute resolution.
- Promote transparency and anti-corruption initiatives and reforms within the judiciary.
- Support programs that improve access to justice for poor and vulnerable populations

Appendix A: Data Sample

Phase	Dimension	Source	Metric	Sample
Phase 1: Desktop	Resilience	SNA	Survey	26 Peace/Security Actors
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	ECOWARN	SitReps	1049 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	155 (after reducing for duplicates and relevance)
Phase 1: Desktop	Risk	ACLED	Incidents	288
Phase 2: Field Research	Risk and Vulnerability	Focus Group Discussions	Broken out by Men, Women, and Youth	3
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

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

NIGER	Vulnerabilities	Risks	Resiliencies	Recommendations
Economics & Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increases in the price of basic goods ➤ Over reliance on subsistence agriculture and livestock herding ➤ Dependence on high-value extractives, such as uranium and petroleum ➤ Suspension of economic activities in some regions due to security concerns, particularly in the Lake Chad Basin ➤ Poor natural resources governance and management ➤ Youth unemployment ➤ Food insecurity ➤ Climate change, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Rising prices due to the 2018 Finance Law ➤ Disruption of trade and supply routes due to insecurity ➤ Conflicts between farmers and herders over water and land access ➤ Drought and flooding ➤ Illicit economic activities ➤ Disease outbreak/pest infestation (crops and animals) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Availability of micro-credit programs for women and youth ➤ Ongoing economic reforms ➤ Support from international NGOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Help local farmers to invest in more mechanized and climate-adaptive approaches for agricultural production, such as the government's 3N (<i>les Nigériens Nourrissent les Nigériens</i> – Nigeriens feed Nigeriens) program. Promote initiatives within government, civil society, development partners, and the private sector to enhance preparedness for the threats of climate ➤ Improve and expand access to credit and financing for women and youth entrepreneurs.. ➤ Invest in infrastructure development in rural and underserved areas ➤ Create and promote alternative livelihood programs, particularly in the Diffa and the Agadez regions to combat illicit economic activities. such as Agadez Invest in initiatives to expand girls' education
Population & Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Population growth and underutilization of family planning ➤ Youth bulge ➤ Poor urbanization and pressures on services and infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Disease outbreak ➤ Tensions between ethnic groups ➤ Vesico Vaginal Fistula (VVF) ➤ Refugees and IDPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Culture of religious tolerance ➤ Strong policies against FGM ➤ Vibrant NGO community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Support government, civil society organizations, NGOs and INGOs in raising awareness on issues of family planning and child marriage ➤ Invest in social services and infrastructure in rural and underserved areas. Support initiatives to enhance the human and technical capacity of the healthcare system

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Inadequate social services, particularly healthcare and sanitation ➤ High rates of child marriages ➤ High illiteracy rate ➤ Cultural barriers to family planning 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Support vocational training and job creation initiatives for the country's large and growing youth population ➤ Support and sustain inter-group dialogue across political, ethnic and religious lines to promote social cohesion ➤ Promote girl-child education
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Tensions between farmers and herders over access to natural resources (water and land) ➤ Growing threat of terrorism ➤ Porous borders ➤ Growth of illicit economic activity, especially drug and human trafficking ➤ Trans-national threats ➤ Proliferation of weapons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Attacks by armed groups particularly Boko Haram and other extremist groups ➤ Radicalization ➤ Herder-farmer conflicts ➤ Rising levels of criminality ➤ Human rights violations resulting from the State of Emergency ➤ Presence of foreign security forces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Neighborhood watch groups ➤ The National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH) ➤ Counter-insurgency measures ➤ Programs to counter violent extremism ➤ State of Emergency as measure to stabilize the Diffa region ➤ Actions of security forces ➤ Presence of the Multi-national Joint Task Force ➤ Security collaboration between Niger and bi and multi-lateral partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strengthen collaboration between national, regional and international partners in addressing larger regional trends of insecurity ➤ Support bi- and multi-lateral training assistance programs, to enhance the institutional and operational capacity of the security forces. ➤ Provide humanitarian assistance to refugees and IDPs, ➤ Work with displaced populations, local communities and security forces to promote trust and encourage relationship-building. ➤ Promote community policing and cross border cooperation between security and defense forces and the local population to improve security
Politics & Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Perceptions of corruption ➤ Low levels of popular trust in the political system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Protests, particularly around the 2018 Finance Law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Presence of NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Establish a national education campaign to encourage women and youth to run for office, led from the top of the government and the leadership of political parties.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Perceived lack of legislative and judicial independence from the executive ➤ Underrepresentation of women and youth in political decision-making ➤ Legacy of military coup d'états ➤ Perception of bad governance ➤ Perception of limited space for the opposition in governance matters ➤ Contentious electoral management institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Electoral violence ➤ Arrests of high profile politicians ➤ Suppression of civil liberties ➤ Suppression of freedom of expression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The role of the on civic education and awareness raising on governance issues ➤ The role of traditional and religious institutions ➤ Inter-faith dialogue ➤ The role of the high authority for the fight against corruption ➤ Equal pay for men and women ➤ Free medical services for pregnant women and <5 children ➤ Youth Parliament platform ➤ Ombudsman 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Adopt best practices from other African countries on increasing political representation of women ➤ Support civic education programs, particularly those targeting youth and women, run by CSOs and government. ➤ Support local and national transparency and anti-corruption initiatives, particularly around management of royalties from mining, oil and other natural resources. ➤ Reform and strengthen electoral management bodies
Rule of Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Low levels of judicial and legislative independence ➤ Perceptions of corruption and bias within the judicial system ➤ Slow judicial processing times 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Incidents of corruption ➤ Violation of civil rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Traditional chiefs, religious leaders and community leaders involved in dispute resolution ➤ Existence of customary law ➤ Ombudsman 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Support initiatives on sensitization and education of civic and legal rights, particularly for women and youth. ➤ Provide training on gender-based violence (GBV) and women's rights to religious, traditional and local leaders involved in alternative dispute resolution. ➤ Promote transparency and anti-corruption initiatives and reforms within the judiciary. ➤ Support programs that improve access to justice for poor and vulnerable populations