



## Climate Change: A Driver of Insecurity in Niger?

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Occasional Paper 58

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## Abstract

Due to its geographical location, Niger's climate is characterised by changing conditions of extreme climate risks and potential, which have disproportionate impacts on agriculture. This paper explores how the country's vulnerability to extreme climatic events has converged with poverty and high population growth to contribute to different forms of insecurity. The paper explores various forms of insecurity as follows: first, how farmer-herder tensions have contributed to banditry, trafficking of weapons, and the establishment of ethnic-based self-defence militias; second, how the precarious socio-economic situations of the rural population are compounded by the activities of violent extremist groups leading to co-optation, forced displacements, and to economic and political strains on host communities; and third, how the closure of gold panning sites and the criminalisation of irregular migration has tended to contribute to criminality. The paper also examines some coping mechanisms that local communities have developed, such as migration, to minimise the adverse effects of extreme climatic conditions. The paper concludes with a summary of its main points and by proffering some recommendations.

Keywords: Climate change, Criminality, Demography, Agriculture, Niger, Sahel.

## Introduction

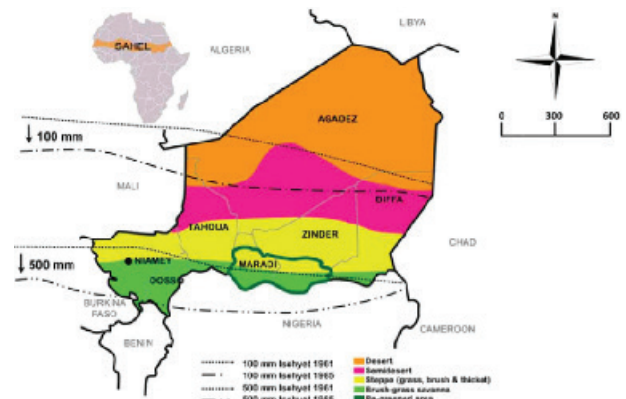
Niger is bordered by seven Sahelian countries; namely Algeria, Libya, Chad, Nigeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, and Mali.<sup>1</sup> It is a landlocked country with three-quarters of its territory covered by the Sahara Desert.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the country's climate is mostly arid and characterised by extreme climatic events such as droughts, floods, strong winds, heat waves, and sandstorms.<sup>3</sup> More than 80 per cent of the country's population live in rural areas and their sources of livelihood are mainly dependent on rain-fed agriculture. What is more, due to its geographical location, Niger serves as the transit hub for migrants whose destinations are, mostly, other Sahelian countries and Europe.<sup>4</sup> The country is also experiencing a spill-over of the activities of violent extremist groups operating in the Sahel, which begs the question: is the country's vulnerability to climate change facilitating the spread of violent extremism in Niger?

Internally, Niger is also experiencing demographic pressure. It is a highly populated country with 51 per cent of its population below the age of fifteen; proffering<sup>5</sup> the question: Does this group of young people represent a demographic 'bomb'? Additionally, since sources of livelihood are affected by climate change, could segments of young people who are highly impressionable and idle be exploited to serve the ends of violent extremist groups? Another factor that has been explored generally in the Sahel, is the tensions between herders and sedentary farmers, which are attributable to the adverse effects of climate change. These issues and the impact of climate change on agricultural productivity and the security implications of climate change, will form the crux of discussions in this paper.

This paper draws information from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was gathered from field research in Niger in December 2022. The paper, from this point onwards, is organised

into four main sections. The first section addresses how the country's climate variability has negatively affected life, livelihoods, and the environment, in general. This section serves as the backdrop to discussions in subsequent sections of the paper. The ensuing section examines how the effects of climate change on agriculture. The next section analyses how climate change demographic pressure, and poverty converge to contribute to insecurity in Niger. The last section highlights some of the resilience mechanisms/adaptation strategies deployed to minimize the adverse effects of climate change. This section presents the different adaptation and resilience strategies that have been employed at different levels to reduce the impact of climate change. The paper ends with the main points and some recommendations for the way forward.

Figure 1: Map of Niger Showing Regions and Vegetation



Source: Sendzimir, Reij, and Magnuszewski, 2011<sup>6</sup>

## Climate Change in Niger: Context, Characteristics and Consequences

Located within the Sahel, Niger is an area deemed to be a major hotspot for unfavourable climatic conditions. The country's climate is both arid and semi-arid. The parts of the country that are arid are the north and the middle belt, while the semi-arid

<sup>1</sup>République du Niger, Groupe de la Banque Africaine de Développement, Climat Investment Funds, & Conseil National l'Environnement pour un Développement Durable. (2019). *Cartographie de la Vulnérabilité des Activités Agropastorales des Régions du Niger dans le Cadre du Projet PDIPC*, 5. Retrieved from [http://www.cnedd.ne/images/documents/PDF/PNA/PDIPC-Cartographie\\_VF%20.pdf](http://www.cnedd.ne/images/documents/PDF/PNA/PDIPC-Cartographie_VF%20.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Wouterse, F. (2017). Empowerment, Climate Change Adaptation, and Agricultural Production: Evidence from Niger. *Climatic Change*, 145, 368.

<sup>4</sup>Moretti, S. (2020). Transit Migration in Niger: Stemming the Flows of Migrants, but at What Cost? *Migration and Society*, 3(1), 81.

<sup>5</sup>République du Niger, Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Salubrité Urbaine et du Développement Durable, Conseil National de l'Environnement pour un Développement durable, Haut-Commissariat à l'Initiative 3N, & Ministère de l'Agriculture et de l'Élevage. (2020). *Stratégie et Plan National d'Adaptation face aux Changements Climatiques dans le Secteur Agricole (SPN2A 2020-2035)*, 17. Retrieved from [https://spn2a.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/AdaptAction\\_Niger\\_SPN2A\\_document\\_cadre\\_10042020.pdf](https://spn2a.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/AdaptAction_Niger_SPN2A_document_cadre_10042020.pdf)

<sup>6</sup>Sendzimir, J., Reij, C. P., & Magnuszewski, P. (2011). Rebuilding Resilience in the Sahel: Regreening in the Maradi and Zinder. *Ecology and Society* 16(3):1. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.5751/ES-04198-160301>.

areas are in the south.<sup>7</sup> Due to its arid nature, the country's climate is largely characterised by extreme high temperatures, intense dry seasons, gales, torrid weather, sandstorms, and rainfall variation.

Table 1: Climate Characteristics and Consequences

Climate Risks	Causes	Consequences
Heat waves	Greenhouse gas emissions, deforestation, droughts	Epidemics, loss of crops, fires, loss of human lives, decline in agricultural production for example, cereal production loss of wildlife
Droughts	Greenhouse gas emissions due to the exploitation of uranium, oil and gold panning, heat waves, variability of rainfall patterns	Land degradation, drying up of water bodies, famine, diseases such as malaria, meningitis and measles, cricket and locust invasions, reduction in farm yields and fodder/pasture
Floods	Siltation of water bodies, deforestation, sandstorms, erosion, strong winds, building in water ways, deforestation, torrential rains, overgrazing, overexploitation of the soil, rapid urbanization, population growth, anthropogenic factors such as uncontrolled clearing, uncontrolled cutting, poor distribution of rains, illegal mining activities	Forced displacement, loss of crops, gullies, silting and filling of water bodies, loss of human lives, loss of arable land, loss of livestock and wildlife, soil degradation, famine, endemic diseases (malaria), poverty

Bush fires	Natural fire, rising temperatures, drying up of rivers	Loss of human lives, loss of livestock and wildlife, deforestation, loss of nutrients in the soil, soil erosion which causes flooding and landslides, increased carbon dioxide (CO <sub>2</sub> ) in the atmosphere, greenhouse effect, rising temperatures, decline in fishing, decline in agricultural production, famines, destruction of pasturelands, destruction of fodder/pasture for livestock, reduction of farm yields
Sandstorms	Environmental degradation destruction of vegetation cover, soil erosion, desertification/ deforestation, loss of biodiversity, overexploitation of natural resources	Water, land and air pollution, erosion, loss of soil, organic matter and of the finest nutrient-rich particles, reduction in agricultural production, silting of river bodies, movement displacement of populations, visibility issues, which can cause accidents and other hazards
Strong winds	Destruction of vegetation cover, droughts	Damage to seedlings, decline in agricultural production

Source: Authors' Construct

In Niger, the country's climate characteristics have uneven impacts on agriculture. To start with, precipitation presents a very high variability both spatially and temporally.<sup>8</sup> The rainy season extends from June to September but the highest rainfall

<sup>7</sup>See Dimé, M., & Tambandia, A. N. (2020). *National Study on the Nexus between Migration, Environment and Climate Change in Niger*. Geneva: International Organization for Migration (IOM). Retrieved from <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1411/files/documents/study-iom-migration-environment-and-climate-change-niger.pdf>; Afifi, T. (2011). Economic or Environmental Migration? The Push Factors in Niger. *International Migration*, 49(S1), 95-124.; UNEP-WCMC. (2007). *A Spatial Analysis Approach to the Global Delineation of Drylands areas of Relevance to the CBD [Convention on Biological Diversity] Programme of Work on Dryland and Subhumid Lands*. Cambridge: UNEP-WCMC. Retrieved from: <https://resources.unep-wcmc.org/products/789fcac8959943ab9ed7a225e5316f08>.

occurs in July and August.<sup>9</sup> Rainfall received within this period comes in the form of severe thunderstorms with rains exceeding the infiltration capacity of the soil.<sup>10</sup> More so, the duration of the rainy season decreases as one moves from the south towards the north.<sup>11</sup> Several episodes of flooding have been recorded in the country since the 1960s.<sup>12</sup> These floods are largely caused by strong overflowing rains, poor layouts and choices of location of buildings in marshy areas.<sup>13</sup> National vulnerability to flooding is some 60 per cent.<sup>14</sup> However, in a normal year, rainfall allows the recharge of the aquifers, the formation of temporary pools, the development of plant cover, and the production of rain-fed cereals such as millet or sorghum in part of the territory.<sup>15</sup>

Another major characteristic of Niger's climate is the prevalence of sandstorms. Sandstorms often originate from the Nigerien Sahara and extends to the pastoral and agricultural zones of the country.<sup>16</sup> They have a direct impact on crops as they cause damage to young seedlings.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, they cause visibility issues and the silting of river bodies. Sandstorms are most prevalent in the region of Agadez, the north of Diffa and Zinder.<sup>18</sup> Closely related to sandstorms are strong winds. The average wind speed is 2.5 metres per second (m/s) in the south and 5 m/s in the north of the country.<sup>19</sup> In spite of its devastating impact, strong winds could also be beneficial. This is because it could give the country exploitable wind potential; particularly for pumping water for domestic and agricultural purposes.<sup>20</sup> Other climatic events, such as high temperatures and the dry season, also have different levels of impact on the environment. For instance, Niger has experienced recurrent droughts since the 1970s and a rapid increase in minimum temperatures.<sup>21</sup>

In a nutshell, the country's extreme climatic events

have contributed to the vulnerability of a population whose livelihoods depend mainly on the agricultural sector. Floods, for example, have destroyed farmlands, buildings, fauna, and livestock.<sup>22</sup> Droughts have caused severe food crises since the 1960s.<sup>23</sup> In Agadez, for instance, irrigated crops such as pepper and rice crops, pastures, people, and their livestock, are subject to the risk of drought.<sup>24</sup> Put together, both droughts and floods have contributed to some 90 per cent of economic losses.<sup>25</sup>

Using the discussion on climate risks as a backdrop, the ensuing sub-section will provide a detailed analysis of the negative consequences of climate change on agriculture.

### Examining the Combined Effects of Climatic and Non-Climatic Factors on Agriculture

Some 80 per cent of Niger's population live in the rural areas.<sup>26</sup> Their primary economic activities are subsistence farming, pastoralism, and fishing. For those involved in subsistence farming, crop production is dominated by cereals such as millet, sorghum, rice, and maize as well as cash crops such as cowpeas, groundnuts, sesame, cotton, rice, and wheat, and garden crops such as onions, peppers, and ginger.<sup>27</sup> Besides, more than 80 per cent of the country's population practice animal husbandry as a main or secondary economic activity. The country's livestock, which is estimated to be more than forty million herds, includes cattle, sheep, goats, camels, horses, and donkeys.<sup>28</sup> Livestock products account for some 20 per cent of the country's export earnings, which is the second source of income after natural resources' mining.<sup>29</sup> In addition, fodder forest resources also contribute between 25 to 30 per cent of resources to feed the Sahelian livestock.<sup>30</sup> These exports represent a monetary value equivalent to

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<sup>9</sup>République du Niger. (2020). Op. cit., 12.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.; République du Niger. (2019). Op. cit., 9.

<sup>11</sup>République du Niger. (2020). Op. cit., 12.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>République du Niger. (2019). Op. cit., 40.; République du Niger. (2020). Op. cit. 39.

<sup>14</sup>République du Niger. (2019). Op. cit., 40.

<sup>15</sup>République du Niger. (2020). Op. cit., 12.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>République du Niger. (2019). Op. cit., 60.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>République du Niger. (2020). Op. cit., 12.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 33 & 70.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 40.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 28.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 63.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 28.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>27</sup>See Dimé & Tambandia (2020). Op. cit., 31.

<sup>28</sup>République du Niger. (2020). Op. cit., 18.



12.5 billion FCFA.<sup>31</sup>

In spite of its contribution to the economy, agricultural and livestock production are changing rapidly under the influence of several interrelated factors such as high population growth, climate change, and insecurity; particularly related to the activities of violent extremist groups and tensions between herders and farmers.<sup>32</sup>

### High Population Density

Niger is a highly populated country. It stretches over 5.7 million hectares of land that overlies an underground water table between 0 and 15 metres deep. The country's fertility rate stands at 7.4 children per woman and the infant mortality rate at 123 per thousand. Meanwhile, the annual population growth rate is estimated at 3.84 per cent in 2015; corresponding to a doubling of the population in less than twenty years.<sup>35</sup>

The country's high population density has put pressure on land, water resources, and pasture.<sup>36</sup> For instance, the space for arable land limited to 13 per cent of the territory<sup>37</sup> dedicated to the production of cereals, legumes, and tubers, among other crops, is constantly expanding.<sup>38</sup> The main cultivated plant species are millet which represents 65 per cent of cultivated area and 75 per cent of cereal production cowpea, sorghum, maize, and rice as well as peanuts, sesame, tiger nuts, onions, and peppers, mainly for export.<sup>39</sup> What is more, the growing numbers in the rural areas have led to the abandonment of fallow land, the reduction of vegetation cover, and risks of land degradation.<sup>40</sup> These changes in land use for crop production, coupled with the settlement of migrant farmers in pastoral areas and land grabbing by commercial farmers, have resulted in a reduction

in the areas<sup>41</sup> accessible to pastoralists.<sup>42</sup> Specifically, due to extensive farming activities, sedentary farmers tend to move beyond their settlements to occupy pastoral spaces. Consequently, there is the non-observance of passage corridors for animals, the obstruction and occupation of grazing lands, the creation of new fields in pastoral areas, the control of water points, and the establishment of new camps or villages for migrant farmers in pastoral spaces.<sup>43</sup> In addition, there are cases where preferential land rights are conferred on those referred to as 'indigenes,' thereby, marginalising and frustrating groups such as herdsman who are believed to be 'foreigners,' while reinforcing farmers' grip on land over time.<sup>44</sup> During the dry season, more herders move to areas where they can find pasture for their animals; thus, swelling the population and increasing the pressure on already scarce land. Because of the competition for natural resources, herds are sometimes prevented from grazing, which increases the hostilities between both herders and sedentary farmers<sup>45</sup>.

### Climate Change, Demography, Poverty and Insecurity in Niger

As a climate hotspot, climatic factors in Niger have had some negative implications for agriculture. High temperatures, modifications in rainfall quantities and distribution, frequent erosive rainy episodes, droughts, sandstorms, strong winds, and floods are all characteristics of the country's climate.<sup>46</sup> It is projected that climate change will lead to a 10 to 20 per cent reduction in most rain-fed crops.<sup>47</sup> This is due to the rise in temperatures, variable rainfall patterns, and the increase in the frequency and duration of the dry season. These extreme climatic events have the tendency to disrupt the agricultural calendar and reduce the production potential of farmers and herders.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>See Dimé & Tambandia (2020). Op. cit., 32.

<sup>33</sup>République du Niger. (2020). Op. cit., 23.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.,17.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>See Dimé & Tambandia (2020). Op. cit., 19-32.; République du Niger. (2020). Op. cit., 19.

<sup>37</sup>République du Niger. (2020). Op. cit.,17.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.,17.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 18

<sup>43</sup>Interview with Official of the Centre National de Coordination du Mecanisme d'Alerte Precoce et de Responses aux Risques Securitaires (CNAP), 14th December 2022.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Sissoko, K., van Keulen, H., Verhagen, J., Tekken, V., & Battaglini, A. (2011). Agriculture, Livelihoods and Climate Change in the West African Sahel. *Regional Environmental Change*, 11, 119.; République du Niger. (2020). Op cit., 19.

Specifically, droughts have contributed to fodder deficits on rangelands, crop losses, soil drying-out and desiccation of plant species, increased mortality of livestock, a resurgence of bush fires, and an exacerbation of conflicts over access to resources.<sup>49</sup> Still, floods cause loss of human life, destruction of infrastructure, the disappearance of plant and animal species, the destruction of crops in affected areas, and the spread of waterborne diseases.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, the incidence of diseases such as meningitis, malaria, and measles are also expected to increase due to the adverse impact of climate change.<sup>51</sup>

Climate change also has a disproportionate impact on livestock production. This is because even though it is expected that climate change will lead to an increase of about 6 to 16 per cent of herbaceous biomass productivity by 2050, rising temperatures could accentuate the degradation of rangeland quality due to their overexploitation.<sup>52</sup> There is also the potential risk of land degradation, which has led to the disappearance of certain plants such as *Andropogon gayanus*, and high soil erosion due to higher annual rainfall totals and frequent erosive rainy episodes.<sup>53</sup> Besides, locust invasions have remained a persistent threat to crop and livestock production in the Sahel in general, and Niger in particular, since the 1980s.<sup>54</sup> Areas most vulnerable to locust infestations in Niger are Air and Tamesna, Aderbissinat, Tchintabaraden, Abalack, Dakoro as well as some farming areas.<sup>55</sup> Locust infestations have a negative impact on the health of herds.<sup>56</sup>

The combined effects of population growth and climate change have increased the competition over access to natural resources by both farmers and herdsman; thereby, breeding tension. As a result, there are common cases of stealing and shooting of cattle by farmers, accusations of destruction of farms, allegations of rape, shooting of herders, and poisoning of water sources.<sup>57</sup> More specifically, the country is witnessing the emergence of armed bandits commonly known as 'coupeurs de route'.<sup>58</sup> These

bandits are organised into networks and engage in thefts of property and livestock, kidnappings, and trafficking of all kinds: weapons, human beings, and drugs. Cattle rustling has also contributed to the proliferation of arms in Niger and the formation of ethnic-based self-defence groups.<sup>59</sup> In order to protect themselves and their livelihoods, people are increasingly equipping themselves with arms.

Violent extremist groups also tend to exploit the frustrations of rural populations whose livelihoods are impacted by climate change. Niger's economy remains poorly diversified and essentially based on the rural sector agriculture and livestock.<sup>60</sup> Agriculture alone generates nearly 40 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP), 80 per cent of jobs, and 15 per cent of household income, and provides 25 per cent of the food needs of the population.<sup>61</sup> However, the socio-economic situation of communities deriving their livelihoods from the agricultural sector is precarious. Sixty-six per cent of the rural population live below the poverty line while 40 per cent of the population are food insecure.<sup>62</sup>

One of the militant groups that is active in Niger is the Macina Liberation Front (MLF) led by Amadou Kouffa. The group is exploiting grievances of the local population, notably the tensions between sedentary farmers and pastoralists such as the Peuhl and the Dausac, to create alliances, gain a foothold, and recruit people from the communities.<sup>63</sup> Some of the affected farmers and herders join violent extremist groups to engage in banditry in the tri-border area of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger; especially, borders closer to Tahoua, Tillabéri and Maradi in Niger.<sup>64</sup> Attacks by violent extremist groups have also led to massive forced displacements of people to urban areas or to neighbouring countries where they become refugees; thus, amplifying the strains on host communities. For instance, movements of people put enormous pressure on the availability of arable land, which is becoming increasingly scarce due to demographic pressure, land grabbing, and

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 28.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 19

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>République du Niger. (2019). Op. cit., 35.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>République du Niger 2020, 19

<sup>57</sup>Interview with State Official. 2022. Op Cit.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>République du Niger. (2020). Op. cit., 17.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>See Mavrakou (2022). Op. cit.

the effects of climate change. The growing number of refugees in host communities has exacerbated the risk of infiltration by elements of violent extremist groups who are in search of new sanctuaries or new followers.<sup>65</sup> Already, almost every region in Niger is affected by the activities of violent extremist groups. For example, some farms are burnt in order to restrict access to farms<sup>66</sup>. Community members are also subjected to extortion of money or of goods in the form of 'tithes' a sort of informal tax levied under the threat of kidnapping or even assassination.<sup>67</sup> For the safety of the people, a state of emergency has been declared in some regions such as Tillabéri and Diffa, which has placed restrictions on movement and affected income-generating activities.<sup>68</sup> Due to their vulnerability to attacks from violent extremist groups, some sections of the population are forced to collaborate with these groups for safety and survival.<sup>69</sup> Principally, the people who voluntarily join these groups perform the role of logisticians.<sup>70</sup> They supply the extremist groups with items such as medicine and fuel, which are smuggled into Niger from Nigeria<sup>71</sup>. Others provide crucial information and other critical services such as technicians who operate equipment.<sup>72</sup>

The closure of gold panning sites and the criminalisation of the trafficking of people in regions such as Agadez, have worsened the economic situation of a majority of the population; notably young people who were already confronted with the problem of unemployment.<sup>73</sup> Consequently, in areas such as the Zinder Region, some young people have formed criminal organisations referred to as 'palaces.' These organisations specialise in criminal practices such as murder, trafficking, marketing of narcotics, prostitution, and pitching fights between various youth groups.<sup>74</sup> Further, the anti-migration law on illegal trafficking of migrants<sup>75</sup>, which criminalises migration through Nigerien borders, has led some of the actors involved in illegal migration to convert to other activities such as banditry, armed robbery, and cattle rustling.<sup>76</sup> The violent activities of young people

in some regions in Niger, have raised concerns about whether there is the tendency for various criminal and violent extremist groups to exploit the vulnerabilities of the rural population and the frustrations of young people in order to co-opt them into perpetrating violent acts.

## Coping/Resilience Mechanisms

Niger is exposed to various risks associated with its changing climatic conditions. These risks tend to accentuate the vulnerability of the citizenry, and have put pressure on the country's capacity to respond. Herders and sedentary farmers are particularly vulnerable because of the low level of diversification of livelihoods and limited access to technical innovation.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, in a context of rapid population growth, the country is witnessing competition for the different uses of agricultural and pastoral land as well as soil degradation. In order to reduce the negative impact of climate change on agriculture, a number of strategies have been employed. These strategies include seasonal migration as well as climate-smart agricultural practices such as stone barriers, planting trees, the half-moon technique, mixed farming, composting, and assisted natural regeneration (ANR) technique. This section focuses on one of the main adaptation strategies; namely migration.

### Migration

In Niger, seasonal migration is a form of adaptation. Mobility trends in the country manifests in two main forms internal and external migration.

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 38.

<sup>66</sup>Interview with Official, Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement, 12th December, 2022.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 37.

<sup>69</sup>Interview with Official, CNAP, Op cit.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>République du Niger, Centre National d'Etudes Stratégiques et de Sécurité. (2020). Stratégie Nationale de Prévention de la Radicalisation et de l'Extremisme Violent. Niamey, 3. Retrieved from <https://www.cverefereceguide.org/sites/default/files/2022-07/Strat%C3%A9gie%20nationale%20de%20pr%C3%A9vention%20de%20la%20radicalisation%20et%20de%20l%E2%80%99extremisme%20violent.pdf>

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 40

<sup>75</sup>Law 36-2015 on the smuggling of migrants (loi No. 2015-36, 26 May 2015, relative au trafic illicite de migrants)

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., 37.

<sup>77</sup>République du Niger. (2020). Op. cit., 28.

## Internal Migration

Historically, and as is the culture in the Sahel, temporary seasonal migration is a coping mechanism or a form of adaptation for the rural population in Niger against the devastating effects of climate change. Usually, people initially alternate between settling in urban areas during the dry season and returning to their homes in the rural areas during the rainy season.<sup>78</sup> The urban areas that mainly serve as destinations for the rural population, are the regions of Tillabéri and Agadez, where there are mining activities, as well as the capital city, Niamey.<sup>79</sup> Yet, for many others, the urban areas initially intended to be temporary locations quickly turn into longer stays or even permanent abodes with the informal economy offering a range of survival activities.<sup>80</sup> Herders, because of their nomadic lifestyle, can survive droughts and gain access to green pastures for their livestock by changing locations seasonally. Mobility allows herdsmen to access large quantities of forage especially after a bad rainy season quality grass such as *Andropogon gayanus* and *Zomia glochidiata*, and harvest residues and sufficient water for their livestock during the dry season.

## External Migration

Niger occupies a transitional zone between North Africa and other parts of the region. It is bordered by Libya and Algeria to the north, Benin and Nigeria to the south, Chad to the east, and Burkina Faso and Mali to the west. Owing to its location, Niger remains a central country of departure and transit for migrants.<sup>81</sup> The country witnesses the movement of its citizens and other migrants to neighbouring countries such as Nigeria, Algeria, Libya, Benin, Ghana, Togo, and Senegal, and sometimes to Europe.<sup>82</sup> For instance, Niger, and especially the region of Agadez, is the main route for migrants coming from Ghana, Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria, and Mali whose destinations are Libya, Tunisia, Canary Islands and other parts of Spain, and Italy.<sup>83</sup> Some of these migrants leave for neighbouring countries in search of jobs, education, and economic opportunities to support their families. There is also the phenomenon of international begging. This is quite a common situation in Niger where people pay money to the relatives or guardians of physically

handicapped people and migrate with them to neighbouring countries to beg<sup>84</sup>.

## Concluding Thoughts and Recommendations

This paper addressed four main issues; namely the nature of climate change in Niger and how it impacts Niger's environment and the physical and economic well-being of its citizenry, how Niger's climate characteristics affect agricultural production, the extent to which non-climatic factors converge with climatic factors to accentuate the vulnerability of the rural population, and the security implications of the adverse effects of climate change. In all this, the paper highlighted that owing to Niger's geographical position at the heart of Sahel, the country is known for its changing climatic conditions such as heavy rainfall in the wet season, severe droughts, high temperatures, sandstorms, and strong winds. More so, the economic activities of the majority of the population, who depend on rain-fed agriculture and the exploitation of pastoral resources to support their livelihoods, live in rural areas. A large percentage of the national population has also been ranked as poor and youthful. This has raised questions about the tendency for criminal and violent extremist groups to exploit the energy, utility, and vulnerability of large sections of the population to serve their ends. Other security concerns relate to the hostilities between sedentary farmers and herders as well as the criminalisation of irregular migration through the country's borders. The paper attempted to examine the extent to which these security issues intersect with the debilitating impact of climate change on agricultural productivity and the vulnerability of large sections of the population. Still, one area for further research would be a study into the country's climate potential and how this could be exploited to serve its development priorities.

## Recommendations

The findings from this paper proffer the following recommendations for addressing the issues of climate change, migration, farmer herder conflicts, and violent extremism.

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<sup>78</sup>See Dimé & Tambandia (2020). Op. cit., 18.; Afifi (2011). Op. cit., 112.

<sup>79</sup>République du Niger. (2019). Op. cit., 27.; Mavrakou (2022). Op. cit.

<sup>80</sup>See Dimé & Tambandia (2020). Op. cit., 19.

<sup>81</sup>See Ibid., 29.

<sup>82</sup>République du Niger. (2019). Op. cit.; Mavrakou (2022). Op. cit.

<sup>83</sup>See Afifi (2011). Op. cit., 105.

<sup>84</sup>Interview with official of the Alternative Espace Citoyen, 16th December 2022.

## Climate Change

1. National authorities should operationalise the initiative, 'Plan d'Action 2021-2025 de l'Initiative 3N (les Nigériens Nourrissent les Nigériens)', which has components related to adaptation to climate change.
2. The State should encourage communal labour where community members come together to cultivate farms that will ensure that the population have access to farm produce at a lower cost during periods of shortage.
3. Technical and financial partners such as the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Search for Common Ground, should support other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) whose activities are related to climate change.
4. The Government should intensify appropriate risk reduction measures, such as building infrastructure and creating employment, in areas that are disaster-prone.
5. NGO interventions should be mapped out at the national level to avoid duplication of interventions, create more impact, and address the problem of insecurity that limits their interventions in certain areas.

## Migration

1. The Government in partnership with NGOs should institute labour mobility programmes to strengthen income-generating activities for displaced people.
2. The Government and other stakeholders should provide protection for unaccompanied migrants as well as regulate, rather than criminalise, migration.

## Farmer-Herder Conflicts

The Government should consider the following:

1. Increase awareness among herders and farmers through communication channels, such as community radios, social networks, awareness

- missions, forums, etc., to promote respect for established rules regarding passage for animals;
2. Raise awareness among all actors including farmers and herders on the legal ways of settling land conflicts and give priority to resolving them internally, if possible;
3. Correctly and consensually determine animal passage corridors to avoid misunderstandings, and supervise and control the development of pastoral areas; and
4. Address the challenges associated with the implementation of the early warning mechanisms. Early warning mechanisms have been established but are ad hoc and mostly initiated by NGOs. These mechanisms consider sensitisation and inter-community dialogues. Nonetheless, in most cases, they do not work. This means that despite multiple interventions, the conflicts are exacerbated.

## Violent Extremism

1. The State must strengthen its presence in vulnerable areas through the delivery of public services, and ensure good governance by involving all segments of the population in the governance process.
2. The State should fight corruption.
3. The State, together with the Commission Nationale pour la Collecte et le Contrôle de Armes Illicites (National Small Arms Commission), should enforce arms control measures to prevent the proliferation of arms to violent extremist groups and other criminal groups.
4. The State should put in place measures to provide adequate facilities for internally displaced persons and refugees to prevent them from becoming victims of abuse and sources of recruitment for violent extremist groups.
5. The State should mobilise resources to implement the Stratégie Nationale de Prévention de la Radicalisation et de l'Extremisme Violent (National Strategy for the Prevention of Violent Extremism).

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