

CENTRAL AFRICA:

**A SUB-REGION
FALLING BEHIND?**



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*



*Lake
Albert*

*Lake
Tanganyika*

**UNDP Sub-Regional
Strategic Assessment
Report No. 1
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2017**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4	List of Acronyms
6	Executive Summary
18	1. Introduction
24	2. Central Africa Sub-Regional Situation Analysis
25	2.1. Sub-regional integration, institutions and politics
25	2.1.1 Sub-regional development context, political environment and relations between states
30	2.1.2 Progress towards sub-regional political and economic integration
31	2.1.3 Central African RECs
35	2.1.4 Socio-cultural integration
36	2.2 Issues and dynamics taking place across borders: spotlight on insecurity
38	2.2.1 Inter-state border demarcation disputes and under-development of border areas
40	2.2.2 Activities of armed groups spreading from country to country
43	2.2.3 Joint military and diplomatic response to trans-border armed rebel activity
47	2.2.4 Organised criminal networks trafficking across state borders
48	2.2.5 Heightened insecurity around traditional migration patterns
49	2.2.6 Presence and needs of refugee and IDP populations
50	2.3 Common development priorities requiring sub-regional response
51	2.3.1 Extractive industry governance and economic diversification
52	2.3.2 Voice and participation for peaceful and integrated societies
56	2.3.3 Environmental management, conservation and climate change response
58	3. Priorities and programming entry-points for development partners
59	3.1 Greater responsiveness to Central Africa as a sub-region
61	3.2 Stabilisation through development and peacebuilding in Central Africa's border areas
62	3.3 Pushing forward momentum with integration through strategic partnerships with RECs based on sub-regional priority issue identification
65	3.4 Complementary interventions in the socio-cultural sphere
66	Recommendations



Central Africa – defined as membership of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)

(Map: United Nations Geospatial Information Section 2015, available at: <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/africa.pdf>)

LIST OF ACRO NYMS

ACBF	African Capacity Building Foundation
AfDB	African Development Bank
AEC	African Economic Community
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
AUPSC	African Union Peace and Security Council
CAFI	Central African Forest Initiative
CAR	Central African Republic
CEDAW	Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CEMAC	Central African Economic and Monetary Community
CEPGL	Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries
CFA franc	Central African franc
COMESA	Common Market for East and Southern Africa
COMIFAC	Commission for Central African Forests
COPAX	Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DMRO	Duly Mandated Regional Organisation
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EAC	East African Community
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EITI	Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative
EIU	Economic Intelligence Unit
EU	European Union
EUFOR RCA	EU Force in the Central African Republic
EUMAM	EU Military Advisory Mission
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
FOMAC	Multinational Force in the Central African Republic
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GiZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HDI	Human Development Index
ICG	International Crisis Group
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority on Development
IS	Islamic State
JAS	People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad
LCBC	Lake Chad Basin Commission
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MARAC	Early Warning Mechanism of Central Africa
MDG	Millennium Development Goal

LIST OF ACRO NYMS

MICOPAX	Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in the Central African Republic
MINUSCA	UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission
MISCA	International Support Mission to the Central African Republic
MNJTF	Multinational Joint Task Force
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise
NEPAD	New Economic Partnership for African Development
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OECD DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Countries
PER	Regional Economic Programme of CEMAC
REC	Regional Economic Community
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
STP	Sao Tomé and Príncipe
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TRIDOM	Tri-National Dja-Odzala-Minkébé
UDEAC	Customs and Economic Union of Central Africa
UEAC	Central African Economic Union
UMAC	Central African Monetary Union
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDP RBA	UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNISDR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNOCA	United Nations Office for Central Africa
UN OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
US	United States
USD	US dollar
WANEP	West African Network for Peacebuilding
WDI	World Development Indicator
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UNITY,
PROSPERITY
AND PEACE,
GREATER LEVELS
OF REGIONAL
INTEGRATION
AND
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WILL BE AN
ESSENTIAL
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CONTINENT'S
FUTURE SUCCESS
(VISION 2063)

The case for approaches to development programming and planning in Africa that are more explicitly cognisant of dynamics at a sub-regional level is becoming more apparent, underscored most dramatically by its present-day violent conflicts, both in Central Africa and elsewhere. However, governments and international partners alike have repeatedly found themselves several steps behind the activities of armed groups expanding across borders. This points to the importance of more proactive analysis and monitoring of sub-regional dynamics going forward.

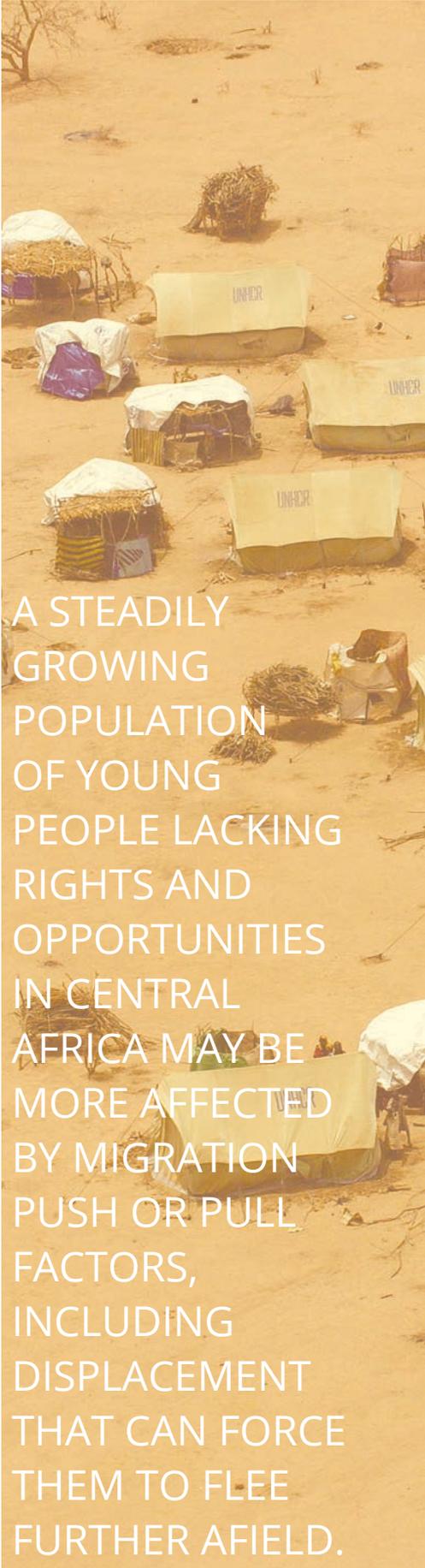
While the domain of peace and security helps to illustrate this need most urgently, other areas of development intervention and planning (economy, health, environment) are similarly affected and curtailed by a default 'nation-state' perspective, which can overlook both the challenges and opportunities generated by any given wider sub-regional context. As advocated strongly by the African Union Commission (AUC), through its economic policy frameworks as well as its peace and security architecture and overall Vision 2063: Unity, Prosperity and Peace, greater levels of regional integration and cooperation will be an essential component of the continent's future success.

Yet, development partners face constraints in responding to sub-regional issues and dynamics, being traditionally closely tied to partnerships with national governments. While several development partners have for many years directed some part of their development assistance through regional programmes that are located more clearly in one or other sub-region, this remains a smaller and less well-established component of overall aid relationships. Often such 'regional' programmes are inconsistent and do not correspond to political groupings, and the potential for political and policy dialogue is not fully exploited.

This report presents a framework for analysing the sub-regional domain sphere along three broad axes: (i) regional integration, institutions and politics; (ii) issues and dynamics taking place across borders; and (iii) common development priorities that require a sub-regional response. It was commissioned as a knowledge product to inform UNDP and its partners' interventions in Central Africa, and is the first in a planned series.

CENTRAL AFRICA: FALLING BEHIND?

Persistent insecurity, accompanied by and linked to delayed economic and political reform and integration, as well as other factors, has had profound



A STEADILY GROWING POPULATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE LACKING RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN CENTRAL AFRICA MAY BE MORE AFFECTED BY MIGRATION PUSH OR PULL FACTORS, INCLUDING DISPLACEMENT THAT CAN FORCE THEM TO FLEE FURTHER AFIELD.

effects on development trajectories in Central Africa for decades. Failure to build lasting peace has condemned the sub-region to repeated and continuing bouts of violence. Contemporary vectors of armed violence include: ongoing fragility following the 2012 crisis in Central African Republic (CAR); the spill-over of the Boko Haram conflict from Nigeria into Chad and Cameroon, as well as Niger; persistent insecurity in the Great Lakes; predation in the DRC-CAR-Sudan-South Sudan region by groups such as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), linked to the illegal exploitation of natural resources; a re-emergence of turbulence linked to elections in Burundi; anticipated tensions around other recent elections; increasingly violent clashes between pastoralists and settled communities in various parts of the sub-region; as well as maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea (piracy, armed robbery, illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, human, drug and arms trafficking and smuggling).

Violent extremism has also manifested in Central Africa, most perniciously in the activities of Boko Haram as it has expanded into the sub-region. The potential for violent and extremist ideologies to root more deeply in what are frequently religiously, ethnically polarised and socially disadvantaged national contexts across the sub-region, is real – as is the potential for the crises related to Boko Haram and CAR to merge. With regard to migration out of Africa, Central Africa has yet to contribute significant numbers as compared to other parts of the continent. However, the perspective on the sub-region emerging from this report gives ample room to envisage how a steadily growing population of young people lacking rights and opportunities in Central Africa may be more affected by migration push or pull factors, including displacement that can force them to flee further afield.

Each conflict setting presents a strong dimension of social exclusion of marginalised groups within national settings, in turn a reflection of root causes located in alienation caused by the governance structures and political economies of nation states. The sub-regional lens allows for a focus specifically on insecurity at and across borders in the region, bringing these to centre stage, with at least six different sources of insecurity readily identifiable at Central Africa's borders. These are explored further in the full report and include:

- i Inter-state border demarcation disputes and under-development of border areas
- ii Activities of armed groups spreading from country to country
- iii Joint military and diplomatic response to trans-border armed rebel activity
- iv Organised criminal networks poaching and trafficking across state borders

A COROLLARY OF DECADES OF INSECURITY IN THE SUB-REGION, IS CENTRAL AFRICA'S TENDENCY TO SCORE AT, OR CLOSE TO, THE BOTTOM OF GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT INDICES.

- v Heightened insecurity around traditional migration patterns; and
- vi Presence and needs of refugee and internally displaced populations.

A corollary of decades of insecurity in the sub-region (that persists to the present day), is Central Africa's tendency to score at, or close to, the bottom of global development indices. The full report includes numerous examples, only a handful of which are highlighted in this Executive Summary. The resurgence of violent conflict threatens to further compound such indicators, posing a significant risk that Central Africa may fall permanently behind other sub-regions of Africa.

Figure 1 below shows that Central Africa has the highest number of people living below the poverty line among all the sub-regions of Africa.

The tragic consequences of these high poverty rates in human development terms are also apparent from available data, with women particularly affected. Central Africa has the highest maternal mortality rate across different African sub-regions, for instance, as evidenced by Figure 2.

Central African countries also score particularly poorly across governance and fragility indicators. Cameroon, CAR, Chad, DRC, Equatorial Guinea and the Republic of Congo are among the countries at the bottom of the Economic Intelligence Unit,¹ Transparency International and Mo Ibrahim governance indices. Closure of political space and tendency towards corruption in the public sector have been given particular attention in these indices.

¹ EIU (2013). *Democracy Index 2013: Democracy in Limbo*. Available at: http://www.ihnews.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Democracy_Index_2013_WEB-2.pdf

Figure 1 – Percentage of population living below the national poverty line, by sub-region (Source: UN Statistics Division, Millennium Development Goals Indicators – chart compiled by UNDP RBA using most recent data available. <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Data.aspx>)

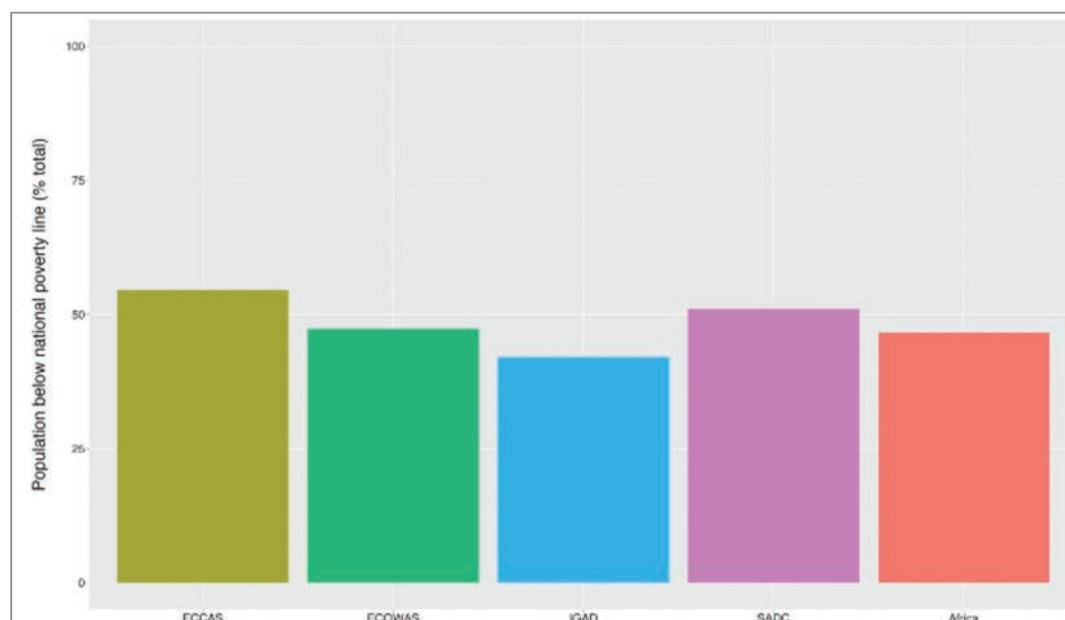


Figure 2: Trends in the estimated maternal mortality ratio across different African sub-regions (Source: WHO 2014 data cited in UNECA, UNDP, AU, AfDB (2014). Millennium Development Goals: Africa Progress Report, p. 62.

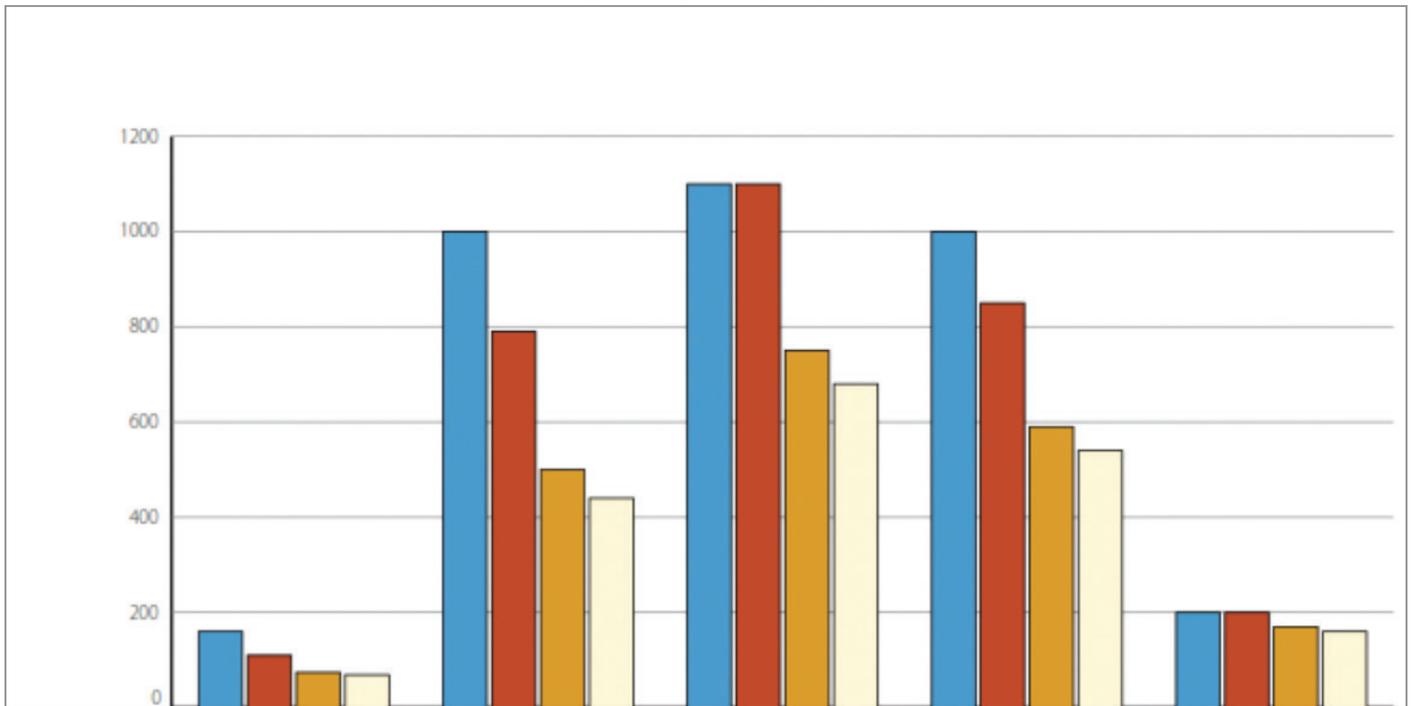


Table 1 – Summary Mo Ibrahim Governance Index 2014 – scores out of 100 (Source: Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2014). 2014 Ibrahim Index of African Governance. See: <http://static.moibrahimfoundation.org/u/2014/09/29110013/2014-iiag-global-press-release.pdf>)

	Safety and rule of law	Participation and human rights	Sustainable economic opportunity	Human development	Overall average
Africa	51.7	49.9	45.6	58.7	51.5
Central Africa	40.6	37.6	35.7	51.8	41.4
East Africa	47.8	46.4	43.2	56.6	48.5
North Africa	47.0	43.7	50.9	69.7	52.8
Southern Africa	62.8	59.1	52.3	62.9	59.3
West Africa	53.4	54.0	45.2	56.3	52.2

Elections and democratic development are also critical for the region's evolution. With multiple presidential and legislative elections scheduled between 2015-2018, efforts of international partners to encourage and support electoral governance reform, both in individual countries and at sub-regional level, become mission critical. The extent to which necessary domestic political transformations can be supported and enabled by international partners, rather than the reverse, is a key question for the sub-region's long-term advancement going forward.

DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES IN THE SUB REGION THAT ARE COVERED IN THIS REPORT INCLUDE ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION, COMBINED WITH IMPROVED GOVERNANCE OF EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY WEALTH, EMPOWERING SUB-REGIONAL NETWORKS AMONG CITIZENS AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT, CONSERVATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE RESPONSE.

There are thus a number of commonly shared development challenges, including these governance issues, around which the sub-region's future success as a whole is centred, and which as a result require sub-regional level responses. While such development challenges are national, their nature and scope, if successfully tackled sub-regionally, would be likely to yield multiplier effects on improved governance, security and development outcomes as well as enhancement of integration for Central Africa overall. As elaborated in the full report, they include:

- i **Extractive industry governance and economic diversification:** Economic diversification, combined with improved governance of extractive industry wealth, would be a direct contribution to reducing fragility in the overall sub-region.
- ii **Voice and participation for peaceful and integrated societies:** Various dimensions of exclusion can be identified, including: civil society, women and youth. Empowering sub-regional networks among these citizens would help to advance the interests of more inclusive, peaceful and regionally integrated societies.
- iii **Environmental management, conservation and climate change response:** Efforts to conserve the sub-region's rich environmental resources is probably the domain where collaboration among states has advanced furthest, representing a degree of cooperation that ought to be capitalized on given other areas of disconnect.

PROSPECTS FOR SUB-REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Some see the human security crisis in Central Africa sub-region as, to some extent, a consequence of poor sub-regional integration.² The inter-personal characteristic of inter-state relations in Central Africa is seen to have profoundly affected the efficacy of sub-regional institutions in the sub-region, as well as the overall health of the integration project. The relationships between the executives of the region, characterised by long-standing rivalry and mistrust and bound up in a jostling for supremacy, may thus have created its own self-perpetuating fragility dynamic.

Responding to continent-level discourse and diplomatic activity around regional integration, Central African states have forged a number of agreements and institutions committed to creating an integrated sub-regional area – 'eliminating the problem of small-sized national markets, to ensure optimal conditions for opening up and creating a larger area capable of facing market competition resulting from globalisation'.³ However achieving these fundamental goals has been made more difficult by the competing institutional mandates and inconsistent membership of the two primary

² C. Ayangafac (2008). 'The Political Economy of Regionalisation in Central Africa', in C. Ayangafac (ed), *op. cit.*

³ C. D. G. Adoumou (2008). 'ECCAS or CEMAC: Which Regional Economic Community for Central Africa', in C. Ayangafac (ed), *op. cit.*

A LONG-RUNNING DISCUSSION ON HARMONISATION BETWEEN CEMAC AND ECCAS HAS SLOWLY ADVANCED, ATTRACTING DIFFERENT INTERNATIONAL SPONSORS OVER THE YEARS – AND SEEING THE TWO ORGANISATIONS CREATE A RATIONALISATION COMMITTEE.

Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in the sub-region, that have similar agendas, creating technical obstacles and policy confusion. While signed into existence at different periods and with different membership, each of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) has an institutional mandate over: agriculture and industry, transport and communications, natural resources and energy, trade and customs as well as monetary and financial issues. Both have subsequently expanded to addressing peace and security issues. Examples of the types of direct duplication these broad overlaps create include replica provisions for a court of justice; a regional network of parliamentarians; finalisation of the CEMAC passport project alongside the creation of ECCAS control posts; as well as duplicate initiatives in the field of money-laundering and organised crime.⁴

A long-running discussion on harmonisation between the two has slowly advanced, attracting different international sponsors over the years – and seeing the two organisations create a rationalisation committee. Currently one initiative sees a partnership between the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Development Bank (AfDB) working alongside the two RECs and regional banks to harmonise policy across 12 key areas.⁵ However the effects of these efforts at harmonisation are yet to be realised; and ongoing proliferation of mandates and diplomatic attention serves to mute the impacts of such small but significant gains that have been made. A strong view that Central Africa's RECs need to be strengthened, following the example of other success stories on the continent, if they are to serve growth and development goals, was widely shared by stakeholders interviewed for this research.

The overall political environment and relationships between member states of the various regional institutions are a major factor influencing their functionality, and efforts to support enhanced capacities need to be predicated on a sound understanding of the sub-regional political economy. Another take on this argument puts forward the hypothesis that sub-regional integration requires the leadership of one undisputed power shaping the agenda and carrying others forward as part of its sub-regional hegemony. Until such political will either manifested in one leader or a group of leaders working together exists, the integration project will continue to stall.⁶

Key countries, Chad, CAR and Equatorial Guinea among them, have no connecting modern transport links. According to the AfDB: 'the inadequate

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ *The Restructuring of Regional Economic Communities in Central Africa high-level project steering committee have reportedly made significant advances across five of the 12 key areas. However, lack of consensus on instruments related to security, free movement of people and goods as well as the integration funding mechanism caused review of these issues to be postponed. Meanwhile, other observers have proposed more radical and longer-term visions of harmonisation – see C.D.G Adoumou (2008), op. cit.*

⁶ *Ibid*

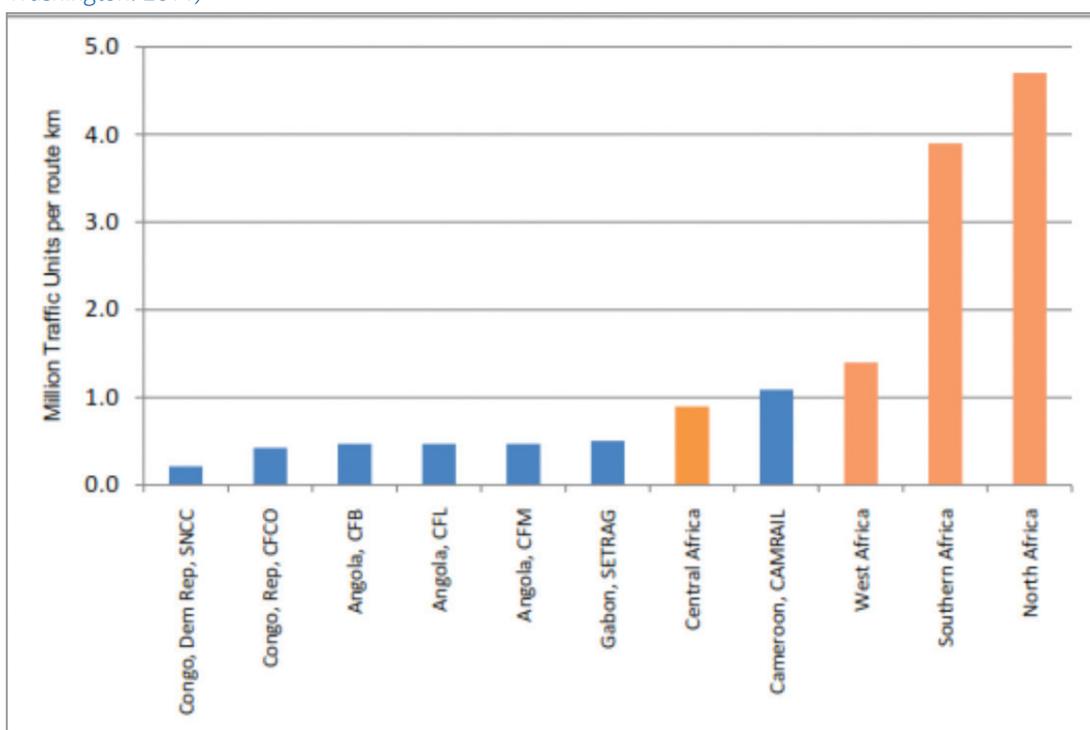
interconnection of national transport networks between Central African countries is an obstacle to economic and physical integration and the development of countries in the region.⁷ As a result of poor transportation links as well as complex customs and tax regimes, intra-regional trade is very low (only 2 percent of total trade if ECCAS and CEMAC community figures are combined).⁸ The sub-region also compares poorly to other African sub-regions across all types of connecting infrastructure. The example of traffic density on Central African railways is shown below.

To this could be added that domestic citizens' demand for integration to be proactively advanced by the institutions, is also missing, with much of the momentum and support coming from external partners. Lack of opportunity for ordinary citizens to engage in, influence and 'own' the longer-term goal of integration is a particular challenge, in part reflecting limited democratic space in the majority of Central African countries themselves, amplified at the sub-regional level. An inevitable corollary of the limited success of the Central Africa sub-regional integration project clearly, is that the sub-region does not yet enjoy a common sense of identity. In this regard, unfavourable comparison between the ECCAS and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) sub-regions was repeatedly made by stakeholders interviewed. Understanding societal actors able to serve as 'connectors' in the sub-region to help advance and advocate for policy-level progress, while also contributing to improved transparency and accountability, is also critical.

⁷ AfDB (2011). *Central Africa: Regional Integration Strategy Paper (2011-15)*, p. 7.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Figure 3: Traffic density on Central African railways (Source: R. Ranganathan and V. Foster (2011). 'ECCAS' Regional Infrastructure: A Continental Perspective', Policy Research Working Paper, No. 5857. World Bank, Washington: 2011)



ALL ACTORS NEED TO INVEST MORE SYSTEMATICALLY BOTH IN ANALYSING THE SUB-REGIONAL DOMAIN AND INTERVENING AT THAT LEVEL IN CENTRAL AFRICA.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

External forces have had a strong influence over the sub-region's development trajectories, which have suffered from inconsistency in international attention, as well as complicity in perpetuating malign governance structures at great cost to local populations. With the effects of these histories now bubbling up in new and widening zones of conflict; elections pending across the sub-region; and further potential for volatility linked to over-dependence on the oil industry, the time is ripe for a greater levels of responsiveness by international development partners. The challenges faced present a strong sub-regional dimension and require appropriate sub-regional level responses. Without a concerted effort to reverse these trends at that level, there is a real risk that Central Africa's development progress could be permanently affected – with consequences for security on the wider continent as well as globally given the potential for Central Africa to become further entrenched in global challenges such as violent extremism and migration.

All actors need to invest more systematically both in analysing the sub-regional domain and intervening at that level in Central Africa. Given the overall normative commitment to regional integration as a means to enhancing African-led development, as well as intensifying AU-level activity in this regard, efforts to scale-up interventions at sub-regional level in Central Africa seems logical, if not overdue.

The multi-faceted dimensions of insecurity taking place within countries and spreading across borders in the sub-region should be understood as a strategic priority. Until these various sources of insecurity are addressed, and border areas are creatively brought into wider development planning and peacebuilding processes, the sub-region is likely to remain in a perpetual state of volatility, threatening backsliding in development terms. The notion of sub-regional programming thus opens the possibility of developing a more ambitious and purposeful approach to development and peacebuilding in border areas, responding to the multiple dimensions of insecurity across borders identified in this report, and under the framework of the AU Niamey Convention. The speed of the expansion across borders of both the Boko Haram and CAR crises, may have created the necessary awareness among all stakeholders of the urgency of increased attention to border areas. A number of additional priorities emerging from the analysis of the sub-regional sphere put forward in this report can also be identified, as summarised in the recommendations below. The importance of leveraging political commitments taken by executives at the level of the African Union, is highlighted throughout.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ALL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

TO ALL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

i Demonstrate greater responsiveness to Central Africa as a sub-region

- Urgently encourage greater attention to security, development and integration challenges in Central Africa, to prevent it falling permanently behind in development terms
- Embark on new efforts to respond to Central Africa's sub-regional dynamics at that level, finding innovative ways to link country programmes and overcome institutional obstacles
- Initiate processes to fill data gaps assessing and monitoring development dynamics at sub-regional level – for the UN system this points to the need to find ways to introduce a sub-regional lens into the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process, as well as consideration of regular sub-regional Human Development Reports to complement national reporting.

ii Attempt to stabilise the sub-region through prioritising peacebuilding and development of border areas

- Develop purposeful approaches to development and peacebuilding in border areas, responding to the multiple dimensions of insecurity across borders identified in this report
- Enhance local peace infrastructures in border areas
- Make the development case to national governments and other stakeholders for greater levels of investment in border areas as part of national development planning, through supporting data collection and analysis, including of perceptions and priorities of communities
- Work with governments to initiate catch-up development interventions of border areas, establishment of state authority, improved security and monitoring of borders, integrated peacebuilding and mediation activities as well as support to local livelihoods
- Support establishment of border surveillance designed to curtail smuggling and conflict-aggravating trade
- Leverage the AU Niamey Convention, supporting governments and ECCAS to implement its vision
- Leverage the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development
- Leverage the AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of IDPs in Africa

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ALL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

iii Renew efforts to harmonise Central African RECs and enhance capacity in key areas

- Review development partner relationships with Central Africa's RECs, based on consideration of strategic priorities related to sub-regional situation analysis, and identification of entry-points for development partners that both respond to these priorities, and specific agencies' niche and competencies
- Ensure initiatives with CEMAC, ECCAS and LCBC contribute to longer-term harmonisation and rationalisation rather than the reverse
- Advance dialogue and planning for implementation and review of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at sub-regional level through ECCAS
- Support production of ECCAS-level data-sets and development context analysis
- Support initiatives on harmonisation between ECCAS and CEMAC
- Initiate processes to advance specific AU conventions and treaties through ECCAS, identified against priority context dynamics.

iv Support efforts to enhance relevance of ECCAS sub-regional identity in the socio-cultural sphere

- Support initiatives to help popularise ECCAS, and create demand for sub-regional integration among civil society networks, think-tanks, private sector networks, etc
- Support 'connectors' in Central Africa, whether inter-faith, women, youth, business or other, able to build momentum for positive change within and across nation-state boundaries
- Initiate programmes seeking to advance a positive and pluralist sub-regional identity that celebrates diversity across identity groups and nations and identify mechanisms for fostering exchange and confidence-building among these (e.g. volunteer exchange programmes)
- Support ECCAS' own communications and external relations capacities.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ALL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

v Foster sub-regional momentum for improved extractive industry governance and economic diversification

- Support sub-regional civil society networks, think-tanks and monitoring capacity focused on extractive industry governance
- Expand support for private sector development and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), with state and non-state peer-to-peer initiatives across the sub-region
- Leverage the AU African Mining Vision in the ECCAS sub-region
- Leverage the AU Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption.

vi Amplify Central African citizens' voice and participation for inclusive and peaceful societies

- Scale-up interventions to monitor and promote free and fair elections across the sub-region
- Scale-up interventions to empower change agents
- Support initiatives that enhance women's voice in the sub-region advocating for gender equality, as well as peace and development
- Support sub-regional dialogue on youth unemployment, ensuring mobilisation of youth empowerment networks at sub-regional level
- Advocate and position for a development approach to preventing and responding to violent extremism in relevant parts of the sub-region
- Support initiatives that enhance capacity of think-tanks/ academics/ civil society
- Leverage the AU Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance
- Leverage the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, and Protocol on Rights of Women
- Leverage the African Youth Charter as well as the AUC Decade of Youth and the recently launched UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace and Security.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ALL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

vii Advance sub-regional cooperation on environmental management, conservation and climate change response initiatives

- Support the Congo Basin Forest Partnership and the new Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI) initiative
- Continue and deepen collaboration around sub-regional conservation interventions
- Support environmentally-focused civil society networks advancing three-fold goals of improved environmental management, conservation and climate change response
- Support initiatives for the regeneration, development and employment creation in the Lake Chad area
- Work with governments/ ECCAS to improve urban management and quality of life
- Leverage the Revised African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.



1 INTRODUCTION

IN THIS SECTION:

Why a sub-regional approach? pg. 19

Defining a sub-regional approach. pg. 21



This report presents an analysis of the sub-regional dynamics affecting development outcomes in the Central Africa sub-region. It was commissioned as a knowledge product to inform the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and its partners' interventions, and is the first in a planned series of sub-regional strategic assessments.

WITHOUT EXCEPTION, FROM THE SAHEL TO THE VILLAGES AND TOWNS AFFECTED BY BOKO HARAM IN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN, ACROSS TO THE HORN AND DOWN TO EASTERN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC), THE MOST EGREGIOUS CONTEMPORARY CONFLICTS IN AFRICA PRESENT A STRONG SUPRA-STATE DIMENSION.

WHY A SUB-REGIONAL APPROACH?

Sub-regional issues and dynamics strongly affect development outcomes in Africa. The case for approaches to development programming and planning in Africa that are more explicitly cognisant of dynamics at a sub-regional level is becoming more apparent, underscored most dramatically by its present-day violent conflicts, both in Central Africa and elsewhere. Without exception, from the Sahel to the villages and towns affected by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin, across to the Horn and down to Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the most egregious contemporary conflicts in Africa present a strong supra-state dimension. Non-state armed groups are mushrooming in response to, among other factors: underdevelopment and 'ungoverned spaces' at border regions; porous borders that facilitate the flow of weapons and high-value contraband; identity ties that straddle numerous countries; and a dearth of common public goods, state or regional institutions able to provide for citizens' needs.¹

All the while these conflicts are generating deepening insecurity, meshing with global transnational security challenges such as violent extremism, as well as humanitarian crises reflected in the unprecedented loss of migrant and refugee lives off the shores of Europe.

Despite recognition of the relevance of sub-regional contexts to understanding contemporary armed conflict, governments and international partners alike have repeatedly found themselves several steps behind the activities of armed groups expanding across borders. This points to the importance of more proactive analysis and monitoring of sub-regional dynamics going forward.

While the domain of peace and security helps to illustrate this need most urgently, other areas of development intervention and planning (economy, health, environment) are similarly affected and curtailed by overly rigid nation-state perspectives, which can overlook both the challenges and opportunities generated by any given wider sub-regional

¹ *Operational approaches to conflict analysis and scholarly literature alike underline the significance of regional contexts in understanding root causes and dynamics. See UN (2012). UN DPKO/DFS Civil Affairs Handbook, Chapter 8; and T. M. Shaw (2003). 'Regional Dimensions of Conflict and Peacebuilding in Contemporary Africa', in Journal of International Development, Vol. 15. The UNDP RSCA and the UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes recently collaborated on a regional conflict analysis of the Great Lakes sub-region.*

³ 'Regional Integration is Gaining Momentum' post on OECD website. Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/swac/regionalintegrationiscurrentlygainingmomentum.htm>

⁴ The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP) are engaged in large-scale relief interventions which are designed to respond to some of the most immediate cross-border dynamics – the needs of displaced populations – and necessarily are framed as regional response plans in some cases. The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) has a Central Africa sub-office and supports the two Regional Economic Communities (RECs). Furthermore, the UN Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), based in Gabon and originally mandated by the Security Council to maintain diplomatic focus and actions around the activities of the originally Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), is an agency within the UN system strategically poised to work sub-regionally on peace and security dynamics in Central Africa as a whole. UNOCA hosts a Standing Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa convening foreign and defence ministers from across the ECCAS region, together with ECCAS and other agencies that meets twice per year to discuss human security related issues and traditional state security challenges. The UN Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa is based in Yaoundé, Cameroon, and has worked to establish a sub-regional network of national human rights institutions, with the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms of Cameroon taking the lead.

⁵ These are: (a) promotion of regional public goods and services, based on strengthened regional cooperation and integration; (b) management of cross-border externalities (challenges and opportunities) and spill-overs – such as trade, the environment and conflict prevention that are best addressed collaboratively on an inter-country basis; (c) advancement of awareness, dialogue and action on sensitive and or emerging development issues that benefit strongly from multi-country and regional experiences and perspectives; (d) promotion of experimentation and innovation to overcome institutional, financial and/or informational barriers that may be too high for an individual country to surmount; and (e) generation and sharing of development knowledge, experience and expertise – for instance, through South-South and triangular cooperation. UNDP (2014). Regional Bureau for Africa: Annual Report 2014, p. 4. Available at: <http://www.africa.undp.org/content/rba/en/home/library/reports/undp-africa-annual-report-2014.html>

⁶ It is the first in a planned series, with the Horn of Africa to follow.

context. As advocated strongly by the African Union Commission (AUC), through its economic policy frameworks as well as its peace and security architecture and overall Vision 2063: Unity, Prosperity and Peace, greater levels of regional integration and cooperation will be an essential component of the continent's future success.

However, development partners face constraints in responding to sub-regional issues and dynamics while closely tied to partnerships with national governments and country-specific financing mechanisms. In the case of the UN, the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), on which UNDP and other agencies in the UN family base their interventions, takes member states' national development planning as its starting point. The essentially national perspective of the UNDAF tool has been a largely uncontroversial and widely accepted *modus operandi* to date.² The UN system is in good company in grappling with the challenges of working sub-regionally. While several development partners have for many years directed some part of their development assistance through regional programmes that are located more clearly in one or other sub-region, this remains a smaller and less well-established component of overall aid relationships.

At a 2010 meeting of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries, ministers acknowledged that implementation of regional projects is often slow and difficult as it involves complex country-level negotiations, but that 'finding pragmatic ways to bring regional stakeholders together is an important role of international support.'³

There are a number of efforts across different UN agencies to respond to cross-border and sub-regional dynamics, including in Central Africa.⁴ UNDP's Regional Bureau for Africa (RBA) clearly articulates the importance of a regionalised outlook informing and shaping interventions to advance development across different sectors in Africa at a strategic level, and has adopted five 'regionality principles'.⁵ Yet there is also a strong sense apparent during research for this report that more could be done in this regard in order to better align with the sub-regional nature of security and development dynamics. This document – and subsequent sub-regional assessments to be published during 2016 – forms part of the overall response to these factors by UNDP.⁶

² The UNDAF process has been subject to scrutiny and discussion in terms of its effectiveness in aligning aid interventions; utility in enhancing results-based management; degree of participation by non-state actors in design and monitoring; and from other points of view. However, its responsiveness or otherwise to priorities affecting national outcomes from outside of national borders, does not appear to have attracted much attention – although it is flagged as a challenge in one report reviewed for this study, see ODI (2006). *Review of the Role and Quality of the UNDAFs*.

Central Africa is a sub-region of Africa that has attracted fresh international concern and attention in recent years as a result of new waves of violent conflict and emergency linked to the crisis in the Central African Republic (CAR) and the Boko Haram insurgency in and around Nigeria, as well as the crisis in Burundi. Yet persistent insecurity, combined with poor governance across the sub-region as well as other factors, has had profound effects on development trajectories across Central Africa for decades. As will be discussed further in this report, the sub-region repeatedly scores at, or close to, the bottom of global development indices. The resurgence of violent conflict threatens to further compound these indicators, posing a significant risk that Central Africa may fall permanently behind other sub-regions of Africa.

Violent extremism has manifested in Central Africa, most perniciously in the activities of Boko Haram as it has expanded into the sub-region. The potential for violent and extremist ideologies to root more deeply in what are frequently religiously polarised national contexts across the sub-region is real. Given its geographic centrality, the risk of Central Africa providing a corridor connecting violent extremism in eastern and West Africa has also been identified. With regard to migration out of Africa, Central Africa has yet to contribute significant numbers as compared to other parts of the continent. However, the perspective on the sub-region emerging from this report gives ample room

ONE OF THE FIRST STUMBLING BLOCKS IS HOW TO DEFINE THE RESPECTIVE REGIONS OR SUB-REGIONS OF AFRICA – INCLUDING CENTRAL AFRICA. THE CONTINENT FACES A PRESSING NEED TO RATIONALISE OVERLAPPING MEMBERSHIPS AND MANDATES AS A WHOLE.

to envisage how a steadily growing population of young people lacking rights and opportunities in Central Africa may be more affected by migration push or pull factors, including displacement that can force them to flee further afield.

A core intention of this report is thus to galvanise a refocusing of development partner attention as well as new approaches to tackling Central Africa's challenges, in order to help shift its prospects in a more favourable direction.

DEFINING A SUB-REGIONAL APPROACH

The AUC is at the apex of wider normative commitment to integrated African-led development dating back at least to the 1991 Abuja Treaty. The overarching continental development strategy adopted by African Union (AU) heads of state and government envisages creation of an African Economic Community (AEC) through successive stages, with a first priority of integration at the regional level. Strengthened Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are ultimately to merge to create the AEC.⁷ The capacity constraints, political will and other challenges confronting the AUC itself, as well as Africa's RECs and other regional institutions, are recognised as obstacles to more effective African-led development strategies as this process unfolds mid- to long-term.⁸ A further challenge persists in implementing the growing body of AU conventions and programmes at the sub-regional level, ensuring a proper flow of legislative initiative and accountability for heads of states' commitments in Addis, with real impacts on the ground.

One of the first stumbling blocks is how to define the respective regions or sub-regions of Africa – including Central Africa. While the membership of RECs provides an important starting point, the continent faces a pressing need to rationalise overlapping memberships and mandates as a whole – as the complexity of Figure 1 below instantly

⁷ UNECA (2012). 'Assessing Regional Integration in Africa: Towards an African Continental Free Trade Area'. From the continent-level perspective the terminology delineating different regions of Africa as regions has been established. However, this report, noting that much 'regional' development programming focuses at continent-level, and that interchangeable use of region to refer to Africa and its sub-regions can create confusion, has chosen to refer to Africa's regions as sub-regions.

⁸ African Capacity Building Foundation (2008). *A Survey of the Capacity Needs of Africa's Regional Economic Communities*. (ACBF: Harare, Zimbabwe).

indicates.⁹ Further, critical cross-border and sub-regional dynamics affecting particular countries frequently emanate from neighbours or regional powers that do not share membership with specific RECs. A good example can be found in the activities of Boko Haram, which straddle several REC zones – as well as the push and pull of factors relating to wider insecurity in the Sahel region up to Libya and the Maghreb, confronted by Chad. Indeed, it is a truism of international relations that any given country has in effect its own ‘sub-regional’ context, determined by specificities of geography, economic partnerships, political affiliations, and other factors – which static institutional membership of this or that REC, will never reflect in full.

Noting that the AU, and the two Central African RECs, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community

(CEMAC), each define ‘Central Africa’ differently, research for this report loosely followed the ECCAS definition, for the reason that ECCAS is the REC for Central Africa that is recognised by the AU (despite the different definition of the sub-region found elsewhere in AU documents).¹⁰ Therefore the coherence of this larger grouping is extremely relevant from the perspective of the overall integration agenda. However, more attention is given to some countries than others in the report’s discussion, based on two factors. The first is a reading of the current overall pressure points in the sub-region as a whole, bound up in its contemporary crises and overall political context. The second factor shaping the focus of this report is the fact that large ECCAS members such as Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) enjoy multiple REC membership status and are arguably more prominent members elsewhere. On a practical note, these countries are also discussed as part of other sub-regions, in other recent or forthcoming sub-regional assessments by UNDP.¹¹ The result of these considerations for this report is that while its overall discussion of the sub-region observes and analyses the recognised REC bloc and progress with integration therein, other aspects of the discussion largely focus on the northern part of the region.

⁹ The historical evolution of the various RECs in most cases pre-date the AU and part of the complexity is a direct result of competing colonial interests. The AU presently formally recognises eight RECs across Africa. Available literature highlights priorities around harmonising AU/ REC interventions, rationalising RECs and building their capacities in key technical and operational areas, as well as ensuring adherence to the spirit of the Protocol on the Relations between the AU and the RECs. This contested and fragmented institutional space is an important background context to the discussion in this report, explored more fully elsewhere.

¹⁰ Membership of ECCAS is Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, CAR, Chad, Republic of Congo, DR Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and STP – with Rwanda re-joining in 2015 after an eight-year hiatus. Membership of CEMAC is Gabon, Cameroon, CAR, Chad, Republic of Congo and Equatorial Guinea. The African Union defines the Central Africa region as: Burundi, Cameroon, CAR, Chad, Congo, DR Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and STP.

¹¹ As above, the UNDP RSCA together with the UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes recently completed a sub-regional conflict analysis. The UNDP RSCA also plans to replicate the present report for the SADC sub-region.

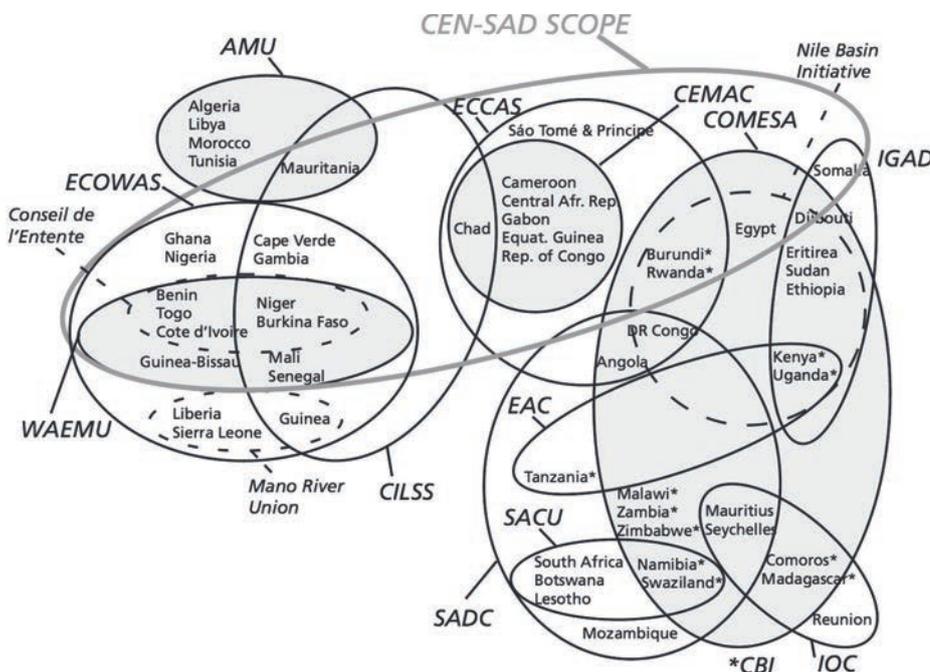


Figure 1: Representation of overlapping membership of RECs in Africa (Source: African Capacity Building Foundation (2008). Survey of the Capacity Needs of Africa’s Regional Economic Communities. ACBF: Zimbabwe, p. 142.)

Whichever definition of the region is considered, key questions remain: how can a sub-region comprising a large (and contested) number of countries, be described? What are the key axes that make it a sub-region? How far does it, or might it, have an identity as such and what are the key characteristics? What are the sub-regional issues and dynamics that emerge as of core significance to development partners?

This report seeks to shed some light on these issues, with a view to highlighting strategic entry-points whereby development partners might positively influence sub-regional dynamics in Central Africa, in the interests of enhancing overall outcomes. Given the brevity of the research and enormity of 'Central Africa' as a unit of analysis, the report maintains a necessarily panoramic perspective and strictly sub-regional lens, deliberately avoiding in-depth analysis per country except where this may be illustrative. It is organised around three distinct though inter-related dimensions of the sub-regional domain, that were identified in the inception phase for the research, and which served as the basis of the interviews. They are:¹²

i

Sub-regional integration, institutions and politics: focusing on the overall development context and state-of-play of the sub-regional integration agenda in Central Africa, the strengths and weaknesses of its RECs and other sub-regional institutions, as well as the all-important geo-political dimension informing the political relationship between states in the region (often overlooked by development actors);

ii

Issues and dynamics taking place at or across borders between sovereign states: focusing on events and processes at borders in the sub-region, placing a particular emphasis on the multi-faceted dimensions of insecurity in these spaces;

iii

Common development priorities that require a sub-regional response: attempting to prioritise which of the many shared development challenges faced by different countries in the sub-region would most benefit from a sub-regional response, whether in the framework of the RECs or by other means.

The report will now proceed to provide a sub-regional situation analysis of Central Africa, clustering its findings according to these three sets of dynamics. The concluding chapter, Section 3, advances the discussion to sketch priority entry-points for development partners active in the region, identified in light of the issues raised.

THIS REPORT SEEKS TO SHED SOME LIGHT ON THESE ISSUES, WITH A VIEW TO HIGHLIGHTING STRATEGIC ENTRY-POINTS WHEREBY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS MIGHT POSITIVELY INFLUENCE SUB-REGIONAL DYNAMICS IN CENTRAL AFRICA, IN THE INTERESTS OF ENHANCING OVERALL OUTCOMES.

¹² These three sets of factors de facto represent a working synthesis of the UNDP Africa regionality principles, simplified for the purposes of this research.

2 CENTRAL AFRICA

SUB REGIONAL SITUATION ANALYSIS

IN THIS SECTION:

2.1 Sub-regional integration, institutions
and politics pg. 25

2.2 Issues and dynamics taking place across
borders: spotlight on insecurity pg. 36

2.3 Common development priorities
requiring sub-regional response pg. 50



Recognising the enormity of 'Central Africa' as a unit of analysis, and the light-touch approach of the assignment, this report takes a necessarily panoramic perspective. It deliberately avoids in-depth analysis per country, noting that the report's added value is in maintaining a sharply sub-regional lens. The following situation analysis for the Central Africa sub-region is organised according to three inter-related interpretations of the sub-regional domain, mentioned above and taken as the basis of the research process. They are:

- Sub-regional integration, institutions and politics;
- Issues and dynamics taking place at or across borders between sovereign states: spotlight on insecurity;
- Common development priorities that require a sub-regional response.

2.1 SUB-REGIONAL INTEGRATION, INSTITUTIONS AND POLITICS

2.1.1 Sub-regional development context, political environment and relations between states

The 'big-man', highly personalised system of rule that has been historically familiar in Africa, finds many of its well-known protagonists in Central Africa.¹³ Six presidents have ruled for over 30 years, others for nearly 20. Several have made repeated constitutional amendments to facilitate this longevity. The socio-political systems which sustain such long-term regimes of government have been shown to generate their own inherently fragile momentum – with

CONTINUED INSECURITY, COMBINED WITH LACK OF POLITICAL TRANSITION IN THE SUB-REGION, HAS HAD PROFOUND EFFECTS ON DEVELOPMENT TRAJECTORIES, DESTROYING INFRASTRUCTURE, SOCIAL CAPITAL AND MARKETS.

weak state legitimacy a core factor determining long-term fragility according to current policy discourse.¹⁴ Evidence from across the continent underscores the way in which highly personalised systems of political power centred around long-serving individuals and their families often also bring with them post-regime crisis and insecurity. Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon are alone, among Central African countries in having enjoyed long periods of stability, sustained by oil income and international support – while the rest of the countries in the sub-region have been embroiled in on-off civil conflict since independence. However, the experience of the rest of the countries regarding post-regime turbulence (e.g. after Zaire's Mobutu, or CAR's Bokassa) provides a warning note for these three.¹⁵

Further, at the sub-regional level, the relationships between the presidents in the region, characterised by long-standing rivalry and mistrust and bound up in a jostling for supremacy, may have created its own self-perpetuating fragility dynamic at that level. The inter-personal characteristic of inter-state relations in Central Africa is seen to have profoundly affected the efficacy of sub-regional institutions in the sub-region, as well as the overall health of the integration project – although, as discussed further below, recent developments hint at the possibility of a more cooperative environment emerging over time.

Continued insecurity, combined with lack of political transition in the sub-region, has had profound effects on development trajectories, destroying infrastructure, social capital and markets, and leaving many of the countries in the region with weakened institutions poorly equipped to address significant ensuing post-conflict reconstruction challenges. These features, underpinned by poor governance, as well as other factors such as climate change

¹³ Discussed extensively in African political science literature, see for example J-F. Bayart (1993). *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*. London/New York: Longman.

¹⁴ For a summary of the literature on state fragility in which the nature of state authority is understood as a factor, see C. McLoughlin (2012). *Topic Guide on Fragile States. Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, University of Birmingham. The first of the New Deal Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals emphasises legitimate politics, and the ability to foster inclusive political settlements and conflict resolution. See: <http://www.newdeal4peace.org/peacebuilding-and-statebuilding-goals/>.*

¹⁵ Indeed, one report goes so far as to predict a period of pending post-regime instability in each of Gabon and Cameroon. See F. N. Ikome (2008). 'Personalisation of Power, Post-Regime Instability and Human (In)security in Central Africa', in C. Ayangafac (ed). *Political Economy of Regionalisation in Central Africa*. Institute of Security Studies, South Africa.

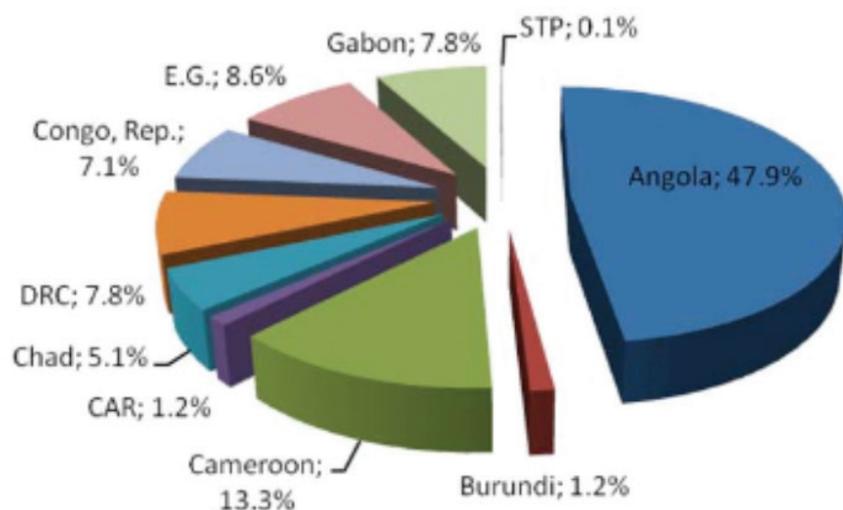


Figure 2: Contribution of the sub-region's countries to total GDP (Source: WDI 2010 data cited in UNECA, AU, AfDB (2013). Report on the Sustainable Development Goals: Central Africa Sub-Region, p. 6. Rwanda was not part of the ECCAS region at the time of this report's publication and hence is not included in the graphic.)

and the advance of the Sahel, push Central African countries to the bottom of development, security and governance indices, notwithstanding variations within the sub-region, as illustrated briefly by the following data.

Table 1 extracts data for Central African countries from the 2014 UNDP Human Development Index – according to which Gabon, the Republic of Congo, Sao Tomé and Príncipe and Equatorial Guinea fall in the 'medium human development' category, with the rest of the region's countries falling in the

'low human development' category, in some cases (Chad, CAR and DRC) among the lowest in the world.

The poverty rate is high in most countries in the sub-region. According to a report produced by the African Development Bank (AfDB), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the AU assessing the region's overall progress towards meeting Millennium Development Goals (MDG) targets, the sub-region faced an average poverty incidence of nearly 55 percent in 2013 – with Cameroon,

Table 1 – Summary UNDP Human Development Index data (Source: UNDP 2014. Human Development Index 2014. Available at: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-1-human-development-index-and-its-components>)

	2014 HDI rank/ 187	Life expectancy at birth	Expected years of schooling	Gross national income per capita (\$)
Angola	149	51.9	11.4	6,323
Burundi	180	54.1	10.1	749
Cameroon	152	55.1	10.4	2,557
CAR	185	50.2	7.2	588
Chad	184	51.2	7.4	1,622
Congo, Rep	140	58.8	11.1	4,909
DRC	186	50.0	9.7	444
Equatorial Guinea	144	53.1	8.5	21,972
Gabon	112	63.5	12.3	16,977
Rwanda	151	64.1	13.2	1,403
STP	142	66.3	11.3	3,111

Gabon and Sao Tomé and Príncipe the only countries in the sub-region where less than one-third of the population earns under \$1 a day.¹⁶ Figure 3 below shows that Central Africa has the highest number of people living below the poverty line among all the sub-regions of Africa.

¹⁶ UNECA, AU, AfDB (2013), *op. cit.*, p. 8.

The tragic consequences of these high poverty rates in human development terms are also apparent from available data, with women particularly affected. Figure 4 below provides comparison of maternal mortality rates across African sub-regions.

Figure 3: Percentage of population living below the national poverty line, by sub-region (Source: UN Statistics Division, Millennium Development Goals Indicators – chart compiled by UNDP RSCA using most recent data available. <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Data.aspx>)

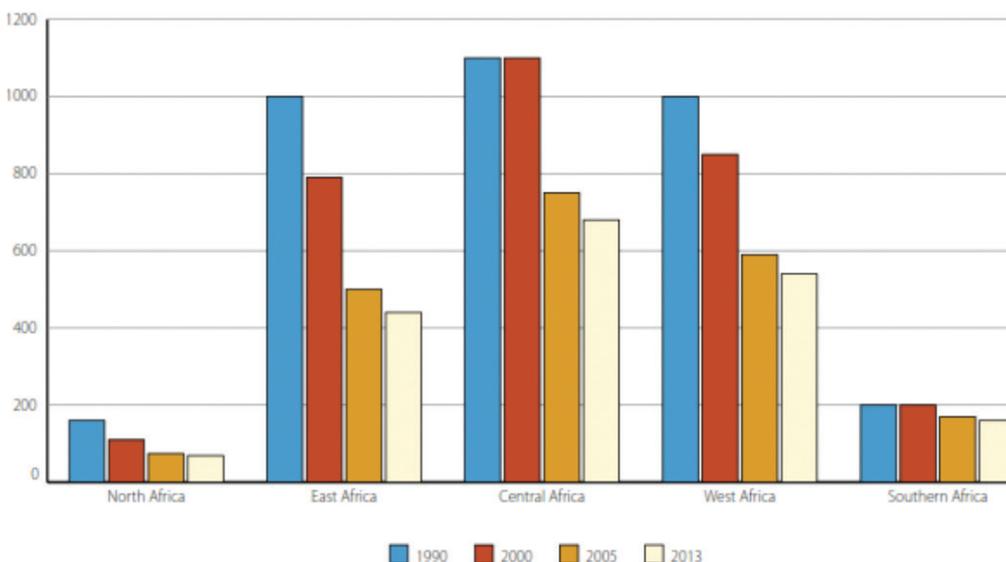
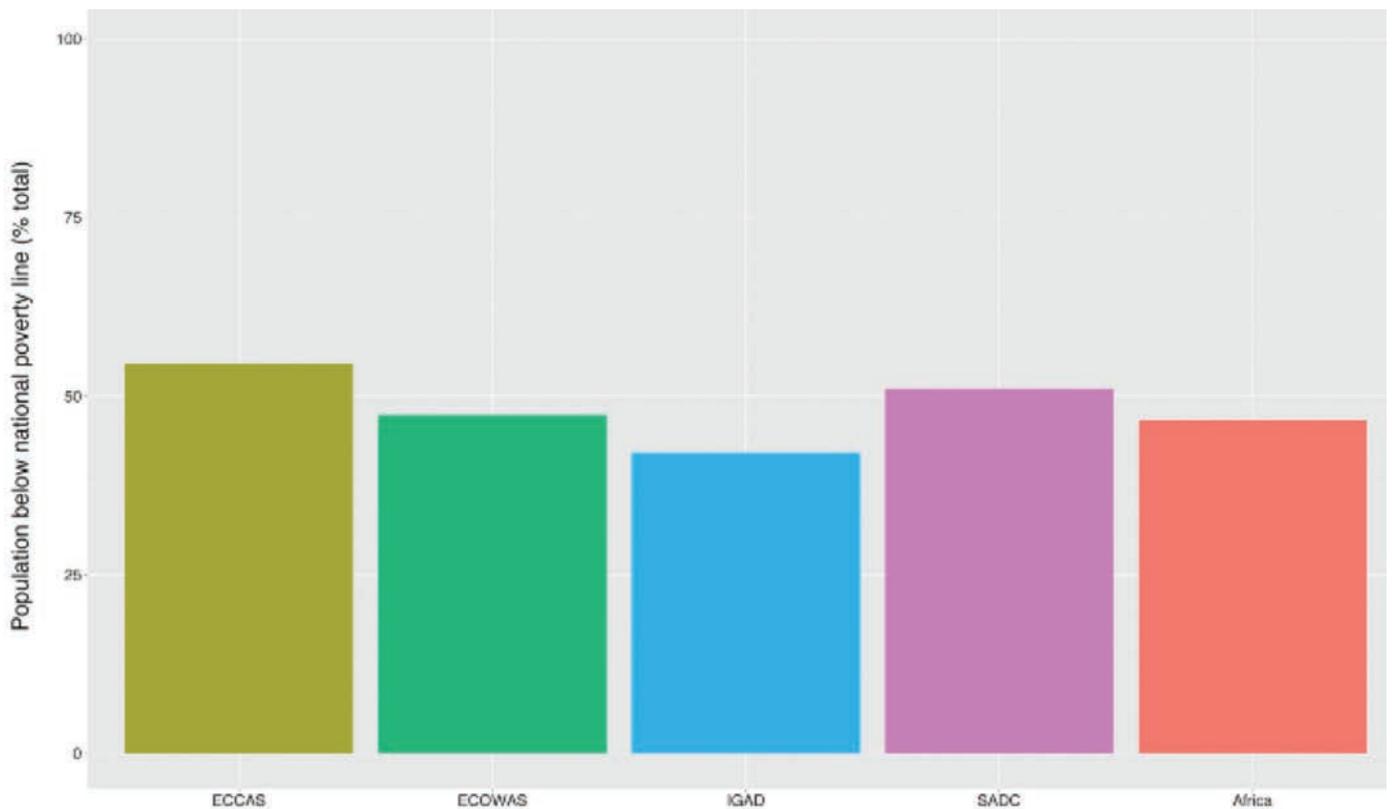


Figure 4: Trends in the estimated maternal mortality ratio across different African sub-regions (Source: WHO 2014 data cited in UNECA, UNDP, AU, AfDB (2014). Millennium Development Goals: Africa Progress Report, p. 62.)

The sub-region also records a low score against other regions of Africa in other analyses concerned with basic growth-enabling infrastructures, as indicated in Table 2 below.

Of central pertinence to the analysis of development priorities facing the sub-region that is put forward in this report, Central African countries also score particularly poorly across governance and fragility indicators. Cameroon, CAR, Chad, DRC, Equatorial Guinea and the Republic of Congo are among the countries at the bottom of the Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU),¹⁷ Transparency International and Mo Ibrahim

governance indices. Some of these can be usefully compared by sub-regions, revealing the extent to which Central Africa falls to the 'bottom of the bottom' in global terms, as summarised in Table 3 and Table 4 below. The Fund for Peace Fragile States Index 2015, assessing various dimensions of governance, rights and participation, also places the countries on a scale from 'Alert' to 'Very High Alert'.¹⁸

¹⁷ EIU (2013). *Democracy Index 2013: Democracy in Limbo*. Available at: http://www.eiu.com/Handlers/WhitepaperHandler.ashx?fi=Democracy_Index_2013_WEB-2.pdf&mode=wp&campaignid=Democracy0814.

¹⁸ Fund for Peace (2015). *Fragile States Index 2015*. Available at: <http://fsi.fundforpeace.org/>

Table 2: Comparing Central Africa infrastructure to other African sub-regions (Source: R. Ranganathan and V. Foster (2011). 'ECCAS' Regional Infrastructure: A Continental Perspective', Policy Research Working Paper, No. 5857. World Bank, Washington: 2011, p. 6.)

	Western	Eastern	Southern	Central
Paved road density	38	29	92	4
Mainline density	28	6	80	13
Mobile density	72	46	133	84
Internet density	2	2	4	1
Generation capacity	31	16	176	47
Electricity coverage	18	6	24	21
Improved water	63	71	68	53
Improved sanitation	35	42	46	28

Table 3 – Summary Mo Ibrahim Governance Index 2014 – scores out of 100 (Source: Mo Ibrahim Foundation (2014). 2014 Ibrahim Index of African Governance. Available at: <http://www.moibrahimfoundation.org/downloads/publications/2014/2014-iiag-summary-report.pdf>)

	Safety and rule of law	Participation and human rights	Sustainable economic opportunity	Human development	Overall average
Africa	51.7	49.9	45.6	58.7	51.5
Central Africa	40.6	37.6	35.7	51.8	41.4
East Africa	47.8	46.4	43.2	56.6	48.5
North Africa	47.0	43.7	50.9	69.7	52.8
Southern Africa	62.8	59.1	52.3	62.9	59.3
West Africa	53.4	54.0	45.2	56.3	52.2

Table 4: Summary governance indicators – Mo Ibrahim, Transparency International and EITI (Source: AfDB (2013). 'Structural Transformation in Central Africa: Historical Perspective and Medium-Term Recommendations'. Regional Department Centre (ORCE)

	Mo Ibrahim		Corruption Perception Index IPC		EITI
	Ranking 2000	Ranking 2011	Ranking 2000	Ranking 2012	Status
Cameroon	33	36	138	144	Candidate
CAR	48	48	130	144	Suspended
Chad	45	50	156	165	Candidate
Congo	44	41	142	144	Compliant
DRC	51	51	156	160	Suspended
Equatorial Guinea	46	44	151	163	Excluded
Gabon	28	22	90	102	Excluded
Central Africa	42	42	138	153	-
Africa	20	22	117	100	-
East Africa	28	28	115	129	-
Southern Africa	18	17	68	89	-
North Africa	19	22	79	108	-

External forces have had a strong influence over the region's development trajectories. Indeed, of all Africa's sub-regions, Central Africa's experience of international involvement is perhaps most marked by continued unevenness and competing geo-strategic/development narratives, with some countries privileged over others, and a seemingly tenuous international commitment overall. CAR's near-invisibility on the international stage at least up until the 2012 crisis provides a case in point – by 2015 only 31 percent of the humanitarian appeal for CAR had been funded, further decreasing to 21% by 2016.¹⁹ Of key and continued relevance is the close interest taken by France in the sub-region, as part of the wider post-colonial set of relationships between France and its former colonies popularly known as *la Françafrique*. Other players also loom large in the calculus of particular countries in the sub-region (Sudan throws a long shadow over Chad; Nigeria over Cameroon); while global players such as China and Saudi Arabia also feature. The effectiveness of other international development partners' interventions in the sub-region have also been questioned.²⁰ The experience in the sub-region of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) is seen by some to

have had particularly perverse overall effects, contributing to its fragility, draining away public services and facilitating bad governance.

While these histories have paved the way for the many contemporary manifestations of insecurity in the sub-region, some of which are discussed in further detail below, it is useful to note here that some see the 'human security crisis' in Central Africa sub-region as, to an extent, a consequence of poor sub-regional integration.²¹ According to this view, Central African states' perspective on sub-regional integration is seen

¹⁹ See UN OCHA (2015). *Humanitarian bulletin: Central African Republic. Issue 1, July 2015*; and <https://fts.unocha.org/pageloader.aspx?page=emerg-AlternativeCost1EmergencyDetails&appealid=1136&emergID=16613> The former relative invisibility of CAR on international radars has been highlighted by rights-based groups such as International Crisis Group, see ICG (2007). 'Central African Republic: Anatomy of a Phantom State'. *Africa Report No. 136, December 2007*.

²⁰ See for example A. Boutellis (2013). 'Chad and the Central African Republic', chapter in J. Boulden, ed. *Responding to Conflict in Africa: The United Nations and Regional Organisations*. Palgrave: New York. On the Democratic Republic of Congo, see International Alert (2013). *Ending the Deadlock: Towards a New Vision of Peace in Eastern DRC*.

²¹ C. Ayangafac (2008). 'The Political Economy of Regionalisation in Central Africa', in C. Ayangafac (ed), *op. cit.*

as an extension of domestic politics – whereby short-term political survival trumps investment in longer-term gains. As a corollary, according to this analysis sub-regional integration is an ‘imperative’ for improving human security, but will only be achieved as a result of domestic political transformations. The extent to which such domestic political transformations can be supported and enabled by international partners, rather than the reverse, is a key question for the sub-region’s long-term advancement. Observers have watched, with mounting unease as political turmoil around Burundi’s electoral process has escalated. Recent electoral processes in the Republic of Congo, CAR and Chad, and soon due in DRC and Gabon (also due in Cameroon in 2018), have each highlighted the importance of pro-active efforts to support reformist elements and voices for change by international partners per country as well as at a sub-regional level.

2.1.2 Progress towards sub-regional political and economic integration

As will be discussed below, some significant measure of military and diplomatic coordination among governments in the sub-region has recently emerged in response to insecurity around each of the Boko Haram and CAR crises. However, these new efforts to collaborate in the face of shared threats has brought with it new sources of turbulence, sharpening rivalries between regional leaders, and it is not clear that any net gains in advancing a more integrated sub-region have been made. Overall confidence in, and progress towards sub-regional integration is low when compared to other sub-

regions.²² It certainly falls far short of the vision of mutual understanding and concord between nations espoused by the AU.²³

The six member countries of CEMAC do share a common currency, the CFA franc, and some other important steps towards economic and political integration have been realised, including most recently adoption of a free movement of people protocol.²⁴ However, despite progress in the CEMAC sub-region, overall progress with economic integration is limited.²⁵ Key countries, Chad, CAR and Equatorial Guinea among them, have no connecting modern transport links. According to the AfDB: ‘the inadequate interconnection of national transport networks between Central African countries is an obstacle to economic and physical integration and the development of countries in the region.’²⁶ As a result of poor transportation links as well as complex customs and tax regimes, intra-regional trade is very low (only 2 percent of total trade if ECCAS and CEMAC community figures are

²² This was the overall consensus among stakeholders interviewed for this report, and is also reflected in available literature.

²³ AfDB (2011). *Central Africa: Regional Integration Strategy Paper (2011-15)*, p. v.

²⁴ See ‘Regional Bloc Agrees to Implement Free Movement of People Protocol’, *Start Africa*, 7th May 2015. However, key countries such as Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon have been unwilling to implement these agreements.

²⁵ It should also be noted that the CEMAC Central African franc is guaranteed by the French national treasury, and has a fixed exchange rate to the euro. This in itself has implications for prospects for wider sub-regional integration.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

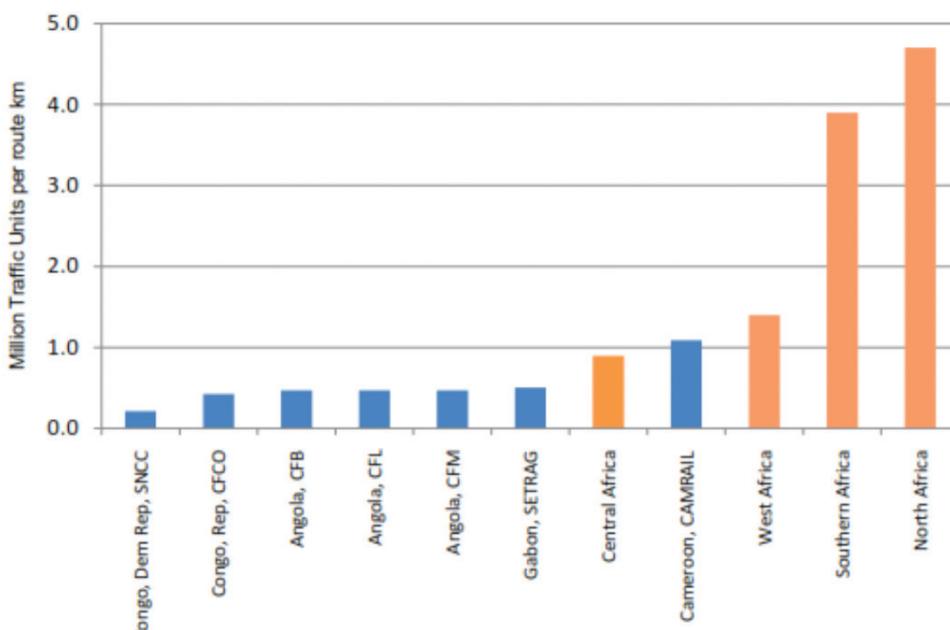


Figure 5: Traffic density on Central African railways (Source: R. Ranganathan and V. Foster (2011), *op. cit.*, p. 20.)

combined).²⁷ The sub-region compares poorly to other African sub-regions across all types of connecting infrastructure. The example of traffic density on Central African railways is shown below.

Stakeholders interviewed for this report pointed repeatedly to the perverse effects of inter-state mistrust, limited integration and lack of enabling common public goods such as infrastructure, acting as a brake on economic development, providing ample anecdotal evidence. A bridge funded by the EU and designed to connect Gabon and Cameroon, had a barrier erected almost immediately once opened – another bridge connecting the two Congos remains closed. Further evidence is provided by the World Bank 2014 Doing Business report for the sub-region, which scores the lowest in Africa in terms of ‘ease of trading across borders’, as illustrated below in Figure 6 – a status that was largely unchanged by time of publication of the 2016 World Bank *Doing Business* report.²⁸

However, despite some gains, there is little evidence of political will to tackle these challenges in order to enable Central Africa to move more firmly in the direction of integration. Reluctance to integrate is fuelled by short-term narratives around divergence in GDP across countries, with the richest countries voicing concern about negative effects,

despite evidence put forward by expert organisations such as the World Bank, the AfDB and UNECA to the contrary. Tacit rivalry for access to the region’s considerable natural resources may be a further factor.²⁹

2.1.3 Central African RECs

Responding to the continent-level discourse and diplomatic activity around regional integration, Central African states have forged a number of agreements and institutions committed to creating an integrated sub-regional area – ‘eliminating the problem of small-sized national markets, to ensure optimal conditions for opening up and creating a larger area capable of facing market competition resulting from globalisation.’³⁰ However, these fundamental goals have been poorly served by the competing institutional mandates and inconsistent membership of the two primary RECs in the sub-region, that have similar agendas, creating technical

²⁷ AfDB (2011), *op. cit.*, p. 7.

²⁸ Available at: http://www.doingbusiness.org/reports/~/_media/GIAWB/Doing%20Business/Documents/Profiles/Regional/DB2016/DB16-Economic-Community-Central-African-States.pdf

²⁹ C. Ayangafac (2008). *The Political Economy of Regionalisation in Central Africa*, in C. Ayangafac (ed), *op. cit.*

³⁰ C. D. G. Adoumou (2008). ‘ECCAS or CEMAC: Which Regional Economic Community for Central Africa’, in C. Ayangafac (ed), *op. cit.*

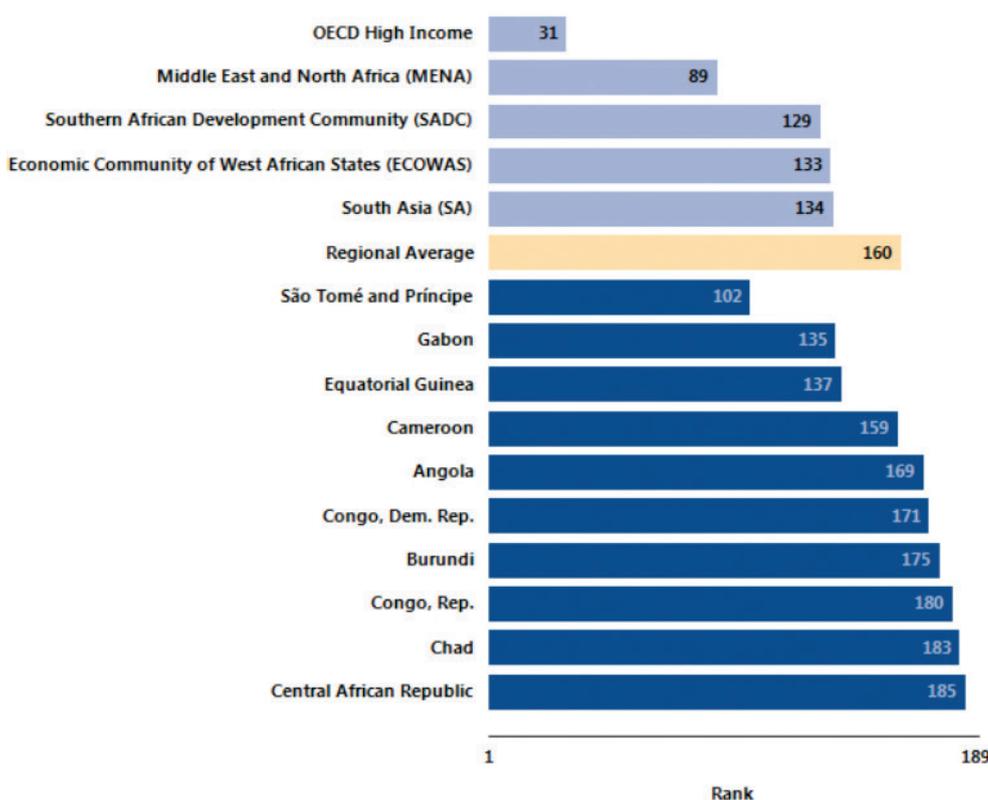


Figure 6: Ranking of ECCAS sub-region in terms of ease of trading across borders (Source: World Bank (2014). *Doing Business 2014: Regional Profile, ECCAS*, p. 63.)

obstacles and policy confusion. While signed into existence at different periods and with different membership, both CEMAC and ECCAS have an institutional mandate over: agriculture and industry, transport and communications, natural resources and energy, trade and customs as well as monetary and financial issues. Both have subsequently expanded to addressing peace and security issues. Examples of the types of direct duplication these broad overlaps create are offered in one report, and include replica provisions for a court of justice; a regional network of parliamentarians; finalisation of the CEMAC passport project alongside the creation of ECCAS control posts, as well as duplicate initiatives in the field of money-laundering and organised crime.³¹

A long-running discussion on harmonisation between the two has slowly advanced, attracting different international sponsors over the years – and seeing the two organisations

create a rationalisation committee. Currently one initiative sees a partnership between UNECA and AfDB working alongside the two RECs and regional banks to harmonise policy across 12 key areas.³² These processes and the issues involved are highly technical, and it is beyond the purview of this report to grapple in much depth with the detail. What is relevant to note is that the effects of these efforts at harmonisation are yet to be realised; and ongoing proliferation of resources and diplomatic attention serves to mute the impacts of such small but significant gains as have been made. A strong view that Central Africa's RECs are among the weakest on the continent, and that this serves as a major barrier to growth and development, was widely shared by stakeholders interviewed for this research. In addition to the two Central African RECs, the Lake Chad Basin Commission is also considered below, as an additional institution with growing influence and significance in the sub-region.

ECCAS WAS SELECTED BY THE UNECA AS THE PILLAR OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN CENTRAL AFRICA

CENTRAL AFRICA'S SUB-REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)

Established in 1983 within the framework of the AEC, ECCAS has the overall goal of creating a common market for Central African states. Its membership comprises 11 countries (Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, CAR, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Rwanda and Sao Tomé and Príncipe). Six of these states are members of CEMAC, while Rwanda, Burundi and DRC are also members of COMESA and the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL). Both Angola and DRC are also members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and more recently Rwanda and Burundi are in the process of joining the East African Community (EAC). Sustained periods have seen a majority of ECCAS members experiencing violent political upheaval, with activity virtually grinding to a halt between 1992-97, for instance. In 1998 the institution underwent a focused effort to re-launch, with a more robust secretariat adopting a re-framed mandate encompassing: (i) development and human integration; (ii) development of physical, economic and monetary integration; (iii) development of capacity to maintain peace, security and stability; (iv) development of capacity for analysis, intervention and entrepreneurship initiatives; and (v) communication and collective negotiation. Various other specialised sub-regional agencies have since been brought under ECCAS leadership with sometimes competing and overlapping mandates. These include the Central African Power Pool, responsible for energy issues; the Central African Forestry Commission (COMIFAC), focused on forest management in the sub-region; the Regional Fisheries Committee for the Gulf of

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *The Restructuring of Regional Economic Communities in Central Africa high-level project steering committee have reportedly made significant advances across five of the 12 key areas. However, lack of consensus on instruments related to security, free movement of people and goods as well as the integration funding mechanism caused review of these issues to be postponed. Meanwhile, other observers have proposed more radical and longer-term visions of harmonisation – see C.D.G Adoumou (2008), op. cit.*

UNDP HAS SUPPORTED A REVIEW OF ECCAS PEACE AND SECURITY ARCHITECTURE, AND ALSO ENGAGED WITH ECCAS AS PART OF A PROJECT WITH RECS ADDRESSING HIV/AIDS ISSUES.

Guinea; and finally, the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX). The ECCAS peace and security architecture, various agencies and organs which together make-up COPAX, have rapidly expanded over the past decade and are the designated sub-regional component of the overall AU Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). This includes a Central African Early Warning System (MARAC) and a standby force, the Central African Multinational Force (FOMAC).

ECCAS was selected by the UNECA as the pillar of regional integration in Central Africa, signing the protocol on relations between the UN and RECs in 1999 and gaining observer status to the UN in 2001. ECCAS is also the REC for the sub-region recognised by the AU. This led to ECCAS becoming the focal point and partner selected for projects under New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). A number of crucial sub-regional infrastructure projects were agreed under the framework of the NEPAD Short Term Action Plan (STAP) though due to problems with implementation these are also seen to have failed to yield desired results.³³

UNDP has collaborated with ECCAS, CEMAC and the Central Africa Power Pool on sustainable energy issues since 2011. This resulted in the development and formal adoption by heads of states and governments of a White Paper on Central Africa's Regional Policy on Universal Access to Modern Energy Services. UNDP has also supported a review of ECCAS peace and security architecture, and also engaged with ECCAS as part of a project with RECs addressing HIV/Aids issues although neither initiative is ongoing. The UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) meanwhile works closely with COPAX, and the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) has a long-running collaboration on strengthening ECCAS capacity in disaster risk reduction (DRR).

ECCAS and CEMAC are the two Duly Mandated Regional Organisations (DMROs) in charge of strategic orientation, programming and implementation of the EU's Regional Indicative Programmes for Central Africa focusing on three priority areas: (1) political integration and peace and security, (2) regional economic integration and trade, and (3) sustainable management of natural resources and biodiversity.

A number of international partner capacity-building projects supporting the secretariat of ECCAS have been undertaken, for instance with support from the African Development Bank, as well as the African Capacity Building Foundation. The French have provided ongoing support to ECCAS primarily for its peace and security structures. In 2007, ECCAS articulated and adopted a Vision 2025, plan for regional integration.

³³ *Ibid.*

CEMAC'S CORE MISSION IS TO FACILITATE THE HARMONIOUS DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEMBER STATES THROUGH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TWO UNIONS: ONE ECONOMIC AND ONE MONETARY.

CEMAC ALSO ENJOYS SOME DEGREE OF CONFIDENCE ON THE PART OF KEY INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS AND HAS MADE SOME SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS IN TERMS OF TANGIBLE PROGRESS TOWARDS INTEGRATION.

Despite the key elements of evolution sketched above, institutional weakness and failure have persisted. Member states did not sign a free trade agreement until 2004 – over 20 years after the creation of ECCAS, and there is little else to point to by way of success in the core priority areas.

Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC)

Six countries (Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Central African Republic (CAR), Chad and Equatorial Guinea) instituted CEMAC in 1994 – an evolution of its predecessor the Customs and Economic Union of Central Africa (UDEAC). CEMAC comprises several institutions including the Central African Economic Union (UEAC), the Central African Monetary Union (UMAC), the Community Parliament, the Court of Justice and other specialised institutions. CEMAC's core mission is to facilitate the harmonious development of the member states through the establishment of two unions: one economic and one monetary. Its main mandate is to formulate and implement a new regional economic and social integration strategy in Central Africa.

According to a survey of CEMAC staff undertaken by the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) in 2008, CEMAC identifies its primary capacity constraints as under-staffing, as well as shortage in management and programme design and implementation capacity.³⁴ Together these have significantly affected its effectiveness. Conflict in the CAR, where CEMAC has its headquarters, has most recently obliged the staff of CEMAC to scatter to different countries.

Nonetheless, CEMAC also enjoys some degree of confidence on the part of key international development partners and has made some significant achievements in terms of tangible progress towards integration. Milestones include setting up a common customs union and generally harmonising tax and customs legislation. It has a clearly articulated roadmap towards regional integration, which details plans in different economic sectors, the Regional Economic Programme (PER), different aspects of which are currently supported by, among others, the World Bank, the AfDB, the EU, France, Germany and the UK. UNDP, together with the EU and France, has jointly supported CEMAC since 2011 with a long-term initiative to support public finance reforms and domestic resource mobilisation, through the Pôle Dakar project.

Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC)

The LCBC was established in 1964 by the four countries that border Lake Chad: Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria and Chad. Membership has since expanded with CAR joining the organization in 1996, and Libya in 2008.

³⁴ *African Capacity Building Foundation (2008), op. cit.*

LCBC HAS POSITIONED ITSELF AS A KEY DIPLOMATIC VENUE FOR SUB-REGIONAL RESPONSE TO THE INSECURITY CAUSED BY BOKO HARAM.

Observer status is held by Sudan, Egypt, the Republic of Congo, as well as DRC. The mandate of the Commission is to sustainably and equitably manage Lake Chad and other shared water resources of the Lake Chad Basin, to preserve the ecosystems of the Lake Chad Conventional Basin, to promote regional integration, peace and security across the Basin. It has recently galvanised increasing support responding to dramatic erosion of Lake Chad, and adopting an increasing role in sub-regional security matters. Most notably it has positioned itself as a key diplomatic venue for sub-regional response to the insecurity caused by Boko Haram.

The overall political environment and relationships between member states of the various regional institutions are a major factor influencing their functionality, and efforts to support enhanced capacities need to be predicated on a sound understanding of the sub-regional political economy. One official interviewed for this report argued that ECCAS was the site of a 'political battle for leadership of an institution that doesn't exist' – and while this may exaggerate the case, the rivalry between key leaders for supremacy in the sub-region is widely acknowledged as a factor. The ensuing political deadlock serves as a forceful constraint on deepened regionalisation.³⁵ Efforts at reform within each institution and between the two, are championed as a function of inter-state rivalry, seeking to shake up influence, rather than a reflection of genuine desire to grow the capacity of the RECs. Non-payment and non-compliance with rules governing statutory member state contributions is a further constraint. Several interlocutors to this research suggested that integration is unlikely to advance far without new leadership in several

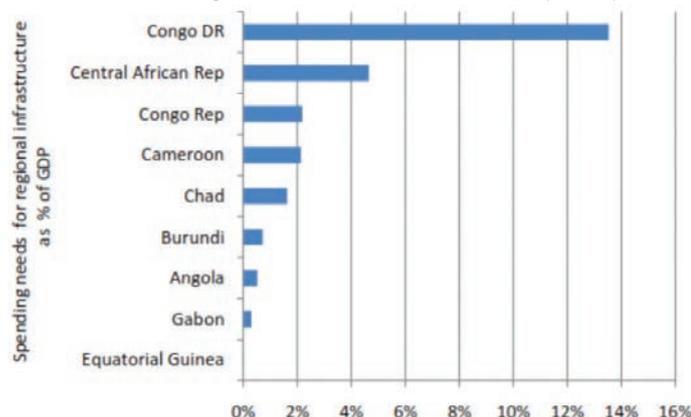
of these states. Figure 7 below illustrates the low priority afforded to upgrading regional infrastructure as one indicator of this wider problematic.

Another take on this argument puts forward the hypothesis that sub-regional integration requires the leadership of one undisputed power shaping the agenda and carrying others forward as part of its sub-regional hegemony. Until such political will, either manifested in one leader or a group of leaders working together exists, the project will continue to stall.³⁶ To this could be added that domestic citizens' demand for integration proactively advanced by the institutions, is also missing, with much of the momentum and support coming from external partners.

2.1.4 Socio-cultural integration

An inevitable corollary of the limited success of the Central Africa sub-regional integration project clearly emphasised in discussions held for this research is that the sub-region does not yet enjoy a common sense of identity. Unfavourable comparison between the ECCAS and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) sub-regions in this regard was repeatedly made by stakeholders interviewed. While there may be scepticism in West Africa itself as to the societal reach of ECOWAS,³⁷ from the vantage point of Central African observers, the ECOWAS project consolidating and

Figure 7: National spending on regional infrastructure as a share of GDP (Source: R. Ranganathan and V. Foster (2011), *op. cit.*, p. 55.)



³⁵ *Ibid.* The ACBF study also notes a lack of political will on the part of members to yield to supra-national coordination and authority as a major obstacle to regional integration.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ See for instance discussion in 'ECOWAS at 40: The Promise of a New West', *Africa Report*, No. 70, May 2015 – supplement on the occasion of ECOWAS 40th birthday.

facilitating sub-regional cohesion appears to be heralded as an out-of-reach success. Although CEMAC and ECCAS both have provision for human and socio-cultural dimensions of integration in their founding protocols, as well as courts of justice and parliaments, and some notional degree of civil society engagement resulting from past development partner collaborations, none of these principles, institutions or processes have taken root with any conviction. Thus, where ECOWAS at least has several NGO networks shadowing its work across key policy areas (for example the West African Network for Peacebuilding serves as the appointed NGO liaison partner for ECOWAS on peace and security issues and mechanisms), equivalent channels and patterns of engagement do not exist in Central Africa.³⁸ Similarly, there is an absence of sub-regionally focused think-tanks, networks of academics and others researching, connecting, and advocating on the issues related to integration. The opportunity to support initiatives to strengthen civic participation and engagement in popularising the purpose and mandate of the Central African RECs, remains wide open.

The question of how to engage with organised civil society, and how far it currently contributes at a sub-regional level to addressing shared issues of concern, generated a fairly unanimously negative response among research participants. A strong sense emerged that some of the problems associated with civil society in Africa as a whole (for instance around political capture and/or restrictions to operating space, representativeness, capacity, integrity, consistency, impact) are most sharply apparent within Central African civil society.³⁹ This issue is discussed in further detail below, in the

BORROWING FROM PEACEBUILDING THEORY, WHAT ARE THE 'CONNECTORS' WITHIN CENTRAL AFRICAN SOCIETY THAT MIGHT BE STRENGTHENED OVER TIME AS A DIRECT CONTRIBUTION TO SUB-REGIONAL INTEGRATION?

section of this report dedicated to 'common development challenges in the sub-region'.

Questions concerning the socio-cultural dimensions of integration are under-researched globally, and would benefit from further review. Beyond the dimension of organised civic engagement with national governance issues, the RECs and the wider integration project per se, to what extent do the citizens of the sub-region share norms, values or identities that bind it together? Borrowing from peacebuilding theory, what are the 'connectors' within Central African society that might be strengthened over time as a direct contribution to sub-regional integration?⁴⁰

While there are multiple loci of shared cultural space at the sub-region's various border regions (e.g the Baka – Gabon, Cameroon, Republic of Congo; the Beti-Pahuin – Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tomé and Príncipe; the nomadic Fulani or Perl – straddling a vast area including Cameroon, CAR and Chad among many other non-Central African countries; the Kanuri – Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad; the Sara – Chad, Cameroon and CAR; as well as the Zande – CAR, South Sudan and DRC), the question of how far ethnic ties translate into wider sharing of norms, and how far this in turn may contribute to a visible aggregation of a (celebratory/ pluralist) sub-regional identity, is a complex one. Indeed, as is immediately apparent, such ethnic ties equally straddle borders to other sub-regions, and also have the potential to feed into divisive narratives of ethnic difference. They are thus better understood as 'push-pull' factors (both divider and connector) at the heart of Africa's regional integration project overall. In the Central Africa context, the 'big man' political personalities competing at the macro political level have preferred narratives of xenophobia and anxiety about migration and foreigners, which have failed

³⁸ See: http://www.wanep.org/wanep/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=341:wanep-ecowas-analysts-meet&catid=25:news-releases&Itemid=8 The ECOWAS Volunteer Programme, that deploys young volunteer teachers into schools in different West African countries, is another interesting model geared at strengthening the socio-cultural aspects of integration that has yet to be undertaken by ECCAS. See: <http://news.ecowas.int/presseshow.php?nb=047&lang=en&annee=2015>

³⁹ These issues are discussed in the context of West Africa in, J. Banfield (2015). *Assessing West African Civil Society's Response to Transnational Organised Crime*. International Alert: London.

⁴⁰ 'Situations of conflict are characterised by two driving forces: Dividers and Connectors. There are elements in society which divide people from each other and serve as sources of tension. There are also always elements which connect people and can serve as local capacities for peace'. Extract from CDA (2010). *DNH Guidance Note: Using Dividers and Connectors*. Available at: <http://cdacollaborative.org/?s=using+dividers+and+connectors>

to take forward a sub-regional pluralist identity-building project.⁴¹ Further, the region has a pronounced dichotomy between Muslim and Christian religious affiliation. While this can be oversimplified, and plays out differently in each member state, the discourse of religious/ ethnic cleansing in the recent CAR crisis and wider global context of violent extremism underlines the significance of further attention being paid to the identity aspects of regional integration. It also suggests that religious leaders brought together in multi-faith initiatives may have an important role to play in consolidating sub-regional identity.

2.2 ISSUES AND DYNAMICS TAKING PLACE ACROSS BORDERS BETWEEN SOVEREIGN STATES: SPOTLIGHT ON MULTI-FACETED INSECURITY

Having reviewed the overall sub-regional context and progress with integration, the second dimension of the sub-regional domain identified through this research relates to dynamics taking place at or across national borders. In principle, intra-regional trade (whether formal or informal) and associated socio-economic processes ought to be a key area of discussion here. However, as noted above, the levels of intra-regional trade in Central Africa are remarkably

low – although informal petty trade across borders is likely to represent a critical source of livelihood for border communities requiring further investigation. Compared to other sub-regions of Africa, there is limited information available documenting this dynamic. However, issues and considerations pertaining to obstacles preventing a greater movement of goods and people across borders in the sub-region as one aspect of the overall integration project are touched on in the preceding section, and will not be revisited here. Other cross-border issues such as management of shared natural resources or deposits that straddle borders might also have been clustered here, but are instead discussed below, under ‘common development challenges’. Research for this report unequivocally suggests that – in terms of strategic prioritisation – the primary set of dynamics that are currently taking place across borders between Central Africa’s states relate to multi-faceted insecurity. Until these various sources of insecurity are addressed, the sub-region will remain in a perpetual and deteriorating state of volatility and continued backsliding in development terms.

⁴¹ C. Ayangafac (2008), *op. cit.* p. 68.



A resident of the largely Muslim enclave of PK5 in the capital city of Bangui in the Central African Republic (CAR), 2014. UN Photo/ Catianne Tijerina

Against the backdrop of decades of military insecurity in the region, which are known to have left behind large pools of former combatants as well as small arms and light weapons (SALW),⁴² contemporary vectors of armed violence include: ongoing fragility following the 2012 crisis in Central African Republic (CAR); the spill-over of the Boko Haram conflict from Nigeria into Chad and Cameroon, as well as Niger; persistent insecurity in the Great Lakes; predation in the DRC-CAR-Sudan-South Sudan region by groups such as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), linked to the illegal exploitation of natural resources; a re-emergence of turbulence linked to elections in Burundi; anticipated tensions around other recent elections; increasingly violent clashes between pastoralists and settled communities in various parts of the sub-region; as well as maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea (piracy;

RESEARCH FOR THIS REPORT UNEQUIVOCALLY SUGGESTS THAT – IN TERMS OF STRATEGIC PRIORITISATION – THE PRIMARY SET OF DYNAMICS THAT ARE CURRENTLY TAKING PLACE ACROSS BORDERS BETWEEN CENTRAL AFRICA'S STATES RELATE TO MULTI-FACETED INSECURITY. UNTIL THESE VARIOUS SOURCES OF INSECURITY ARE ADDRESSED, THE SUB-REGION WILL REMAIN IN A PERPETUAL AND DETERIORATING STATE OF VOLATILITY AND CONTINUED BACKSLIDING IN DEVELOPMENT TERMS.

armed robbery; illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing; human, drug and arms trafficking; and smuggling). Each conflict setting presents a strong dimension of social exclusion of marginalised groups within the overall national setting, in turn a reflection of root causes found within malign governance structures and political economies of nation states. In part because many of these excluded groups live in the ungoverned spaces of peripheral border regions, and in part because the nature of borders and relations between states in the sub-region create conducive conditions, significant trans-border dimensions also characterise these situations. In the words of one stakeholder interviewed for this report: 'History is catching up with Africa': the dynamics of insecurity do not observe colonial state boundaries, and are in many ways driven by their ongoing contestation.

The phenomenon of insecurity at borders in the region is multi-faceted and unpacked further below, in order to allow a more complete picture. Overall, the breadth and depth of the issue of insecurity across borders underlines the critical need for new approaches to galvanising positive development outcomes in border areas.

2.2.1 Persistent inter-state border demarcation disputes and under-development of border areas

Inter-state relations in Central Africa are characterised by mistrust, suspicion and xenophobia, as highlighted in the first section of this sub-regional situation analysis above. Rivalry is fuelled by the sub-region's style of political leadership, as well as more structural factors such as incomplete border demarcation processes dating back to the colonial era, which has seen, for example, Nigeria and Cameroon; Equatorial Guinea and Gabon; Rwanda and DRC; as well as Chad and its (non-Central African) neighbour Sudan, in long-running territorial disputes. Some analysts see a dominant trend of inter-state realpolitik and territorial expansionism underpinning tensions in the region, with states concerned to gain control particularly of mineral-rich areas, exploiting uncertainty over colonial borders to do so.⁴³ While such interests may also express themselves covertly through states

⁴² High levels of illicit trade in SALW had already been highlighted in one report as a 'regional tinderbox' in 2008, and is known to have been exacerbated by more recent events. See E. Berman and L. Lombard (2008). *The Central African Republic and Small Arms: A Regional Tinderbox. Small Arms Survey*. Geneva. Available at: <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/D-Book-series/book-07-CAR/SAS-Central-African-Republic-and-Small-Arms.pdf>

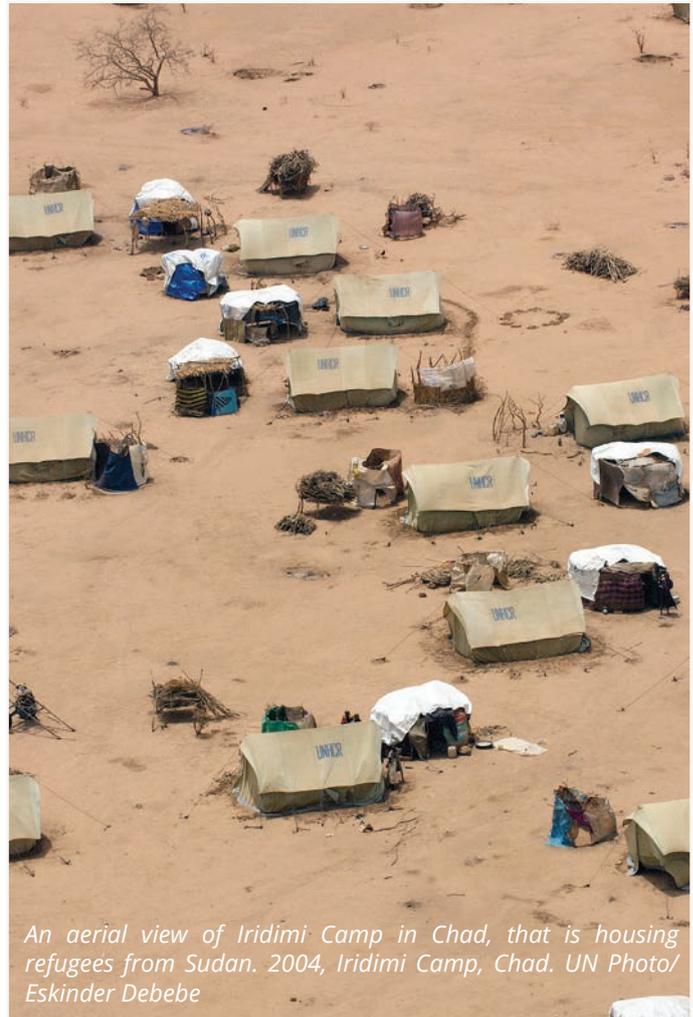
⁴³ C. Ayangafac (2008), *op. cit.*, p. 69

providing political and financial support to rebel groups operating in neighbouring countries, a clear and prior need to complete and secure border demarcation processes exists. The issue of Africa's flawed colonial-era demarcation process and its implications for present-day border management has recently received high-level diplomatic attention, for instance at the level of the AU which signed into effect the AU Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation (the Niamey Convention) in 2014. This important convention even goes beyond demarcation issues to propose a framework for completely re-envisioning African border areas. It has the following objectives:⁴⁴

- 1 Promote cross-border cooperation at local, sub-regional and regional levels;
- 2 Seize the opportunities arising from shared borders and address the related challenges;
- 3 Facilitate the delimitation, demarcation and reaffirmation of inter-state borders, in conformity with mechanisms agreed upon by the parties concerned;
- 4 Facilitate the peaceful resolution of border disputes;
- 5 Ensure efficient and effective integrated border management;
- 6 Transform border areas into catalysts for growth, socio-economic and political integration of the continent; and
- 7 Promote peace and stability through the prevention of conflicts, the integration of the continent and the deepening of its unity.

The AUC also recently launched an innovative *From Barriers to Bridges* Border Management Programme – mainly focused thus far on the border management and demarcation priorities set out by the Convention, but with newer projects envisaged to work across all areas.⁴⁵ While each of ECCAS, CEMAC and the Lake Chad Basin Commission have engaged in some work through their various peace and security provisions to improve border security at different times and geographic points, the more transformative developmental and peacebuilding agenda proposed by the Convention requires a new generation of attention and investment at border areas in the sub-region.

The content of the Niamey Convention is particularly relevant given that insecurity at the borders in Central Africa



An aerial view of Iridimi Camp in Chad, that is housing refugees from Sudan. 2004, Iridimi Camp, Chad. UN Photo/ Eskinder Debebe

is compounded by under-development of border areas. While human development data is not readily available in disaggregated form for all border regions, it is clear that development gains are skewed geographically within each country context, with remote border regions often representing the least developed. This reinforces societal divides and a concentration of power towards the centre regions. Stakeholders to the research spoke of 'abandonment of the peripheries'; of the way in which in most countries it is commonly seen as a sort of penance to be sent to work as a civil servant in such remote areas – assuming state authority even exists to that level, where frequently it does not.

The presence of identity groups living at borders, with strong communal identity ties connecting them to communities across borders more closely than they may be connected to a nation-state notable for its absence in practical terms, is

⁴⁴ Available at: <http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/au-niamey-convention-eng.pdf>

⁴⁵ See: <http://aubis.peaceau.org/home>

a further factor. Such ties may in some cases be part of the causal chain leading to the emergence and sway of particular non-state armed groups, also providing trading networks that facilitate logistical supplies. However, overly simplistic conflation between host communities and rebel groups is in most cases erroneous. The brunt of the egregious conduct of armed groups in the region as a whole, as well as abuses committed by opposing state or vigilante forces, is more often than not borne by local communities, even where these are among common identity groups (for example Boko Haram and Kanuri people) – leading to profound intra-community alienation and scarring. Nonetheless the typical centre/periphery divide affecting border areas – often far from capital cities and remote from central axes of development and growth – points to the urgent need for catch-up development interventions that begin to see state authority and public services delivered in these areas, with minority groups more successfully included in development planning. Explicit efforts to heal residual inter- and intra-community hostility where conflicts have occurred are also required.

2.2.2 Activities of armed groups spreading from country to country

Expansion of the activities of armed groups across borders in the sub-region is readily facilitated by weak state authority, porous borders, social exclusion of minority groups, identity ties among border communities, underdevelopment and alienation commonly found in border areas. Mutual interference and even support to rebel groups

AMONG THE MOST AGGRAVATED SITES OF INSECURITY AFFECTING CENTRAL AFRICA TODAY, THE BOKO HARAM AND CAR CRISES BOTH PRESENT A STRONG DIMENSION OF ARMED ACTIVITY MUSHROOMING ACROSS BORDERS.

by neighbouring states motivated by domestic political concerns and tensions is a further factor. One analyst calls this ‘conflict exportation’, pointing to various examples of states supporting rebellions in each other’s territory.⁴⁶ Such tactics, aimed at regime-reinforcement, nonetheless yield a patchwork of state and non-state interests that develop their own momentum and quickly slip beyond the control of any one actor or set of actors.

Among the most aggravated sites of insecurity affecting Central Africa today, the Boko Haram and CAR crises both present a strong dimension of armed activity mushrooming across borders.⁴⁷ There are other examples, but this report’s discussion will focus on these two, in each of the next two sub-sections. The analysis below focuses on the ways in which each conflict system has internationalised across borders, as well as the consequences of this spread.

The insurgency of *Jama’atul ahl al-sunnah li da’awati wal jihad* (JAS) or ‘People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet’s Teachings and Jihad’ (most commonly known as Boko Haram and mistranslated as ‘Western Education is Forbidden’) has presented a major challenge to the stability and development trajectory of Nigeria particularly since 2011, though it has a longer history.⁴⁸ Boko Haram’s activities have been concentrated in the north-east of Nigeria in the states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe bordering Lake Chad, a region which is the poorest in Nigeria, scoring significantly lower than national averages across human development indicators.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ C. Ayangafac (2008), *op. cit.*

⁴⁷ *The third major site of armed conflict is within and across the eastern and southern borders of Eastern DRC. As the overall Great Lakes conflict dynamics have been analysed elsewhere by UNDP, this report does not discuss conflict in Eastern DRC in any depth, beyond noting similar types of border insecurity do exist there.*

⁴⁸ Office of the National Security Adviser (2015). *Policy Brief: Religious and Ideological Dimensions of Radicalization*. Also see M. Sani Umar (2014). *The Roles of the Ulama in Radicalization, Counter-radicalization and De-radicalization*. UK DFID NSRP Project on Radicalization, Counter-Radicalization, and De-radicalization in Northern Nigeria.

⁴⁹ Last available data from the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics confirms that in 2010, north-eastern states averaged a poverty incidence of 76 percent as compared to 59 percent in the south-west. NBOS (2012). *Nigeria Poverty Profile Report 2010*. Available at: <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/b410c26c2921c18a6839baebc9b1428fa98fa36a.pdf>

Since 2009, more than 23,000 people are thought to have died as a direct result of Boko Haram's activity, and over 2.7 million have been displaced.⁵⁰ In addition to indiscriminate killings, Boko Haram has attacked and destroyed schools, mosques, churches, markets, and other public places in Nigeria, disrupting livelihoods and economic activity. Civilian populations in northeast Nigeria have been under daily threat of armed attacks, kidnappings, killings and other forms of abuse. While the abduction of 270 school girls from a secondary school in Chibok in April 2014 sparked international outrage, abductions have been rife throughout, with the majority of abductees still unaccounted for. Alleged complicity of various security actors in human rights violations including extrajudicial killings, summary arrests and torture, have also been documented by a number of credible human rights monitoring sources.⁵¹

From 2013 Boko Haram began to increase the scope of its targets and areas of activity beyond the borders of Nigeria into the Lake Chad Basin countries of Cameroon, Chad and Niger.⁵² The pledge of allegiance by Boko Haram to the Islamic State (IS) in early 2015 is thought to have enhanced its capacity. Intelligence reports also suggest that Boko Haram

has links with Al Shabaab (Somalia) and Mujao (Mali), as well as Senegal, and has established training bases in Mauritania. It frequently crosses into Cameroon through the long and porous border and clashes with Cameroonian troops, and has planted landmines around health facilities in far northern Cameroon, generating fear among the population. Near daily attacks and suicide bombings have led to over 1000 civilian casualties and Boko Haram violence has led to a doubling of the internally displaced population in Cameroon within three months to 190,000 as of April 2016 and the doubling of food insecurity over the same period to 2.4 million, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) figures. Cameroonian youths have reportedly been recruited, offered cash incentives by Boko Haram, and there have been instances of kidnapping of foreign nationals and targeted killings of national officials.

⁵⁰ See OCHA Lake Chad Basin Crisis Overview, June 2016; and UN OCHA Nigeria Humanitarian Response Plan, January- December 2016. See also Amnesty International (2015). *Stars on their Shoulders, Blood on their Hands: War Crimes Committed by the Nigerian Military*. Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr44/1657/2015/en/>

⁵¹ *Ibid.*



Demonstrators gather in front of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) headquarters in Bangui, following the alleged killing of two Muslims by Christians. 2014, Bangui, Central African Republic. UN Photo/Nektarios Markogiannis

The extra burden imposed on the government in its fight against the insurgents has had a negative impact on the country's finances demanding heavy military expenditures. Closure of the border with Nigeria has also had profound economic effects in the northern region, compounding attacks on farm lands and theft of cattle. The situation has led to a destabilisation of commodity prices prompting the government to send cereals, food and milk to local markets in order to help stabilise prices of these commodities. Boko Haram activity in northern Cameroon has also impacted the Chadian economy with the closure of the transnational road from N'Djamena to Kousseri which connects to the Cameroonian port of Douala, a vital sea outlet for Chad. This has compounded already high costs of living, rising since Chad was significantly hit by the worldwide slump in oil prices. Boko Haram is also present on the Chadian border, only a few kilometres from N'Djamena – and from June 2015 launched a series of attacks in the capital itself, following four commando-type attacks on Chadian territory previously. Due to insecurity around Lake Chad, traders travel longer distances and the resulting decrease in trade has also hit government revenue collection. The high cost of military action is similarly thought to be affecting other areas of government spending including on development projects.⁵³

Boko Haram thus now has a membership base in Cameroon and Chad, as well as Niger, underscoring the growing mobility and transnational nature of its operations. However, within Nigeria, its origins in the under-development of the north-east, affiliations with Northern politicians, and utility in an overall north-south contest for power have also been mooted as important factors.⁵⁴

SINCE 2009, MORE THAN 23,000 PEOPLE ARE THOUGHT TO HAVE DIED AS A DIRECT RESULT OF BOKO HARAM'S ACTIVITY, AND OVER 2.7 MILLION HAVE BEEN DISPLACED.

Such blurring of domestic political, developmental, and sub-regional dynamics (as well as the influence of international forces) are also at work in CAR. Up until the outbreak of a fresh cycle of conflict in 2012, CAR had already experienced six violent political transitions in its post-colonial history, including significant international involvement throughout. From December 2012, a predominantly Muslim coalition of armed forces identifying themselves as Seleka, made up of veterans of past rebellions as well as mercenaries from Sudan and Chad, launched an armed offensive that culminated in their seizure of power in March 2013. In power for nearly 10 months, the Seleka were responsible for massacres, extrajudicial executions, rape, torture and looting, as well as massive burning and destruction of Christian villages. In revenge attacks, a largely Christian coalition of forces known as anti-Balaka, made up of former members of the security forces, retaliated by launching lethal attacks on Muslim communities. The threat of ethnic cleansing prompted a massive Muslim exodus. The demise of the Bozizé regime in 2013 was followed by a proliferation of armed groups and an intensification of violence. Over the last two years in particular, groups have been fighting for control of the state, and revenge attacks have degenerated into inter-group and inter-religious violence. The arrest of former Chadian rebel leader Abdel Kadder Baba Ladde in December 2014 in CAR illustrates the way in which security dynamics in CAR are closely bound up with domestic politics at home for Chad.⁵⁵

The collapse of the state has had deleterious consequences for CAR and the region. Some 2.7 million people in CAR – over half of the population – are in urgent need of immediate assistance and there has been a significant displacement of populations within and outside of CAR's borders.⁵⁶ The displacement of Central Africans into neighboring countries has imposed severe pressure on border regions and local communities. Moreover, the instability in CAR has led to incursions of armed groups into Cameroon, violent clashes with the Cameroonian military, and kidnappings in Cameroon by armed groups.

⁵³ While outside of the Central Africa region, Niger has also been badly affected by the Boko Haram crisis, suffering similar effects as in Chad and Cameroon.

⁵⁴ 'Group wants ex-Governor arrests over Boko Haram links', *The Africa Report*, 10th December 2014. Available at: <http://www.theafricareport.com/West-Africa/nigeria-group-wants-ex-governor-arrested-over-boko-haram-links.html>

⁵⁵ EIU (2015). *CAR: Country Report 2015*.

⁵⁶ OCHA, *Community Radio: A Lifeline for a Country in Crisis*, 8 April 2015.

The remnants of the Seleka and anti-Balaka groups have recast themselves, and subsequently fragmented again, as some elements sought to lay-down arms and normalise as a political party. The situation has become further complicated by the overlay of communal tensions between pastoralists and farmers linked to seasonal transhumance have interwoven with the ex-Seleka/ anti-Balaka confrontation, leading to a cycle of revenge attacks between Fulani communities and other communities.

Elsewhere in the country, the LRA has reportedly been responsible for atrocities, deaths and significant displacement. The arrest of Dominic Ongwen, LRA senior commander, by US and AU authorities in January 2015, and his subsequent transfer to the International Criminal Court, was of symbolic importance for many stakeholders, but did not serve to stem LRA attacks in the south-east of the country.⁵⁷ Reports of a potential spill-over of Boko Haram from the border area with Cameroon into CAR appear to date not to have been founded.⁵⁸ However, the country's territory overall is characterised by a virtual absence of state authority outside

of Bangui and a few other areas, and numerous other lesser-known armed groups roam freely. The crisis saw a 36 percent GDP contraction, with inflation surging to 15 percent. Despite some improvements during the transition period, national agricultural output is still 58 percent below pre-crisis levels, creating the conditions for ongoing insecurity, and predatory interest in the country's mineral and other natural resources.⁵⁹ While the elections held in CAR in late 2015/ early 2016 have been heralded as a great success in peacefully installing a legitimately elected new president, the situation remains inherently fragile.

2.2.3 Joint military and diplomatic response to trans-border armed rebel activity

The conflicts in CAR and related to Boko Haram have also prompted new patterns of inter-state collaboration in tackling

⁵⁷ Report of the UN Secretary General on the Situation in the CAR, 1 April 2015.

⁵⁸ Noted as a possibility in the Report of the UN Secretary General on the Situation in the CAR, 1 April 2015

⁵⁹ EIU (2014), *op, cit*.

Ahead of legislative and presidential elections in the Central African Republic (CAR) scheduled for 27 December, the Police arm of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the country (MINUSCA) conducts a refresher training on maintaining and restoring public order for 160 CAR police officers and national gendarmes. December 2015, Bangui, Central African Republic. UN Photo/Alexandra Simpson



shared security threats. Despite the reputation latterly enjoyed by the Nigerian military as one of the most effective fighting (and peacekeeping) forces in Africa, Boko Haram insurgents successfully gained territory, caused terror and insecurity, and made a mockery of state security actors by expanding in confidence, profile and scope at least up until May 2015 when, in the final moments of President Goodluck Jonathan's administration, the tide showed signs of turning. The Nigerian parliament had passed anti-terrorism legislation in 2011 and 2013 to facilitate greater counter-terrorism coordination, but poor inter-agency coordination within the government continued to undermine efforts. Lack of discipline and outright collaboration among elements of the army has been cited as a further factor in military ineffectiveness, pointing to the importance of effective security sector reform as a precondition to lasting management of insecurity. This has been adopted as a priority by the new Nigerian government led by General Buhari.

The spillover of the conflict into neighbouring countries prompted military action on the part of Chad, Cameroon and Niger, as well as diplomatic and military activity by regional institutions. In a statement adopted on 19 January 2015, the UN Security Council (UNSC) condemned, in the strongest terms, the escalation in Boko Haram attacks, as well as its expansion in the Lake Chad Basin region. The Member States of the LCBC and Benin held a ministerial meeting in Niamey, Niger, in January 2015, requesting the AU send stronger regional and international support to strengthen the capacities of the new Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to the fight against Boko Haram.⁶⁰ The LCBC member state defence chiefs have continued to liaise as the core operational protagonists of the MNJTF. The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AUPSC) in March 2015, approved the strategic concept of operationalising MNJTF against Boko Haram and authorised an increase in its strength from 7,500 to 10,000 strong (including civilians and other non-military personnel) from the member states of the LCBC and Benin. The Chadian army together with that of Niger had already launched a major ground and air offensive in northeast Nigeria against Boko Haram on two fronts in Bosso and near Diffa. In February 2015 the ECCAS COPAX convened its first ever extraordinary summit of heads of state, leading to a joint declaration pledging solidarity and continued support to the military effort, as well as CFA 50 billion in funds.⁶¹ Diplomatic messaging including of solidarity to those members directly

THE PEAK OF BOKO HARAM'S REACH TO DATE IN THE EARLY PART OF 2015 SAW IT CONTROL AN ESTIMATED 3,000KM OF TERRITORY ACROSS THE BORDERS OF THE LAKE CHAD BASIN COMPRISING NUMEROUS TOWNS AND VILLAGES; CLAIMING MILITARY SUCCESSES INCLUDING OVER-RUNNING IN ONE INCIDENT THE MNJTF MILITARY BASE.

affected by Boko Haram has been a core part of the agenda at CEMAC meetings in intervening months. ECOWAS and even the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) have been invited participants to much of this activity.

The peak of Boko Haram's reach to date in the early part of 2015 saw it control an estimated 3,000km of territory across the borders of the Lake Chad Basin comprising numerous towns and villages; claiming military successes including over-running in one incident the MNJTF military base. The results of the collective military effort outlined above among neighbouring states from outside and within Nigeria – including some efforts to stamp out indiscipline within the Nigerian army – has now seen a number of towns and villages liberated and a significant pushback against Boko Haram. More recently, following the attacks within N'Djamena the Chadian authorities claim to have captured one of the key Boko Haram leaders based there. With the changing domestic political environment signalled by the swearing into office as President of Nigeria of General Buhari, the sub-region is experiencing at least a hiatus in the downward security trajectory. Challenges remain for the Nigerian government

⁶⁰ AU Peace and Security Council, 484th meeting at the level of Heads of State and Government, 29 January 2015.

⁶¹ See: 'COPAX: FCFA 50 billion to Combat Boko Haram', Cameroon Tribune, 17th February 2015.

regarding the sustained reestablishment of state presence and authority in recaptured areas, tackling root causes, reparations for abuses perpetrated on both sides, deeper security sector reform processes, among other priorities, and the situation remains fragile.

Meanwhile, in CAR, international concern at the prospect of mass sectarian murder led the UN Security Council in December 2013 to authorise the deployment of peacekeeping forces to the country, comprising about 5,500 African troops under the authority of the AU, the International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (MISCA), as well as 1,600 French troops known as Sangaris, deployed mainly within Bangui and other towns to the north and southwest. The EU also deployed an EU Force in CAR (EUFOR RCA mission until March 2015, followed by the military advisory mission EUMAM RCA). In September 2014, MISCA formally transferred authority to the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (MINUSCA), expanding the force to 12,000; in parallel, the French and EU forces were reduced.

Regional powers through ECCAS and CEMAC have been substantively involved in responding to successive crises in CAR, dating back to the deployment of FOMAC, a peacekeeping mission deployed by CEMAC members from 2002-08, transitioning command to ECCAS from 2008, when the mission was re-named the Mission de consolidation de la paix en république centrafricaine (MICOPAX). Funded by

MOST OBSERVERS AGREE THE INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE – AND IN PARTICULAR THE SACRIFICE MADE BY TROOPS FROM THE SUB-REGION – AVERTED A GENOCIDE AND CONTRIBUTED TO ADDITIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS SUCH AS THE FRAMEWORK OF THE NATIONAL RECONCILIATION PROCESS.

FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS REPORT, THE KEY QUESTION IS: TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE THE JOINT MILITARY OPERATIONS AGAINST COMMON SECURITY THREATS, RELATED TO TWO OF CENTRAL AFRICA'S MOST CHALLENGING SECURITY SITUATIONS TODAY OF BOKO HARAM AND CAR, CONTRIBUTED TO STRONGER BONDS AND CONFIDENCE AMONG AFFECTED STATES?

the EU and working closely with French troops, its purpose was to restore peace and security in CAR. Any gains made by MICOPAX were fast overturned by the emergence of Seleka and subsequent events. Despite efforts to expand the force, and amid allegations that FOMAC's Chadian contingent was aligning itself with Seleka, the mission was formally transferred first to MISCA and then to MINUSCA. However, troops from CEMAC countries continue to make up the largest part of MINUSCA troops. Both RECs have sustained a diplomatic role, with ECCAS playing the role of mediator of the political process, and CEMAC adopting peace and security in CAR as the theme for annual CEMAC celebrations in 2015, among other contributions.

Most observers agree the international presence – and in particular the sacrifice made by troops from the sub-region – averted a genocide and contributed to additional achievements such as the framework of the national reconciliation process.⁶² Consensus around the urgency of achieving a successful political process, to negotiate a settlement among fighting factions and transition the country to a post-conflict phase, has sustained continued

⁶² *The Mission: A Last Defence against Genocide*, New Yorker, 20th October 2014.

international cooperation. The President of the Republic of Congo, Denis Sassou Nguesso, served as the ECCAS appointed mediator of this process. The appointment of a transitional president, Catherine Samba-Panza, and the signing of a ceasefire agreement in July 2014 did not stem continued violence, however – and confidence in the transitional government quickly waned. The much-awaited Bangui Forum took place in May 2015, leading to an agreed framework towards eventual elections and restoration of normalcy – with optimism beginning to mount following the successful conclusion of the subsequent elections in March 2016.

For the purposes of this report, the key question is: to what extent have the joint military operations against common security threats, related to two of Central Africa's most challenging security situations today of Boko Haram and CAR, contributed to stronger bonds and confidence among affected states? Might enhanced security cooperation under REC frameworks pave the way for a new era and greater advances across a broader spectrum of regional integration priorities?

Despite the overall context of mistrust among Central African political actors outlined above, the cooperation in both situations is welcomed by observers as positive. The RECs have also demonstrated that they can play a bigger role in managing security threats – deploying troops and other forms of assistance. However, it is likely too early to speak with confidence about lasting gains in this regard. Some observers also see the creation of the MNJTF as a retrospective effort to give Chad's unilateral actions in defence of its territory a multilateral hue, with others raising concerns about the MNJTF's potential to regionalise insecurity and rights abuses.⁶³ There are also reports that funds towards the Boko Haram Solidary Fund have not been forthcoming, raising questions as to the readiness of states to follow diplomatic rhetoric with firm and consistent commitments – while the military activities were 100 percent underwritten by the EU.⁶⁴ Further, there have been signs of a new turbulence in the alignment among Central African states resulting from the new level of security cooperation, contributing to tensions among the sub-region's executives. The Economist Intelligence Report proposes that relationships between Cameroon and Chad have been positively strengthened, while ties between Nigeria and Cameroon remain strained.⁶⁵



UN Peacekeeper Speaks with Women Refugees in Chad. March 2009, Farchana Camp, Chad. UN Photo/Olivia Grey Pritchard

These hints at shifts in behind-the-scenes inter-state dynamics responding to the pressure that two significant sites of conflict in the sub-region has placed on relations, against the baseline of competition in the wider sub-regional political economy, point again to the essential challenge faced in Central Africa with regard to its not yet having a clear leading power, or pillar around which cooperation and integration can organize. The long-term stability of the region will ultimately require the emergence of such a leader, or accepted, power-sharing among leaders (as, for instance, has long been the case in the European Union with France and Germany). While it took Europe centuries to arrive at a mutually acceptable status quo reflected in its own regional institutional make-up, Central Africa does not have time on its side – or may face similar cycles of conflict to arrive at a more consolidated distribution of power. Questions were raised during this research as to the longer-term international commitment to financing peacekeeping and transition processes emerging from Central Africa's crises, most of which remain already significantly under-funded. The ever-present risk associated with dependence on international support for these interventions underscores how critical the need for sub-regional leadership on peace and security issues in the framework of its RECs is likely to become for the sub-region's citizens in the years ahead.

⁶³ See 'Regional Boko Haram Offensive: Multinational Effort Should Protect Civilians, Respect Prisoners' Rights', Human Rights Watch, 11th February 2015.

⁶⁴ Interview with AU official conducted for this report, and 'Fight against Boko Haram: CEEAC Claiming FCFA 50 billion promised by COPAX', Business in Cameroon, 17th July 2015.

⁶⁵ EIU (2015). Cameroon Country Report.

THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROFIT PRESENTED BY THE SITES OF CONFLICT ACROSS THE SUB-REGION ARE A MAJOR FACTOR FUELLING VIOLENCE, WITH SMUGGLING ACROSS BORDERS A FURTHER DIMENSION OF CROSS-BORDER INSECURITY.

2.2.4 Organised criminal networks trafficking across state borders

In addition to likely receiving logistical and financial support from regional and international Islamic militant groups, Boko Haram is known to have committed kidnapping for ransom as well as bank robberies, in order to finance itself. Arms smuggling from Mali and Libya is a further factor. Plunder of assets and supplies by means of its frequent attacks on villages and towns are clearly also part of its strategy. Illicit trade in Nigerian army weapons, clandestinely distributed to Boko Haram, has also been observed, suggesting political protection and complicity. Some accounts also claim links between certain forms of serious organised crime faced in other parts of Nigeria, such as maritime piracy, oil bunkering and drug trafficking, with the militant groups in the northeast.⁶⁶ However, the actual evidence demonstrating these links is scant, and little is yet known about which, if any, forms of Nigeria's wider organised crime networks are actively contributing to Boko Haram and affiliates. CAR represents a liberalised, lawless terrain where a number of shadowy entrepreneurs can readily plunder diamonds, uranium, and wildlife products. Experts have also identified a network of LRA and Janjaweed-linked armed individuals forming a trading route that stretches from north-eastern DRC through CAR and into Sudan.⁶⁷ The links between violent conflict and illicit trade across other borders of eastern DRC are well documented.

The opportunities for profit presented by the sites of conflict across the sub-region are a major factor fuelling violence, with smuggling across borders a further dimension of cross-border insecurity. Overall, these dynamics have received significantly less attention with regard to Central Africa than they have in other regions, where first 'conflict commodities' and latterly 'organised crime' have attracted extensive policy interest.⁶⁸

CENTRAL AFRICA - UNDP SUB-REGIONAL STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT REPORT NO. 1

Nonetheless, criminal activities sustaining insecurity in the region is clearly in evidence and requires attention. A UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) threat assessment on organised crime and insecurity in Central Africa published in 2011 highlighted concerns about illegal trade primarily in mineral commodities, wildlife and forest products, as well as cannabis and weapons, traded through criminal networks directly linking to conflict activities.⁶⁹ Together, trade in these commodities presents a significant source of income and wealth for armed groups and others involved, with an estimated total annual value of USD 200 million.⁷⁰ A more recent meeting report from the Permanent Consultative Committee to the UN Concerned with Security in Central Africa points to mounting concern on the part of Interpol and other agencies present (including ECCAS) around evidence of drug trafficking spreading from West Africa into the sub-region.⁷¹ Exploiting porous borders, weak or absent state controls and/or collusion of officials, as well as trans-border identity groups and networks, the business opportunities in the criminal economy straddling borders in the sub-region bring associated risks of further state erosion and instability. A significant illicit trade in SALW, boosted by the spill-over from Libya's collapse, and involving a large number of direct and indirect sources of weapons transfer into and across the region, is a further central factor.



⁶⁶ F. Onouha and G. Ezirim (2013). 'Terrorism and TOC in West Africa', *Al Jazeera Center for Studies*, June 2013.

⁶⁷ *The Ivory Wars: How Poaching in Central Africa Fuels the LRA and Janjaweed*; African Arguments, 14th January 2013. Available at: <http://africanarguments.org/2013/01/14/the-ivory-wars-how-poaching-in-central-africa-fuels-the-lra-and-janjaweed-percentE2percent80percent93-by-keith-somerville/>

⁶⁸ See M. Berdal and D. Malone. *Beyond Greed and Grievance; and, on the narco-trafficking as a factor of instability in West Africa*, see: *West African Commission on Drugs* (2014). *Not Just in Transit: Drugs, the State and Society in West Africa*. Available at: <http://www.wacommissionondrugs.org/report/>

⁶⁹ UNODC (2011). *Organised Crime and Instability in Central Africa: A Threat Assessment*.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Report of the 39th ministerial meeting of the Permanent Consultative Committee to the UN Concerned with Security in Central Africa*, 1-5 December 2014.

2.2.5 Heightened insecurity around traditional migration patterns

Seasonal migration of herders with their cattle in search of pasture is a practice common to several countries in the sub-region, particularly Chad, CAR and DRC, frequently involving pastoralists roaming across state borders. For generations, competing land-use between pastoralists and settled communities have been managed through customary dispute resolution practices and established mores. In a tale that is familiar across different parts of Africa, climate change, population pressure, displacement and other pressures linked to armed conflict, have served to aggravate these tensions. Concerning the crisis in CAR, several international organisations and NGOs have raised the alarm around a surge of intercommunal clashes and likely further escalation of violence associated with seasonal transhumanist migration, as ex-Seleka militias are perceived to have allied themselves with the herders (who are for the most part Fulani Muslim from Chad), raising the stakes of reprisals and violence between the two groups considerably.⁷² According to the International Crisis Group (ICG): 'The enrolment of vulnerable young herdsmen into armed groups, the crumbling of agro-pastoralist mediation structures, and the yearly coming of

pastoralists, especially Chadians, to CAR, may amplify the ongoing bush warfare.'⁷³ This rural war, or 'conflict within a conflict', has already contributed to further displacement, forcing communities to flee within CAR or into neighbouring Chad or Cameroon.

While not to date associated with levels of violence seen in CAR, in Orientale Province, in DRC, migration of Perl Mbororo/ Fulani herdsmen from several Central African countries has led to an often tense coexistence with the local population and the Congolese authorities.⁷⁴ According to ICG, 'some Sahel countries such as Niger or Chad have received support from donors to regulate pastoralism and have tried to mitigate conflicts. For their part, the CAR and DRC do not regulate transhumance and are unable to deal with increasing violence between communities.'⁷⁵

⁷² ICG (2014a). 'Central African Republic's Hidden Conflict,' Policy Briefing No. 105, Nairobi, December 2014. See also Danish Refugee Council (2014). *Situation de la transhumance en republique centrafricaine suite aux crises de 2013 et 2014*; and IOM (2014). *Migration Dimensions of the Crisis in Central African Republic: Short, Medium and Long-term Considerations. Working Paper, August 2014.*

⁷³ ICG (2014a), *op. cit.*

⁷⁴ ICG (2014b). *The Security Challenges of Pastoralism in Central Africa. Africa Report No. 215.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

July 2014, Kaga Bandoro, Central African Republic. UN Photo/Catianne Tijerina



UNHCR'S PLANNING FIGURES FOR THE CENTRAL AFRICA AND GREAT LAKES REGION COMBINED ESTIMATE THAT BY THE END OF 2015, THERE WERE SOME 5.1 MILLION REFUGEES, ASYLUM-SEEKERS AND IDPS, WITH ASSISTANCE BEING PLANNED FOR SOME 3.7 MILLION.

2.2.6 The presence and needs of refugee and IDP populations hosted at border areas

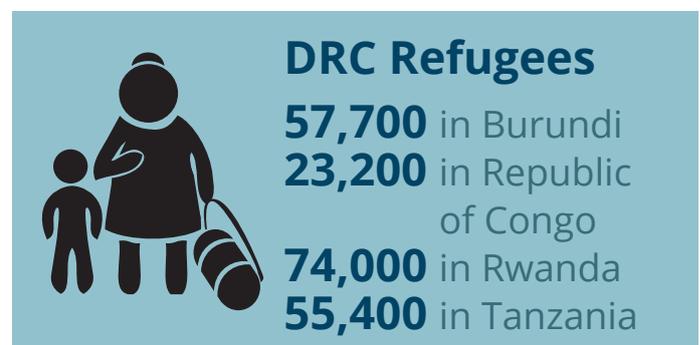
The various dimensions and manifestations of cross-border insecurity outlined above are generating significant internal displacement as well as refugee populations, hosted at border areas across the sub-region. These populations bring with them commensurate socio-economic needs and impacts, as well as risk of future cycles of insecurity, in each location. In CAR, the escalation of conflict since December 2013 left some 930,000 people internally displaced during 2014, while another 250,000 Central Africans have sought refuge in Cameroon, 22,000 in the DRC, 20,000 in Chad and some 10,000 in the Congo.⁷⁶ As of 2012, the activities of the LRA had caused the displacement of 20,269 people within CAR, displacement of 6,034 Congolese who have fled to live as refugees in CAR, in addition to the internal displacement of 347,360 Congolese, as well as many thousands of deaths and abductions (also affecting South Sudan).⁷⁷ The situation in CAR has also forced the flight of tens of thousands of third country nationals, mainly from Chad and Cameroon. The situation of Chadian nationals in particular has posed a humanitarian problem since most of them had been settled in the CAR for many years and are second or third-generation Chadians with few, if any, links to their country of nationality.

The Boko Haram conflict has meanwhile displaced 2.2 million internally, forcing 200,000 Nigerians to flee to Niger, Chad and Cameroon.⁷⁸ Inter-communal clashes between pastoralists and farming communities has itself led to massive displacement of pastoralists from the west and centre of CAR

towards neighbouring countries and to eastern and northern CAR, and into Cameroon and Chad. Pastoralists now form a large proportion of the people in refugee camps in these two countries.⁷⁹ New pastoralist settlements have emerged within CAR in the quest for safety.

In the eastern part of the DRC, the security situation still remains volatile and unpredictable, hampering humanitarian activities and preventing the return of some 429,000 DRC refugees currently living mainly in Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. Over 2.6 million people are internally displaced in the DRC. The Republic of Congo still hosts some 23,200 DRC refugees, in addition to over 10,000 new arrivals from the CAR. Refugees from the DRC are also present in significant numbers in Burundi (57,700), Rwanda (74,000) and in Tanzania (55,400). Smaller groups can be found across the African continent, notably in Kenya, Uganda and Zambia.⁸⁰ Recent violence around the elections in Burundi and the overall volatile situation caused an increasing outflow of Burundians to neighbouring countries, with over 170,000 Burundian refugees in Tanzania alone by mid-2016.⁸¹ In August 2015 the total refugee population was estimated to be 180,000 and there is an unknown number of IDPs. Major host countries are Rwanda and Tanzania, with Uganda and DRC receiving a smaller share.

Indeed, most of the countries mentioned in this report host refugee populations from earlier cycles of conflict or other turbulence in neighbouring countries, even as their own citizens have fled into other countries. Overall, UNHCR's



⁷⁶ UNHCR Sub-Regional Operations Profile 2015: Central Africa and the Great Lakes. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e45a6c6.html>

⁷⁷ Enough Project (2012). *The LRA in Congo, CAR and South Sudan*. Available at: <http://www.enoughproject.org/conflicts/lra/congo-car-south-sudan>

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ ICG (2014a), *op. cit.* p. 8.

⁸⁰ UNHCR, *op. cit.*

⁸¹ See: <http://data.unhcr.org/burundi/regional.php>

planning figures for the Central Africa and Great Lakes region combined estimate that by the end of 2015, there were some 5.1 million refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs, with assistance being planned for some 3.7 million.⁸²

Inevitably, tensions among many communities have arisen where displaced populations have settled, as pressure on livelihoods and food security as well as all basic infrastructure and services in areas of scarcity is exacerbated. One report analysing challenges in social cohesion around Lake Chad provides an illustration, as communities now contain four groups of people:

- Nigerian refugees who have fled towns and villages in Nigeria because of the conflict there;
- Returnees – Chadian migrants who left for Nigeria but have now returned;
- Displaced people – Chadians who have left their villages because of the threat from Boko Haram and have moved towards more urbanised areas;
- Local communities – who are absorbing the other three types of people.⁸³

The big hit on economic activity resulting from the Boko Haram crisis, and including restrictions on trade to Nigeria, means that local populations are hosting this influx at a time of great economic strain. This creates a climate of suspicion and resentment that can readily flare into more localised conflicts, a situation replicated across the sub-region.

2.3 COMMON DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES REQUIRING A SUB-REGIONAL RESPONSE

This report has highlighted the importance of improving the overall political environment in the sub-region, in order to create a more conducive environment for sub-regional economic and societal integration, including through harmonisation and expansion of REC activity, and greater ownership and 'demand' for the agenda within society. It has also discussed the multiple dimensions of insecurity taking place at borders in the sub-region borders, as conflicts whose root causes are both intra- and inter-state in origin spread, bringing with them the scars of war and further sources of insecurity.

In addition, given that most of the countries in the region fall at or close to the bottom among performers on human

CENTRAL AFRICAN COUNTRIES INTERNALLY SHARE 'COMMON DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES' ACROSS THE SPECTRUM OF DEVELOPMENT SECTORS. WHILE THE DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES HIGHLIGHTED ARE NATIONAL, THEIR NATURE AND SCOPE, IF SUCCESSFULLY TACKLED SUB-REGIONALLY, WOULD BE LIKELY TO YIELD MULTIPLIER EFFECTS ON IMPROVED GOVERNANCE, SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES AS WELL AS ENHANCEMENT OF INTEGRATION FOR CENTRAL AFRICA OVERALL.

development indicators, it is fair to say that Central African countries internally share 'common development priorities' across the spectrum of development sectors. Among these, this section focuses on three broad sets of commonly shared development priorities that have emerged through this research process as of particular relevance to the sub-regional perspective. While the development challenges highlighted are national, their nature and scope, if successfully tackled sub-regionally, would be likely to yield multiplier effects on improved governance, security and development outcomes as well as enhancement of integration for Central Africa overall. Discussion of these three sets of issues forms the remainder of the sub-regional situation analysis, and the report will then proceed to draw together implications of its discussion for development partner priorities and interventions in its final chapter.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ 'Community Cohabitation around Lake Chad', published in *Insight on Conflict*.

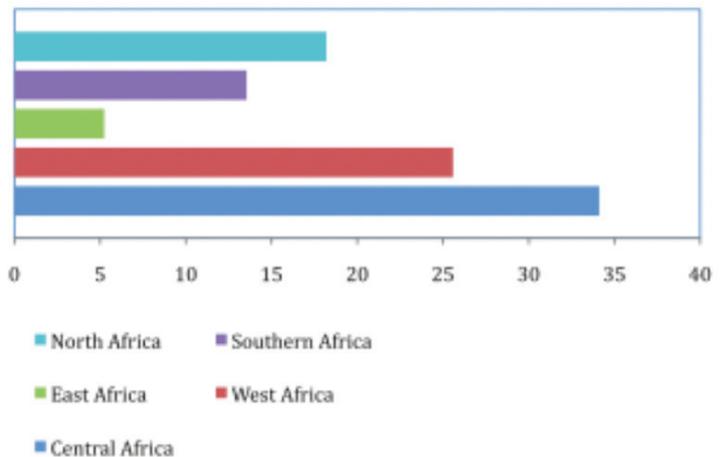


2.3.1 Extractive industry governance and economic diversification

The Central Africa sub-region starkly manifests the familiar paradox of great natural resource wealth against a wider context of deep poverty and under-development.⁸⁴ The region's Congo Basin is the second largest reserve of dense rainforest in the world, representing 70 percent of the dense forest cover in Africa.⁸⁵ In addition to its forest resources, the region has the hydroelectric potential to supply the whole continent with electricity, as well as largely untapped agri-business opportunities. However, most countries in the region are dependent on mining and oil sectors built around significant mineral wealth and deposits. From 1999-2009, the region recorded an average growth rate of 6.2 percent, largely driven by extractive industry activity.⁸⁶ Angola, Cameroon, Gabon, the DRC, the Republic of Congo, Chad, Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tomé and Príncipe are oil producers, also hosting other valuable minerals. CAR is rich in a number of minerals including uranium and diamonds. Overall, oil represented 79 percent of the CEMAC region's exports in 2007.⁸⁷ Figure 8 illustrates that of all the sub-regions of Africa, Central Africa relies the most heavily on income from natural resources.

Yet, as already highlighted above, the region also comprises some of the lowest-scoring performers on global development indices in the world. This paradox can be explained by the governance setting: corruption and control of national wealth by political actors, patronage, and co-option of commercial activity characterises the personalised style of rule in many of the countries, resulting in power imbalances and high levels of inequality, which retard opportunities for the wider citizenry to advance economically and expand their human capabilities.⁸⁸ In addition to the poor development indicators, these high-levels of inequality are also noted in other available data.⁸⁹ The 2008-09 global financial crisis, and more recent plummeting oil prices, have equally had severe impacts further undermining public spending and overall welfare indicators, suggesting a new phase of potential instability directly linked to the failure to translate high growth into broad-based development gains, which is the consequence of weak diversification.

Figure 8: Natural resource rents as a percentage of GDP, 2011 (Source: AfDB (2013), *op. cit.*, p. 3.)



⁸⁴ As summarised in UNDP (2013). *Strategy for Supporting Sustainable and Equitable Management of the Extractive Sector for Human Development*. Available at: http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/poverty-reduction/inclusive_development/strategy-note--undps-strategy-for-supporting-sustainable-and-equ/

⁸⁵ UNECA, AU, AfDB (2013). *Report on the Sustainable Development Goals: Central Africa Sub-Region*. (Addis Ababa: 2013).

⁸⁶ AfDB (2011). *Central Africa: Regional Integration Strategy Paper, 2011-15*.

⁸⁷ Cited in ISS (2008), p.8.

⁸⁸ *The link between various governance indicators and development outcomes from natural resource abundance in different settings is the subject of a vast literature and widely accepted. See for instance D. Kaufmann et. al. (2005). Governance Matters. Advancing good governance of extractive industries in Africa is thus also a priority for UNDP. See UNDP (2013), op. cit.*

⁸⁹ UNDP (2014). *Human Development Index 2014, Table 3 - Inequality adjusted HDI*. Available at: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-1-human-development-index-and-its-components>

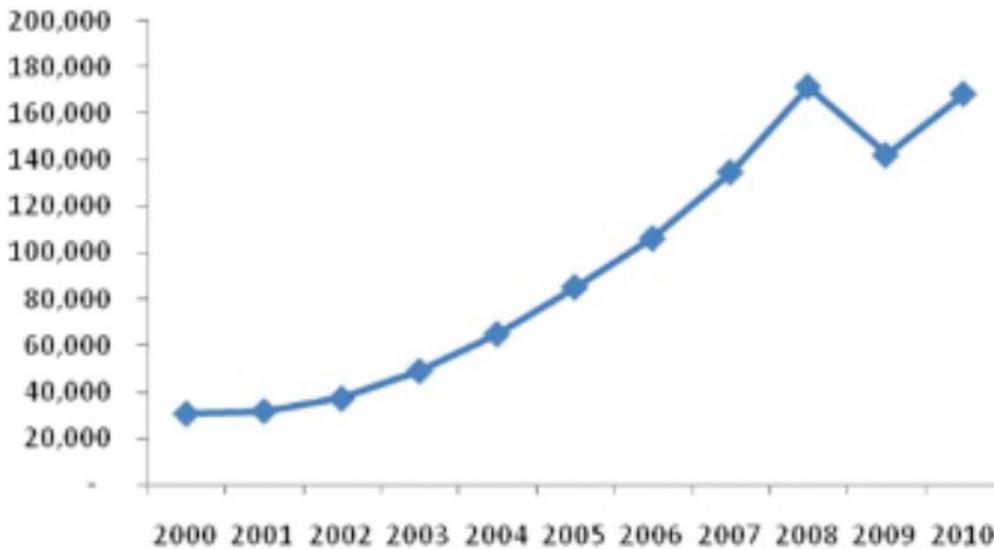


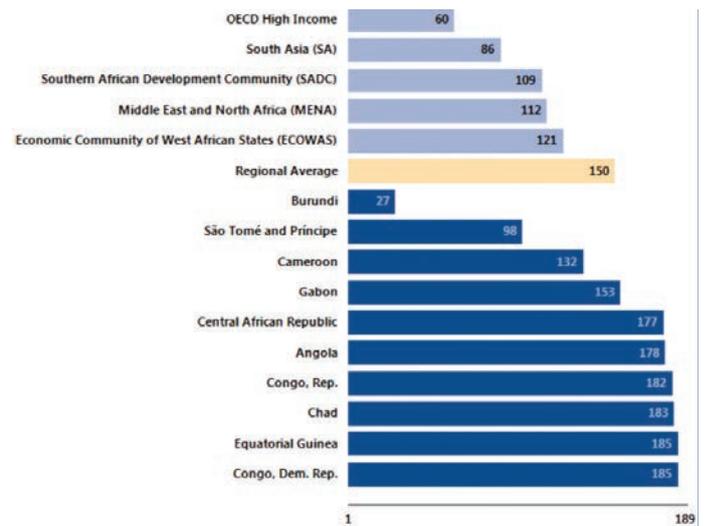
Figure 9: GDP trends of ECCAS region, illustrating impact of 2008-09 crisis (Source: UNECA, AU, AfDB (2013), op. cit. p. 6)

Plummeting oil prices have hit all countries in the region, creating a direct link to social discontent as other prices soar. Several stakeholders interviewed for this report predicted dramatic consequences in a scenario where the downward trend in oil prices continues.

The importance of economic diversification as well as improved governance of extractive industry wealth is well-recognised at the policy level by most of the countries in the region, as well as RECs – and features prominently in development partner country programme priorities. Yet across the sub-region, the agenda around improved governance of mineral wealth twinned with economic diversification, has yet to yield tangible results, despite its urgency increasing with the turbulence in oil markets. Central Africa again scores unfavourably against other sub-regions in Africa with regard to institutions, policy environment processes and dialogue supporting private sector growth, and the micro, small and medium-sized enterprise sector remains significantly weaker than those found in other sub-regions – with some countries at the very bottom of the World Bank Doing Business scale, as illustrated in Figure 10.

Economic diversification, combined with improved governance of extractive industry wealth, would be a direct contribution to reducing fragility in the overall sub-region. Opportunities to further incentivise meaningful change through mobilisation of sub-regionally focused collective action by civic networks, academics, think-tanks as well as businesspeople lobbying for more inclusive growth offers the potential for advances in the socio-cultural domain as well as with the issues themselves.

Figure 10: Ranking of ECCAS sub-region in terms of ease of starting a business (Source: World Bank (2014), op. cit, p. 13. See also AfDB (2013). 'Promoting Private Investment in ECCAS Countries', AfDB Quarterly Thematic Review Central Africa, Issue No. 1, March 2013.)



2.3.2 Voice and participation for peaceful and integrated societies

This report has highlighted the fundamental governance deficit confounding the Central African sub-region which in turn lies at the root of many of the sub-region's conflicts. Efforts to tackle the root causes of conflicts and tensions within countries are urgently required, in order to prevent further conflict systems emerging at sub-regional level, noting the pronounced tendency for conflict to spill over state borders that is discussed above.

Governance indicators and Central Africa's low score on these compared to other sub-regions of Africa were highlighted in the first section of this chapter. These directly reflect limitations on political and other forms of participation for a wide

number of social groups and their representatives. According to one report, 'with few exceptions, electoral processes and mechanisms [in Central Africa] are generally flawed, with the executive misusing its office to undermine the system of checks and balances (opposition political parties, CSOs and the media, except those owned by the executive), or strip state bodies responsible for monitoring the actions of the executive of their powers.'⁹⁰ There are few credible alternatives to ruling political parties across the sub-region as a result of these trends – recent elections in the Republic of Congo and Chad provide ample testimony. Given the history of armed conflict across the sub-region, efforts to promote more inclusive societies, in which different social groups share in the benefits of development and participate freely in economic and public life, will help build more peaceful societies and the prevention of further cycles of conflict. Improved human security can also directly link to improvements in regional integration in a mutually reinforcing virtuous circle, with domestic political transformation as the key to each. This again raises questions as to how sub-regional networks of civil society and other types of civic actors might be better supported to gain a sense of ownership and 'demand' around performance of the RECs and accountability of member states in advancing the integration agenda.

GIVEN THE HISTORY OF ARMED CONFLICT ACROSS THE SUB-REGION, EFFORTS TO PROMOTE MORE INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES, IN WHICH DIFFERENT SOCIAL GROUPS SHARE IN THE BENEFITS OF DEVELOPMENT AND PARTICIPATE FREELY IN ECONOMIC AND PUBLIC LIFE, WILL HELP BUILD MORE PEACEFUL SOCIETIES AND THE PREVENTION OF FURTHER CYCLES OF CONFLICT.

This section will now consider various dimensions of exclusion, identifying groups of citizens that might usefully be empowered as agents of change in the interests of more inclusive, peaceful and regionally integrated societies.

Civil society

According to one participant to this research, civil society in Central Africa as a sector is comparable in its capacity and effectiveness to civil society in West Africa 20-30 years ago. While it was beyond the scope of this study to make a comprehensive assessment, it is interesting to note that there is a considerably smaller available secondary literature reporting and analysing activism by the sub-region's civil society than that available for other African sub-regions. It is perhaps also instructive to contrast the tenacious role of civic actors in successfully pushing for peaceful, free and fair elections in Nigeria's recent electoral process; the peaceful *Y'en a marre* movement in Senegal that triggered a change in government; as well as the *balai* citizens' movement in Burkina Faso, against the way in which civil protest against the incumbent Burundian president's announcement of his plans to stand for a third term quickly degenerated into violent confrontation, as well as the way in which news of the former Gabonese presidential candidate Mba Obame was also met with violence, subsequently morphing into an otherwise inarticulate outpouring of civic grief. In the Republic of Congo a highly organised momentum for change in the face of President Sassou Nguesso's push to secure a third presidential term under the rallying cry hashtag #SassouFit (a play on *ça suffit* – 'that's enough'), felt ultimately betrayed by key international partners such as France's continued vocal support to Sassou Nguesso at a critical moment in the protest movement, which lost momentum.⁹¹

Comparing these events in brief no doubt risks oversimplification of different contexts and trajectories, but perhaps serves all the same to raise questions for international partners as to the importance of investing in and supporting both domestic and sub-regional civic activist capacities in Central Africa. Research for this report pointed to some efforts by international partners in this realm – for instance, the UNECA Central Africa regional bureau has a project to put together a new network of anti-corruption activists that deliberately seeks to go beyond the 'usual

⁹⁰ UNECA, AU, AfDB (2013), *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁹¹ B. L. Carter (2016). 'President Sassou Nguesso prepares for final stage of his constitutional coup: elections in the Republic of Congo, African Arguments 16th March 2016.

suspects' dominating that particular terrain.⁹² Such initiatives would appear to be very welcome: perhaps, for too long, international partnership with long-standing political elites in the sub-region has inadvertently contributed to retarding the development and reach of such networks, to the detriment of longer-term outcomes. Aggregating to the sub-regional level again allows for the possibility of partnerships with non-state actors reinforcing the goals of regional integration, through enhancing the socio-cultural dimensions of integration, as well as the performance and accountability of the RECs themselves, as discussed above.

Women's empowerment

The situation of women in the sub-region is particularly restricted. Representing half the population in Central Africa, women's social and political situation is highly unequal to that of men. According to a comparative compilation by sub-region of UNDP's Gender Inequality Index, Central Africa scores as the second most gender unequal among African sub-regions after West Africa as illustrated in Figure 11 below.

According to a recent report by UN Women, while nine out of 15 West African countries have ratified the additional protocol on women's rights to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (the Maputo Protocol), Chad is the only Central African country to have done so. Some gains in women's political participation have been made: Cameroon,

for the first time since independence, recently reported 31 percent of parliamentary seats are now held by women, and the country has also put in place new measures to deal with sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).⁹³ However, while all Central African countries have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), only Sao Tomé and Príncipe has developed a subsequent national gender strategy.⁹⁴ Moreover, there is limited available data on wider perceptions concerning the situation of women specifically in Central Africa. While a recent study by the think-tank Afrobarometer noted positive gains in perceptions about the goal of equality of women across 34 African countries (despite persistent shortfalls in practice), only one Central African country was included in the survey.⁹⁵

Abiding challenges confronted by women across West and Central Africa identified by UN Women include illiteracy, barriers issuing from customs and traditions, lack of gender-

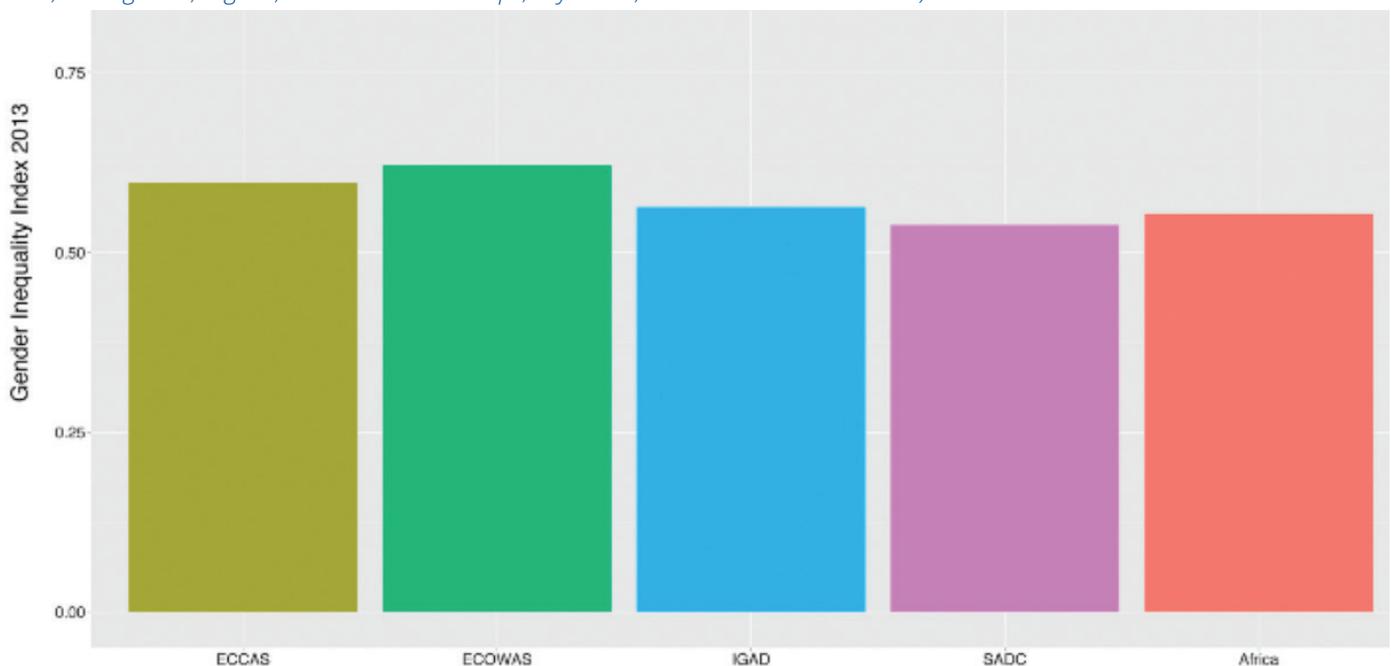
⁹² The Réseau des institutions nationales de lutte contre la corruption d'Afrique centrale (RINAC) was launched in Libreville in April 2015 with support from the UN Economic Commission for Africa.

⁹³ *Ibid*, p. 6.

⁹⁴ UN WOMEN (2014). *Target 2015: Progress on the Horizon?*, p. 8.

⁹⁵ Afrobarometer (2014). 'Support for African Women's Equality Rises: Education, Jobs and Political Participation Still Unequal', Policy Paper No. 8, March 2014. Available at: http://afrobarometer.org/sites/default/files/publications/Policy%20paper/ab_r5_policypaperno8.pdf. It should also be noted that UN Women's West and Central Africa regional bureau only actually includes Cameroon among Central African countries among its focal countries.

Figure 11: Comparing gender inequality across Africa's sub-regions (Source: UNDP (2014). *Human Development Index reports, Gender Inequality Index*. Compiled by UNDP ARSC. Missing data: Angola, Cape Verde, Comoros, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Madagascar, Nigeria, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Seychelles, Somalia and South Sudan.)



	2008	2012
Developing world	56	57
Africa	23	24
East Africa	20	27
Central Africa	7	7
Southern Africa	54	58
West Africa	9	9
North Africa	55	45
Asia	62	62
Latin America and the Caribbean	64	67

Figure 9: GDP trends of ECCAS region, illustrating impact of 2008-09 crisis (Source: UNECA, AU, AfDB (2013), op. cit. p. 6)

sensitivity in macro-economic policies and budgets, and limited access to finance and land rights particularly for rural women, as well as productive resources.⁹⁶ Central Africa's undiversified economies, as well as poor progress with sub-regional integration, directly impacts women, the majority of whom depend on basic agricultural activity for their livelihoods.⁹⁷ Comparable data by sub-region on these issues is not always available, however Figure 12 illustrates that the lives of women may be particularly hard in the sub-region, alongside experiences in West Africa.

As a direct reflection of their exclusion, several interlocutors pointed to the role of women as potential change agents. This notion, offered by three key observers, each with long years of experience working in the sub-region, is based on a perception that women have held societies together in the face of decades of conflict, failed ('big man') governance and neglect, and thus may represent a strategic social group to envision common goal-setting in terms of advancing women's rights across other divides, as well as longer-term

transformation. The idea of networking among women in the sub-region as a whole was also put forward. Presently there is a network of female parliamentarians, the Réseau des femmes parlementaires d'Afrique centrale, as well as the Réseau femmes africaines pour le développement durable d'Afrique centrale. Support to the expansion in number and deepening in impact of such initiatives emerges as a priority.

Youth empowerment

A further crucial dimension of voice and participation for more peaceful Central African societies relates to the situation of young people in the sub-region. Central Africa faces strong demographic pressure, with the population increasing by one-third in one decade, and projections anticipating a total population of 200 million by 2025 (from 108 million in 2002).⁹⁸ With economies structured as they presently are, the prospects of this expanding labour force finding employment are low. The sub-region already has an extremely high average unemployment rate at 23.13 percent in 2010, with higher rates per country such as Chad (30 percent) and DRC (70 percent).⁹⁹ A high percentage of un- or under-employment is borne by young people given the extreme youthfulness of the sub-regional population.¹⁰⁰ As noted, population projections for the sub-region flag serious concerns around population growth rate. In the context of rural poverty, skewed core-periphery development and border insecurity, there exist strong pull factors bringing particularly young populations to cities in the sub-region – compounding population growth

⁹⁶ UN WOMEN (2014), op. cit.

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 8.

⁹⁸ UNECA, AU, AfDB (2013), op. cit, p. 5.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 7.

¹⁰⁰ The UNDP country programme document for DRC states that two-thirds of the Congolese labour force is unemployed, mainly youth – fuelling the country's high inequality score. Prospects for youth job creation are identified as one of three factors that will be crucial to DRC's future. The country programme document for Cameroon highlights chronic underemployment of 76 percent; the Republic of Congo document states that 42.2 percent of under-30s are unemployed; the CAR, Chad and Equatorial Guinea country programme documents all prioritise job creation in one way or another.



Locally elected women leaders of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees receive solar-powered radio transmitters donated under an initiative led by the Civil and Political Affairs Section of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) in partnership with Internews, under the Quick-Impact Project. 2009, Kerfi, Chad. UN Photo/Olivia Grey Pritchard

trends to create a combustible mix. Already over 50 percent of the urban population lives in slums in the region, with associated and expanding pressures on land, housing, intra-urban transport, water and sanitation and other services.¹⁰¹ Whether recruitment of youth living in the border regions of Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger by Boko Haram; or of young Fulani by ex-Seleka, among many other examples, under-employment represents a major facilitating factor fuelling insecurity in the sub-region.¹⁰²

Clearly, any success with improved sub-regional economic integration will do much to unlock employment opportunities – and this will de facto have positive outcomes for job creation for young people given the youthfulness of the populations. Similarly, the rationale for economic diversification is precisely to expand livelihood and wealth creation opportunities for a wider section of society, beyond elites. However, given the nexus between youth unemployment and insecurity and the critical juncture at which the sub-region now stands, additional and direct efforts to stimulate youth employment and empowerment are valid, and the issue would benefit from galvanising policy momentum at the sub-regional level. This

would have the additional potential to indirectly contribute to the socio-cultural dimensions of regional integration by bringing youth policy networks advocating for better employment opportunities, accessing available educational opportunities, monitoring government schemes, and general advancement of youth empowerment, into contact with each other across different countries.

2.3.3 Environmental management, conservation and climate change response

Central Africa contains a rich diversity of ecosystems and significant water and forest resources. Issues related to climate change, environmental management and conservation are shared both in the sense of being ‘commonly experienced’, and, in many cases, with regard to actual sharing of natural resources and climatic zones. Pressures linked to conflicting interests over use of resources, plunder (including as a vector

¹⁰¹ UNECA, AU, AfDB (2013), *op. cit.*, p. 5.

¹⁰² *The potential for un- or under-employment to serve as a facilitating factor enabling violence are well established. See World Bank (2011). World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security and Development. Washington: World Bank. See also T. Gurr (1970). Why Men Rebel. New Jersey: Princeton University Press; and C. Moser and D. Rogers (2005). Change, Violence and Insecurity in Conflict Situations. London: ODI.*

*An aerial view of one of the tributaries of the Niger River. 1982, Cameroon.
UN Photo/Shaw McCutcheon*



of insecurity, as above), as well as the impacts of deforestation are rife. Experts estimate that as much as three-quarters of the elephant population in Central Africa has been decimated by heavily armed poachers.¹⁰³ The gradual drying of Lake Chad (whose usage is shared by Algeria, Cameroon, CAR, Chad, Libya, Niger, Nigeria and Sudan and home to approximately 30 million people in its wider basin) with the associated phenomenon of drought and desertification have already caused significant negative impacts on livelihoods and security – accountable, for example, for an estimated drop in fishery production of 60 percent.¹⁰⁴ Other shared waters in the sub-region are poorly managed.

Governments throughout the sub-region have developed plans and policies in this area, with the ECCAS *Vision 25* asserting the green economy as a key sector for the economic development of the sub-region. However, governments and RECs alike demonstrate an insufficient capacity to factor the environment dimension into its various plans, and to enforce protection rules. The impact of these factors as well as climate change pose a grave risk of exacerbating extreme poverty and serving as a hindrance to long-term human development.

At the same time, the environment is probably the domain where collaboration among states has advanced furthest, representing a degree of cooperation that ought to be capitalized on given other areas of disconnect. In the assessment of one interlocutor, there have been ‘good initiatives for harmonisation, but implementation falls down’. However, the Commission des Forêts d’Afrique Centrale (COMIFAC) established by the Heads of State and Government in 1999 represents an important platform to catalyse sub-regional cooperation on issues related to forests, ecosystems and biodiversity. It recognises 12 transboundary conservation programmes – for example the Tri-National Dja-Odzala-Minkébé (TRIDOM) programme implemented by the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) with support from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and lead by UNDP, straddling the Republic of Congo, Gabon and Cameroon. A new initiative spearheaded by UNDP and launched in September 2015 also sees six Central African countries (Cameroon, CAR, Republic of Congo, DRC, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon) partner with UN agencies, in a programme designed to slow down and halt deforestation and forest degradation in the Central Africa sub-region. The Central African Forest Initiative (CAFI) has a total envelope of USD 500 million and currently has attracted

pledges from Norway. Regenerating Lake Chad would also have massive positive impacts and emerges as a strategic priority for the sub-region, and new efforts by the LCBC to generate the necessary investment and partner support are key.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF COMMONLY SHARED DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES, INCLUDING GOVERNANCE ISSUES, AROUND WHICH THE SUB-REGION’S FUTURE SUCCESS AS A WHOLE IS CENTRED, AND WHICH AS A RESULT REQUIRE SUB-REGIONAL LEVEL RESPONSES.

WHILE SUCH DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES ARE NATIONAL, THEIR NATURE AND SCOPE, IF SUCCESSFULLY TACKLED SUB-REGIONALLY, WOULD BE LIKELY TO YIELD MULTIPLIER EFFECTS ON IMPROVED GOVERNANCE, SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES AS WELL AS ENHANCEMENT OF INTEGRATION FOR CENTRAL AFRICA OVERALL.

¹⁰³ UNECA, AU and AfDB (2013). *Report on the SDGs: Central African Sub-region*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁴ LCBL (2014). *Donor Conference for the Funding of the Five-Year Investment Plan 2013-17: Participants’ Handbook*.

3 PRIORITIES

AND

PROGRAMMING

ENTRY POINTS FOR
DEVELOPMENT
PARTNERS

IN THIS SECTION:

Greater responsiveness to Central Africa as a sub-region pg 59

Stabilisation through development and peacebuilding in Central Africa's border areas pg 61

Pushing forward momentum with integration through strategic partnerships with RECs based on sub-regional priority issue identification pg 62

Complementary interventions in the socio-cultural sphere pg 65



This report has analysed the development context of the Central African sub-region, offering an understanding of the sub-regional domain along three broad axes: regional integration, institutions and politics, issues and dynamics taking place across borders (with a focus on the multi-faceted dimensions of insecurity at borders), as well as common development priorities that require a sub-regional response. The following concluding pages draw together priorities emerging from the discussion. Recommendations are intended primarily for international development partners active in the sub-region, with relevance for governments and RECs as well as the AU.¹⁰⁵

3.1 GREATER RESPONSIVENESS TO CENTRAL AFRICA AS A SUB-REGION

This report has shown that Central African countries frequently score at the very bottom of available development, governance and security indicators. Despite unevenness across individual countries, this holds true for the sub-region as a whole where aggregated data is available comparing different sub-regions. Central Africa also falls behind other sub-regions of Africa with regard to progress with sub-regional integration. External forces have had a strong influence over the sub-region's development trajectories, which have suffered from inconsistency in international attention, as well as complicity in perpetuating malign governance structures at great cost to local populations. With the effects of these histories now bubbling up in new and widening zones of conflict, elections pending across the sub-region, and further potential for volatility linked to over-dependence on the oil industry, the time is ripe for a greater level of responsiveness by international development partners. The challenges faced present a strong sub-regional dimension and require appropriate sub-regional level responses. Without a concerted effort to reverse these trends at that level, there is a real risk that Central Africa's lagging development progress may

THE TIME NOW IS RIPE
FOR A GREATER LEVEL
OF RESPONSIVENESS
BY INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS.

become permanent – with consequences for security on the wider continent as well as globally given the potential for dynamics in Central Africa to mesh with global challenges such as violent extremism and migration.

A first recommendation arising from this report is that all actors need to invest more systematically both in analysing the sub-regional domain and intervening at that level in Central Africa. Given the overall normative commitment to regional integration as a means of enhancing African-led development, as well as intensifying AU-level activity in this regard, efforts to scale-up interventions at sub-regional level in Central Africa seem logical, if not overdue.

Challenges confronting development partners in focusing at a sub-regional level were flagged in the Introduction to this report. UNDP clearly articulates the importance of a regionalised outlook informing and shaping interventions to advance development across different sectors in Africa at a strategic level. However, challenges persist: we found for instance that our own programme documents for Central Africa make fairly limited, if any, reference to sub-regional context dynamics affecting national development outcomes.¹⁰⁶ Frequently, programmes that are described as 'regional' are in reality multi-country interventions, yoking countries from quite different African sub-regions together, thereby overlooking opportunities to reinforce integration efforts through programme design and delivery. A further issue is that while UNDP clearly recognises the importance of working with RECs at a strategic level, the relationship with Central Africa's RECs is not presently being optimised.¹⁰⁷ Stakeholders within UNDP country programmes interviewed for this report strongly agreed with the statement that new ways of analysing and responding to sub-regional dynamics were urgently required.

¹⁰⁵ A supplementary Annex providing further reflections more specifically for UNDP regarding its own efforts to programme sub-regionally has also been produced as an output from this report.

¹⁰⁶ The following UNDP Country Programme documents were reviewed: Draft programme de pays pour la République Centrafricaine 2012-16 (which has been superseded by the crisis of 2012 and re-alignment of UNDP priorities to support the subsequent transition process); Programme de pays pour le Tchad 2012-6; Projet de descriptif de programme pour la République de Congo 2014-18; Projet de descriptive du programme du Cameroun 2013-17; Country Programme Document for the Democratic Republic of the Congo 2013-17; Country Programme Document for Equatorial Guinea 2013-17; Draft Country Programme Document for Gabon 2012-16; Programme de pays pour Sao Tomé et Principe 2012-16.

¹⁰⁷ This confirms the finding of the 2008-13 UNDP Africa Regional Programme, which highlighted issues concerning a perceived lack of strategy guiding UNDP engagement with various RECs – found by the evaluation team to be ad hoc and inconsistent

Interviews with World Bank and European Union officials – probably the two agencies that have the largest portfolio of regional development programmes – equally pointed to the difficulties in designing and implementing appropriate interventions at sub-regional level. Both organisations are actively grappling with the demands of enhancing responses to sub-regional dynamics, with the World Bank launching a series of sub-regionally focused programmes and interventions in recent years, in addition to the regular EU Regional Indicative Programmes. However, many development partners currently organise their ‘regional’ interventions in a somewhat ad hoc manner, administratively linking Central and West Africa, for instance, or focusing on a small selection of countries within a wider region – reflecting both internal institutional administrative histories as well as the wider difficulties in defining African sub-regions discussed earlier in this report. Innovative approaches to try to reduce these constraints and to create the administrative readiness to begin to scale-up programming on a clear and coherent sub-regional basis responding to priority dynamics are needed.

This report’s discussion has made a deliberate effort to compare the Central Africa sub-region with other sub-regions of Africa throughout, drawing on available comparative data and in some cases compiling this for the first time in these pages. However, it is notable that surprising

gaps exist across most data-sets in aggregating sub-regional perspectives on key issues, particularly those most closely linked to different dimensions of human development as opposed to economic growth perspectives.¹⁰⁸ Clearer data sets documenting development progress by sub-region would assist governments as well as development partner country teams to ‘join the dots’ among themselves. This would in itself be helpful to the integration agenda. Sub-regional analysis can pave the way to new insights, inspiring a wider set of interventions and readiness to channel development funds to important sub-regional issues and dynamics, in addition to national priorities. It also provides baseline data against which sub-regional performance can better be assessed. One immediate entry-point for elevation of such sub-regional analytical processes would be baseline data collection as well as reflection, capacity-building, planning, implementation and review around Central Africa’s response to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

¹⁰⁸ For example, the MDG Progress Report for Africa treats North Africa separately, but clusters all other sub-regions of Africa together. UN WOMEN analysis of West and Central Africa actually only incorporates information from Cameroon. UNFPA and others simply put all of Africa together as a region, even while individual country-level information may also be available. Similarly the respected polling organisation Afrobarometer only includes one Central African country out of the 34 in which it conducts its polls.



A local girl at the market in Mekambo, in Gabon’s northeastern Ogooué-Ivindo province. 2011, Mekambo, Gabon. UN Photo/Gill Fickling

3.2 STABILISATION THROUGH DEVELOPMENT AND PEACEBUILDING IN CENTRAL AFRICA'S BORDER AREAS

The multi-faceted dimensions of insecurity taking place within countries and spreading across borders in the sub-region should be understood as a strategic priority. Until these various sources of insecurity are addressed, and border areas are creatively brought into wider development planning and peacebuilding processes, the sub-region is likely to remain in a perpetual and deteriorating state of volatility and continued backsliding in development terms. The notion of sub-regional programming thus opens the possibility of developing a more ambitious and purposeful approach to development and peacebuilding in border areas, responding to the multiple dimensions of insecurity across borders identified in this report, and under the framework of the AU Niamey Convention. The speed of the expansion across borders of both the Boko Haram and CAR

COMMONLY OWNED STRATEGIES TO CATALYSE CATCH-UP DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS OF BORDER AREAS, ESTABLISH STATE AUTHORITY, IMPROVE SECURITY AND MONITORING OF BORDERS, INTEGRATE PEACEBUILDING AND MEDIATION ACTIVITIES AND SUPPORT LOCAL LIVELIHOOD ENHANCEMENT INTERVENTIONS WOULD YIELD SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT DIVIDENDS, AS WELL AS GAINS IN OVERALL SUB-REGIONAL SECURITY PROSPECTS.

crises may have created the necessary awareness among all stakeholders of the urgency of increased attention to border areas, and a number of new initiatives are underway.

Commonly owned strategies to catalyse catch-up development interventions of border areas, establish state authority, improve security and monitoring of borders, integrate peacebuilding and mediation activities and support local livelihood enhancement interventions would yield significant development dividends, as well as gains in overall sub-regional security prospects. Cross-border traders and traditional leaders able to mediate and resolve differences are just two groups of people who act as 'connectors' locally and whose support through targeted interventions may be particularly beneficial. Design of such initiatives again points to the need for improved analysis, disaggregating human development data for these areas, in order to 'make the development case' to national governments and other stakeholders for greater levels of investment in these areas as part of national development planning, as well as analysing perceptions and priorities of communities.

Efforts to intervene creatively across borders in particular peripheral zones represents a growing focal area of development programming, with a number of development partners beginning to create a strong body of project experience in this area.¹⁰⁹ Primarily, such initiatives have focused on other sub-regions of Africa,¹¹⁰ but some evidence of these approaches is apparent in Central Africa, as part of the AU Border Management Programme, with a relatively new project partnering the World Bank, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the AU that is working in the LRA-affected areas for instance. While each of ECCAS, CEMAC and the Lake Chad Basin Commission have engaged in some work through their various peace and security provisions to improve border security at different times and geographic points, the more transformative

¹⁰⁹ *The World Bank Group is also exploring what it terms 'borderland development' as an evolving agenda, with a particular emphasis on cross-border trade as part of regional integration, as a deterrent of conflict risk. IOM's Regional Strategy for West and Central Africa 2014-16 includes an emphasis on integrated border management and risk analysis, among others.*

¹¹⁰ *Examples include UNDP's Community Border Security Programme in the Sahel, as well as COMESA's partnership with the World Bank as well as implementing NGOs such as International Alert in working across borders in Eastern DRC; and the Life and Peace Institute working across borders in the Horn of Africa.*

developmental and peacebuilding agenda proposed by the Convention requires a new generation of attention and investment in the sub-region. The AU Border Management Programme itself is supported by GiZ, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and Danida, and is in the process of expanding to the ECCAS sub-region in partnership with ECCAS, initially through a process geared towards ratification of the Niamey Convention. The opportunity for more partners to contribute and add complementarity to this approach is clearly there given the enormity of the challenges. Further mapping of different border development interventions emanating from other sub-regions of Africa is required to identify lessons and ensure complementarity in this relatively new field of development assistance.

Chad's borders may be of particular interest, in considering the long-term stability of the Central Africa sub-region. Chad has also emerged as an important sub-regional peacekeeping force, though is arguably over-stretched with fronts in both Mali and Nigeria. Chad is also geo-strategically placed at the centre of conflict systems stretching to its north, south, east and west: if Chad is overwhelmed by the threats it currently faces, prospects for Central Africa gaining ground across the numerous indicators where it currently falls behind will be slashed. Efforts to pilot new approaches to border management in Central Africa may do well to prioritise Chad's borders for these reasons.

Further, each of the different dimensions and manifestations of border insecurity that are identified in this report, warrant specific attention. In some cases – for example responding to the humanitarian needs of refugees and IDPs – response mechanisms are well-established and the terrain is even crowded, despite persistent shortfalls in resourcing. In others – for instance the economic and criminal dimensions of insecurity, related to smuggling of illicit commodities across borders as a means of profiteering by armed groups – responses by development actors are extremely thin on the ground. Efforts to establish surveillance at borders in order to begin to curtail these conflict-aggravating trades are required. More detailed gap analysis against the priorities identified in order to identify further entry-points and ensure more comprehensive approaches to tackling insecurity in the region is recommended to enhance the strategic relevance of current interventions.

3.3 STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH RECS BASED ON SUB-REGIONAL PRIORITY ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

The discussion has highlighted stalled progress with the sub-regional integration agenda as a major brake on development. Slow progress is a direct consequence of the longevity of political rule affecting most countries in the sub-region, and rivalry between states. This governance dimension is compounded by the absence of leadership and political will to support progress with integration.



Members of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the French Army (Operation Sangaris), and the Central African Forces (FACA), inspecting the field after the destruction of rockets in Bagui, Central African Republic, 2015. UN Photo/Nektarios Markogiannis

Instead, countries jostle for supremacy, compromising the regional integration agenda in so doing. Poor progress with integration is reflected in society, with few signs of socio-cultural integration or sense of Central African identity or confidence in the integration project. This inter-state dynamic and stagnation in the regional integration process is reflected in, and further compounded by, the institutional weakness and blurred role and mandates of the sub-regions two RECs, CEMAC and ECCAS, and their specialised institutions. Recent collaboration among some states in the sub-region under the auspices of the RECs and AU in meeting shared security threats, may signal the beginnings of a new era – although it has also brought turbulence. Central African states who have the capacity to do more to sustain the gains generated in the security sphere urgently need to find ways to constructively use this influence in enlightened self-interest and in the interests of sustainable and inclusive development of the sub-region.

It is clear that sub-regional programming by development partners has already helped to address the constraints hampering a stronger role for the Central African RECs to some extent. However, greater consistency and a more strategic approach will yield further dividends. Of central importance is the ongoing effort to advance harmonisation between CEMAC and ECCAS and longer-term clarity over these institutions' respective roles and responsibilities in delivering stronger sub-regional integration across all relevant policy arenas (as well as that of the LCBC). Noting this complexity, coordinated efforts to support the long-term harmonisation between CEMAC and ECCAS and ensure that individual partnerships between development partners

and these institutions do not in any way undermine this goal should be sustained. Research pointed to a scattered approach to partnership with RECs by some development partners, and a failure to own the overall institutional relationship at a strategic level, with the result that the overall impact of thematic engagements may be muted. Grounded in strong context analysis, a sub-regional focus informing the relationship with RECs can enable greater granularity and responsiveness to context than is afforded by 'continent-level' initiatives. A key recommendation arising from this study is that the relationship with Central African's RECs should be in some cases re-defined, based on consideration of strategic priorities related to the sub-regional situation analysis, and identification of entry-points for development partners that both respond to these priorities, and specific agencies' niche and competencies.

The opportunity to build on continent-level momentum around some of the priority issues is not being fully optimised at present. Efforts to popularise particular AU conventions and decisions that are especially pertinent to the challenges faced in the sub-region, based on analyses such as that offered in this report, would be timely. As illustrated by Figure 13 below, ratification rates overall are low – with a continent-wide average of 19 out of the 49 treaties presently ratified. The ECCAS sub-region falls below this average, at par with the SADC sub-region and above the Inter Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) sub-region but below the ECOWAS sub-region.

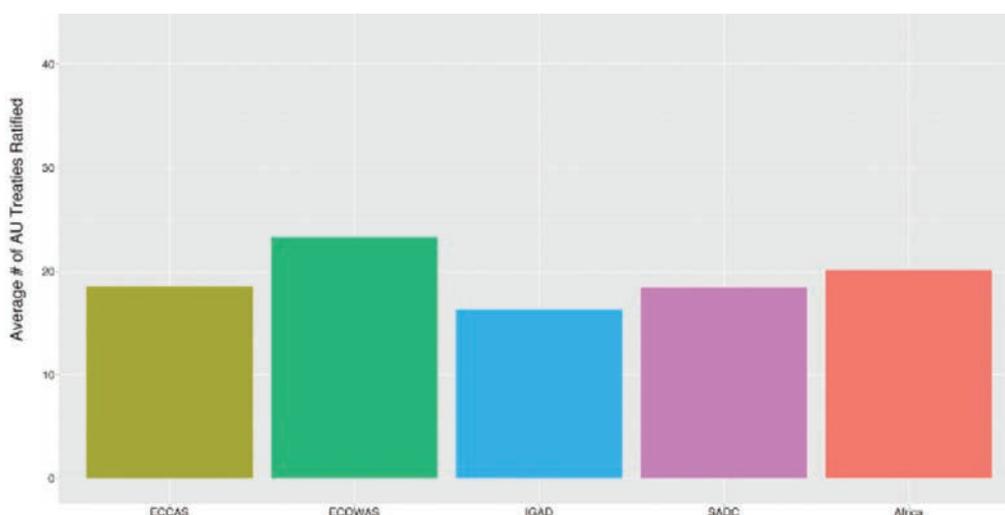


Figure 13: AU Treaties, Conventions, Protocols and Charters, ratification rate by African sub-region (Source: AU Treaties, Conventions, Protocols and Charters, available at www.au.int/en/treaties. Chart compiled by UNDP RSCA for this report.)

Concerted efforts to enhance momentum in actualising commitments undertaken by heads of state in Addis Ababa under the framework of the AU through work with, in the case of Central Africa, ECCAS will help to ground these important initiatives. A sub-regional policy focus will enable greater strategic responsiveness to context than is afforded by continent-level initiatives, while at the same time contributing to the overall integration agenda.

This report has primarily directed its discussion to international development partners. However, if there are delays with regional integration in a particular sub-region such as Central Africa, or it shows signs of falling significantly behind in other respects, the AU itself, as champion of the overall integration agenda at continent-level, has an interest in and responsibility for finding ways to support REC performance more directly. This relates not only to integration, but also concerted efforts to implement AU positions and conventions where these have been stalled.

**A SUB-REGIONAL
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AGENDA.**

The conventions that emerge as particularly relevant for Central Africa to the issues raised in this report's analysis are:

- #11 African Charter on Human and People's Rights
- #27 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the rights of Women in Africa
- #28 AU Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption
- #29 Revised African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
- #33 African Youth Charter
- #34 African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance
- #39 AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of IDPs in Africa (Kampala Convention)
- #44 AU Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation (Niamey Convention)
- #49 African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development.

In this line, the report's analysis points to a number of different dimensions that ought to be reflected in such a new approach to the relationships, in order to leverage and enhance Central Africa's sub-regional institutions and architecture more effectively. By focusing on the priority issues identified as 'common development priorities that would benefit from a sub-regional response', development partners have the opportunity to galvanise and enhance momentum with sub-regional integration. Many of the issues that emerge as particularly key with regard to commonly owned development challenges in the sub-region, are already at the core of development partner country programming in the sub-region. However, due to weak capacity and past performance by the RECs to implement sub-regional projects, such interventions are often focused at the country level with little or no 'joining of dots' between them. This makes it difficult to activate the multiplier effects at the sub-regional level.

3.4 COMPLEMENTARY INTERVENTIONS IN THE SOCIO-CULTURAL SPHERE

Given the way in which the overall political and governance context in Central Africa has acted as a brake on regional integration rather than the reverse, any strategy of engagement must be accompanied by work in the socio-cultural environment. The governance context points to the crucial importance of international actors ceasing to allow geo-strategic agendas to compromise development objectives. The political economy of the sub-region as well as its malign governance structures must be more directly acknowledged and addressed. This implies a re-balancing of interventions to ensure both 'supply' and 'demand' for improved capacity are factored into future relationships with RECs, as well as more widely. Development partners will only succeed in galvanising and enhancing momentum with sub-regional integration through partnership with non-state actors, as much as with governments and the RECs themselves.

A key emphasis ought to be in engaging multi-stakeholder actors in policy dialogue around sub-regional priority issues. For example, this might imply focused work around the extractive industry and economic diversification agenda with the RECs, in tandem with civil society and media capacity-building and coalition-building efforts or work on youth empowerment that mobilises and supports the capacity of youth networks – with dividends for confidence-building among different country representatives. Sincere efforts to identify mechanisms to empower change agents able to tackle the fundamental governance challenges in the sub-region are needed.

Initiatives to support the advancement of a sub-regional socio-cultural identity to assist with the regional integration project, are also needed. Programmes seeking to advance a positive and pluralist sub-regional identity that celebrate diversity across identity groups and nations and identify mechanisms for fostering exchange and confidence-building among these will be an important aspect. Identifying 'connectors' already able to transcend xenophobic narratives

that currently keep people within the sub-region apart, to champion this effort, may lead to working at sub-regional level with women's networks or inter-faith religious leaders, private sector coalitions, among others. Efforts to prevent and respond to violent extremism in relevant parts of the sub-region will also benefit.

In conclusion, while change will happen slowly, the time for a concerted push forward in tackling Central Africa's tendency to appear at the bottom of development indicators is now, as the sub-region reels from the twin blows of two aggravated cycles of geographically spread armed violence, as well as plummeting oil prices, while at the same time turning to confront mounting anxiety about the overall political context. The issues emerging from this report are not 'new' issues in Central Africa, and find reflection to different degrees in many of the interventions of development partners active in the region. What this report suggests may have been missing to date is a recognition of the strategic value of maximising the potential of tackling such issues as far as possible sub-regionally as well as within countries. Sub-regional interventions should be both scaled up and reviewed for the strategic value, if development partners are to achieve the twin goals of successfully contributing to regional integration in line with continent-level vision, and effectively responding to the fundamentally sub-regional nature of many development challenges confronted in Central Africa. This includes a redefinition of partnership with the sub-region's RECs to better respond to priority issues as well as the goal of harmonisation; intensified efforts to stabilise the sub-region through development and peacebuilding interventions at its borders; as well a genuine move to support citizens' voice and participation for more inclusive societies, as well as the integration agenda itself. Lack of opportunity for ordinary citizens to engage in, influence and 'own' the longer-term goal of integration is a particular challenge, in part reflecting limited democratic space in the majority of Central African countries themselves, amplified at the sub-regional level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

TO ALL
DEVELOPMENT
PARTNERS

The following recommendations summarise the conclusions proposed above, laying out key objectives to inform new approaches to pushing forward sub-regional momentum in a positive direction in Central Africa.



.1. DEMONSTRATE GREATER RESPONSIVENESS TO CENTRAL AFRICA AS A SUB-REGION

- Urgently encourage greater attention to security, development and integration challenges in Central Africa, to prevent it falling permanently behind in development terms
- Embark on new efforts to respond to Central Africa's sub-regional dynamics at that level, finding innovative ways to link country programmes and overcome institutional obstacles
- Initiate processes to fill data gaps assessing and monitoring development dynamics at sub-regional level – for the UN system this points to the need to find ways to introduce a sub-regional lens into the UNDAF process, as well as consideration of regular sub-regional Human Development Reports to complement national reporting.

.2. ATTEMPT TO STABILISE THE SUB-REGION THROUGH PRIORITISING PEACEBUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT OF BORDER AREAS

- Develop purposeful approaches to development and peacebuilding in border areas, responding to the multiple dimensions of insecurity across borders identified in this report
- Enhance local peace infrastructures in border areas
- Make the development case to national governments and other stakeholders for greater levels of investment in border areas as part of national development planning, through supporting data collection and analysis, including of perceptions and priorities of communities
- Work with governments to initiate catch-up development interventions of border areas, establishment of state authority, improved security and monitoring of borders, integrated peacebuilding and mediation activities as well as support to local livelihoods
- Support establishment of border surveillance designed to curtail smuggling and conflict-aggravating trade
- Leverage the AU Niamey Convention, supporting governments and ECCAS to implement its vision
- Leverage the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralisation, Local Governance and Local Development
- Leverage the AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of IDPs in Africa.

3. RENEW EFFORTS TO HARMONISE CENTRAL AFRICAN RECS AND ENHANCE CAPACITY IN KEY AREAS

- Review development partner relationships with Central Africa's RECs, based on consideration of strategic priorities related to sub-regional situation analysis, and identification of entry-points for development partners that both respond to these priorities, and specific agencies' niche and competencies
- Ensure initiatives with CEMAC, ECCAS and LCBC contribute to longer-term harmonisation and rationalisation rather than the reverse
- Advance dialogue and planning for implementation and review of SDGs at sub-regional level through ECCAS
- Support production of ECCAS-level data-sets and development context analysis
- Support initiatives on harmonisation between ECCAS and CEMAC
- Initiate processes to advance specific AU conventions and treaties through ECCAS, identified against priority context dynamics.

4. SUPPORT EFFORTS TO ENHANCE RELEVANCE OF ECCAS SUB-REGIONAL IDENTITY IN THE SOCIO- CULTURAL SPHERE

- Support initiatives to help popularise ECCAS, and create demand for sub-regional integration among civil society networks, think-tanks, private sector networks, etc
- Support 'connectors' in Central Africa, whether inter-faith, women, youth, business or other, able to build momentum for positive change within and across nation-state boundaries
- Initiate programmes seeking to advance a positive and pluralist sub-regional identity that celebrates diversity across identity groups and nations and identify mechanisms for fostering exchange and confidence-building among these (e.g. volunteer exchange programmes)
- Support ECCAS' own communications and external relations capacities.

5. FOSTER SUB-REGIONAL MOMENTUM FOR IMPROVED EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY GOVERNANCE AND ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

- Support sub-regional civil society networks, think-tanks and monitoring capacity focused on extractive industry governance
- Expand support for private sector development and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), with state and non-state peer-to-peer initiatives across the sub-region
- Leverage the AU African Mining Vision in the ECCAS sub-region
- Leverage the AU Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption.

6. AMPLIFY CENTRAL AFRICAN CITIZENS' VOICE AND PARTICIPATION FOR INCLUSIVE AND PEACEFUL SOCIETIES

- Scale-up interventions to monitor and promote free and fair elections across the sub-region
- Scale-up interventions to empower change agents
- Support initiatives that enhance women's voice in the sub-region advocating for gender equality, as well as peace and development
- Support sub-regional dialogue on youth unemployment, ensuring mobilisation of youth empowerment networks at sub-regional level
- Advocate and position for a development approach to preventing and responding to violent extremism in relevant parts of the sub-region
- Support initiatives that enhance capacity of think-tanks/ academics/ civil society
- Leverage the AU Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance
- Leverage the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, and Protocol on Rights of Women
- Leverage the African Youth Charter as well as the AUC Decade of Youth and the recently launched UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace and Security.

**.7.
ADVANCE
SUB-REGIONAL
COOPERATION ON
ENVIRONMENTAL
MANAGEMENT,
CONSERVATION AND
CLIMATE CHANGE
RESPONSE INITIATIVES**

- Support the Congo Basin Forest Partnership and the new CAFI initiative
- Continue and deepen collaboration around sub-regional conservation interventions
- Support environmentally-focused civil society networks advancing three-fold goals of improved environmental management, conservation and climate change response
- Support initiatives for the regeneration, development and employment creation in the Lake Chad area
- Work with governments/ ECCAS to improve urban management and quality of life
- Leverage the Revised African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.



