

WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION DYNAMICS IN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN

A study by the
United Nations Department of Peace Operations
and the
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Summary of findings

Illicit arms trafficking and civilian possession in the Lake Chad Basin (LCB)

- The illicit circulation of weapons and ammunition represents one of the primary conflict drivers in the LCB. Main sources of illicit materiel are diversions from regional national stockpiles (mainly through raids and theft, and corruption to a lesser extent), materiel 'recycled' from previous conflicts in the region, as well as craft production.
- While many civilians possess weapons in areas affected by Boko Haram, communities differ in their approach to weapons ownership. While some are culturally attached to the principle of arms ownership, others would be keen to disarm if sufficient security were to be provided by the State.
- Vigilante groups have proliferated in response to the increasing threat of terrorism and the lack of formal security provision. They include a wide range of entities which differ in terms of objectives, membership, governmental oversight, and equipment. Most vigilantes carry hunting rifles; some are keen to procure better firearms and others have reportedly been provided with assault rifles by the authorities.

Boko Haram/ISWAP's arsenals

- Tracing of recovered materiel by specialist organizations indicates that diversions from the respective national stockpiles of LCB security and defense forces, as well as proliferation of pre-2011 Libyan stockpiles and leftovers from other conflicts in Africa are the main sources of weapons and ammunition held by Boko Haram. Materiel is acquired locally, either through battlefield capture or purchased on the illicit market.
- At this stage, there is no evidence suggesting any direct supply of materiel from ISIS central to ISWAP. However, the former has been transferring money to ISWAP on an irregular basis, including to procure materiel.
- The tactic of ISWAP has evolved in response to the strengthening of the Nigerian Air Force. Rather than large-scale attacks, ISWAP has shifted to smaller operations, often using motorbikes, roadblocks, and ambushes, requiring small arms, light weapons such as RPGs, ammunition, and IEDs.
- Recent MNJTF operations in the islands of Lake Chad enabled the recovery of significant weapons and military materiel, including artillery launchers and the destruction of several IED factories.
- Nigeria suffers the highest number of IED attacks by Boko Haram, with 85 per cent of regional incidents in 2020. The number of IED attacks targeting the civilian population has decreased over the past year, while ISWAP tries to gain the support of the population in the areas in which it operates.
- According to the MNJTF, the main concern for Boko Haram currently is the acquisition of ammunition for small arms given the continuing demand. Strengthened control and management of ammunition, as well as initiatives to counter ammunition trafficking are therefore critical.

National Weapons and Ammunition Management (WAM) capacity

- Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria are party to a number of regional and international arms control instruments, but each country differs both in terms of the level of implementation they have achieved and regarding the status of national legal frameworks.
- Niger and Nigeria are members of ECOWAS while Chad and Cameroon are members of ECCAS. This translates into a discrepancy in national arms control capacity across the region but also presents opportunities for regional cooperation since ECCAS member states are able to draw on the experience of their ECOWAS counterparts.
- In an effort to prevent and address illicit trafficking and unplanned explosions, national authorities in the LCB have been working to reinforce their WAM capacity. National coordination structures, financial capacity, operational priorities, needs, and levels of international technical support vary from country to country.
- Stockpile management, and the building and rehabilitation of storage facilities in particular, have been the most widely implemented WAM-related activities across the LCB.
- Recordkeeping, including national databases for state-owned and civilian-owned weapons and ammunition remains a consistent need expressed by national authorities.
- Destruction of obsolete and surplus ammunition remains a priority in several countries whose authorities have raised their concerns with regards to deadly unplanned explosions and diversions for terrorism purposes.

Fighting against illicit trafficking and possession

- In addition to DDR efforts, the four countries bordering Lake Chad have designed and implemented a range of initiatives including reinforcing their legal frameworks, building awareness and sensitizing communities to the issue, rolling out voluntary and forced weapons disarmament programmes, enhancing national and cross-border agency coordination, and managing seizures of weapons.
- Security agencies in each of the four countries seize weapons and ammunition; however, the lack of any clear and coherent national procedures and verification processes results in materiel unaccounted for and heightened risks of further diversions
- With regards to materiel seized from Boko Haram, there is a notable lack of recordkeeping, handling procedures, and transparency across the four countries.
- Further analysis of recovered weapons would provide significant support to efforts in tackling and preventing diversions and illicit trafficking to terrorist groups

DDR/defector programmes in the LCB

- In parallel to military operations aimed at countering Boko Haram, each of the four LCB countries have set up defector programmes, pursuant to United Nations Security Council Resolution 2349 (2017).
- While the preconditions for traditional DDR programmes are not currently met in the Lake Chad area, DDR processes can include DDR-related tools and reintegration support to prevent individuals from joining armed groups designated as terrorist organizations as well as to support programmes for those leaving armed groups. In this context, Transitional WAM is particularly relevant to the LCB and could support other DDR-related tools such as Community Violence Reduction (CVR).
- There is a general lack of focus on military materiel in DDR planning and procedures across national programmes. Management of the weapons and ammunition of disengaged

combatants has not been given due consideration at the policy, strategic, or operational levels, leaving a significant gap in the implementation of DDR initiatives.

- A number of former fighters have defected and surrendered weapons in each LCB country, with questions remaining as to what happened to the weaponry of those who did not. Transparency with regards to weapons of former fighters would contribute to more successful community reintegration.
- Representatives of national SALW control institutions interviewed explained that they do not work closely with DDR authorities, sometimes feeling misinformed or side-lined from many of these initiatives. National arms control experts should be given the opportunity to advise DDR authorities.

1. Introduction

Historically a crucial source of food production for the region, the Lake Chad Basin (LCB) has been affected by an increasing range of environmental, security, economic and social challenges. The inadequate management of natural resources, weak governance structures, and the acute impact of climate change have all contributed to the deterioration of both the economies and social fabric of the four LCB states – Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. This has fueled inter-communal tensions, violent extremism, and organized crime. Over the past 10 years, the conflict between Boko Haram and national defense forces has significantly destabilized the Basin area, which hosts close to 20 million people, of whom 2.8 million are internally displaced and 250,000 are refugees¹, placing significant additional burden on the livelihoods of host communities. Children and youth are particularly affected by the conflict through impacts to education access and employment opportunities, while girls and women have been subjected to abduction, slavery, and sexual violence. Elderly people have also been suffering from a disproportionate number of violations and abuses by Boko Haram and during military operations in areas controlled by Boko Haram or perceived as supporting them².

Strong strategic and ideological divisions within Boko Haram led to a split into two major factions in 2016: *Jama'at Ahlis Sunna Lidda'wati wal-Jihad* (JAS) led by Abubakar Shekau, and the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) led by Abu Musab al Barnawi³. Severe clashes between the two factions resulted in the death of Shekau in May 2021 and a significant strengthening of ISWAP through its expansion into new territories in Nigeria, as well as the absorption of fighting groups formerly aligned with JAS⁴. In addition to those that joined ISWAP, many former JAS fighters surrendered while others joined the Bakura Group – another splinter group named after Bakura Sa'alaba, which operates on the banks and islands of the northern part of Lake Chad. For ease of reference, in this paper, the phrase 'Boko Haram' refers to either the terrorist group before the 2016 split, its various factions and splinter groups collectively, or whenever it has not been possible to attribute activity to a particular faction (eg. JAS, ISWAP, Bakura Group, etc.)⁵.

Through their security forces and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), the four governments have been scaling up military operations while maintaining the implementation of humanitarian, social, and peacebuilding initiatives, including Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) processes. While national authorities have established normative, policy, and institutional DDR frameworks, each national programme faces a broad range of challenges, including strategic, security, legal, and resourcing issues, which make the involvement of international partners especially complex. While addressing the threat posed by Boko Haram has remained a priority for the international

¹ OCHA. 2022. Lake Chad Basin Humanitarian Snapshot. June. <https://reliefweb.int/report/chad/lake-chad-basin-humanitarian-snapshot-15-june-2022>

² See for instance Amnesty International. 2020. 'My heart is in pain': Older people's experience of conflict, displacement, and detention in northeast Nigeria. <file:///C:/Users/savan/Downloads/AFR4433762020ENGLISH.pdf>

³ For detailed information about the history of Boko Haram and its factions and about their respective strategies, see ICG.2017. Niger and Boko Haram: Beyond Counter-Insurgency. <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/245-niger-and-boko-haram-beyond-counter-insurgency.pdf> and ICG. 2022. After Shekau: Confronting Jihadists in Nigeria's North East. <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/b180--iswap.pdf>. See also section 2.4 of the study.

⁴ See ICG. 2022. After Shekau: Confronting Jihadists in Nigeria's North East. <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/b180--iswap.pdf>

⁵ 'Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad (Boko Haram)' (Qde.138) and 'Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP)' (Qde.162) are listed on the UN ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida Sanctions List and therefore subject to the assets freeze, travel ban and **arms embargo** set out in paragraph 1 of Security Council resolution 2368 (2017). <https://scsanctions.un.org/ok277en-all.html>

community, all countries in the region face financial constraints in operationalizing the rehabilitation and reintegration of former members.

The Lake Chad Basin is hampered by widespread illicit arms circulation which represents one of the primary conflict drivers of the various security crises with which governments of the region are currently grappling. The bulk of the material is sourced from diversion from national stockpiles and legacy military armaments used by non-state actors in previous conflicts, as well as craft production. Repeated attacks against military bases and other security positions have enabled Boko Haram to amass significant arsenals through violent captures, further hindering the MNJTF and national defence forces in their efforts to eradicate the group.

In this context, the development and implementation of sound arms control activities as part of an integrated DDR process can make an important contribution to the success of processes as well as to the overall implementation of the Regional Strategy for the Stabilization, Recovery and Resilience (RSS) of the Boko Haram-affected areas of the Lake Chad Basin Region⁶.

1.1 What are the arms control options for DDR processes? ⁷

DDR has typically been associated with the implementation of DDR programmes in contexts where a peace agreement has been signed between armed groups and a national government – such as DDR programmes conducted in Chad and Niger in the 1990s and 2000s. However, with armed conflict increasingly characterized by the multiplication of armed actors, including armed groups designated as terrorist organizations (AGDTO), and the absence of peace agreements, adaptive and flexible DDR tools have been developed, many of which can be used in scenarios in which the conditions needed for a formal DDR programme are lacking.

Responding to these developments, the UN launched its updated Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) in 2019 which provide guidance not only on DDR programmes but also on a range of other options under the umbrella of a DDR process⁸.

A DDR process may consist of any combination of the following:

- **DDR programmes** consist of a range of top-down activities falling under the operational categories of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. DDR programmes can only be implemented if specific preconditions are in place, including the signing of a peace agreement, trust in the peace process, the willingness of the parties to participate, and a minimum guarantee of security.
- **DDR-related tools** are immediate and targeted measures that can be used to reduce levels of violence and to facilitate the transition of combatants into civilian life. This can include pre-DDR, transitional weapons and ammunition management, Community Violence Reduction or 'CVR'⁹ and support to programmes for those leaving armed groups labelled and/or designated as terrorist organizations.

⁶ <https://cblt.org/regional-strategy-stabilization/>

⁷ For detailed guidance see UNDP and UNODA. 2021. Effective Weapons and Ammunition Management in a Changing Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Context: A Handbook for UN DDR Practitioners. https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/ddr-handbook-2ed-3_2021.pdf

⁸ For detailed guidance on the components of DDR processes, see IDDRS 2.10 on The UN Approach to DDR <https://www.unddr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/IDDRS-2.10-The-UN-Approach-To-DDR.pdf>

⁹ Community Violence Reduction aims to address the main drivers of violence in communities by providing alternatives to recruitment into armed groups and building social cohesion. This bottom-up approach includes

- **Reintegration support** for former combatants and persons formerly associated with armed forces and groups should be provided at all times, both during and after conflict. Reintegration support as part of sustaining peace is not only an integral part of DDR programmes, it also complements DDR-related tools.

DDR processes can include two arms components:

- **Disarmament**¹⁰: as part of a traditional DDR programme, the aim is to control and reduce arms, ammunition and explosives held by combatants before demobilisation.
- **Transitional weapons and ammunition management (TWAM)**¹¹ is primarily aimed at reducing the capacity of individuals and groups to engage in armed violence and conflict. TWAM also aims to reduce accidents and save lives by addressing the immediate risks related to the possession of weapons, ammunition and explosives. TWAM includes a series of gender-responsive interim arms control measures which generally supports the implementation of other DDR-related tools, including CVR¹².

While the preconditions for DDR programmes are not currently met in the Lake Chad area, DDR processes can include DDR-related tools and reintegration support to prevent individuals from joining armed groups designated as terrorist organisations (AGDTOs), as well as implementing initiatives for former AGDTO members and individuals associated with them who have been appropriately vetted by the national authorities. In this context, TWAM is particularly relevant to the LCB and could support other DDR-related tools such as CVR.

1.2 Objectives of the study

This study aims at supporting national, regional, and international arms control and DDR policymakers and practitioners in the design and implementation of evidence-based, efficient and gender-sensitive initiatives in line with best practices. It seeks to do this by providing:

- Key political and security facts that have an impact on weapons and ammunition dynamics in the region;
- An analysis of current weapons and ammunition dynamics in the LCB, including weapons and ammunition possession by non-state actors;
- An overview of relevant normative frameworks on conventional weapons and ammunition control applicable to Lake Chad Basin countries;
- An overview of national weapons and ammunition management (WAM) capacities and needs; and

a wide range of activities from labour intensive projects to community dialogue. It is particularly suited for situations with widely diffused and localised violence by non-state actors.

¹⁰ Disarmament refers to the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population. Disarmament also includes the development of responsible arms management programmes. For detailed guidance see IDDRS 4.10 on Disarmament <https://www.unddr.org/modules/IDDRS-4.10-Disarmament.pdf> as well as MOSAIC module 2.30 on Small Arms and Light Weapons Control in the Context of DDR <https://front.un-arm.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/MOSAIC-02.30EV1.0.pdf>

¹¹ See IDDRS 4.11 on Transitional Weapons and Ammunition Management

<https://www.unddr.org/modules/IDDRS-4.11-Transitional-Weapons-Ammunition-Management.pdf>

¹² See Table 1 of IDDRS 4.11 for a typology of TWAM activities

- Recommendations on the development and implementation of arms control and weapons and ammunition management initiatives, including as part of DDR/CVR.

1.3 Methodology

Information and data contained in this study were collated through desk research and a literature review, further drawing from interviews with 37 key stakeholders between February and May 2022, including political and security analysts as well as DDR and arms control specialists from national authorities, regional organisations, the UN, civil society and independent researchers.

In order to refine the findings and delve further into this sensitive topic, additional research should be conducted or commissioned by the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), relevant UN entities, and/or specialized civil society organizations including local researchers. Findings on certain topics are more detailed than others, reflecting the availability of information and the capacities of national authorities and experts to engage within the timeframe of the study.

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2. Security and political context

This section focuses on highlighting some of the primary security and political factors that have an impact on arms and ammunition diversion, illicit trafficking, and other weapons dynamics in the region. These factors should be taken into consideration by DDR and arms control policy makers when designing and implementing WAM programming, including as part of DDR processes.

Each of the four countries in the LCB face significant levels of armed violence from a diverse range of actors, leading to increasingly stretched and frequently repositioned military resources. While Boko Haram currently poses the greatest threat to Nigeria and therefore sits among the top of the list of national security and social priorities, elsewhere governments are focused on prioritizing resources against other sources of instability. This includes transnational organized crime and intercommunal violence, as well as terrorist activity from Mali-based groups in Niger, the crisis in the North-West and South-West (NWSW) regions of Cameroon, and rebel armed groups in Chad.

With climate change fueling tensions over access to resources, terrorist activity expanding in the wider Sahel and the absence or stalemate of negotiations between central governments and rebel groups in several countries, the demand for weapons and ammunition will likely remain high for the foreseeable future.

2.1 Cameroon

In addition to the conflict with Boko Haram in the Far North Region, the separatist insurgency in the North-West and South-West Regions (NW/SW), and the regular inter-communal tensions on the borders with Chad and the Central African Republic, Cameroon has recently been facing increasing

political tensions exacerbated by uncertainty regarding the prospective transition of power from 89-year-old President Paul Biya¹³.

With regards to weapons and ammunition dynamics, the conflict in the NW/SW is of particular concern as it has created a new focus for trafficking networks and additional flows of uncontrolled materiel in the country. The situation remains volatile with continued fighting as well as attacks on civilians by armed groups and security forces, further inhibiting the prospect of an inclusive national dialogue. Among other trends, national and international stakeholders have noticed a change in tactics and increasing sophistication of weaponry used by non-state armed groups (NSAGs)¹⁴.

Until 2017, NSAGs in the NW/SW were reportedly using craft weapons, mostly made locally or imported illegally from Nigeria¹⁵. Since then, NSAGs have increasingly been acquiring manufactured automatic rifles looted from Cameroonian armed forces, as well as purchased in Nigeria. Several Cameroonian nationals have also been charged with alleged shipping or attempting to ship weapons and military materiel from the United States to Nigeria, including ammunition, without an export license¹⁶.

With regards to manufactured weaponry, while the national defense forces have issued statements in relation to the use of 'heavy weapons' and 'anti-tank rockets'¹⁷, there is no evidence of such materiel being used. Rather than anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs), it seems that this material is more likely to be Rocket-Propelled Grenade (RPG) launchers; a light weapon that is very easy to operate, presenting a higher degree of fire power for NSAGs. RPG launchers are commonly found in the hands of both state forces and NSAGs in the region and are relatively easy to acquire. The first attack by NSAGs using RPGs was documented in the press in September 2021, wherein a military convoy was targeted and 28 people were reportedly killed¹⁸. Other attacks on military bases using RPGs have been reported since, but they remain limited¹⁹.

The use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in the NW/SW is relatively new and marks an important change of *modus operandi* for NSAGs. Recent research conducted by the Small Arms Survey on the ground indicates that, although Nigeria is the main source of components for IEDs in this area, there are differences in both supply lines and fabrication methods between those used in the NW/SW and those in the Far North Region²⁰.

Weaponry and ammunition used by separatists appear to be sourced primarily from Nigeria, as well as from attacks against Cameroonian forces. In September 2021, 40 suspected weapons traffickers

¹³ Interview with a UN Officer, February 2022.

¹⁴ Interviews with UN officers, March 2022. Interview with representative of Ministry of Defence of Cameroon, March 2022.

¹⁵ Finnan, Daniel. 2018. Cameroon: I spent a week embedded with Anglophone armed separatists. RFI. 14 June. <https://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20180614-cameroon-i-spent-week-embedded-anglophone-armed-separatists> According to S4 Data Set, separatists began acquiring arms and ammunition via attacks on security forces in November 2017, see <https://www.s-4.org/s4-data-set>

¹⁶ Bagnetto, Laura. 2021. Cameroon Anglophone separatists 'supporters' in US charged with gun smuggling. RFI. 18 June. [Cameroon Anglophone separatist 'supporters' in US charged with gun smuggling \(rfi.fr\)](https://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20210618-cameroon-anglophone-separatist-supporters-in-us-charged-with-gun-smuggling)

¹⁷ Kindzeka, Moki Edwin. 2021. Cameroon: Rebels use smuggled anti-tank rockets to kill 28 people.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Interview with international security analyst, February 2022.

²⁰ Interview with Senior Researcher, Small Arms Survey, March 2022.

were arrested in Nigeria after being accused of supplying weapons to Cameroonian separatists. According to media reports, the materiel seized included assault rifles, ammunition, and explosives²¹.

Focus on the Lake area

Since the death of Abubakar Shekau in 2021, the former leader of Boko Haram, the scale of violence against civilians – particularly through the use of person-borne IEDs – appears to have decreased. While attacks have continued, it has been difficult to attribute these accurately, as they may be linked to a range of armed actors, including those affiliated with Boko Haram, such as pockets of JAS fighters or criminal bandits, the distinction often being difficult to establish²².

Intercommunal conflicts have become more recurrent of late, including in the Far North Region where the Boko Haram crisis is having a significant economic and social impact, creating fertile ground for feuds to erupt around access to resources, especially among farmers, herders, and fishing communities²³. Some clashes have been deadly, resulting in high numbers of casualties. While most include the use of bladed weapons, some involve craft hunting rifles and, more rarely, manufactured automatic rifles²⁴. The main herding communities typically move around with firearms. 2021 was marked by clashes between the Arab *Choa* herders and *Musgum* communities, which led to the displacement of more than 100,000 people in December with the majority crossing the border to seek refuge in Chad²⁵.

2.2 Chad

Following the death of President Idriss Déby Itno in April 2021 during clashes with rebels in the north, Chad has continued to undergo a political transition led by a transitional military council. Key pillars of the transitional government's roadmap include driving forward the national-level dialogue process, including negotiations with NSAGs and designing a DDR framework to enable the reintegration of former combatants. Decisions about the processing of arms and ammunition possessed by these groups – some of which are particularly well equipped – will be key to fighting illicit trafficking in the region. The Chadian authorities are currently expanding the size of their armed forces and, depending on the outcome of the above-referenced negotiations, may include former rebels. Any expansion of the military involving the integration or procurement of military materiel will require significant planning and increased capacity for weapons and ammunition management. Finally, with the advancement of the Front for Change and Concord (FACT) group in Chad in 2021, reports of weapons distribution to various Deby supporters constitutes an additional recent injection of weapons into society²⁶.

²¹ Kindzeka, Moki Edwin. 2021. Cameroon: Nigeria Investigates Arms Traffickers Accused of Supplying Weapons to Separatists. VOA. 3 September. https://www.voanews.com/a/africa_cameroon-nigeria-investigate-arms-traffickers-accused-supplying-weapons-separatists/6219186.html

²² Interview with representative of Cameroonian civil society, April 2022. Interview with international security analyst, February 2022.

²³ Interview with UN official, February 2022.

²⁴ Interview with international security analyst, February 2022.

²⁵ UNHCR. 2021. Clashes in Cameroon's Far North displace more than a 100,000 people. 17 December. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2021/12/61bc54734/clashes-camerouns-far-north-displace-100000-people.html>

²⁶ Interview with UN officer, February 2022.

Following extensive negotiations between the Transitional Military Council (TMC) of Chad and politico-military groups under the mediation of the State of Qatar, the parties to the conflict signed, on 8 August 2022, “Doha Agreement for Peace and the Participation of Politico-Military Groups in the Inclusive and Sovereign National Dialogue”. Overall, the peace agreement contains key provisions concerning the implementation of an integrated DDR process in Chad. This includes the creation of the National Commission responsible for the implementation of the DDR programme (CNCMO-DDR) and the establishment of a Consultative and Follow-up Committee on the Implementation of the Doha Peace Agreement.

Alongside these new or evolving dynamics, inter-communal and other forms of armed conflict have intensified over access to diminishing natural resources, notably between farmers and herders in the south and east of the country²⁷. While communities typically procure weapons locally, some herders are also armed by senior officers of the armed forces to protect whose cattle they manage²⁸. Tensions are also mounting in gold mining areas in the North where armed groups continue to challenge the central authorities and where recent intercommunal conflicts have killed more than a hundred people²⁹. Demand for weapons throughout the territory is high and clashes escalate quickly due to their wide availability.

Since the beginning of the political transition, violent feuds between political and military figures in the capital N’Djamena have increased, and citizens are procuring weapons for self-defence given the level of political uncertainty³⁰. In response, the Minister of Security issued a decree in December 2021 aimed at tightening the restrictions linked to arms carrying in the capital city³¹ and authorising security forces to conduct physical searches and confiscate any illicit weapons and ammunition³².

Combatants and mercenaries from Chad are also extensively involved in conflicts outside the country’s borders, including in Sudan, Libya and Central African Republic, contributing to the cross-border movement of arms and ammunition.

Focus on the Lake Area

Boko Haram operations escalated in Chad in 2015 as part of the group’s regional expansion throughout the Lake Chad Basin³³. In 2015, the group launched several attacks in the capital, N’Djamena, targeting the Police headquarters and Central Market. Between 2015 and 2021, the group conducted numerous attacks targeting civilians – including cattle theft and abductions – resulting in the significant displacement of local populations, as well as attacks against military personnel, culminating in an assault against the Bohoma base in March 2020 which killed 100

²⁷ Le Monde avec AFP. Au Tchad, vingt-deux morts lors d’affrontements entre éleveurs et agriculteurs. 8 August 2021. [Au Tchad, vingt-deux morts lors d’affrontements entre éleveurs et agriculteurs \(lemonde.fr\)](https://www.lemonde.fr)

²⁸ Interview with UN senior officer, February 2022.

²⁹ Sahara Media, 2022. Tchad: Operation de desarmement apres les recents affrontements sanglants. 6 June. <https://fr.saharamedias.net/tchad-operation-de-desarmement-apres-les-recents-affrontements-sanglants/>

³⁰ Interview with UN officer, February 2022.

³¹ RFI. 2021. Le gouvernement tchadien encadre strictement le port d’armes a feu. 10 December. <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20211210-le-gouvernement-tchadien-encadre-strictement-le-port-d-armes-%C3%A0-feu>

³² RFI. 2021. Tchad : les fouilles pour traquer les armes laissent les habitants sceptiques. 8 September. <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20210908-tchad-les-fouilles-pour-traquer-les-armes-laissent-les-habitants-sceptiques>

³³ <https://www.acaps.org/country/chad/crisis/boko-haram->

people³⁴. On the back of this attack, the ‘Wrath of Bohoma’ operation was launched by the Chadian military and the authorities reported that more than a thousand members of Boko Haram had been killed. In April 2020, the Chadian government announced that there were no Boko Haram members in Chad anymore³⁵. Challenges in the northern part of the country in 2019 and the major rebel incursion in April 2021 has resulted in a general reduction of engagement of the Chadian military in the Lake Chad area³⁶.

Despite the substantial and effective military response, Boko Haram successfully conducted a number of lethal attacks against military positions throughout 2021. However, the death of Abubakar Shekau in May of that year, coupled with a number of major counter-offensives, reduced the foothold of the group in Chad and led to a notable decrease in attacks.

2.3 Niger

Niger, which faced a coup d’état in 2010 but has since remained politically stable, continues to face a range of domestic and cross-border security challenges. In addition to the ongoing conflict with Boko Haram, other regions are experiencing regular lethal attacks against civilian and military targets from al-Qaeda and Islamic State-affiliated groups operating in the tri-border areas between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Hundreds of soldiers and civilians lost their lives in 2021 and significant quantities of arms and ammunition were seized from barracks and security positions by non-State and terrorist armed groups.

State capacity in Niger is stretched and the government is struggling to enforce security measures across its vast territory and to tackle the armed violence that feeds on grievances from past rebellions that have been left unaddressed. Inter-communal tensions have also been increasing over the past few years, offering a fertile ground for terrorist groups to exploit.

The south-west border strip with Nigeria between Doucoure and Maradi has been increasingly affected by the spread of violent armed banditry from Nigerian organized criminal networks (see Section 2.4). While some groups are driven by greed, others, pastoralists in particular, take up arms to defend their communities and address their decreasing access to pastures. Networks are increasingly organized along community lines and sedentary groups have been setting up self-defence groups due to the lack of security provided by national and regional authorities³⁷.

As a result, vigilante groups have flourished in the country, particularly in areas affected by terrorism, banditry, and inter-communal violence (see Section 4.4.2). Despite a reported increase in manufactured firearms, these groups are mostly armed with locally made materiel and are the targets of deadly retaliations from terrorist groups that are far better equipped³⁸. The development of gold

³⁴ RFI. 2020. Tchad: 44 membres de Boko Haram retrouvés morts dans leur cellule. 18 April.

<https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20200418-tchad-44-prisonniers-boko-haram-retrouves-morts-cellules>

³⁵ Le Figaro avec AFP. 2020. Le Tchad clame s’être débarrassé de Boko Haram. 7 April.

<https://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/le-tchad-clame-s-etre-debarrasse-de-boko-haram-20200407>

³⁶ ICG. 2022. After Shekau: Confronting Jihadists in Nigerian’s North East.

³⁷ ICG. 2021. South-western Niger: Preventing a New Insurrection. 29 April.

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/afrika/sahel/niger/301-sud-ouest-du-niger-prevenir-un-nouveau-front-insurrectionnel>

³⁸ TV5Monde. 2021. Niger: Une attaque djihadiste contre des milices d’autodéfense a fait au moins 69 morts. November. <https://information.tv5monde.com/afrique/niger-une-attaque-djihadiste-fait-des-dizaines-de-morts-mardi-431175>

mining sites along the Niger and Nigerian border is also having an impact on the country, driving greater insecurity and fueling the circulation of explosives across the region.

Over the past 10 years, Niger has significantly enhanced its military budget³⁹ and security capacity as a key partner in the fight against terrorism in the region. Its military is engaged on multiple fronts, including the G5 Sahel, MNJTF, and MINUSMA. The country has focused heavily on building international military cooperation and developing its security sector⁴⁰, including in relation to WAM (see section 5.3). With the European Takuba Task Force and French Operation Barkhane forces' disengagement from Mali and the reorganization of French military strategy in the Sahel, Niger is set to receive additional support⁴¹, including military supplies and the reinforcement of its WAM capacity. These provisions will continue to be critical for the country.

Focus on the Lake area

Boko Haram initially used Niger as a rear base to source supplies before starting to conduct deadly attacks against civilians and security positions in 2015. Insecurity resulted in significant displacement⁴² and increased community tensions, while social and economic development were severely impacted and further hindered by the stringent measures taken by the government in response to rising insecurity (e.g. closure of markets and schools, banning of fishing or access to fertile soils of the Kumadugu river – the natural border with Nigeria etc.).

Over the past year, as evidenced by the organization of the *fete tournante* in Diffa in December 2021 and the easing of restrictions, such as the lifting of curfews and reopening of roads, the security situation seems to be improving from the perspective of the national authorities. The national authorities have also moved forward with the resettlement of inhabitants in certain areas of the Basin (Operation 'Retour au Village'); however, this has suffered a number of setbacks with people leaving the area again due to renewed attacks⁴³. Civil society organizations believe that resettlement is too premature and is not well supported. In addition to terrorist attacks, armed banditry in the area has increased over the past year, with reports of violent kidnappings for ransom, armed attacks on highways, and theft of livestock⁴⁴.

2.4 Nigeria

Nigeria is facing rising levels of armed violence and overlapping security crises that include terrorism, inter-communal conflicts, organised crime, and separatist agitation. The causes of armed violence in Nigeria are complex and multi-layered, with inter-communal violence intertwined with competition for resources and armed criminality. These growing tensions have fuelled the establishment of militias

³⁹ See for instance <https://donnees.banquemondiale.org/indicateur/MS.MIL.XPND.CD?locations=NE>

⁴⁰ Between 2011 and 2022, the number of Security and Defense Forces (SDF) in Niger increased from 11,000 to 30,000. The Nigerien Government plans to further increase the strength of the SDF to 50,000 by 2025. See ActuNiger. 2022. Forces armées nigériennes: 1500 nouveaux soldats présentes au Drapeau. 3 March. <https://www.actuniger.com/societe/17957-forces-armees-nigeriennes-fan-1500-nouveaux-soldats-presentes-au-drapeau.html>

⁴¹ See Mohamed Bazoum: 'La fin de Barkhane va créer un vide qui profitera aux terroristes. 18 février 2022.

⁴² There are currently still more than 236 000 displaced persons in the area. UNHCR. 2022. Operational Update : Niger. January. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Niger%20operational%20update-December%202021-January%202022.pdf>

⁴³ Interview with Nigerien researcher from Diffa University, February 2022.

⁴⁴ Interview with Senior Researcher, Conflict Armament Research, December 2021 and interview with Nigerien researcher from Diffa university, February 2022.

and vigilante groups in several regions (see section 4.4.2). In turn, this has contributed to unprecedented levels of violence, particularly in the north-west where criminal armed gangs, often operating along ethnic lines, have flourished and conduct regular attacks against civilians and security forces, as well as engaging in sexual assault, armed robberies, kidnap for ransom and cattle rustling⁴⁵. Gangs have been upgrading their weaponry through the acquisition of light weapons, including general purpose machine guns and RPGs. Building on this, Boko Haram has been taking advantage of the security crisis to forge alliances with these gangs and extend its influence⁴⁶.

Environmental degradation is continuing to exacerbate competition over land, with armed criminality and the crisis linked to Boko Haram further destabilizing traditional transhumance corridors. This has forced pastoralists to migrate south, resulting in deadly clashes between farming communities throughout the country⁴⁷.

The availability of small arms and ammunition, prompted by an increasing demand, creates an enabling environment for armed violence, with estimates of illegally owned firearms in Nigeria in the millions⁴⁸. Over the past decade, the authorities have implemented a range of efforts to tackle the root causes and symptoms of violence, including interventions specifically focused on addressing illegal weapons ownership. Despite mixed results, the Nigerian authorities have a long track record of targeting illicit arms circulation and are experienced in designing and implementing arms control policies and programmes without the involvement of international partners.

Focus on north-eastern Nigeria

Since 2009, the Boko Haram crisis has been directly connected to the deaths of over 35,000 people and indirectly to more than 320,000 – mostly children – with another two million people internally displaced or forced to flee as refugees⁴⁹. Armed attacks by the terrorist group have increased annually since 2016, peaking in 2021, which was the year ISWAP claimed the most attacks. This trend has continued into 2022, with over 40 attacks claimed in February alone⁵⁰.

Following the pledge of allegiance to ISIS, the death of Abubakar Shekau, and the increasing interest of ISIS central in ISWAP, the strategy of the group has evolved in line with the ISIS tactic of trying to win the hearts and minds of the local population. Towards this end, the group is actively trying to develop a governance system in areas it controls – including through taxation and trade support

⁴⁵ See ICG. 2021. Halting the Deepening Turmoil in Nigeria's North West.

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/halting-deepening-turmoil-nigerias-north-west>

⁴⁶ See Samuel, Malik. 2021. Boko Haram teams up with bandits in Nigeria. ISS. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/boko-haram-teams-up-with-bandits-in-nigeria> and ICG. 2021. Halting the Deepening Turmoil in Nigeria's North West. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/halting-deepening-turmoil-nigerias-north-west>

⁴⁷ ICG. 2021. Ending Nigeria's Herder-Farmer Crisis: The Livestock Reform Plan.

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/302-ending-nigerias-herder-farmer-crisis-livestock-reform-plan>

⁴⁸ While the precise methodologies used to estimate the number of illicit firearms in circulation are unclear, several researchers and analysts reference 'millions'. For instance, SBM Intelligence cites the figure of 6,145,000 small arms as being in the hands of non-state actors, and a further 586,000 in the hands of the State. See SBM Intelligence. 2021. Report on Small Arms, Mass Atrocities and Migration in Nigeria. https://www.sbmintel.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/202005_SALWMAIM.pdf

⁴⁹ UNDP. 2021. Assessing the Impact of conflict on development in the North-east region. https://www.ng.undp.org/content/nigeria/en/home/library/human_development/assessing-the-impact-of-conflict-on-development-in-north-east-ni.html

⁵⁰ ICG. 2022. After Shekau: Confronting Jihadists in Nigerian's North East.

– and has increasingly refrained from attacking or mistreating civilians. While the number of civilian deaths has decreased, a greater number of security and defence forces have been targeted and killed. In response to greater aerial bombardment by the Nigerian Air Force, ISWAP has intensified its operations against the Nigerian military with numerous low-level attacks.⁵¹

Thousands of JAS fighters and associates fled after the death of Abubakar Shekau in May 2021. While some have surrendered, others have joined the Bakura group or have headed to other parts of Northern Nigeria which continues to be plagued by armed violence and criminality, potentially destabilising the situation even further. Small groups of JAS fighters remain and continue to conduct attacks against civilians.

Since 2011, the Nigerian army has conducted a series of counterinsurgency operations in the north-east of the country, the latest of which – Hadin Kai – was launched in 2021. Over the last decade, the authorities have adapted their military strategy in response to the evolving threat, including the establishment in 2019 of ‘super camps’, aimed at reducing the loss of materiel and personnel. However, these super camps have also resulted in clusters of security forces across the country, leaving swathes of territory exposed for terrorist groups that have adapted their *modus operandi* to exploit and civilian communities unprotected⁵². The Nigerian army has recently bolstered its military capacity through the procurement of enhanced weaponry and aircraft, and increased intelligence gathering and surveillance operations, successfully preventing large scale attacks on garrison towns⁵³.

The Borno State Government is in the process of closing IDP camps and encouraging people to resettle in their areas of origin. In addition to the heightened risk of attacks in areas that are not secured and the absence of any basic services, humanitarian organizations are concerned about the large quantities of explosive remnants of war and the lack of any organized clearing efforts⁵⁴. International mine action efforts are hampered by insecurity. National clearance capability is hindered by a weak framework for the coordination of mine action and limited national explosive ordnance disposal capacity⁵⁵. The Outcome Report of the Third Meeting of the Governors’ Forum for Regional Cooperation on Stabilization, Peacebuilding and Sustainable Development held in October 2021 emphasizes the “imperative of returning IDPs and refugees to their communities of origin, based on the principles of voluntary, safe and dignified return”⁵⁶.

2.5 MNJTF operations ⁵⁷

The Lake Chad countries set up the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in its current form in 2014, collectively committing over 8,000 troops to the regional Force with civilian oversight provided by the LCBC. This established a critical multilateral framework to combat Boko Haram insurgents. In addition, the Force has conducted several operations against the group in recent years such as Operation Gama

⁵¹ Interview with ICG Senior researcher, February 2022.

⁵² Samuel, Malik. 2020. Nigeria ‘s super camps leave civilians exposed to terrorists. ISS.

<https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/nigeria-s-super-camps-leave-civilians-exposed-terrorists>

⁵³ ICG. 2022. After Shekau: Confronting Jihadists in Nigerian’s North East.

⁵⁴ Interviews with humanitarian workers, February 2022.

⁵⁵ MAG. 2020. Hidden Scars: The Landmine Crisis in north-east Nigeria.

<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/488081393-Hidden-Scars-The-Landmine-Crisis-in-north-east-Nigeria-MAG.pdf>

⁵⁶ See Report of the Third Annual Governors’ Forum of the Lake Chad Basin Commission. October 2021.

<https://cblt.org/download/reports-on-annual-governors-forum/>

⁵⁷ Most of the information included in this section was provided by the LCBC, July 2022.

Aiki in 2016, Operation Rawan Kada in 2017, Operation Amni Fakat in 2018, and Operation Yancin Tafki II in 2021. These kinetic operations have included individual sector operations, joint cross-border operations, and activities in conjunction with the national operations of Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad. These actions have involved either clearance operations, fighting patrols, raids, ambushes, or targeted operations with the objective of isolating and neutralizing the insurgents, denying them freedom of action, clearing them from their enclaves and disrupting their supply lines.

From March to June 2022, the MNJTF launched a series of coordinated land and air offensives against Boko Haram in the islands of Lake Chad. One such offensive – codenamed ‘Operation Lake Sanity’ – was a combined operation involving MNJTF troops from Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad, and troops from Operation Hadin Kai (OPHK- Nigeria). Other security agencies, such as the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), also participated from the Nigerian side (see Section 4.4.2). It is reported that this operation resulted in the neutralization of hundreds of Boko Haram fighters in Nigeria and the capture of thousands more, as well as non-combatants and their families. The operation also enabled the recovery of significant quantities of weapons and military materiel, including artillery launchers, and the destruction of several IED factories. Commercial enterprises were also destroyed and a number of hostages were rescued, including both women and children⁵⁸. This was the first time that any such military operation had been conducted against Boko Haram combatants on the islands.

Box 1: IEDs

Nigeria suffers the highest number of IED attacks by Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin, with 85 per cent of regional incidents recorded in Nigeria in 2020 (Cameroon 10%, Niger 4% and Chad 1%)⁵⁹. According to Action on Armed Violence, 9,039 civilians were killed or injured by IEDs in Nigeria between 2011 and 2020⁶⁰. Furthermore, Nigeria was the third most-affected country globally by person-borne IEDs (PBIEDs) in the last decade with 6,196 reported civilian casualties⁶¹. This includes an unprecedented number of female PBIED assailants. By 2018, 469 females had either successfully deployed or been arrested in 240 incidents, killing more than 1,200 people. 75 per cent of the attacks were perpetrated in Nigeria, with 20 per cent in Northeast Cameroon⁶² and the remaining 5 per cent in Chad and Niger.

According to the data used by UNMAS, 2,609 civilians died in explosive ordnance accidents in northeast Nigeria between 2016 and 2021, including IEDs. With regards to victims, 25 per cent were boys, 12 per cent were girls, 43 per cent were men, and 20 per cent were women.⁶³

The number of IED attacks targeting the civilian population has decreased over the past year, while ISWAP tries to gain the support of the population in the areas in which it operates. The military are still targeted yet according to the MNJTF, the number of vehicle born IEDs has decreased partly due to the group’s lack of heavy ammunition⁶⁴.

Poorly managed national stockpiles of weapons and ammunition, as well as explosive remnants of war that have not been cleared, are a major source of the explosives needed to construct IEDs.

⁵⁸ Interview with Chief J2, MNJTF, March 2022.

⁵⁹ See Tweet from former UNMAS coordinator, Nigeria. <https://twunroll.com/article/1357758771272028160>

⁶⁰ <https://aoav.org.uk/explosiveviolence/nigeria/>

⁶¹ <https://aoav.org.uk/explosiveviolence/nigeria/>

⁶² Pearson, Elizabeth. 2018. ‘Wilayat Shahidat: Boko Haram, the Islamic State, and the Questions of the Female Suicide Bombers’ in Boko Haram, Beyond the Headlines. Combatting Terrorism Center.

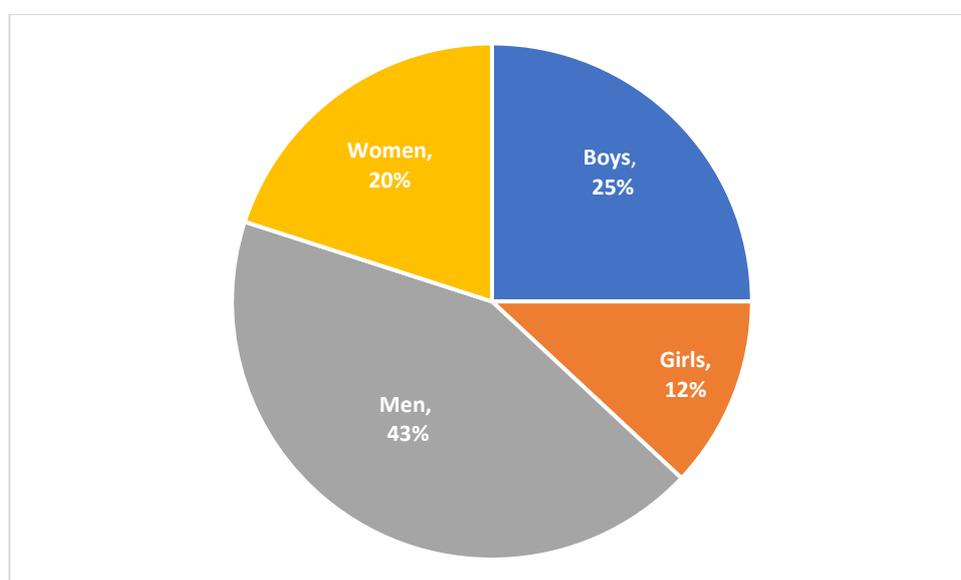
⁶³ UNMAS. 2021. Victims of explosive ordnances accidents in North East, Nigeria: Dashboard.

⁶⁴ Interview with Chief J2, MNJTF, March 2022.

Table 1: Number of IED-related incidents, civilian fatalities and injuries compiled by UNMAS in Nigeria since 2018⁶⁵

Year	No. of IED-related incidents	No. of civilian fatalities	No. of injuries
Jan-Feb 2022	9	26	7
2021	267	163	155
2020	215	125	150
2019	141	157	217
2018	246	307	597
Total	878	778	1,126

Chart 1: Civilian deaths due to explosive ordnance accidents in Northeast Nigeria 2016-2021 (UNMAS)



2.6 Other regional trends of interests

While this section explores national dynamics that affect arms control in the four countries of the LCB, there are a myriad more to be considered in the immediate region and beyond. While it has not been possible to analyse all aspects in this paper, the following should be taken into consideration by policy makers when designing or implementing arms control efforts in the LCB:

- The evolution of violent extremist groups in Mali; their increasing operations in Niger; and their demand for weapons, ammunition and explosives
- The shift in French military policy towards the Sahel
- Mali withdrawal from G5 Sahel
- The evolution of the situation in Libya, particularly with regards to weapons dynamics, foreign armed groups and mercenaries
- The development of conflicts between Zaghawa and Arabs, and Arabs and Massalit, on the border between Chad and Western Darfur, Sudan
- The evolution of the situation in the Central African Republic

⁶⁵ Nigeria – IED Dashboard. UNMAS. These are compiled from data provided by INSO.

3. Arms Control normative Framework

Any arms control initiatives, including as part of DDR processes in the Lake Chad Basin, should be designed and implemented in line with relevant international, regional, and national legal frameworks. Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria are party to a number of regional and international arms control instruments, but each country differs both in terms of the level of implementation they have achieved and regarding the status of national legal frameworks.

The four countries belong to two different regional organizations; Niger and Nigeria are members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), while Cameroon and Chad are part of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). Both organizations are at a different stage in their implementation of regional arms control strategies. For its part, the *ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), and their Ammunition and other Related Materials* dates back to 2006 and parties to it have been progressing implementation since then. Meanwhile, the *Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and all Parts and Components that can be used for their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly* – also referred to as ‘the Kinshasa Convention’ – was adopted in 2010 with less ground covered so far, given inter alia the shorter time frame. This translates into a discrepancy in national arms control capacity across the region, but also presents opportunities in terms of regional cooperation since ECCAS member states are able to draw on the experience of their ECOWAS counterparts.

Table 2: Ratification of regionally and international legally binding arms control instruments

	Arms Trade Treaty	Firearms Protocol	Ottawa Convention	ECOWAS Convention	Kinshasa Convention
Cameroon	X (2018)		X (2002)		X (2015)
Chad	X (2015)		X (1999)		X (2012)
Niger	X (2015)		X (1999)	X (2007)	
Nigeria	X (2013)	X (2006)	X (2001)	X (2009)	

3.1 How are these international instruments relevant to conventional arms control in the Lake Chad Basin?

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)⁶⁶ aims at regulating the international arms trade with a range of obligations, including in relation to transfers (exports, imports, brokering, transit and transshipments) and the development of national control systems. LCB states engage in the international arms trade primarily through imports. Particularly relevant provisions include obligations with regards to import controls, international cooperation – including for risk assessments and end-user controls – and recordkeeping to mitigate the risk of diversions.

Built on the principles of the UN Programme of Action on SALW, the **ECOWAS Convention**⁶⁷ and the **Kinshasa Convention**⁶⁸ require State Parties to prevent, combat, and eradicate trafficking in small

⁶⁶ <https://unoda-web.s3-accelerate.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/English7.pdf>

⁶⁷ <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/research/disarmament/dualuse/pdf-archive-att/pdfs/ecowas-convention-on-small-arms-and-light-weapons-their-ammunition-and-other-related-materials.pdf>

⁶⁸ Kinshasa Convention: ‘Central African Convention for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and All Parts and Components That Can Be Used for Their Manufacture, Repair and Assembly’ <https://www.unrec.org/docs/Kinshasa.pdf>

arms and light weapons, their ammunition and components, and to strengthen control over the manufacture, repair, trade, movement, transfer, possession, and use of SALW. Of particular significance, both conventions include provisions for possession by civilians, marking and tracing, registration, recordkeeping, collection, destruction, stockpile management, and border control. Each convention also mandates the destruction of illicit SALW and ammunition and institutionalizes regional cooperation. ECOWAS and a number of State Parties consider IED components as ‘other related materials’ and therefore subject to the Convention.

The Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition (**the Firearms Protocol, or ‘the Protocol’**)⁶⁹ should be interpreted together with the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. State Parties to the Protocol agree to adopt and implement the strongest possible legislation to prevent, investigate, and prosecute offences stemming from the illicit manufacturing and trafficking of firearms and their ammunition. Specific measures include the confiscation, seizure, and destruction of firearms illicitly manufactured or trafficked, as well as the marking of firearms and the maintenance of records to identify and trace them.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (**The Ottawa Convention**)⁷⁰ is the primary international agreement that bans antipersonnel landmines. The Convention applies to both manufactured and improvised anti-personnel mines like those that Boko Haram has been using (see section 4.4.3.3). Cameroon and Niger are also parties to the **Convention on Conventional Weapons and to its Amended Protocol II** on the Prohibitions and Restrictions in the Use of Mines, Booby Traps and Other Devices.

Other non-binding international instruments are to be taken into consideration by national authorities and their partners, including the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALW in All Its Aspects and the International Instrument to Enable States to Identify and Trace, in a Timely and Reliable Manner, Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons. Policymakers and practitioners should also ensure that interventions are in line with the Lusaka Master Road Map and support the ‘Silencing the Guns’ initiative undertaken as part of the African Union Agenda 2063.

3.2 Overview of the primary national arms control legislation

In 2016, **Cameroon** adopted Law n° 2016/015 regulating arms and ammunition. Specifically, this law regulates the manufacturing, import, export, cession, acquisition, transit, transfer, tracing, possession, and carrying of arms and munitions⁷¹. The document is not fully in line with the provisions of the Kinshasa Convention or the ATT, which was ratified by Cameroon in 2018. Cameroon is currently working on developing its legal framework and is planning to build its National Control List this year⁷².

⁶⁹ <https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/Publications/A-RES%2055-255/55r255e.pdf>

⁷⁰ <https://geneva-s3.unoda.org/static-unoda-site/pages/templates/anti-personnel-landmines-convention/APLC%2BEnglish.pdf>

⁷¹ <https://www.juriafrica.com/lex/loi-2016-015-14-decembre-2016-25713.htm>

⁷² National control lists allow for the categorization of materiel subjected to transfer controls and thus restricted to access by non-state actors.

Chad is yet to update its national legislation, which dates back to 1968 – Ordinance n°26/PG-INT of 28 October 1968 - regulating the import, transportation, selling and possession of firearms and ammunition.⁷³

Similarly, the backbone of the current national arms control legislation in **Niger** dates back to 1963 and does not reflect the international and regional obligations of the country. The Nigerien authorities have completed a full review of the relevant national legislation and drafted a comprehensive **Firearms Bill** which has been stuck in the legislative process for several years. The new bill includes provisions that are critical to the design and implementation of any effective weapons and ammunition management framework; the adoption of which is now a matter of urgency given rising violence fuelled by widely-available weapons and ammunition⁷⁴. The Nigerien National SALW Control Commission is planning to organize a national validation workshop on the draft law in October 2022.

The current basis of **Nigeria's** national arms control legislation still resides in the **Firearms Act** of 1959, with subsidiary laws adopted in 1984, 1990, and 2004. Although the legal framework includes provisions on the manufacture, possession, use and transfer of arms and ammunition, it is outdated and does not, for instance, domesticate obligations with regards to the ECOWAS Convention or the ATT. There is a critical lack of any legal provisions covering marking, recordkeeping, and tracing. For several years now, the Nigerian authorities have been working on updating the Act to support efforts to prevent and fight against the illicit possession of weapons and to establish a comprehensive and effective national WAM system. A draft bill is currently being reviewed by the Senate and underwent a second review in February 2022⁷⁵.

In addition to the normative arms control framework, all initiatives implemented where armed groups designated as terrorist organisations (AGDTOs) operate should comply with applicable international law, which includes international human rights law, international humanitarian law (IHL), international criminal law (ICL), international refugee law⁷⁶, and international counter-terrorism frameworks.

3.3 Technical guidance

In line with the international arms control legal framework, the UN has been supporting the development of several sets of guidance relevant to WAM work in DDR processes. These include:

The United Nations Integrated DDR Standards⁷⁷

The IDDRS comprises a comprehensive and detailed set of gender-mainstreamed policies, guidelines, and procedures for undertaking DDR. The document offers a UN-system wide guidance and covers over 30 thematic areas. They include two modules on arms-control issues: IDDRS 4.10 on disarmament and IDDRS 4.11 on transitional weapons and ammunition management.

⁷³ Alpers, Philip, Marcus Wilson and Amélie Rossetti. 2020. Tchad — Faits, chiffres et lois sur les armes à feu. Sydney School of Public Health, The University of Sydney. GunPolicy.org, <https://www.gunpolicy.org/fr/firearms/region/chad>

⁷⁴ Interview with the former Permanent Secretary of the Niger National SALW Commission, March 2022.

⁷⁵ Vanguard. 2022. Senate moves to repeal an Act to stop proliferation of illegally possessed firearms. 8 February. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/02/67yrs-after-senate-moves-to-repeal-an-act-to-stop-proliferation-of-illegally-possessed-firearms/>

⁷⁶ For more information on this, see International DDR Standard 2.11 on The Legal Framework for UN DDR.

⁷⁷ See <https://www.unddr.org/operational-guide-iddrs/>

The International Ammunition Technical Guidelines⁷⁸

The IATG aim at reducing the dual risks of unplanned explosions and diversion from ammunition stockpiles. The IATG consist of 12 volumes which provide practical guidance for a ‘through life’ approach to ammunition management and offer a risk reduction level approach that allows for adaptation according to the setting⁷⁹.

The Modular Small-arms-control Implementation Compendium⁸⁰

MOSAIC includes 24 modules that provide practical guidance on all aspects of small arms and light weapons control, including legislation, programme design, and operational support. MOSAIC Module 2.30 focuses specifically on Small Arms and Light Weapons Control in the Context of DDR⁸¹.

4. Illicit arms trafficking

The mapping of routes and trafficking networks in the Lake Chad Basin is beyond the scope of this study and would require significant field research. Therefore, this section sheds light on some of the broader dynamics and trends.

Porous borders, transnational criminal networks, and conflict dynamics in each of the four countries in the LCB fuel trafficking across the region. It is therefore critical that national, regional, and international policymakers understand and address the following trends.

4.1 Diversions from national stockpiles

Diversions from national stockpiles are one of the primary sources of illicit weapons and ammunition in circulation in the region. In addition to attacks by NSAGs against security positions, which result in diversions of substantial quantities of materiel (see Section 4.4.3.1), arms and ammunition from national stockpiles also ‘leak’ for a number of other reasons. Corruption is widespread in the region, with procurement and distribution after import as particularly vulnerable points along the weapons and ammunition management life cycle. For instance, in the context of efforts by the Nigerian authorities to stem corruption, it was reported that between 2011 and 2015, USD 15 billion had been stolen by senior defense officials through fraudulent arms procurement deals⁸². Although the methodology of data analysis is not clear, according to the annual report of the Auditor General of Nigeria for the year 2019 (published in 2021) stated that within the police alone, 178,459 firearms are unaccounted for, including 88,078 AK-type rifles⁸³.

⁷⁸ See <https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/ammunition/iatg/>

⁷⁹ For additional guidance on utilizing the IATG in conflict-affected and low-capacity environments see <file:///C:/Users/savde/Downloads/utilizing-the-international-ammunition-technical-guidelines-in-conflict-affected-and-low-capacity-environments-en-749.pdf>

⁸⁰ <https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/mosaic/>

⁸¹ See <https://front.un-arm.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/MOSAIC-02.30EV1.0.pdf>

⁸² Reuters. 2016. Nigeria, Vice President says \$15 billion stolen in arms procurement fraud. 2 May <https://www.reuters.com/article/nigeria-corruption-idINKCNOXT1UK?edition-redirect=in>

⁸³ Office of the Auditor General for the Federation. 2021. Auditor General’s annual report – Non compliance for 2019. <https://www.oaugf.ng/docman/34-augf-annual-report-non-compliance-2019/file>

4.2 Trafficking from past and current conflict zones

Tracing efforts indicate that a significant number of illicit weapons and ammunition in circulation in the wider region have been ‘recycled’ from past conflicts or transferred from active conflict zones. According to the Small Arms Survey⁸⁴, trafficking patterns differ in the wider region. Sizeable shipments of small arms are transported from active conflict zones by highly organised networks specialised in arms trafficking, particularly north of the Niger River. Trafficking tends to be less organised south of the river, involving numerous local intermediaries and following traditional commercial and trafficking routes. Opportunistic traffickers transport arms in combination with other types of illicit activities, including cigarettes and narcotics, wildlife trade, and human trafficking.

4.3 Craft production

Despite prohibitions under national legislation, each of the four LCB states has a long and vivid tradition of craft weapons production. Craft weapons are reported to be used by hunters and vigilante groups, and this type of materiel has featured in a range of seizures made by national authorities of the region from Boko Haram⁸⁵. In Cameroon, national legislation stipulates that craft firearms are non-classified and forbidden. However, the authorities recognize that there is a need to discuss a framework and the potential regulation of the making and possession of these weapons since they are used widely throughout the territory⁸⁶. In Nigeria, while the unlicensed production of firearms is prohibited under the Firearms Act, traditional gunsmiths operate throughout the country and are fabricating increasingly sophisticated weapons. Craft weapons represented 80 per cent of the weapons collected from civilians during the amnesty organised in Benue State in 2016.⁸⁷

4.4 Weapons and ammunition possession by non-state actors

This section provides an overview of non-state armed actors present in the Lake Chad Basin area, including Boko Haram and vigilante groups, as well as civilians, all of whom participate in the illicit circulation and possession of weapons and ammunition and should therefore be the focus of arms control initiatives.

In the LCB, analysis of the possession, type, and management of the arms and ammunition in circulation is severely limited. However, the following section should be taken into consideration when designing any arms control initiatives, including disarmament or TWAM activities as part of DDR processes.

4.4.1 Civilian possession

All analysts interviewed for this study agreed that weapons ownership among the civilian population in the LCB is relatively common, but almost exclusively among men. However, there is a general lack of quantitative data available to support this assessment. Many civilians have traditionally owned

⁸⁴ This paragraph is based on the findings from Mangan, Fiona and Matthias Nowak. 2019. The West Africa-Sahel Connection: Mapping Cross-border Arms Trafficking. Small Arms Survey.

<https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-BP-West-Africa-Sahel-Connection.pdf>

⁸⁵ Nowak, Matthias and Andre Gsell. 2018. Handmade and deadly: craft production of small arms in Nigeria. Small Arms Survey. [SAS-BP-Nigeria-craft-weapons.pdf \(smallarmssurvey.org\)](https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-BP-Nigeria-craft-weapons.pdf)

⁸⁶ Interview with SALW focal point of Cameroon, February 2022.

⁸⁷ Lewis, Mike and Himayu Shiotani. 2020. WAM Country Insight: Nigeria. UNIDIR.

hunting rifles, while possession of manufactured weapons has been on the rise due to years of rebellion, localised armed conflict, and the increased threat of terrorism⁸⁸.

Illicit arms possession has also fuelled the rise of armed banditry, which afflicts several areas in the Lake Chad Basin. Security forces regularly seize firearms – generally manufactured small arms such as assault rifles, as well as ammunition – in their efforts against such crimes⁸⁹.

While many civilians possess weapons in areas affected by Boko Haram, communities differ in their approach to weapons ownership. While some are culturally attached to the principle of arms ownership, others would be keen to disarm if sufficient security were to be provided by the State⁹⁰. To build a more accurate picture of weapons possession on the ground, and implement evidence-based arms control activities, SALW surveys should be conducted by national authorities with the support of international partners if necessary⁹¹. These surveys seek to determine the nature and extent of the distribution and impact of small arms and light weapons, as well as perceptions around small arms and light weapons ownership, armed violence, and the capacity to respond to the challenges posed by these weapons. This process would also enable the collection of gender- and age-disaggregated data to better understand the extent, purpose, and impact of illicit arms ownership.

It is legally possible to own a firearm in each of the four countries of the LCB with a license procured from the national authorities and conditions vary from country to country. Further research on the ground would enable the collection of quantitative data on weapons licenses to provide insight into the scale of licit vs illicit gun ownership and demographics. According to 2018 data, 2,000 people have legally registered weapons in Niger – just a small fraction of the total ownership figure⁹². In both cases – licit and illicit – the vast majority of weapons are owned by men. Similarly, in Cameroon, statistics released in 2021 by the Ministry of Territorial Administration indicate that authorities had delivered 3,800 licences to carry firearms, a small amount when compared to the overall number of weapons reported to be in circulation⁹³.

4.4.2 *Vigilante groups*

Vigilante groups are common across the four countries and have proliferated in the Lake Chad Basin in response to the increasing threat of terrorism and the lack of formal security provisions. They include a wide range of entities which differ in terms of objectives, membership, governmental oversight, and equipment. Thousands of groups exist in the area and are composed mostly of men, with some including women in Nigeria⁹⁴. While they play a role in the fight against Boko Haram, vigilante groups are often accused of human right abuses and some, particularly in Nigeria, have turned into gang organizations reflecting the challenge for authorities in controlling these activities⁹⁵. Controlling these groups and their firearm ownership represents a significant challenge for the

⁸⁸ Interview with former Permanent Secretary of Niger National SALW Commission, March 2022.

⁸⁹ See for instance Atafa, Ahmadou. 2022. Niger: un gang de bandits armes démantelé a Zinder. 6 April. <https://levenementniger.com/niger-un-gang-de-bandits-armes-demantele-a-zinder/>

⁹⁰ Interview with the former Permanent Secretary of the Niger National SALW Commission, March 2022.

⁹¹ For guidance on SALW surveys see MOSAIC 05.10 on Conducting small arms and light weapons survey

⁹² De Tessieres, Savannah. 2017. At the Crossroads of Sahelian Conflicts. Insecurity, Terrorism and Arms Trafficking in Niger. Small Arms Survey. <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-SANA-Report-Niger.pdf>

⁹³ SBB. 2021. Official stats report 23,000 illegal weapons in circulation in Cameroon. <https://www.stopblablacam.com/society/2605-6609-official-stats-report-23-000-illegal-weapons-in-circulation-in-cameroon>

⁹⁴ ICG. 2022. Managing Vigilantism in Nigeria: Near-term Necessity. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/308-managing-vigilantism-nigeria-near-term-necessity>

⁹⁵ Idem

authorities in the long term and a strategy should be put in place for dealing with the issue as soon as possible.

While most groups were previously armed with bladed weapons, an increasing number have been acquiring firearms, including craft and manufactured weapons in certain areas⁹⁶. Further, vigilantes have been the targets of many of Boko Haram's retaliation attacks and groups in various areas around the LCB are seeking to acquire more weapons and ammunition in response.

Due to the history of insurgencies, the central authorities in the region have a somewhat ambiguous relationship with vigilante groups, as they are often established along community lines and difficult to control. In Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, vigilante groups are provided with some support – including communications equipment – by the authorities, with the exception of weapons or ammunition. This reflects the key role played by these groups in the defence against terrorist groups. Except for specific groups in Nigeria, vigilante groups generally do not have any kind of legal status and weapons ownership is largely uncontrolled. Finally, as a strong community-based security actor, they themselves are sometimes involved in controlling weapons ownership and use in their communities and regularly seize weapons from armed bandits.

While not officially endorsed by the authorities in **Niger**, the 'comités de vigilance' are widely accepted and have consistently played an informal role in policing. In the Lake area, the Nigerien authorities provided them with logistical support at first, in order to protect communities against Boko Haram; however, due to the challenges of controlling them, they are now mostly used as a source of intelligence given their extensive networks and positioning. Information they have provided has helped security forces secure numerous arrests, though this trend has been criticized by human rights organisations due to what is seen as a lack of effort to corroborate the allegations. Vigilante groups in Niger are mostly equipped with blunt weapons though some – including Fulani and Arab groups – are armed with assault rifles and already carry weapons to protect their herds⁹⁷. While the legalisation of weapons ownership or the disarming of vigilante groups seem unlikely in Niger, the National SALW Commission has plans to, with the support of the Gendarmerie, record gun ownership to facilitate future potential weapons collection or other control initiatives⁹⁸.

In **Chad**, the 'comités de vigilance' are mostly armed with blunt weapons. They cooperate closely with the security forces and play a key intelligence gathering role. They have reportedly been provided with communications equipment but not with weapons⁹⁹.

In **Cameroon**, self-defence groups have existed for many decades and, with the rise of Boko Haram, the creation of 'comités de vigilance' was encouraged by the local authorities who issued a formal decree in 2014¹⁰⁰. Under the responsibility of local traditional or administrative authorities, they work closely with the security forces, particularly with regards to intelligence gathering and are often the

⁹⁶ The design of tailored weapons control initiatives aiming at supporting the regulation of vigilante groups would require further research on the weapons and ammunition management mechanisms and capacity of groups.

⁹⁷ De Tessieres, Savannah. 2017. At the Crossroads of Sahelian Conflicts. Insecurity, Terrorism and Arms Trafficking in Niger. Small Arms Survey. <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-SANA-Report-Niger.pdf>

⁹⁸ Interview with the former Permanent Secretary of the Niger National SALW Commission, March 2022.

⁹⁹ Interview with UN staff, March 2022.

¹⁰⁰ ICG. 2018. Extrême-Nord du Cameroun: nouveau chapitre dans la lutte contre Boko Haram <https://www.crisisgroup.org/fr/africa/central-africa/cameroon/263-extreme-nord-du-cameroun-nouveau-chapitre-dans-la-lutte-contre-boko-haram>

first line of defence against attacks in areas where military positions are absent¹⁰¹. Members are selected from local communities and the vast majority are armed with bladed or craft weapons, with some owning manufactured firearms¹⁰². Civil society organisations have conducted training for some *comités* on national and international weapons control norms¹⁰³.

Vigilante groups are a key security-provider in **Nigeria** where thousands exist throughout the country. While most are not regulated, some have been established by state governments with members vetted by the authorities. In some cases, support is provided through monthly stipends, as is the case for a portion of members of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF)¹⁰⁴. Most vigilantes carry hunting rifles; some are keen to procure better firearms and others have reportedly been provided with assault rifles discreetly in contravention of Nigerian gun control legislation¹⁰⁵. While they have played a key role in responding to a crucial lack of formal security, the rapid spread of vigilante groups over the past decade has resulted in significant security challenges, including their transition to gang-style armed groups, various human rights abuses, and increased tensions between communities.

4.4.3 *Arsenals of Boko Haram*

Representatives of national authorities interviewed on the subject of sources of materiel used by Boko Haram repeatedly cited Libya as a primary source alongside acquisitions and support from other stakeholders outside the African continent. However, different conclusions emerged from the research conducted for this study. To fight illicit trafficking and acquisition of weapons, ammunition and related material by terrorist groups, policy makers should have a clear understanding of the sources of supply, types of diversions, and modes of acquisition by these groups. The following section provides some key insights.

4.4.3.1 Sources of arms and ammunition held by Boko Haram

In 2017, the Small Arms Survey published a study based on the analysis of materiel seized from Boko Haram by the Nigerian security forces. This indicated that while some of the materiel was left over from past rebellions, most was diverted from governmental arsenals. This included some materiel that was trafficked out of Libya following the collapse of state control over stockpiles, but it was mostly comprised of materiel looted after attacks on security positions, including weapons, ammunition, vehicles, uniforms, and communications equipment¹⁰⁶. Ammunition retrieved from the group was very similar to that collected from civilians, including cattle herders and armed bandits in the area, indicating that these different actors procure from the same channels, or trade and seize materiel between themselves.

In 2019, Conflict Armament Research (CAR) documented and traced a sample of arms and ammunition recovered from militants associated with Boko Haram in southern Niger. The results of this analysis

¹⁰¹ Interview with UN staff, March 2022.

¹⁰² Interview with representative of civil society, February 2022.

¹⁰³ Interview with representative of civil society, April 2022.

¹⁰⁴ ICG. 2022. Managing Vigilantism in Nigeria: Near-term Necessity. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/308-managing-vigilantism-nigeria-near-term-necessity>

¹⁰⁵ Ibid

¹⁰⁶ See de Tessieres, Savannah. 2017. At the Crossroads of Sahelian Conflicts. Insecurity, Terrorism and Arms Trafficking in Niger. Small Arms Survey.

supported the above outlined trends¹⁰⁷. According to CAR, Boko Haram procures locally and on an opportunistic basis in the area where it is very easy to acquire weapons and ammunition¹⁰⁸.

- **Diversions from the respective national stockpiles of LCB security and defense forces:** At least 17 per cent of the weapons documented by CAR were drawn from governmental holdings; the vast majority of which came from Nigeria and more anecdotally from Chad and Niger. 23 per cent of the ammunition was traced back to Nigerian stockpiles. The amount of materiel captured by Boko Haram during attacks or after positions are abandoned is significant and explains in part the resilience and strength of the group. According to Safeguarding Security Sector Stockpiles (S4), more than 500 attacks were conducted by Boko Haram against security positions between 2015 and 2021, at least a hundred of which involved ‘significant’ losses of materiel¹⁰⁹.

The diversion of weapons from security forces is a sensitive issue and difficult to broach; nevertheless, the MNJTF is aware of the matter and national defence forces have made efforts to prevent it. To protect their troops and prevent looting, the Nigerian army has reorganized its deployment in the north-east with the establishment of ‘super-camps’ (see Section 2.4) and reinforced protective measures, particularly around heavy ammunition stocks which Boko Haram seeks to exploit for components utilized in the construction of IEDs¹¹⁰. Cameroon has also been adopting the ‘super-camp’ approach (see section 2.4).

Diversions also occur through corruption (see section 4.1). There have been several reported cases of military personnel selling weapons and ammunition to Boko Haram. In Nigeria, several soldiers have been tried for the alleged theft and sale of ammunition to Boko Haram¹¹¹. Some cases of such corruption have also been reported in Niger, although these have been rare. In 2013, for example, security officers in the Diffa region reportedly stole and sold on newly acquired Chinese-produced type 56-1 assault rifles after having chiseled away the serial numbers. The officers were prosecuted and the crime was judged as an act of terrorism¹¹².

- **Proliferation from pre-2011 Libyan stockpiles** is the second most prevalent source of materiel according to the sample traced by CAR (at least 12% of the weapons sample, including iconic AK 103-2s). According to weapons trafficking experts interviewed for this research, diversions of materiel from Libya mostly occurred between 2011-14 after the fall of Muammar Gadhafi through the looting of national storage facilities. Despite reports of sporadic seizures of materiel coming out of Libya¹¹³, experts believe that there is no current major trafficking activity from Libya to

¹⁰⁷ See Conflict Armament Research. 2022. Weapons supplies fuelling terrorism in the Lake Chad Crisis.

[file:///C:/Users/savan/Downloads/Weapon-supplies-fuelling-terrorism-in-the-Lake-Chad-crisis-English%20\(3\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/savan/Downloads/Weapon-supplies-fuelling-terrorism-in-the-Lake-Chad-crisis-English%20(3).pdf) CAR documented 185 weapons and 6000 units of ammunition.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with CAR Senior Researcher, March 2022.

¹⁰⁹ See Berman, Eric. 2021. The Management of Lethal Materiel in Conflict Settings: existing challenges and opportunities for the European Peace Facility. IPIS <https://ipisresearch.be/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Eric-Berman-The-Management-of-Lethal-Materiel-in-Conflict-Settings.pdf> “‘Significant’ is defined as an incident in which one of the following three criterion is met: (a) 10 or more weapons are seized; (b) 1,000 or more rounds of ammunition are seized; or (c) 1 or more gun trucks or armoured vehicles are seized.’

¹¹⁰ Interview with Nigerian Senior military official, March 2022.

¹¹¹ Associated Press. 2016. Nigeria Military : Some Officers Selling Arms to Boko Haram

<https://www.voanews.com/a/nigerian-military-some-officers-selling-arms-to-boko-haram/3493038.html>

¹¹² See de Tessieres, Savannah. 2017. At the Crossroads of Sahelian Conflicts. Insecurity, Terrorism and Arms Trafficking in Niger. Small Arms Survey.

¹¹³ See for instance Koaci. 2021. Niger: grosse saisie d’armes et de missiles en provenance de la Libye a Ingal. 15 April. https://www.koaci.com/article/2021/04/15/niger/politique/niger-grosse-saisie-darmes-et-de-missiles-en-provenance-de-la-libye-a-ingal_150304.html

Niger or Chad¹¹⁴. Trafficking from Libya has declined significantly since 2014, mostly due to the depletion of Gadhafi's SALW stockpiles, reinvigorated levels of national demand in light of renewed conflict in Libya, and increased levels of surveillance in the region with the deployment of Operation Barkhane. Recent seizures in the North of Niger however indicate that some illicit transfers from Libya are still occurring using pick-up trucks¹¹⁵.

- **Leftovers from other conflicts in Africa:** CAR has also identified weapons coming from other former areas of conflict, including Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Rwanda, all countries which have previously undertaken DDR processes with disarmament components.
- **Other sources:** 11 per cent of weapons documented by CAR were manufactured in North Africa, including relatively recent Algerian-made AK-type rifles (2000s) as well as some ammunition (2009-10). Chains of custody and diversion points of weapons and ammunition remain unclear. Finally, some weapons shared distinct features with those recovered from al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and their allies in West Africa, indicating that the groups may overlap or use the same supply mechanisms.

Box 2: Does ISWAP receive arms and ammunition from ISIS central?

At this stage, there is no evidence suggesting any direct supply of materiel from ISIS central to ISWAP. However, the former has been transferring money to ISWAP on an irregular basis, including to procure materiel¹¹⁶. ISIS money has been used to buy looted materiel from ISWAP fighters. Purchasing looted materiel from fighters after raids – while they could sell it on elsewhere – allows ISWAP to secure control and to provide its fighters with some additional income. According to reports, ISIS central even issued a price list¹¹⁷.

4.4.3.2 Typology and current needs

Weapons used by ISWAP mostly include small arms and light weapons and related ammunition¹¹⁸. The group also uses *technicals*, which are pick-up trucks mounted with light weapons such as heavy machine guns or armaments from infantry fighting vehicles. While unable to compete with the better-equipped ISWAP, the Bakura group remains quite strong on the Lake due to its fleet of motorized

¹¹⁴ Exchange with UN specialist, February 2022. See also Bish, Alexandre. 2021. Soldiers of Fortune : The future of Chadian fighters after the Libyan ceasefire. Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime.

¹¹⁵ Interview with a representative of Nigerien security forces, 2022

¹¹⁶ Interview with ICG Senior Researcher, March 2022.

¹¹⁷ Foucher, Vincent. 2020. The Islamic State Franchise in Africa: Lessons from Lake Chad. International Crisis Group. <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/iswap-29oct20.pdf> This practice is in line with 'the caliphate's interpretation of Islamic legal principles, fighters who seize money or property are supposed to share four fifths of the loot among themselves and give one fifth to the organisation.'

¹¹⁸ Interview with Chief J2, MNJTF, March 2022. Interview with CAR Senior Researcher, February 2022. For a detailed typology of materiel in service, or recovered from, Boko Haram, see Berman, Eric. 2021. The Management of Lethal Materiel in Conflict Settings: existing challenges and opportunities for the European Peace Facility. IPIS <https://ipisresearch.be/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Eric-Berman-The-Management-of-Lethal-Materiel-in-Conflict-Settings.pdf>. See also Calibra Obscura. 2021. The Weaponry of IS West Africa. For instance <https://www.calibreobscura.com/the-weaponry-of-is-west-africa-attrition-continues/>

canoes mounted with light weapons¹¹⁹. Although most weapons used by Boko Haram appear to be industrially manufactured, craft weapons also regularly feature in seizures¹²⁰.

Table 3: Typology of the main manufactured SALW and ammunition used by Boko Haram

	Weapons	Ammunition
Small Arms	Assault rifles [majority AK-type, as well as FN FAL, G3, Galil] Sniper rifles (Dragunov) General Purpose Machine Guns (PK/PKM, FN Mag)	7.62x39mm (vast majority) 7.62x51mm 7.62x54mmR
Light weapons	Heavy machine guns Mortar launchers RPG launchers	12.7x99mm 12.7x108mm 14.5x114mm RPG rockets Mortar bombs (60, 81, 82 mm)

Weapons and ammunition held by Boko Haram are typically acquired locally, either through battlefield capture or purchasing diverted material on the illicit market (see Sections 4.1 and 4.4.3.1). This includes weapons that have been manufactured in a range of countries, primarily in Asia and Europe¹²¹. Most of the materiel from the sample examined by CAR (see Section 4.4.3.1) was produced in China, reflecting both their importance as a commercial partner for national authorities in the region and the need for African states to further reinforce their arms control systems to prevent diversions to terrorist and criminal groups (see Section 4.1).

With regards to heavy weapons, Boko Haram has seized significant quantities of material, mostly from the Nigerian army which conducted several ‘clearance operations’ to recover and neutralise them. Over the past few months, the MNJTF has recovered armoured personal carriers and artillery pieces¹²². Although the capture of heavy materiel is symbolically important and a way to dampen the morale of national security forces while boosting that of the insurgents, the group does not currently tend to retain and use such weaponry¹²³. In fact, heavy materiel is logistically difficult to move around and requires trained personnel to operate and maintain, which leads to heavy weapons and vehicles being abandoned or destroyed. This is further exacerbated by a portion of the materiel’s suboptimal conditions. ISWAP has a shortage of spare parts and ammunition and is also impacted by the fuel crisis which is affecting all of northeast Nigeria¹²⁴.

¹¹⁹ ICG. 2022. After Shekau: Confronting Jihadists in Nigeria’s North East.

¹²⁰ Nowak, Matthias and Andre Gsell. 2018. Handmade and deadly: craft production of small arms in Nigeria. Small Arms Survey. [SAS-BP-Nigeria-craft-weapons.pdf \(smallarmssurvey.org\)](https://smallarmssurvey.org/SAS-BP-Nigeria-craft-weapons.pdf)

¹²¹ For more detailed information on the origin of the materiel in service or recovered from Boko Haram, see Berman, Eric. 2021. The Management of Lethal Materiel in Conflict Settings: existing challenges and opportunities for the European Peace Facility. IPIS <https://ipisresearch.be/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Eric-Berman-The-Management-of-Lethal-Materiel-in-Conflict-Settings.pdf>.

¹²² Interview with Chief J2, MNJTF, March 2022.

¹²³ Idem. As part of its communication strategy, ISWAP releases footage of systems and vehicle captured from security forces see for instance <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6-l8j37v-w>

¹²⁴ DW. 2022. Nigeria hit by fuel crisis. 25 March. <https://www.dw.com/en/nigeria-hit-by-fuel-crisis/av-61250658>

Overall, the tactic of ISWAP has evolved in response to the strengthening of the Nigerian Air Force (NAF). Following the acquisition of new aircraft, the NAF made more than 5,000 sorties in the northeast and northwest of the country in 2021¹²⁵. Rather than large-scale attacks, ISWAP has shifted to smaller operations, often using motorbikes, roadblocks, and ambushes, requiring small arms, light weapons such as RPGs, ammunition, and IEDs¹²⁶.

According to the MNJTF, the main concern for Boko Haram currently is the acquisition of ammunition for small arms given the continuing demand. Strengthened control and management of ammunition, as well as initiatives to counter ammunition trafficking are therefore critical¹²⁷.

4.4.3.3. Boko Haram's improvised weaponry

Over the years, Boko Haram has developed their technical capabilities and has begun using captured military materiel to make armored vehicles and rockets, as well as fabricating improvised launchers, including for 122mm rockets. Howitzers and multiple rocket launchers have been installed on pick-up trucks and Armored Personnel Carriers (APC) parts grafted onto technicals¹²⁸.

Boko Haram has also developed strong capabilities in the construction and use of Vehicle Born IEDs (VBIEDs) and IEDs (see Box 1), which are integral to the group's tactic. IEDs are mostly placed on roads and are primarily victim-operated using pressure-plates with some limit use of command wires, and function as improvised anti-personnel mines.

While the MNJTF regularly destroys IED factories, there is little public information on the IED components and sources of materiel used by Boko Haram. Although international information management tools exist, data related to IED components is generally collected on a national basis by national security agencies and international organisations rather than regionally, hindering a collaborative understanding of the phenomenon. Research by the Small Arms Survey indicates that components used in IEDs in Niger and Cameroon are mostly sourced in Nigeria, including detonators and cords¹²⁹. For explosives, the group reportedly uses materiel harvested from heavy ammunition, including mortar bombs and anti-tanks mines, such as PRB M3 mines. Overall, there is a general lack of a cohesive regional approach to addressing the proliferation and use of IEDs in the Lake Chad Basin, including the management and regulation of potential precursors to IEDs¹³⁰.

4.4.3.4. Management of weapons

There is limited information on the ways in which Boko Haram manages its weapons and ammunition and additional research on this specific issue is therefore recommended.

Several officials from national authorities interviewed for this project explained that fewer defectors were turning in weapons due to strict weapons management rules from Boko Haram leadership who would be responsible for storing materiel when not deployed on operations. While fighters may

¹²⁵ Orizu, Udora. 2021. Insurgency: NAF embarks on 3700 missions in North east in 10 months. 17 November. Thisday. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2021/11/17/insurgency-naf-embarked-on-3700-missions-in-n-east-in-10-months/>

¹²⁶ Interview with Chief J2, MNJTF, March 2022. See also ICG. 2022. After Shekau: Confronting Jihadists in Nigeria's North East.

¹²⁷ Interview with Chief J2, MNJTF. March 2022.

¹²⁸ For detailed documentation of Boko Haram's improvised engineering, see Calibra Obscura. 2021. The Weaponry of IS West Africa: Curious Capabilities. <https://www.calibreobscura.com/the-weaponry-of-is-west-africa-pt-5-curious-capabilities/>

¹²⁹ Interview with Senior Researchers of Small Arms Survey, March 2022.

¹³⁰ UNDP/Crisis Bureau Recovery Solution and Human Mobility Mine Action Team. 2021. Mine Action Virtual Assessment Mission to the Sahel.

invoke this claim when defecting without a weapon, there is not sufficient information available to support it. Analysts believe that ISWAP's arms and ammunition management capacity is limited; however, given the reported presence of ISIS central mentors within ISWAP and the last year's return of dozens of fighters who travelled abroad to fight with ISIS, this is likely to become more organised over time¹³¹. While the exact degree of support from ISIS central is difficult to determine, ISWAP has clearly become more important strategically following its loss of power in Iraq and Syria. This has been illustrated through ISWAP featuring on 20 of the 52 covers of ISIS's weekly magazine, *Al-Nabal*, in 2021¹³².

5. Weapons and ammunition management capacity

Box 3: What is Weapons and Ammunition Management (WAM)?

WAM is the oversight, accountability, and management of arms and ammunition throughout their life cycle, including the establishment of frameworks, processes, and practices for the safe and secure acquisition, stockpiling, transfer, tracing and disposal of materiel. WAM focuses not only on SALW but also on a broader range of conventional weapons, including ammunition and artillery¹³³.

In an effort to prevent and address illicit trafficking and unplanned explosions, national authorities in the LCB have been working to reinforce their WAM capacity. National coordination structures, financial capacity, operational priorities, needs, and levels of international technical support vary from country to country, as do the legal frameworks that govern this important activity (see section 3).

This section provides insight into efforts and gaps with regards to national coordination mechanisms in each of the LCB countries, as well as physical security and stockpile management (PSSM), marking, tracing and disposal, based on available information. More information is provided on Niger and Nigeria since the two are States Party to the ECOWAS Convention – the first regional SALW control instrument in Africa – and have been developing and reporting on their national arms control systems for over 15 years. The Convention has also led to a wide range of capacity building and awareness campaigns at both strategic and operational levels, promoting international cooperation. As part of these efforts, Niger and Nigeria have conducted comprehensive national WAM Baseline Assessments with the support of UNIDIR and its regional partners, and developed national roadmaps to strengthen their national frameworks.¹³⁴ Such national WAM baseline assessments provide detailed information

¹³¹ Interview with Senior ICG researcher, February 2022. Interview with Chief J2, MNJTF, March 2022. ICG. 2022. *After Shekau: Confronting Jihadists in Nigerian's North East*.

¹³²¹³² ICG. 2022. *After Shekau: Confronting Jihadists in Nigerian's North East*. ICG uses data collated by Jihad Analytics.

¹³³ UNDPO and UNODA. 2021. *Effective Weapons and Ammunition Management in a Changing DDR Context: A handbook for UN DDR practitioners; IDDRS Module 4.11 on transitional weapons and ammunition management, 2020; The Role of Weapon and Ammunition Management in Preventing Conflict and Supporting Security Transition*, UNIDIR. 2019.

¹³⁴ See UNIDIR. 2020. « Série d'Aperçu des Pays, Le Niger, La Gestion des Armes et des Munitions », Country Insight Series, Nigeria, Weapons and Ammunition Management. Full reports are available at UNIDIR, upon request.

about processes and mechanisms of national WAM systems at strategic and operational levels, as well as their strengths and weaknesses¹³⁵.

While Cameroon and Chad have also been reinforcing their respective arms control frameworks, they are part of ECCAS, which has a regional SALW instrument that is still in the early stages of implementation (see section 3). Both countries' institutional WAM frameworks are also less developed as they do not yet have national arms control commissions and therefore face significant challenges in coordinating WAM at both the national level and with international stakeholders and partners.

5.1 Cameroon

National coordinating mechanism: While there is a SALW focal point within the Ministry of External Relations, authorities plan to create a National SALW Commission to better coordinate efforts aimed at fighting illicit weapons trafficking and enhancing the national WAM system¹³⁶. Cameroon has taken a leadership role in the implementation of the Kinshasa Convention and organised the first 'Conference of State Parties' in 2018. Cameroon has also been working on its implementation of the ATT with the support of the EU ATT Outreach programme. In compliance with the ATT, the national authorities plan to build a National Control List, providing definitions of categories of items which are to be subject to national transfer controls.

Stockpile management: During an interview, the Cameroonian focal point for SALW control within the Ministry of External Relations and a representative of the Ministry of Defence mentioned several key areas which the authorities would like to reinforce, namely: 1) recordkeeping; 2) marking; 3) storage facilities; 4) destruction of surplus ammunition and weapons; and 5) tracing.

5.2 Chad

National coordinating mechanism: Chad does not yet have a national coordinating institution; however, there is a focal point within the *Direction of Reserve Strategique* (DRS), the part of the Chadian Army that deals with weapons and ammunition management. Given that the Government is already active in driving forward arms control initiatives, the establishment of a central institution would serve as an important mechanism for coordinating activities at a national level and as an entry point for international partners.

Stockpile management: In 2017, Chad developed national PSSM standard operating procedures (SOPs) based on the IATG and MOSAIC¹³⁷ guidelines, with the support of UNREC¹³⁸; however, there is little information available on the actual implementation of these SOPs. According to a representative of the DRS, there are capacity needs within stockpile management, including marking and destruction. The Chadian authorities are working with Mine Advisory Group (MAG) to address both of these issues. MAG has been working in Chad since 2004, first on humanitarian demining and risk education and subsequently supporting the national authorities with a range of WAM-related issues, including the

¹³⁵ See <https://www.unidir.org/publication/reference-methodology-national-weapons-and-ammunition-management-baseline-assessments>

¹³⁶ Interview with a representative of civil society working on arms control issues, February 2022. Interview with the SALW focal point of the Ministry of External Relations of Cameroon, February 2022.

¹³⁷ Referred to as 'ISACS' at the time

¹³⁸ <https://www.unrec.org/default/index.php/fr/updates/411-chad-sop>

refurbishment and construction of storage facilities and provision of mobile armouries¹³⁹. MAG has also been assisting the authorities with recordkeeping and, to a lesser extent, destruction, and has provided a range of trainings on WAM.

5.3 Niger¹⁴⁰

National coordinating mechanism: Niger was the first ECOWAS country to set up a National SALW Commission. Niger has become a key partner for western countries in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel and has received support on WAM from various specialised NGOs, bilateral partners, and international organizations. The Commission therefore plays a key role in ensuring national ownership and that support is coordinated and reflective of national strategic priorities.

Recordkeeping: All security agencies have an accounting system in place, but while registers at HQ-level are computerized, most field units still use paper records, rendering the centralisation of data very difficult. National databases for state- and civilian-owned materiel are crucially lacking, in addition to those for lost, stolen, and seized materiel.

Marking: The marking of materiel held by defence and security forces was launched in 2017 with more than 7000 weapons marked to date (currently held in reserve in Niamey). With support from UNODC, the marking campaign is now also focusing on the *Garde Nationale*. Management software has been developed with support from the Ivorian National SALW Commission which will assist the creation of a national central weapons management database(s). UNODC has also been providing legal support to magistrates in the treatment of firearms in judicial investigations¹⁴¹. The implementation of a marking campaign allows for the building of a national inventory of what is actually held in stocks and the identification of obsolete, hazardous, and surplus materiel. Regional instruments include precise provisions on what markings should be included.

Stockpile management: Most WAM efforts have focused on stockpile management to date. In particular, efforts have prioritized the construction and refurbishment of storage facilities with support from international partners. While all defence and security force configurations have significant needs with regards to storage facilities, border areas vulnerable to terrorist attacks are being prioritized. In order to reinforce their stockpile management procedures and practices, the authorities are planning to develop national PSSM norms and facilitate the drafting of SOPs specific to each security agency.

Managing captured and seized weapons: Security and defence forces seize weapons and ammunition and hold them in facilities where they are generally neither destroyed nor stored according to international standards. Due to limited resources, some Nigerien security agencies – like others in the region – tend to integrate seized weapons and ammunition into their own arsenals. Law enforcement agencies tend to regard the capture of illicit weapons as an end in itself, rather than an investigative opportunity.

¹³⁹ <https://www.maginternational.org/what-we-do/where-we-work/chad/>

¹⁴⁰ Information contained in this section is mostly based on publications from the Small Arms Survey, UNIDIR as well as interviews with national arms control practitioners. In particular, de Tessieres et al. 2020. Weapons and Ammunition Management Country Insight : Niger. UNIDIR. <https://unidir.org/publication/weapons-and-ammunition-management-country-insight-niger>

¹⁴¹ Interview with Senior UNODC officer, March 2022.

Disposal: Destruction is the main disposal method in Niger. There are large quantities of materiel currently awaiting destruction in security force storage facilities. While the country has the equipment to cut firearms, they have very limited means for destroying ammunition for light and heavy weaponry and would require additional support in this regard.

5.4 Nigeria¹⁴²

National coordinating mechanism: In terms of institutional coordination, in 2021, a National Centre for the Control of SALW (NCCSALW) was created under the remit of the Office of the National Security Adviser to serve as the institutional mechanism for policy guidance, research and monitoring of all aspects of SALW in Nigeria¹⁴³. It also supports the implementation of the requirements of the ECOWAS Convention to establish national SALW commissions. A strong national coordination mechanism is key to an efficient national WAM system which, in Nigeria, includes 15 arms-bearing security and intelligence agencies. To date, each agency seems to have its own WAM-related procedures and mechanisms, including for seized weapons or those voluntarily surrendered. In 2022, six regional coordinators were appointed to head up each of the six regional offices that the NCCSALW is currently in the process of setting up.

The national authorities implemented a national WAM Baseline Assessment in 2016 with support from UNIDIR and partners. Most of the options identified and agreed upon by the Nigerian authorities to reinforce their national WAM national system remain valid today¹⁴⁴.

Marking: Although a requirement of the ECOWAS Convention, marking is not a common practice within Nigeria. Some security agencies use existing 'butt markings' for registration with different colours depending on which agency completes the process. The NCCSALW is currently in the process of sensitizing security and defence forces to the benefits of marking and plans to organise a seminar in 2022 to explain the process to relevant security and intelligence agencies. Ahead of launching the marking campaign, the Centre plans to establish a national database for weapons ownership and is currently working with the relevant agencies to secure the necessary supporting data¹⁴⁵.

Recordkeeping: There is no centralized database of all SALW held by security agencies and licensed civilians; recordkeeping practices vary across security agencies. This complicates the management of national stocks, as well as identification of the origin of illicit weapons. Ammunition is generally recorded by caliber, type, and quantity but not by lot number, which impedes traceability and proper management. While some registers are electronic, many still use paper. Setting up a national database is one of the priorities of the NCCSALW.

Disposal: Despite the fact that the Nigerian armed forces have the capacity to destroy weapons and ammunition through cutting, burning, and open-pit detonation, there is an issue of surplus management which presents a threat both in terms of diversions and unplanned explosions.

¹⁴² Information contained in this section is mostly from an interview with a Senior representative of the National Center for the Control of SALW as well as publications from UNIDIR. In particular Lewis, Mike and Shiotani, Himayu. 2020. Weapons and Ammunition Management Country Insight: Nigeria.

<https://unidir.org/publication/weapons-and-ammunition-management-country-insight-nigeria>

¹⁴³ Interview with the Arms Registrar, NCCSALW, March 2022.

¹⁴⁴ For the recommendations, see Lewis, Mike and Shiotani, Himayu. 2020. WAM country insight: Nigeria.

UNIDIR. <https://unidir.org/publication/weapons-and-ammunition-management-country-insight-nigeria>

¹⁴⁵ Interview with the Arms Registrar, NCCSALW, March 2022.

Tracing: While the NCCSALW has not received or sent any international tracing requests, they are currently working on the domestic tracing of items; checking whether weapons seized by government forces belong to any national agencies¹⁴⁶.

Stockpile management: The most lethal unplanned explosion at a munitions site to date in the world¹⁴⁷ occurred at the Ikeja storage facility in 2002, killing 1,500 people and injuring more than 5,000. Since then, the Nigerian authorities have focused considerable effort on refurbishing facilities and training personnel. MAG is one of the main partners to the NCCSALW on this matter and the Centre is seeking additional support in building large-scale armories¹⁴⁸.

Manufacturing: Nigeria is the only country in the LCB which manufactures weapons and ammunition. According to the site of the Defence Industry Corporation of Nigeria (DICON), the plant in Kaduna produces SALW (including shotguns, handguns, assault rifles, sub-machine guns, general purpose machine guns, RPG and mortar launchers, as well as ammunition for small arms)¹⁴⁹. DICON was originally established in 1964 to supply the Nigerian armed forces; however, very little information exists in the public domain about the organization's marking and recordkeeping practices. Ammunition produced by DICON was documented in seizures made against Boko Haram combatants in Niger, likely sourced from materiel seized during earlier raids against Nigerian forces¹⁵⁰.

5.5 Gaps and opportunities

- **National WAM Baseline Assessments** could support the coordination and strengthening of WAM policies, processes, and institutions in both Cameroon and Chad. Particularly if undertaken in parallel with the development of national coordinating mechanisms, the implementation of such an assessment would facilitate a better understanding of current strengths and needs and enable both the design of a national strategy and the mobilisation of relevant governmental bodies. WAM baseline assessments serve as strong evidence for the development of national WAM strategies.¹⁵¹
- **Mainstreaming gender throughout all WAM policies, processes and activities** is key to ensuring that programming is effective, inclusive, and sustainable. In particular, women are widely underrepresented in WAM technical roles. For this reason, LCB authorities and their partners should encourage their meaningful participation in this field in line with the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda.
- **WAM-related efforts lack coordination at a national level** where security agencies often continue to work in silos. National coordinating mechanisms are therefore key and should be given the

¹⁴⁶ Interviews with the Arms Registrar, NCCSALW, March 2022.

¹⁴⁷ Berman, Eric and Pilar Reina. 2014. Unplanned Explosions at Munitions Sites (UEMS). Small Arms Survey. https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/UEMS%20Handbook%202014%20content%20October_2015%20WEB_final.pdf. The SAS updates data on UEMS on an annual basis.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Arms Registrar, NCCSALW, February 2022.

¹⁴⁹ <https://dicon.gov.ng/#>

¹⁵⁰ De Tessieres, Savannah. 2017. At the Crossroads of Sahelian Conflicts. Insecurity, Terrorism and Arms Trafficking in Niger. Small Arms Survey. <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-SANA-Report-Niger.pdf>

¹⁵¹ See UNIDIR. 2020. A Reference Methodology for National Weapons and Ammunition Management Baseline Assessments. <https://www.unidir.org/publication/reference-methodology-national-weapons-and-ammunition-management-baseline-assessments>. Available in English, French and Spanish.

mandate, means, and resources to oversee the implementation of WAM policies at strategic and operational levels. Strong national coordination mechanisms are also key to the development of regional or international information management systems.

- **Recordkeeping, including national databases for state-owned and civilian-owned weapons and ammunition**, is key to any proper management of materiel and remains a consistent need expressed by national authorities. However, the development and maintenance of databases is a heavy undertaking since it requires several elements which are not straightforward to secure: sharing of accurate data on holdings by security agencies; nationwide software and IT resources; and reliable electricity and internet connection. Regional organisations have been supporting such initiatives, including ECOWAS and RECSA in the LCB; however, without an exhaustive approach to address each of the component parts, results will be limited.
- **Destruction of obsolete and surplus ammunition** remains a priority in several countries whose authorities have raised their concerns with regards to deadly unplanned explosions that have occurred in other African states, as well as the risk of diversions for terrorism purposes. Cameroon, Chad, and Niger are all actively looking for international technical support on this particular issue.
- Niger has received the **most support from international partners** – in relation to assessments, marking, recordkeeping, PSSM etc – including from bilateral actors, regional organizations, and specialised NGOs. The other three countries in the LCB have received limited support to date; however, collaboration with international partners appears to be steadily increasing.

Interviews conducted with international support providers indicate that the defence and security forces in Cameroon, Chad, and Nigeria often see defence issues as a sovereign matter related to national security and are therefore slow to build trust. They also cited a lack of national coordination on the issue and difficulty navigating complex national institutional systems as other factors that have impeded collaboration. However, several individuals spoke of an increasing openness on the part of the authorities, with more identified entry points, including, for instance, mine action and capacity development to mitigate the threat of IEDs. International partners also seem to be cautious to engage in geographical zones with active military operations, as there are often reports of human rights violations by security forces.

Conversely, one Cameroonian arms control practitioner explained that international support is very much focused on the Sahel and West Africa for strategic reasons and said that donors and operational agencies should look to increase their presence in Central Africa.

- The **national military budgets** in each of the four countries in the LCB have undergone **significant increases** in response to levels of insecurity, including for the purchase of new military equipment. Several countries, including Niger for instance, have become key partners for western countries in the fight against terrorism and have also received training as well as arms and ammunition as part of military cooperation. The situation is unlikely to change in the near future; reinforcing WAM capacity is therefore key as the security sectors in each of these countries expands.

6. DDR and civilian arms control initiatives in the Lake Chad Basin

Illicit weapons ownership in each of the four countries bordering Lake Chad is high among civilian and non-State actors, with trafficking prevalent to some degree throughout. In light of this, a number of initiatives have been put in place aimed at addressing the issue, primarily focused on either forced or voluntary collection programmes. Three countries – Chad, Nigeria and Niger – also have strong experience in implementing DDR programmes and are familiar with the challenges associated with weapons and ammunition management (WAM) in such processes.

6.1 Past DDR programmes in the Lake Chad Basin

With the exception of Cameroon, the other countries bordering Lake Chad all have past experience of conducting DDR programmes. Programmes undertaken in the 1990s and 2000s in Chad and Niger aimed to implement peace agreements between national governments and rebel groups. They included a strong disarmament component, reflecting the wish of central governments to bring weapons back under their control. However, large quantities of armaments remained in circulation, and this continues to fuel conflict in the wider region. In Chad, DDR programmes and security sector reform initiatives did not succeed in addressing grievances with regard to political and economic participation, further perpetuating the conflict dynamic. On 8 August, the Chadian authorities signed a peace agreement with rebel groups, including provisions on DDR. The design and implementation of the disarmament component will be complex and sensitive but critical to its overall success (see Section 2.2).

In response to the violent militancy that had plagued the Niger Delta for over three decades, the Nigerian authorities launched the 'Post-Amnesty Programme (PAP)' in 2009, which allowed militants who freely handed over their weapons to be reintegrated without facing prosecution¹⁵². Under the terms of the PAP, ex-militants would receive a formal education, small business loans, and a monthly stipend of USD 400 (the minimum wage in Nigeria was around USD 60 per month at the time). While the initiative contributed to the reduction of armed violence, the level of financial incentive had a negative impact on reintegration¹⁵³. Conditional access to this lucrative programme resulted in groups of youths purchasing weapons on the illicit market. For a number of Nigerian analysts, this 'money for weapons' approach proved detrimental to peace and security in the Delta¹⁵⁴. Access to benefits and demands for their continuation became an important point of tension and ultimately triggered renewed violence.

6.2 Fighting illicit trafficking of SALW and ammunition

In addition to DDR, the four countries bordering Lake Chad have designed and implemented a range of initiatives to address the illicit circulation of weapons, including reinforcing their legal frameworks (see Section 3), building awareness and sensitizing communities to the issue, rolling out voluntary weapons collection programmes, enacting forced disarmament measures, enhancing national and cross-border agency coordination, and managing seizures of weapons. However, precise coordination

¹⁵² Tarila Ebiede et al. 2019. DDR : Analysing the outcomes of Nigeria's Post Amnesty Programme.

¹⁵³ See The Conversation. 2017. How amnesty efforts in the Niger Delta triggered new violence .

<https://theconversation.com/how-amnesty-efforts-in-the-niger-delta-triggered-new-violence-74085>

¹⁵⁴ See also Oluwaniyi, Oluwato. No date. Post-amnesty programme in the Niger Delta: Challenges and prospects. https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/39221-doc-175_the_post-amnesty_programme_in_the_niger_delta_challenges_and_prospects.pdf

mechanisms are still being developed and strategic planning is limited, with a range of different governmental bodies implementing interventions in parallel and often in silos.

- **Collecting weapons and ammunition**

Each of the four LCB countries has a long and proven track record in weapons collection through a range of approaches, including voluntary collections, forced disarmament, and incentive-driven programmes. Interventions listed here include examples implemented over the past decade.

In the face of repeated rebellions and DDR programmes, **Chad** organized several small arms and light weapons collection initiatives throughout the country. Following the collapse of the Gadhafi regime in Libya and the looting of Libyan government arsenals, traffickers from Chad played an important role in the proliferation of Libyan weapons into the Sahel. In 2013, the Chadian government, with support from the US, even organized a buy-back scheme in order to address the proliferation of Man-Portable Air-Defense Systems (MANPADS) from Libyan stockpiles¹⁵⁵. While buy-back programmes are considered to be bad practice and are not used in the LCB region anymore, this particular initiative focused on very specific items in limited circulation and contributed to the destruction and removal from circulation of a number of these systems that are actively sought by terrorist groups.

In July 2021, the Government of Transition in Chad created a *Commission Mixte de Désarmement*, responsible for ‘recovering all illegally-held weapons, arresting those individuals that hold them and transferring them to the judicial system’¹⁵⁶. The Commission appears to be engaged in a process of forced disarmament of civilians, which some civil society representatives have described as counter-productive. As of February 2022, the Commission had ‘recovered’ more than 4000 weapons in various parts of the country – as well as an unknown quantity of ammunition – with AK-type rifles being the most common¹⁵⁷. The materiel has been recorded and stored and is waiting to be destroyed¹⁵⁸.

In **Niger**, which has over 20 years’ experience of weapons collection and disarmament efforts, the National SALW Commission has coordinated a number of arms and ammunition collection programmes throughout the country, the bulk of which took place before 2013 while an amnesty on the surrender of illicit arms was still in place. The Commission continues to run information campaigns across the country in an effort to sensitize the population to the risks related to the possession of illicit weapons and the efforts being made to combat illicit trafficking.

Past weapons collection efforts in Niger have had limited impact. Firstly, large numbers of surrendered weapons and ammunition were obsolete, with people preferring to hold on to weapons that were serviceable. Secondly, both the incentives offered and promises made by the Government in exchange for the surrender of weapons have not always been realized, which has discouraged participation in the scheme. Similarly, the 2003 amnesty which protected individuals that were willing to surrender their weapons from prosecution is no longer in force and people are more reluctant to participate.

National experts cautioned that weapons collections and disarmament activities may not be adequate or could even be harmful to the population in areas prone to armed violence and terrorism, and where

¹⁵⁵ See reports of UN Panel of Experts on Libya

¹⁵⁶ République du Tchad. Arrêté N°0028/CMT/PCMT/2021 Portant Mise en place et Composition d’une Commission Mixte de Désarmement. 15 July 2021.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with the person in charge of arms and ammunition management, Présidence du Conseil Militaire de Transition of Chad, February 2022.

¹⁵⁸ idem

state security provision is limited¹⁵⁹. In Niger, the SALW Commission started to engage with territorial brigade commanders in an effort to identify, map and register possession and availability of arms and ammunition without actually seizing any materiel¹⁶⁰.

In **Nigeria**, the national authorities have been launching voluntary disarmament campaigns at national and State level through disarmament committees established by State governors in parallel to an amnesty. With the assistance of UNDP, national authorities have also engaged in a range of sensitization efforts for communities to encourage their support and participation. Once amnesties have been exhausted, the State increases the pressure and induces forced disarmament measures¹⁶¹.

- **Inter-agency and cross-border cooperation**

One of the main issues identified by national and international experts interviewed as part of this research is addressing the porous borders and weak controls that facilitate trafficking. This is - and will continue to be - a challenge for all four countries, particularly with regards to borders surrounding Nigeria, where a large portion of the illicit weapons, ammunition and IED components circulating in the LCB originate.

Information sharing between security agencies at the national level remains a challenge. In Nigeria, for instance, more than 15 different government security bodies and agencies are involved in security provision. Cameroon, with support from INTERPOL, is currently building its internal information-sharing system between security and defense forces, including on IED issues¹⁶². Meanwhile in Niger, the authorities, with support from UNODC, have created SOPs for their security agencies on information sharing and the collection and use of admissible evidence from the field, including in relation to weapons and ammunition, which can be used to prosecute terrorist offences before national courts¹⁶³.

Weapons collections and seizures constitute a major source of information regarding the types, sources, and supply routes of illicit arms and ammunition. Tracing illicit weapons is essential not only to establish at what stage materiel was diverted to the illicit sphere, but also to prevent future diversions or trafficking. While authorities in each of the four countries are increasingly using domestic tracing requests to ascertain whether weapons seized or found at a crime scene are from their own stockpiles, regional and international tracing efforts remain very limited in scope¹⁶⁴.

Tackling cross-border trafficking networks requires close transnational intelligence cooperation, which the MNJTF embodies. On the bilateral level, Cameroon and Nigeria enjoy the most robust levels of collaboration on security matters established through the Transborder Security Committee, which provides a framework for security cooperation and information exchange¹⁶⁵. The two countries share several similar threats, including from Boko Haram, separatist militant groups, and the trafficking of weapons and other goods.

¹⁵⁹ Interview with former Permanent Secretary of the Niger National SALW Commission, March 2022. See also de Tessieres, Savannah. 2017. *At the Crossroads of Sahelian Conflicts. Insecurity, Terrorism and Arms Trafficking in Niger*. Small Arms Survey. <https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/SAS-SANA-Report-Niger.pdf>

¹⁶⁰ Interview with the former Permanent Secretary of the Niger National SALW Commission, March 2022.

¹⁶¹ Lewis, Mike and Himayu Shiotani. 2020. *WAM Country Insight: Nigeria*. UNIDIR.

¹⁶² Interview with international WAM specialist, February 2022.

¹⁶³ Interview with Senior UNODC officer, March 2022.

¹⁶⁴ Interviews with National SALW experts, February and March 2022.

¹⁶⁵ Agence Ecofin. 2021. *Le Cameroun et le Nigeria s'engagent dans une coopération active contre les djihadistes et les séparatistes*.

Finally, the involvement of border communities remains key in information gathering and prevention. In Nigeria, the authorities, with support from UNDP, have conducted a range of projects focused on sensitizing border communities to the risks of SALW trafficking¹⁶⁶.

- **Managing recovered weapons**

Most security agencies in each of the four countries – army, police, gendarmerie, customs, special forces – seize weapons and ammunition; however, the lack of any clear and coherent national procedures and verification processes results in materiel unaccounted for and heightened risks of further diversions. Interviews conducted with stakeholders in several countries also revealed that, due to their limited resources, security forces tend to absorb seized weapons and ammunition into their own arsenals for their own use¹⁶⁷. Mismanagement of seizures also impedes effective tracing and hinders information-gathering needed for a deeper understanding of trafficking patterns.

With regards to materiel seized from Boko Haram, there is a notable lack of recordkeeping, handling procedures, and transparency across the four countries. The MNJTF, with the support of the LCB, the African Union, and the Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies (BICC), has been developing SOPs¹⁶⁸ to improve and harmonize practices in managing recovered weapons and ammunition across the sectors and to support tracing efforts. Recovered weapons include those seized or collected during patrols, cordon-and-search operations, securing areas, DDR initiatives, as well as those confiscated from combatants who surrender or are captured.

The MNJTF has limited capacity to manage seized materiel as well as data related to it. The Task Force HQ does not have a weapons intelligence unit and does not centralize or analyze all data related to seizures by the different sectors¹⁶⁹. Individual sectors manage seizures according to their national procedures and legislation and, in theory, should transfer materiel to the governmental authorities in charge of dealing with illicit materiel¹⁷⁰. Sectors have limited resources and practices differ from one to another, with some storing materiel indefinitely and some transferring it to other agencies or destroying it. For instance, the Nigerian NCCSALW has requested that each of the 15 arms-bearing national agencies provide them with a list of illegal weapons and ammunition in their custody, including those seized from Boko Haram. The Centre plans to request the transfer of this materiel to existing storage facilities secured by the military and then destroy the materiel¹⁷¹. In Niger, the SALW Commission and the defence forces are currently planning the creation of several ‘transitory armories’ along the Nigerien MNJTF areas of operation in order to centralize the storage and efficient management of recovered weapons and ammunition¹⁷².

Further analysis of recovered weapons would provide significant support to efforts in tackling and preventing diversions and illicit trafficking to terrorist groups, which is a primary objective of the MNJTF.

¹⁶⁶ Lewis, Mike and Himayu Shiotani. 2020. WAM Country Insight: Nigeria. UNIDIR.

¹⁶⁷ Interview with governmental expert, Cameroon, March 2022. See also de Tessieres, Savannah. 2017. At the Crossroads of Sahelian Conflicts. Insecurity, Terrorism and Arms Trafficking in Niger. Small Arms Survey.

¹⁶⁸ Multinational Joint Task Force SOP on the management of recovered small arms and light weapons in the MNJTF area of operation. Draft, 2021.

¹⁶⁹ MNJTF has four sectors: Sector 1 in Mora (Cameroon), Sector 2 in Bagasola (Chad), Sector 3 in Monguno (Nigeria) and Sector 4 in Diffa (Niger).

¹⁷⁰ African Union. 2021. Report of the consultative workshop on the development of SOPs for the MNJTF on recovered SALW

¹⁷¹ Interview with the Arms Registrar, NCCSALW, March 2022.

¹⁷² Interview with the former Permanent Secretary of the Niger National SALW Commission, March 2022.

6.3 Disengagement, Disassociation, Reintegration and Reconciliation programmes in the Lake Chad Basin

In parallel to military operations aimed at countering Boko Haram, each of the four LCB countries participating in the MNJTF have set up defector programmes, pursuant to United Nations Security Council Resolution 2349 (2017). These programmes encourage national authorities to develop and implement disarmament, demobilization, de-radicalization, rehabilitation, and reintegration initiatives (see Table 4). As part of the RSS, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria are currently implementing Disengagement, Disassociation, Reintegration, and Reconciliation Programmes (DDRR), though with different approaches, levels of funding, coordination mechanisms, procedures and legal frameworks. Women and children make up a large part of the participants in these defector programmes¹⁷³.

Table 4: Operative clauses related to DDR of UNSC Resolution 2349 (2017)

	Disarmament, demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration, and accountability
29	Encourages Governments in the Region, in collaboration with regional and sub-regional organisations, relevant United Nations entities and other relevant stakeholders, and, in the context of this resolution, to develop and implement a regional and coordinated strategy that encompasses transparent, inclusive, human rights-compliant disarmament, demobilisation, de-radicalisation, rehabilitation and reintegration initiatives, in line with strategies for prosecution, where appropriate, for persons associated with Boko Haram and ISIL, drawing upon regional and international best practice and lessons learned; and urges relevant national and through them local actors, to develop and implement appropriate plans for the disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration, and where appropriate prosecution of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) and other community-based security groups;
30	Stresses the need to pay particular attention to the treatment and reintegration of women and children formerly associated with Boko Haram and ISIL , including through the signing and implementing of protocols for the rapid handover of children suspected of having association with Boko Haram to relevant civilian child protection actors, as well as access for child protection actors to all centres holding children, in accordance with applicable international obligations, and the best interests of the child;
31	Urges Governments in the Region to develop and implement consistent policies for promoting defections from Boko Haram and ISIL and for deradicalising and reintegrating those who do defect, and to ensure that there is no impunity for those responsible for terrorist acts , and abuses and violations of international human rights and violations of humanitarian law; and invites the international community to extend its support to the Governments in the Region in developing and implementing their disarmament, demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies and policies;
32	Calls upon concerned governments to urgently develop and implement, consistent with international law, in particular international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law as applicable, vetting criteria and processes allowing for the prompt assessment of all persons who have been associated with Boko Haram and ISIL in the custody of authorities, including persons captured or surrendered to authorities, or who

¹⁷³ In Cameroon for instance, as of January 2022, 1523 people were held in CNDDR centres, including 327 women and 521 children. République of Cameroun – CNDDR. 2022. Effectifs des XC dans les centres CNDDR au 26 janvier 2022.

are found in refugee or IDP camps, and to ensure that children are treated in accordance with international law; and encourages Governments in the Region, within the context of this resolution, to prosecute those responsible for terrorist acts, where appropriate, and to develop both rehabilitation programmes in custodial settings for detained terrorist suspects and sentenced persons, and reintegration programmes to assist persons either released from custody having served their sentence or those who have completed a rehabilitation programme in an alternative setting, in order to facilitate reintegration into their communities;

In 2018, **Cameroon** established the National Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Committee¹⁷⁴, which is responsible for managing the DDR of former Boko Haram fighters and ex-combatants from other armed groups, including by: a) receiving and disarming former fighters; b) collecting, listing and storing weapons and ammunition voluntarily handed over by former fighters; and c) taking appropriate measures to destroy these weapons, munitions and explosives, in coordination with other relevant government departments.

In **Chad**, with support from the IOM, the authorities have designed and implemented a programme of ‘Disengagement, Disassociation, Reintegration et Reconciliation (DDRR)’ and in 2019 established the ‘Coordination chargée du Programme de DDRR’, an inter-ministerial committee, as well as a management committee or ‘Comité de Pilotage’¹⁷⁵. Unlike the other LCB countries, Chad does not have a centre through which to ‘process’ low-risk disengaged combatants; instead, the government relies on local and traditional authorities to support their reintegration. This has led to an estimated 6,000 defectors who have joined communities¹⁷⁶.

As of 2021, **Niger** had rehabilitated more than 200 ex-fighters from Boko Haram through their National Programme for Defectors with support from the IOM, UNDP and UNICEF. Participants go through a process of ‘deradicalisation’ and receive support for economic rehabilitation¹⁷⁷.

In **Nigeria**, in 2016, the authorities launched Operation Safe Corridor to encourage defections by providing multidisciplinary deradicalisation programming and reintegration opportunities to ‘low risk clients’¹⁷⁸. Run by the Nigerian military, the programme has processed more than a thousand people previously associated with Boko Haram. Only 20-25 per cent of beneficiaries are former fighters, with the majority being villagers and farmers who stayed in areas under Boko Haram control to protect or feed their families and were treated as defectors when they eventually fled¹⁷⁹. Following the mass surrender of former Boko Haram members and associates, the Borno authorities have advanced the implementation of parallel interventions, under the “Borno Model for Integrated Management of the Mass Exits”.

6.3.1 Treatment of weapons in national DDR processes

LCB DDRR national processes do not include weapons eligibility criteria as a precondition to participate. The aim of the authorities is to encourage as many combatants and people associated

¹⁷⁴ See Decree 2018/719 of 30 November 2018 establishing the CNDDR

¹⁷⁵ See Arrêté N 0016/PR/2019 of 14 juillet 2019 portant mise en place d’une coordination chargée du programme de DDR.

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Head of Comité de Pilotage DDR, Cameroon, March 2022.

¹⁷⁷ Niger. 2021. Institutional architecture and coordination for DDR/SPRR. PPT Presentation.

¹⁷⁸ Nigeria. 2021. Institutional architecture and coordination of disengagement, disassociation, reintegration and reconciliation programme (DDRR) and PCVE programme in Nigeria. PPT Presentation.

¹⁷⁹ Foucher, Vincent. 2021. Getting Boko Haram fighters to defect. ICG.

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/getting-boko-haram-fighters-defect>

with Boko Haram as possible, to defect. Eligibility criteria are therefore rather minimal. Most analysts and national experts interviewed for this project believe that including weapons-related eligibility criteria in DDR processes would be detrimental to their success. Nonetheless, further transparency is required in terms of the procedures for collecting, handling, and destroying weapons and ammunition.

Cameroon is the only country that includes Disarmament as part of its DDR process¹⁸⁰. However, despite having clear WAM provisions in the mandate of the DDR programme and having assigned Committee staff to be in charge of this activity, there do not appear to be any disarmament or weapons-related initiatives implemented to date.

The study found that there is a general lack of focus on military materiel in DDR planning and procedures across national programmes, which is having a negative impact on the broader process. Management of the weapons and ammunition of disengaged combatants has not been given due consideration at the policy, strategic, or operational levels, leaving a significant gap in the implementation of DDR initiatives. For instance, there was a notable surge of defections in 2021 after the death of Shekau, when at least 2,000 JAS fighters surrendered themselves to the authorities in Nigeria and Cameroon¹⁸¹. There is no information available about what happened to the armaments of these former combatants.

One national expert from a DDR coordination body explained: *‘When designing the programme, we were advised not to include a focus on weapons, I am not sure why’*. Similarly, another government arms control specialist said: *‘There are issues with defectors and their weapons – we ignore them while we could be killing two birds with one stone; ie. exploiting the defector programme to achieve some degree of arms control at the same time’*. National authorities of the four countries may consider exchanging perspectives and experiences in this area, potentially through exchanges with national counterparts in other regions on the continent in order to understand the benefits of WAM integration into DDR processes.

Other governmental experts explained that the majority of participants in DDR programmes are not actually combatants (see Section 6.3, above) and that those who had combat roles do not typically surrender with weapons. Reasons for this include the absence of weapons eligibility criteria but also the understandable reluctance of disengaged combatants to approach traditional leaders or security forces with a weapon to request their integration into DDR programmes. Moreover, defectors may be reluctant to present themselves as ‘active’ combatants since high-risk members of Boko Haram are generally prosecuted.

Nevertheless, an unknown number of former fighters have defected and surrendered weapons in each LCB country, with questions remaining as to what happened to the weaponry of those who did not. In Cameroon, civil society organizations and international observers explained that, while some combatants have surrendered their weapons, others have buried theirs. This is a source of concern for host communities where former fighters are reintegrated, as well as those living in the vicinity of programme centres¹⁸². The lack of any clear information and transparency with regards to the weaponry of defecting fighters further increases the stigma associated with being a ‘reformed’ member of a terrorist group and the resulting suspicion of communities towards them, which presents a major obstacle to their reintegration and to the overall success of DDR initiatives. Civil society

¹⁸⁰ See Decree 2018/719 of 30 November 2018 establishing the CNDDR

¹⁸¹ ICG. 2022. After Shekau: Confronting Jihadists in Nigeria’s North East.

¹⁸² Interview with representatives of civil society organisations in Cameroon, March 2022. Interview with representative of international organisation, April 2022.

representatives explained that traditional authorities are first in line when dealing with combatants disengaging from the group but do not have guidance on what to do with their arms and ammunition when confronted with the issue.

In Nigeria, following challenges faced in the Delta ‘Post-Amnesty Programme’ (see above), the authorities do not want to offer incentives for surrendering weapons. According to one Nigerian official, this would have an impact nationally on the way they deal with non-state armed actors in the various crises affecting the country (see Section 2.4). However, while there is no official incentive for handing weapons over, there is a tacit understanding that combatants defecting with weapons will have a better chance of entering the programme, noting that there are currently not enough places to grant access to all those who volunteer.¹⁸³

6.4 Gaps and opportunities

- The LCB countries are currently implementing a variety of **weapons collection efforts** which **should be coordinated and underpinned by a robust national WAM plan**. Before implementing any programming, the authorities should have processes and resources in place to deal with the accounting, storage, and disposal of materiel.
- Aside from sensitisation and awareness-building efforts, this research did not identify any additional ongoing community-based WAM initiatives in the areas affected by Boko Haram. Given the limited levels of governance in these areas, **community-based organisations**, including those that provide security, have assumed a more active role and **should therefore be engaged as early as possible in the design and implementation of any TWAM initiatives** as part of DDR processes. Under this premises, synergies should be promoted between TWAM interventions and the implementation of community-violence reduction (CVR) projects (see section 1.1), as well as the provision of support to programmes for disengaged combatants.
- Gender-sensitive disarmament operations are proven to be more effective in addressing the impact of the illicit circulation and misuse of weapons than those that do not incorporate a gender perspective. **Ensuring that gender is adequately integrated into all stages of disarmament and other DDR-related arms control initiatives is essential** to the overall success of DDR processes.
- All representatives of **national SALW control institutions** interviewed explained that they **do not work closely with DDR authorities**, sometimes feeling misinformed or side-lined from many of these initiatives. However, it is vital for these various institutions and authorities to work closely together to ensure that national arms control experts can effectively advise DDR authorities.
- The **absence of consideration with regards to weapons and ammunition of fighters disengaging from Boko Haram** represents a missed opportunity for DDR initiatives. There is a general lack of understanding as to what happens to weapons once fighters leave the group. This aspect merits a deeper discussion on the topic between the regional management teams of the various defector programmes and WAM coordinating mechanisms to: a) compare experiences and share knowledge on the issue; and b) explore what mechanisms and procedures could and should be put in place to deal with this materiel.

¹⁸³ Interview with Nigerian senior military officer, March 2022. Interview with representative of civil society organisation, February 2022.

- The ‘**fiche de triage**’¹⁸⁴ used by national authorities to register disengaged combatants includes a box on weapons. While it is unclear whether the contents of these documents are electronically recorded in a database, an analysis of the data could provide additional insight into weapons ownership and the profiles of weapons owners.

7. Recommendations

To National authorities

- Given the absence of consistent practice in and across LCB countries, it is recommended to establish national guidelines on the physical collection, documentation, storage, and disposal of weapons and ammunition gathered during any collection programmes or DDR processes. The SOP established by the MNJTF on the topic, coupled with MOSAIC and IATG guidance, could be used as a strong basis to ensure consistency across the region.
- Since national authorities are ultimately responsible for the management of arms and ammunition recovered by their respective MNJTF sectors, it is recommended to involve forensic institutions and conduct tracing at the domestic; regional and international levels through existing mechanisms in order to better understand diversion patterns, trafficking networks and prevent further proliferation.
- For Chad and Cameroon, conduct a national WAM Baseline Assessment to: identify the strengths and needs related to national WAM capacity; guide the strategic planning of national WAM policy; and request support from international partners as required. Periodically conduct national assessments as a way of ensuring follow-up action and evaluation of progress and impact.
- To take advantage of the strong community networks established in each country, it is recommended to involve them as early as possible in the design and implementation of DDRR activities and Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE) programmes. Particular attention should be placed on those that include community-based arms control initiatives, including sensitization and weapons and ammunition collection campaigns, beginning with obsolete or hazardous items in areas where disarming the population would create a security vacuum.
- Include arms control aspects in existing community policing efforts and community safety programmes with an emphasis on increasing the participation of women.
- Include TWAM activities as a part of potential future CVR projects to be conducted with communities living in the vicinity of programmes centres or those into which former Boko Haram members are being reintegrated.
- As each of the four LCB countries are conducting various types of arms control initiatives in parallel, including multiple civilian arms control interventions and DDR processes on the same

¹⁸⁴ See ‘Fiche de triage uniformisée LCB’ put together by national authorities. The document is not publicly available.

territory, it is recommended that national authorities coordinate strategies and technical aspects, so these initiatives become mutually reinforcing. In particular:

- Communicating these simultaneous enterprises to secure buy-in and support from the wider population and ensuring greater transparency around these sensitive processes will play an important role in guaranteeing their success.
 - Similarly, it will be critical to develop and support the role of national SALW control commissions in line with regional instruments.
 - Encourage greater coordination between national DDR authorities and arms control institutions such as national SALW commissions, WAM coordinating bodies, and mine action centres.
- While vigilante groups will likely continue to play an important role in security provision in the areas affected by Boko Haram, it is recommended that national authorities engage with these groups on WAM-related issues and record details of their arsenals in anticipation of facilitating future disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration efforts in line with UNSC resolution 2349 (2017) (see Table 4)
 - Conduct counter-IED capability self-assessments to identify challenges and gaps, and develop coherent national prevention, preparedness and response measures to the threat posed by IEDs through the use of an existing voluntary tool that can facilitate such assessments¹⁸⁵ together with relevant UN and regional partners. Moving forward, the LCBC should consider establishing a platform to facilitate the development of a common approach to the threat posed by IEDs.
 - Participate in and contribute to dialogue on lessons learned and good practices, as well as the development of information exchange mechanisms, including through a regional database on IED incidents.
 - Given the significant quantities of illicit ammunition in circulation in the region, the constant demand by NSAGs, and the challenges to control this type of materiel, national authorities should consider specific policies and strategies on ammunition through life management. This should include a focus on procurement, marking, stockpile management, recordkeeping, tracing/profiling, and disposal.
 - While each of the four countries have been implementing a range of efforts aimed at preventing the acquisition of arms and ammunition by armed groups and groups labelled or designated as terrorist groups, their authorities could further reinforce their prevention

¹⁸⁵ See UNIDIR. 2020. Counter-IED Capability Maturity Model and Self-Assessment Tool. <https://unidir.org/publication/counter-ied-capability-maturity-model-and-self-assessment-tool>. Available in English, French and Spanish.

strategies in line with UNSC Resolution 2370 (2017) and use the technical guidelines developed by the UN in 2022 to inform the implementation of its provisions¹⁸⁶.

To the Lake Chad Basin Commission

- Given the limited information available on the status of weapons of disengaged fighters, additional field-based research could be conducted to better understand this issue and offer a compelling body of information for LCB countries to discuss and adopt evidence-based arms control approaches. The implementation of SALW surveys in areas affected by Boko Haram would be an excellent tool to design tailored, effective, age- and gender-sensitive arms control interventions, including TWAM efforts as part of DDR processes.
- As part of the LCBC and African Union’s work on improving arms management practices in the region, it is recommended that discussions on WAM as part of DDR processes are promoted between national authorities. It is further recommended to pursue efforts to sensitize authorities to potential arms control options that could be implemented in settings where traditional DDR programming is not possible. A joint training with the UN on WAM in DDR processes would also contribute to the implementation of this recommendation.
- Encourage greater coordination between national DDR authorities and arms control institutions such as national SALW commissions, WAM coordinating bodies, and mine action centres which currently work mostly in silos.

To the Multinational Joint Task Force

- Finalize, adopt, and implement the SOP on the management of recovered materiel.
- Develop a database on weapons and ammunition recovered in the four sectors so data can be shared and analyzed.
- Assign focal points for the recording and management of recovered weapons and ammunition in each sector, as well as an analyst at HQ level.

To the United Nations

- Most representatives of national authorities interviewed were not familiar with the updated IDDRS and still had a very ‘traditional’ understanding of DDR. The UN should support awareness-raising activities for national authorities on the new UN approach to DDR and the use of DDR-related tools, including Transitional WAM.
- The lack of clear guidance on DDR processes related to AGDTOs was referenced several times by interviewees as a serious impediment to the design and implementation of programmes in

¹⁸⁶ UNSC 2370 (2017) calls on all States to eliminate the supply – and prevent the acquisition – of to those involved in terrorist acts. In 2022, UNCCT, CTEED and UNIDIR compiled technical guidelines on ‘Preventing Terrorists from Acquiring Weapons’, developed under the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Compact Working Group for Border Management and Law Enforcement in counter-terrorism.

[Technical guidelines to facilitate the implementation of security council resolution 2370 2017 and related international standards and good practices on preventing terrorists from acquiring weapons.pdf](#)

the LCB. The adoption and release of the IDDRS module on DDR and AGDTO would be very useful for national DDR authorities and their international partners in supporting the design and implementation of complex processes, including when it comes to WAM components.

- The designation of armed groups as terrorist organizations creates significant implications for the implementation of DDR. UN practitioners should always seek legal and political advice and be aware of the possible risks when seeking to support WAM activities related to the DDR process focusing on members of AGDTOs.
- Support the delivery of capacity-development for national SALW commissions or other WAM coordinating bodies on arms control as part of DDR processes. Through these bodies, continue to support the strengthening of national WAM assessments and capacity, including storage, registration and recordkeeping systems, marking, disposal efforts, and tracing and profiling initiatives.