

INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF THE LOGONE RIVER WATERS : **ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES OF THE MOUNDOU AGREEMENT PROTOCOL**

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The Logone river is a major tributary of lake Chad. More than a boundary between Cameroon and Chad, it is a reservoir of vital resources: its waters irrigate farmlands, sustain livestocks, and shape fishing activities.

Essential to the livelihoods of riparian communities and to wealth creation, the Logone River is nevertheless an increasingly fragile resource. It has been profoundly altered by natural phenomena such as droughts, floods, and erosion. Population growth, the construction of hydro-agricultural infrastructure, and the resurgence of insecurity have further complicated its daily use.

In the Past: A Visionary Agreement at the Time of Its Adoption

The Cameroon–Chad Agreement Protocol on Hydraulic Developments on the Logone River was signed on 21 August 1970. Better known as the ***Moundou Agreement Protocol***, it marked an important milestone in the joint management of the Logone River's waters, as it aimed to regulate hydraulic developments, control water abtractions, and prevent tensions between the two countries over this shared watercourse.

In a context of steadily increasing water demand and growing climate variability, Chad and Cameroon, countries sharing a common vision to develop rice farming by harnessing the Logone River and its high-potential valleys, adopted this legal framework to guide the development and management of hydraulic infrastructure. In doing so, they paved the way for a culture of dialogue and transboundary cooperation, laying the foundations for shared governance of water resources between neighbouring countries.

Today: The Urgent Need to Align with a Changing Landscape

More than fifty years after its adoption, the Moundou Agreement Protocol presents a mixed record. While its objectives remain unchanged, the context has evolved significantly. The combined effects of climate change, demographic pressure, divergent perspectives on hydro-agricultural developments, and growing tensions over access to water are placing severe strain on stability along both banks of the Logone River.

Despite notable progress, a degree of mistrust has gradually taken hold over the years, fueled by delays in the operationalisation of the Chad–Cameroon Joint Commission responsible for implementing the Agreement. This situation is compounded by :

- a low level of information-sharing among stakeholders regarding water abstraction and the Maga hydraulic dam;
- insufficient dissemination and understanding of the Moundou Agreement Protocol;
- weak alignment of the Protocol with regional instruments, such as the Lake Chad Basin Water Charter.

Nevertheless, the objective of promoting hydraulic development while preventing water-use conflicts, within a framework of agricultural revitalisation and shared development remains relevant and widely shared.

Looking Ahead: Laying the Groundwork for Revision

In 2021, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), through the Building River Dialogue and Governance (BRIDGE) project, launched an exploratory process of awareness-raising and consultation around the Moundou Protocol.

The ambition of BRIDGE was to highlight this agreement as a successful example of a cooperation instrument for transboundary water management, while placing at the centre of the discussion the need for the various parties to initiate the process of revising this instrument.

To this end, a diagnostic study was conducted, and national and regional dialogues were organised to raise awareness among key actors involved in the management of the Logone river and to strengthen their capacities on emerging issues related to the Logone, water diplomacy, and regional and global instruments for transboundary water management.

The project helped strengthen collective understanding of the need to adapt the Protocol to the contemporary realities of the Logone river, while paving the way for more sustainable and equitable governance.

"If this agreement did not exist, tensions between Chad and Cameroon would have escalated significantly."

Representative of a local NGO (Cameroon)

DIAGNOSTIC: A STRONG FACTUAL FOUNDATION

From the outset of the BRIDGE project, it was clear that any sustainable action needed to be grounded in a thorough understanding of local realities. To this end, surveys were conducted with 552 respondents across Cameroon and Chad, including individual fishers, community groups, traders, and processors.

The surveys established that :

1. Water abstraction from the Logone River for agricultural development (rice farming) represents the primary source of contention, largely due to the lack of shared information among all stakeholders;
2. A near-total dependence on fishing, with 95% of riparian households relying on the Logone River for both income and food security;
3. Concerning practices, such as the widespread use of non-compliant fishing gear (beach seines, small-mesh nets, cast nets), the capture of immature fish, and the intensive exploitation of fishing canals (2,747 canals identified). As a result, fish stocks are being depleted and the river is visibly changing before the eyes of local communities.

These findings were complemented by a diagnostic study of the Moundou Protocol, which revealed that stakeholders are not always familiar with the provisions governing the use of the Logone river and that local practices frequently diverge from them.

Rules related to the establishment of protected areas and biological rest periods are poorly applied or ignored, due to insufficient awareness-raising and lack of effective monitoring.

The surveys and national and regional dialogues also made it possible to assess the ecological and social consequences, including :

- water-use conflicts and administrative interventions;
- ecosystem disruption, including habitat degradation, declining species populations, and the proliferation of certain invasive plant species;
- socio-economic pressures, such as food insecurity, loss of household income, and rising tensions among riparian communities.

Summary of the Diagnostic Conducted by the BRIDGE Project

Underlying causes of gaps in the implementation of the Moundou Protocol :

- limited awareness and understanding of the Protocol;
- economic pressures;
- weak transboundary coordination.

Levers for action :

- strengthen awareness-raising and communication efforts;
- promote sustainable practices;
- actively involve local authorities;
- harmonise actions between Cameroon and Chad.

"If the Moundou Protocol did not exist, disputes surrounding developments along the Logone would have already escalated into open conflict."

Jean-Pierre Bako, *Divisional officer of Mayo-Danay (Cameroon)*

FROM KNOWLEDGE SHARING TO COLLECTIVE ACTION: THE IMPACT OF NATIONAL AND REGIONAL DIALOGUES

The information-sharing and awareness-raising activities carried out during these dialogues constituted one of the core pillars of the BRIDGE project. They enabled the dissemination of study findings, the promotion of good practices, and the mobilisation of all relevant stakeholders.

These four national and regional dialogues directly trained and sensitised approximately one hundred participants. Through these activities, sectoral ministries, civil society organisations, technical partners, and local administrative and religious authorities were able to exchange experiences, build knowledge, and commit to sustainable practices.

The dialogues also made it possible to address, in a practical manner, the challenges faced by field-level actors, while the testimonies collected revealed the day-to-day realities of local communities. These testimonies were essential in illustrating the interaction between local practices and administrative regulation, and in demonstrating the need to strengthen coordination with public authorities. They helped participants understand that sustainable management of the Logone river cannot succeed without the involvement of all stakeholders and the clear definition of roles and responsibilities.

Key Outcomes of the National and Regional Dialogues

- Improved stakeholder understanding of the Moundou Agreement;
- Increased awareness among stakeholders of the Protocol's potential in preventing transboundary conflicts and of the need to revise it;
- Signature of a ministerial decree (August 2023) establishing a multisectoral working group in Chad for the revision of the Moundou Agreement Protocol;
- Completion of a diagnostic study assessing the level of implementation of the Protocol and identifying its main limitations;

The dialogues therefore combined practical capacity-building with strategic dialogue through:

1. Strengthening cooperation and water diplomacy among stakeholders;
2. Enhancing understanding of local dynamics and adapting interventions to more effectively support communities.

Through this inclusive and participatory approach, the dialogues created platforms for exchange, strengthened mutual trust, and helped prepare the ground for sustainable and equitable governance of the Logone River. These actions laid a solid foundation for the strategic and inclusive revision of the Moundou Protocol, integrating environmental, social, and climate-related challenges.

- Active engagement of all stakeholders in the various national and regional dialogues;
- Development of a roadmap outlining priority actions for the revision of the Moundou Agreement Protocol.

"This agreement has helped resolve many situations between farmers and fishers on both banks. It must be modernised, not abandoned."

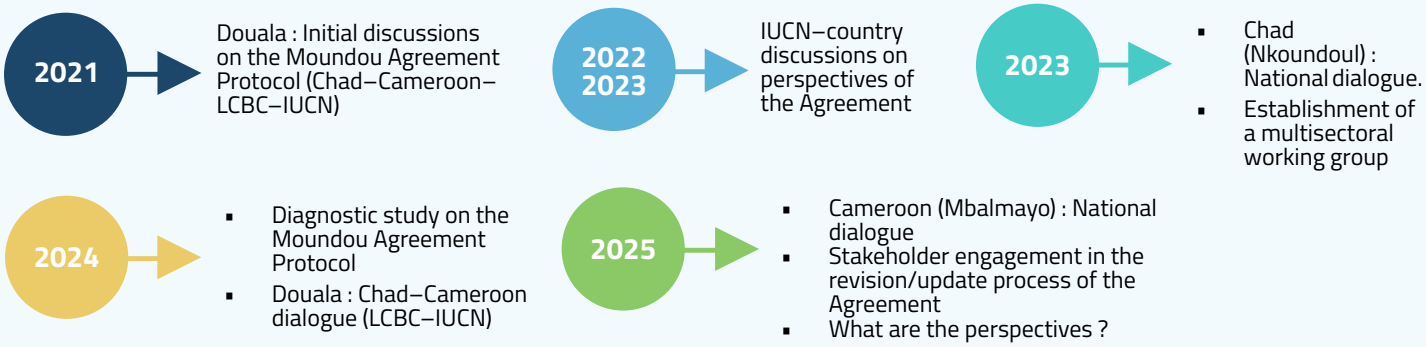
Aïssatou Garba, *Deputy Mayor of Yagoua (Cameroon)*



Number and profile of participants sensitized and trained as part of regional and national dialogues between 2021 and 2025 :

Event and Location	Number of Participants	Participants
Regional Dialogue between Chad and Cameroon (2021, Douala) : Reflection on mechanisms to strengthen transboundary cooperation instruments for managing conflicts related to the exploitation of natural resources in the Logone sub-basin	50	The event brought together representatives from : - Regional organizations (Lake Chad Basin Commission – LCBC; Economic Commission for Livestock, Meat and Fishery Resources – CEBEVIRHA) - United Nations Water Convention - Yagoua Rice Expansion and Modernization Company (SEMRY) - Local communities
National Dialogue in Chad (2023) :	25	Representatives from : Sectoral ministries responsible for planning, water, environment, agriculture, and foreign affairs
Regional Dialogue (Douala, 2024) : Workshop on strengthening transboundary cooperation between Cameroon and Chad in the integrated management of the Logone river.	20	Representatives of : - Universities - Lake Chad Basin Commission - Yagoua Rice Expansion and Modernization Company (SEMRY) - Sectoral ministries responsible for planning, water, environment, agriculture, and foreign affairs.
National Dialogue in Cameroon (Mbankomo, 2025) : Awareness-raising and consultation for the review/update of the Moundou Agreement Protocol signed in 1970 between Cameroon and Chad on hydraulic developments on the Logone river.	25	Representatives from : Sectoral ministries responsible for planning, water, environment, agriculture, land affairs, territorial administration, and foreign affairs.

History of National and Regional Dialogues Conducted since 2021



In 2022, discussions did not take the form of an in-person meeting but consisted mainly of :

- Joint efforts by stakeholders to locate the original text of the Agreement;
- The continuation of exchanges on the key issues and the historical context surrounding the signing of the Agreement.

BRIDGE: A LEVER FOR ADVOCACY TOWARD THE REVISION OF THE MOUNDOU AGREEMENT PROTOCOL

Through studies, field surveys, and participatory dialogues, the BRIDGE programme facilitated the identification and mobilisation of all relevant stakeholders, including key sectoral ministries, operators of hydro-agricultural schemes, local and administrative authorities, and staff of Civil Society Organisations. These engagements created a genuine platform for exchange and awareness-raising, enabling each stakeholder to better understand their role in preserving the resource.

The results are tangible :

- increased awareness among water users and resource managers, alongside the gradual adoption of recommended practices;
- improved coordination among stakeholders;
- strengthened local and transboundary cooperation.

These actions have laid the foundations for a strategic and inclusive revision of the Moundou Protocol, now integrating environmental, social, and climate-related challenges.

> **"This agreement is one of the few bilateral frameworks that has made it possible to maintain continuous dialogue between our administrations. Without it, communities would already have crossed the breaking point."**

Mahamat Abakar Youssouf, ,
Secretary General of the Mayo-Kebbi East Governorate (Chad)

Summary Table of Key Results by Category of Stakeholders

Stakeholder Categories	Key Results of the BRIDGE Project
1. Key Sectoral Ministries (Environment, Water, Agriculture, Fisheries, etc.)	▪ Improved understanding of issues related to the Moundou Protocol and transboundary management of the Logone River ▪ Strengthened technical capacities in hydro-diplomacy, negotiation, and water-related conflict management ▪ Enhanced understanding of the need to revise the Moundou Agreement ▪ Improved technical capacities regarding the importance of preserving environmental flow requirements ▪ Better understanding of how the Agreement is implemented by Chad and Cameroon
2. Companies and Major Operators on the Logone river (SEMRY[1], VIVA Logone[2], PULSI[3], etc.)	▪ Strengthened technical capacities on the need to preserve environmental flows ▪ Enhanced dialogue with authorities and downstream communities ▪ Commitment to more responsible water abstraction practices
3. Local Authorities (Divisional Officer, Sub-Divisional Officer, Mayors, Traditional Leaders)	▪ Strengthened technical capacities in mediating water-related conflicts ▪ Active participation in national and regional dialogues ▪ Improved dissemination of information to local communities

[1] SEMRY : Yagoua Rice Expansion and Modernization Company
[2] VIVA Logone : Project for the Development and Valorization of Investments in the Logone Valley
[3] PULSI : Emergency Control Project against Flooding

Why Is It Necessary to Revise the Agreement?

The 1970 Moundou Protocol is now outdated, inequitable, and ill-suited to the challenges of the 21st century. Its revision is not an option, but an urgent necessity in order to :

- Prevent conflicts and strengthen transboundary peace;
- Ensure sustainable, equitable, and climate-resilient management of water resources;
- Adapt to current climatic, demographic, and economic realities;
- Regulate fishing practices and the management of fisheries resources along the river;
- Honour the international commitments of both countries and comply with regional and global frameworks for transboundary water management.

Why Is It Necessary to Align the Protocol with Regional (Water Charter) and Global Instruments (UN Water Convention) ?

This alignment is essential given the obsolescence of the Moundou Agreement Protocol, more than 50 years after its adoption, which presents limitations that have already been addressed in more recent regional and international instruments, notably with regard to :

- **Equitable and reasonable use of shared water resources :** The Lake Chad Basin Water Charter requires that water abstractions take into account minimum environmental flows, unlike the Moundou Protocol, which although it provides for seasonal abstraction caps does not adequately address the emergence of climate-related crises;
- **The systematic integration of a mechanism for managing transboundary conflicts** between States Parties;
- **Recognition of the rights and interests of local and riparian communities**, which are the primary beneficiaries of, and dependents on the resource;
- **Strengthening the binding nature of the agreement**, particularly with regard to the regular functioning of the Joint Commission (biannual meetings with the possibility of extraordinary sessions).

Which Key Sectors/Domains Should Be Addressed in the Revised Agreement? ?

The revised agreement should give particular attention to the following key sectors :

- **Diplomacy** (strengthening bilateral cooperation through integrated management of the river) ;
- **Environmental protection and international water law** (taking hydrological variability into account and promoting sustainable water management) ;
- **Inclusion of local communities and conflict management** (involving riparian populations and establishing mechanisms for resolving conflicts among users of shared water resources) ;
- **L'agriculture** (modernization of agricultural practices).

What Role Should the "Cameroon–Chad Joint Commission" Play in Implementing the Agreement ?

In accordance with Article 2 of the Protocol, the Joint Commission serves as the central and permanent body responsible for steering, financing, and implementing major joint development projects between Cameroon and Chad. Its responsibilities include :

- **Supervising studies** on the hydraulic regime of the Logone river ;
- **Facilitating industrial and agricultural exchanges** ;
- **Monitoring investments** while taking into account the evolving dynamics of the river.

"The Logone is a shared, vital resource. The Moundou Protocol reminds us that it must be managed collectively, not individually."

Djimet Djerakor, *District Head of Bongor (Chad)*



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Drawing on more than a decade of experience in implementing the *Building River Dialogues and Governance (BRIDGE)* programme across more than twenty transboundary river basins worldwide, IUCN has developed a water diplomacy approach grounded in strengthening water governance capacities, with the aim of achieving effective water management, security, and peace. BRIDGE seeks to catalyse the sustainable management and development of water resources, ensure water supply and sanitation, preserve biodiversity, and strengthen transboundary cooperation.

Now in its fifth phase, the programme consolidates the knowledge and expertise acquired during previous phases in order to support ongoing key negotiation processes, in which IUCN plays a facilitative and mediating role to promote transboundary agreements at multiple scales and strengthen institutions. IUCN will strive to maximise the impact of BRIDGE Phase V by aligning programme outcomes with a set of strategic priorities and linking them to specific regions and river basins. This approach aims to ensure solutions tailored to the diverse needs of BRIDGE sites. These efforts are complemented by a range of global and regional interventions in response to the United Nations' call to accelerate the implementation of SDG 6.5. BRIDGE delivers solutions adapted to specific geographic priorities while responding globally to the urgent need to accelerate cooperation over transboundary waters.

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