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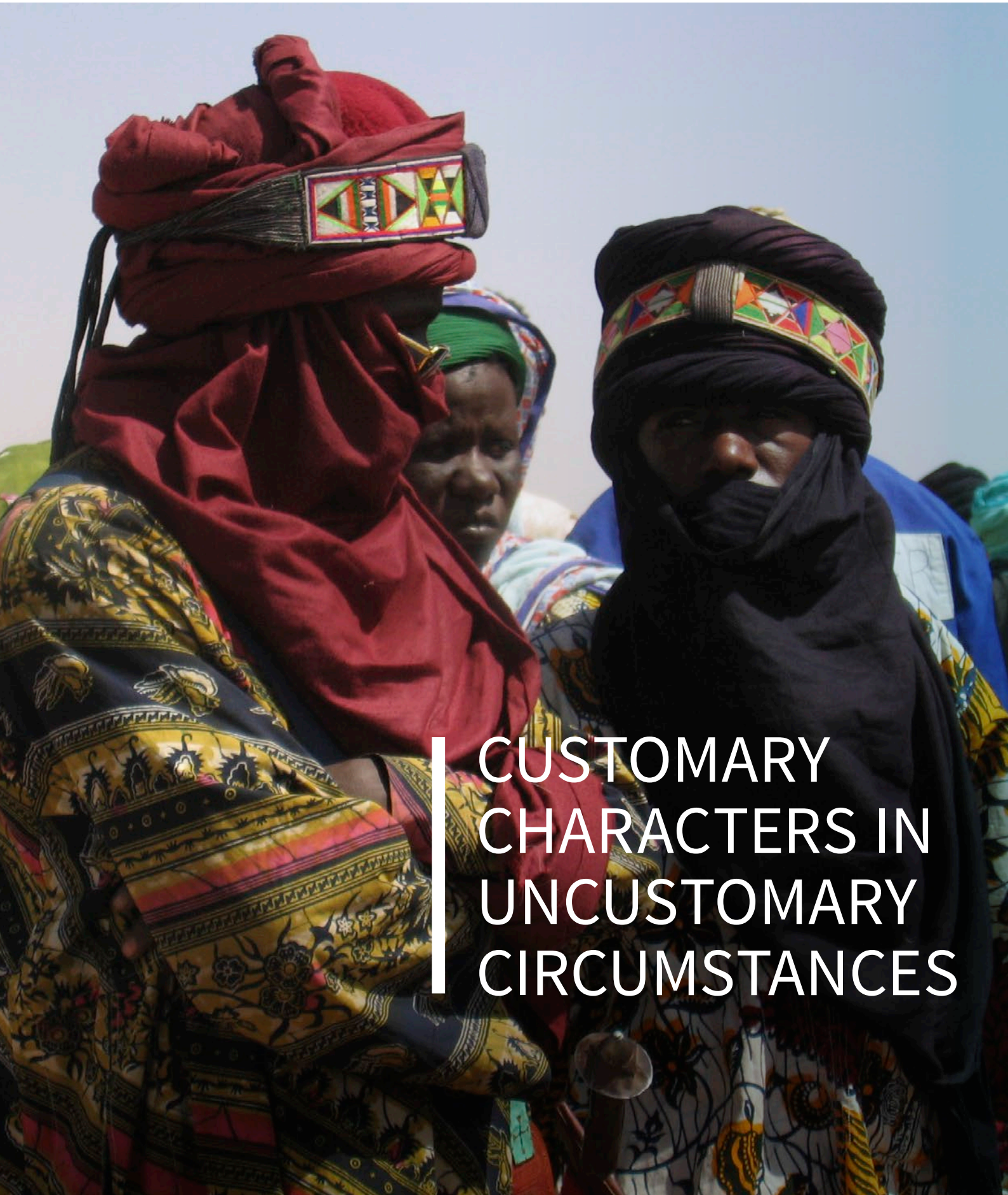

CUSTOMARY CHARACTERS IN UNCUSTOMARY CIRCUMSTANCES

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USAID Customary Resilience

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Cover photo: Men in Traditional garments in Ayerou © Flickr/Willemstom

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CUSTOMARY CHARACTERS IN UNCUSTOMARY CIRCUMSTANCES

TRADITIONAL AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES' RESILIENCE TO VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN MALI, NIGER, AND BURKINA FASO

Fransje Molenaar
Méryl Demuynck
Kars de Bruijne

CUSTOMS ARE MADE FOR CUSTOMARY CIRCUMSTANCES, AND CUSTOMARY CHARACTERS; AND HIS CIRCUMSTANCES OR HIS CHARACTER MAY BE UNCUSTOMARY

– JOHN STUART MILL'S ON LIBERTY

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This report is part of the USAID-funded study *Customary Characters in Uncustomary Circumstances: Traditional and religious authorities' resilience to violent extremism in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso*. Our online database with key findings, including links to five regional reports and the methodology report, can be found here: https://www.clingendael.org/publication/customary-legitimacy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of the Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael' and the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

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This report was written by Fransje Molenaar, Méryl Demuynck, and Kars de Bruijne. With over 1,400 surveys and 600 key informant interviews, research coordination as well as data collection and analysis proved a monumental task. This study was made possible by the work of Julie Coleman, Anna Schmauder, Rida Lyammouri, Abdoul Aziz Azeibou, Luca Vellage, Annabelle Willeme, Nicolas Libert, and Thomas Caulier. Jean-Luc Jucker is our regression and machine learning wizard. A special thanks goes to Alex Thurston, Constantin Gouvy, and Rahmane Idrissa, who have invested time in providing valuable comments and suggestions. Finally, we are especially grateful to all the respondents who made themselves available for a survey or an interview, and who generally demonstrated a willingness to share insights on such a complex topic.

CONTENTS

Executive Summary 6

List of abbreviations 12

List of figures 13

List of tables 15

Introduction 20

Part 1 – Traditional and religious authorities' role in general resilience 32

Part 2 – Traditional and religious authorities' performance and general resilience 48

Part 3 – Traditional and religious authorities' role in fostering resilience against VEOs 70

Conclusions 92

Annex 1 – Communities Advancing Resilience Toolkit (CART) Assessment Survey 101

Annex 2 – General community resilience across regions 102

Annex 3 – Regression model: Traditional and religious authorities' roles and general community resilience 103

Annex 4 – Regression model: traditional and religious authorities' performance and general community resilience 104

Annex 5 – Regression model: Traditional and religious authorities' effectiveness and general community resilience 106

Annex 6 – General community resilience: Decision tree learning 107

Annex 7 – Regression model: Effectiveness of traditional and religious authorities' security measures 108

Annex 8 – Regression model: Effectiveness of traditional authorities' conflict resolution efforts 109

Notes 112

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Traditional and religious authorities are key figures when it comes to supporting governance in the Sahel. They can therefore support USAID West Africa Regional Mission's countering violent extremism (CVE) efforts, which apply a holistic approach to addressing the root causes of violent extremism. Based on 1,437 surveys and 656 key informant interviews (KIIs) with citizens and authorities in six border regions in the Sahel,[1] the *Customary Characters in Uncustomary Circumstances* study shows that these authorities are often the first set of actors that citizens contact in domains such as conflict resolution, justice provision, and – in some regions – even security and basic service provision. They are much more relevant, and also much more trusted, governance providers than local and national state administrations or non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

General community resilience

Despite this, traditional and religious authorities are not a panacea when it comes to creating resilient communities and addressing violent extremism. Indeed, in our survey data, the two most crucial dimensions that affect general community resilience are (1) the extent to which traditional authorities are perceived to serve their communities' interests rather than their own, and (2) the extent to which traditional and religious authorities are perceived to treat men and women equally.[2] Analysis shows that in 59 percent of our cases, it is possible to correctly predict whether respondents give low, average, or high scores to their communities' resilience just by knowing their answers to these two questions.

These findings are crucial because the survey analysis also shows that big differences exist in the way traditional and religious authorities operate across the different regions. Authorities in Centre-Nord (Burkina Faso) and Tillabéri (Niger) score particularly well when it comes to legitimacy. They are mostly seen to work for the benefit of their communities and respondents mostly have trust in them. Authorities in Ménaka (Mali) score most poorly on these measures. Authorities in Gao (Mali), Est (Burkina Faso), and Sahel (Burkina Faso) fall somewhere in between – being seen as self-serving in Gao or as relatively untrustworthy in Est and Sahel. Religious authorities overall score better, which is likely the result of their work being more contained in the religious domain and them not having access to state resources.

Similar regional differences exist when it comes to the equal treatment of men and women. Respondents perceive traditional and

religious authorities to operate most indiscriminately in Tillabéri. Their scores are twice as high as they are for any other region in Mali or Burkina Faso, where men are generally seen to be favored by traditional authorities in particular (although religious authorities also do not do well). As was the case for legitimacy, Ménaka again comes in last – with only 18 percent of respondents perceiving their traditional authorities to treat men and women equally. Our KIIs in Tillabéri and Ménaka reveal that a lack of effort does not explain these differences, as both regions have been subject to efforts to improve women's participation in public life. This suggests that a closer look needs to be taken at the conditions that affect the effectiveness of gender programming on the ground – especially in the face of conservative norms and values.

Our analyses also show that respondents give lower scores to their communities' resilience when they perceive local state officials to have a lot of influence over traditional and religious authorities. Such influence is generally seen to be present, as two-thirds of respondents indicate that local state officials (which include both the local administration and locally elected politicians) have either a lot or a little influence over traditional authorities. For religious authorities, this is about half of our respondents. It is only in Tillabéri that a majority of respondents perceive local state officials to have no influence at all, which is likely explained by the more institutionalized role of traditional authorities in Niger. Our KIIs reveal that traditional authorities are often accused of being influenced by and/or involved in politics, which is perceived as weakening their ability to be impartial actors. Respondents describe politicization as a major source of grievances, especially against traditional authorities, in all researched regions.

Lastly our analyses show that the links that traditional and religious authorities form with armed actors matter. In particular, general community resilience is higher when respondents perceive police and state security forces to have some or a lot of influence on traditional and religious authorities. This likely suggests that traditional and religious authorities are better able to contribute to resilience in contexts where there is some semblance of a state security presence. Resilience is significantly lower when self-defense groups or local security initiatives have a lot of influence on traditional and religious authorities. This likely points to the fact that, although self-defense groups may form a necessary ally for these authorities when faced with insecurity and threats posed by violent extremist organizations (VEOs), local self-defense initiatives oftentimes result in more local divisions due to a lack of accountability and instrumentalized violence. This goes to show that the current move toward an increase in self-defense groups in the region, be it in a nascent form as is the case in Tillabéri or in a more state-sponsored form as is the case in Burkina Faso, is a worrying development.

Resilience against violent extremism

Violent extremism poses a particular type of threat to general community resilience due to the degree of insecurity and violence it often entails. The *Customary Characters in Uncustomary Circumstances* study shows that traditional and religious authorities may strengthen resilience against these aspects in both a direct and more indirect fashion.

Most directly, traditional authorities often engage in security provision in their respective communities. Indeed, although they are

not typical security actors, one-fifth of our survey respondents indicated they turn to traditional authorities when they are in need of security provision. The most common security measures that respondents observe their traditional authorities performing are calling on security forces for help, surveilling foreign elements in the community, and resolving conflicts by dialogue. Half of our respondents indicated that these measures have contributed to their safety – although regional differences again exist. Traditional authorities are seen to be least effective in Gao, which was also the most dangerous region at the time of data collection, and most effective in the three regions in Burkina Faso. Moreover, in light of best practices identified in the field of Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE), we do not advise the adoption of CVE programming that instrumentalizes chiefs as security actors, as they are often targeted by VEOs for precisely this reason.

TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES CAN COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM THROUGH CONFLICT RESOLUTION

More indirectly, traditional authorities can counter violent extremism through conflict resolution. Such efforts allow them to address those fault lines in society that VEOs often exploit. For traditional and religious authorities alike, three-quarters of our respondents indicated that their conflict resolution efforts either eased tensions or improved conflict situations significantly. Traditional authorities overwhelmingly intervene in conflicts over land use and in conflicts between herders and farmers. Regional variance again exists. Sahel and Centre-Nord stand out as regions where traditional authorities have had the biggest positive impact on conflicts while in Ménaka only half of our respondents perceive this to be the case.

Various factors contribute to the effectiveness of traditional authorities' conflict resolution efforts. Legitimacy is again a crucial factor. When traditional authorities are trusted and perceived to work for the benefit of their communities, this increases their perceived effectiveness in the domain of conflict resolution. The need to treat subgroups in society equally is also underlined again, as preferential treatment of elders in particular correlates to significantly lower effectiveness of conflict resolution efforts. It also helps if traditional authorities are the key actors available for conflict resolution. When other actors are available, including the police or self-defense groups, the effectiveness of traditional authorities' conflict resolution efforts is perceived to be lower. The one exception is armed groups – a broad category that includes armed signatories to the peace agreement in Mali, as well as VEOs.[3] The effectiveness of traditional authorities is significantly higher when such actors are perceived to have a lot of influence on traditional authorities, which likely provides them with the connections and enforcement power needed to resolve conflicts in insecure settings.

A final crucial factor that has a positive effect on traditional authorities' conflict resolution efforts is their contribution to social cohesion through discursive action. The way in which traditional authorities respond to public discussions when faced with a major crisis matters for conflict resolution, as the more diverse the range of discursive actions they

take, the more likely it is that their actions are perceived to result in effective conflict resolution. Further exploration of the survey data reveals that it is quite common for traditional and religious authorities to take such measures, with calls for peace and unity being the types of discursive actions deployed most frequently by traditional and religious authorities alike.

Toward this end, chiefs and religious leaders use different communication channels, including regular meetings with the population, awareness-raising campaigns on the radio, and *inter alia,* interventions during cultural events, such as intercommunal festivals. Our interview respondents have mixed opinions, however, as regards the actual impact of these communication strategies. Many respondents were quite critical about the effectiveness of such awareness-raising efforts, especially when it comes to deterring youth from joining violent extremist and other armed groups. Regional differences do exist, with respondents in Burkina Faso, especially in Sahel and Est, overall showcasing more confidence in traditional and religious authorities' ability to play an efficient and positive role in preventing youth from joining VEOs, due mostly to the legitimacy, respect, and moral authority they exert.

Implications for programming

Taking the whole-of-society approach seriously

The importance of traditional and religious authorities in many governance domains reinforces the vital role that a "whole-of-society" approach to P/CVE plays in countering radicalization in the Sahel. Rather than focusing on traditional, security-focused counter-terrorism measures in which state actors are the primary counterparts, programming should reflect the role that a diverse array of local actors can play. It should also recognize that tick-the-box exercises will not suffice. In addition, projects focused on overall development (meeting basic needs of the populations), reducing interethnic tensions, and promoting social cohesion are likely to be more effective than hard security measures when it comes to strengthening community resilience to violent extremism in the long term. This is the case in particular as respondents identify food insecurity as the number one security threat in half of our regions (Tillabéri, Centre-Nord, and Est) and the third most significant security threat in the Gao and Sahel regions.

Strengthening traditional and religious authorities' core capabilities

Programming should capitalize on traditional and religious authorities' key strengths, such as conflict resolution, meditation of herder-farmer conflicts, and awareness raising on key resilience values. Yet integrating traditional authorities in P/CVE programming is not a silver bullet. Supporting them across the board without tailoring the interventions to the areas in which they are most impactful is an inefficient use of resources. The differences that exist between traditional and religious authorities' governance performance across the various regions – and even across the various municipalities we studied in these regions – highlights the need for programming to build upon clear political economy assessments before engaging with these authorities. Our online data dashboard, which allows for the further exploration of relevant data for each municipality included in this study, provides a starting point.[4]

Addressing traditional and religious authorities' key weaknesses

To address some of traditional and religious authorities' key weaknesses, we recommend three lines of programming in particular:

- Legitimacy: it is vital to raise awareness among traditional and religious authorities about the need to serve their communities' interests, as our study finds that this is the key contribution they can make to strengthen their communities' resilience. Yet many respondents complained that their authorities are too self-serving – particularly when it comes to the distribution of resources in their communities. In regions where this issue is particularly pertinent, such as in northeastern Mali, failure to take the authorities' self-serving nature into account in programming will likely only further undermine the authorities' legitimacy and may even risk fueling local tensions.

- Equal treatment of men and women: traditional and religious authorities' equal treatment of men and women comes out as a key factor contributing to general community resilience. Yet our findings also suggest that when external values are seen to be imposed on the community, little progress is made in improving equality of treatment between men and women. Programming that seeks to address the international push to include women in anti-radicalization measures, such as the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda,[5] should take these regional differences into account and develop localized approaches based on a good understanding of local contexts and values in seeking to inculcate gender equality.

- Youth and the prevention of VEO recruitment: although regional differences exist, we generally find that traditional and religious authorities' influence on youth seems limited and that authorities tend to favor elders over youth. Programming could pay particular attention to the need to include youths' voices in the public domain. In addition, initiatives could be developed that teach young people the skills needed to be more politically engaged, including advocacy skills, public speaking, and communication. These would enable young people to more productively engage with a variety of actors, including traditional and religious authorities, to advocate for their own needs.

- Politicization of traditional authorities: some of the most questionable aspects of the current positions of chiefs is their politicization and lack of real autonomy relative to both the central state and local communities. In regions where regulation does not yet exist, such as Burkina Faso, chiefs could benefit from the legal regulation of their position, including a prohibition against running for public office or joining political parties (as exists in Niger) and the specification of clear criteria for succession questions. Chiefs also need training and a code of conduct to help them secure some autonomy relative to special community interests and other untoward influences. Yet regulation is not a panacea, as it may create institutional spoils that could instigate further inter-elite competition and there is often pressure from the national political parties for chiefs to choose sides. Any programming should hence take into account the linkages that exist between the national political arena and local governance structures that involve traditional and religious authorities.

Refrain from instrumentalizing traditional and religious authorities as security actors

The biggest factor impacting traditional authorities in carrying out their jobs is the security context. Conflicts over land and access to resources are turning increasingly violent – making traditional authorities and their reliance on conciliation less equipped to handle them. Moreover, traditional and religious authorities require protection as they are currently vulnerable VEO targets. From a programming focus, we would advise that, if stakeholders (such as USAID or even the respective national governments) are going to work with the traditional or religious authorities, this should not be publicized. At a minimum, as a general good practice, projects that seek to engage with these authorities should not be framed as P/CVE projects, as this could undermine their legitimacy *vis-à-vis* their community and it would likely increase the targeting they experience. Such a project should obviously contain a local risk assessment at the outset to ensure it does no harm.

We find that strong ties oftentimes exist between traditional authorities and self-defense groups. One crucial role that traditional authorities could play in bringing security to the region is to put pressure on these groups to stop committing human rights abuses. Efforts to address these are most urgent in Burkina Faso's Est region, where we currently are witnessing an increase in stigmatization and abuse of Fulani community members. Making use of traditional authorities' tight connections to the Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland (*Volontaires pour la Défense de la Patrie,* VDP) and Koglweogo, something also witnessed in Centre-Nord, efforts could be made in these regions to push back against the human rights abuses committed by self-defense groups and to promote more inclusive recruitment of members of self-defense groups. Unless larger issues of unaccountability and impunity are addressed, however, such actions will likely be a drop in the ocean at best. More preventive measures could be taken in Tillabéri, where the creation of self-policing initiatives is only just starting to appear, although this would require their status to be clarified first (as they are currently not legally sanctioned).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CART	Communities Advancing Resilience Toolkit
CMA	Coordination of Azawad Movements
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
CT	Counterterrorism
ISGS	Islamic State in the Greater Sahara
JNIM	Group of Support for Islam and Muslims *(Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin)*
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PVE	Preventing Violent Extremism
P/CVE	Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism
VDP	Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland (*Volontaires pour la Défense de la Patrie*)
VEO	Violent Extremist Organization
WPS	Women, Peace, and Security

LIST OF FIGURES

Map 1	Conflict events June 2020-June 2021 in research locations	21
Figure i	Survey Respondent Demographic Information	26
Figure ii	Distribution of KIIs across main categories of actors	27
Figure iii	Distribution of KIIs across subcategories of other stakeholders	27
Figure 1	Resilience across regions	33
Figure 2	Exposure and full recovery from shocks over the past two years (per region)	34
Figure 3	How households cope with shocks (per region)	34
Figure 4	Key person/authority that helped households deal with shocks	35
Figure 5	Community actor contacted for basic service provision (per region)	36
Figure 6	Extent to which traditional and religious authorities are involved in the distribution of emergency aid (per region)	38
Figure 7	Community actor contacted for security provision (per region)	40
Figure 8	Community actor contacted for conflict resolution within the community (per region)	41
Figure 9	Community actor contacted for conflict resolution outside the community (per region)	41
Figure 10	Community actor contacted for justice provision (per region)	43
Figure 11	Whose interest are traditional and religious authorities most likely to serve?	50
Figure 12	Trust in traditional (TA) and religious authorities (RA) (per region)	51
Figure 13	Traditional and religious authorities' treatment of men vs. women (per region)	54
Figure 14	Traditional and religious authorities' treatment of youth vs. elders (per region)	56
Figure 15	Traditional and religious authorities' treatment of rich vs. poor (per region)	58
Figure 16	Traditional and religious authorities' treatment of farmers vs. herders (per region)	59

Figure 17	Influence of state officials on traditional and religious authorities (per region)	61
Figure 18	Trust in NGOs (per region)	62
Figure 19	Trust in local (LSO) and national state officials (NSO) (per region)	63
Figure 20	Influence of police and state security force on traditional and religious authorities (per region)	64
Figure 21	Trust in police and security forces (per region)	65
Figure 22	Influence of self-defense groups and local security initiatives on traditional and religious authorities (per region)	66
Figure 23	Trust in self-defense groups & local security initiatives (per region)	66
Figure 24	Evaluation of security situation in community (per region)	71
Figure 25	Evolution of the security situation over the past year (per region)	71
Figure 26	Security threats (per region)	72
Figure 27	Impact of traditional and religious authorities' security measures	72
Figure 28	Impact of traditional and religious authorities' security measures (per region)	73
Figure 29	Top 3 security measures taken by traditional and religious authorities (per region)	75
Figure 30	Change in communal authorities' intermediary role (per region)	77
Figure 31	When is it acceptable for traditional and religious authorities to negotiate with VEOs (per region)	78
Figure 32	Effectiveness of traditional and religious authorities' conflict resolution efforts (per region)	80
Figure 33	Extent to which traditional and religious authorities intervene in community conflicts (per region)	81
Figure 34	Traditional and religious authorities' discursive actions in the face of a major crisis (per region)	86
Figure 35	Decision Tree Classifier for Resilience (depth = 2, accuracy = 0.59)	107

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Data collection across regions	25
Table 2	Actor you turn to for basic service provision	36
Table 3	Extent to which traditional and religious authorities are involved in the distribution of emergency aid	37
Table 4	Actor you turn to for security provision	39
Table 5	Actor you turn to for conflict resolution within your community/with other communities	41
Table 6	Actor you turn to for justice provision	42
Table 7	Perceived interest that traditional and religious authorities serve	49
Table 8	Trust in traditional and religious authorities and family/friends	51
Table 9	Traditional and religious authorities' treatment of men vs. women	53
Table 10	Traditional and religious authorities' treatment of youth vs. elders	55
Table 11	Traditional and religious authorities' treatment of rich vs. poor	55
Table 12	Traditional and religious authorities' treatment of herders vs. farmers	55
Table 13	Influence of state officials and NGOs on traditional and religious authorities	61
Table 14	Trust in state officials and NGOs	62
Table 15	Influence of armed actors on traditional and religious authorities	64
Table 16	Trust in security actors	65
Table 17	Traditional and religious authorities' security actions in the face of violent extremism	74
Table 18	Changes in communal authorities' intermediary role in response to security situation in neighboring communities	77
Table 19	When is it acceptable for traditional and religious authorities to negotiate with VEOs (multiple choice)	78

Table 20	Effectiveness of traditional and religious authorities' conflict resolution efforts	80
Table 21	Extent to which traditional and religious authorities intervene in community conflicts	80
Table 22	Traditional and religious authorities' discursive actions in the face of a major crisis	85
Table 23	Dependent variable: General community resilience (range 0-55)	103
Table 24	Traditional authorities – Dependent variable: General community resilience (range 0-55)	104
Table 25	Religious authorities – Dependent variable: General community resilience (range 0-55)	105
Table 26	Dependent variable: General community resilience (range 0-55)	106
Table 27	Dependent variable: Effectiveness of traditional and religious authorities' security measures	108
Table 28	Dependent variable: Effectiveness of traditional authorities' conflict resolution efforts	109

TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES MUST SERVE THE INTERESTS OF THEIR COMMUNITIES

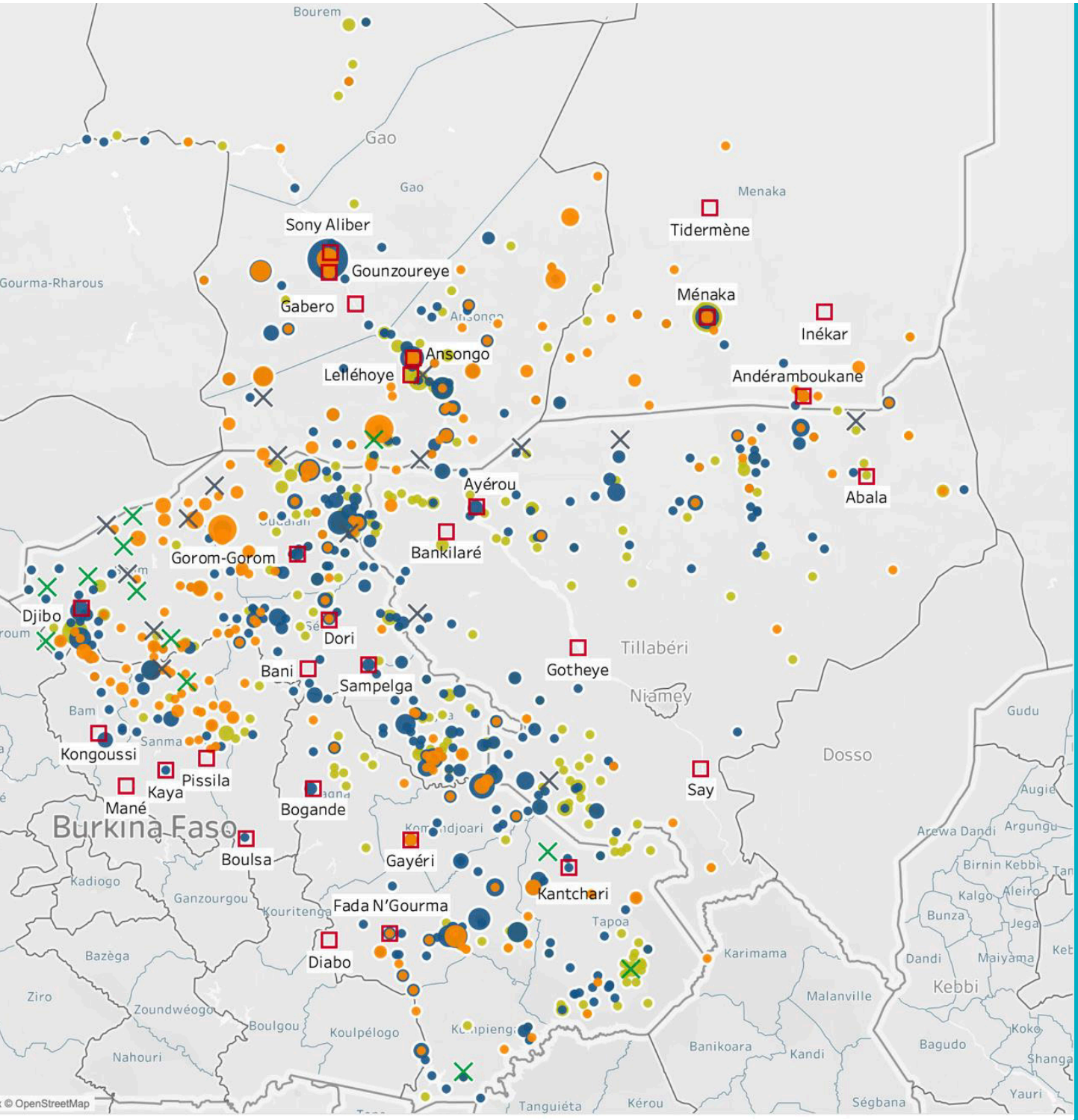
INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, the border regions of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso have become the epicenter of violent conflict dynamics (see Map 1). A number of different – but related – dynamics underlie the proliferation of conflict throughout these regions.

First, the ongoing conflict between herders and farmers, as well as inter-pastoralist and inter-agriculturalist conflict, continues to become more violent.[6] While these tensions were previously resolved through negotiation or low-intensity conflict, the fronts between herding and farming communities have hardened over the years and conflict has increasingly taken on an ethnic character. In Burkina Faso, for example, violence regularly erupts between sedentary communities, such as between pastoralist Fulani communities and the primarily farming Foulse and Mossi communities in the Sahel and Centre-Nord regions (and the mostly sedentary Gourmatché and Mossi in the Est region). In Niger, intercommunal tensions over access to land and resources exist between the Djerma and Fulani communities. In Mali, the Tuareg Doussahak and Fulani communities have engaged in unprecedented numbers of violent encounters since 2015.[7]

Second, intercommunal violence is aggravated by the creation of local self-defense militias, such as the Mossi-dominated Koglweogo and the state-sponsored Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland (*Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie*, VDP) in Burkina Faso, as well as by abuses conducted by state security forces. In Central Mali, for example, the Dan Na Ambassagou militia has incited violence and hatred against Fulani communities and committed several massacres, including one of 160 civilians in Ogossagou.[8] This pattern is exemplary of a larger dynamic of abuses based on ethnic affiliations – targeting communities who are claimed to side with jihadist militant groups or ethnic militias.[9] In another example, Koglweogo militiamen killed 113 Fulani in the north of Sanmatenga (the Centre-Nord region of Burkina Faso) on January 1, 2019. In Niger, the military conducted mass arrests and executions of Fulani community members in communities on the border with Mali in response to the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) attack on a military base in Chinagrodar in January 2020.

Third, the presence of the ISGS and the Group of Support for Islam and Muslims (*Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin*, JNIM) – Al-Qaeda's affiliate in Mali and West Africa – contributes to the violence. Both organizations have established cells across all three countries, although their presence and capabilities differ from one region to another and shift over time. The creation of self-defense groups has resulted in violent extremist organizations (VEOs) inflicting an "atypical" degree of violence on civilians, which has been



Events
1
5
10
15
20

Legend
- Cell
- Event
- Research Site

- Research Site
- Alleged JNIM Cell
- Alleged ISGS Cell
- Battles
- Violence against Civilians
- Looting/Property Destruction/Explosions

Map 1 **Conflict Events June 2020 – June 2021, Research Locations, ISGS/JNIM cells December 2020**

witnessed in particular in Centre-Nord, Est, and Tillabéri. In the latter region, recent large-scale massacres at the hands of VEOs are a direct response to the creation of local self-defense groups, suggesting a similar pattern to that previously observed in neighboring Mali and Burkina Faso.[10]

These dynamics are all entangled and create a general level of insecurity that has also been exploited by bandits using the opportunity to shake down civilians. This begs the question of what could be done to increase communities' resilience against violent extremism – and against insecurity more generally.

USAID West Africa Regional Mission's approach[11]

In the face of these challenges, West African governments and civil society organizations are increasingly looking beyond military solutions toward a holistic approach to countering violent extremism (CVE). To that end, the region's historical and cultural traditions of tolerance and moderation remain a critical bulwark against violent extremist influence and a solid foundation for efforts to build peace. USAID West Africa Regional Mission seeks to reduce vulnerability to violent extremism by strengthening the capacity of West African institutions to counter violent extremism, amplifying credible moderate voices, and increasing community cohesion in areas at greatest risk of violent extremist influence. The *Customary Characters in Uncustomary Circumstances* study supports these efforts by furthering an understanding of the role of traditional and religious authorities in strengthening and/or weakening community resilience to violent extremism in the Sahel. It has been designed as a foundational contribution to inform both USAID West Africa's own ongoing response work in this area, and the activities and policies of other stakeholders and partners.

The link between traditional and religious authorities and resilience

In contrast to the prevailing security-based approaches to countering VEOs, P/CVE advocates for a development-focused, locally owned, whole-of-society approach, grounded in human rights, tolerance, and respect for diversity, emphasizing collaboration with local authorities and leaders.[12] A whole-of-society approach to addressing violent extremism is one in which the role of subnational actors is identified as essential to the improvement of environments subject to VEO presence. Two relevant types of subnational actors are traditional authorities and religious leaders. In the Sahelian context, these include, among others, traditional leaders such as village chiefs (*chefs de village*) and religious leaders such as priests or imams – none of which have previously been thought of necessarily as national security actors.

Traditional chiefs and religious leaders have performed key governance tasks in the region since (pre-) colonial times,[13] which has earned them a high degree of legitimacy.[14] They engage in crucial service delivery, such as justice provision and conflict mediation, and they form a source of community unity – albeit based on a hierarchical ordering of society. In areas of limited statehood, traditional and religious authorities are key entry points for local dispute resolution and mediation initiatives.[15] Yet while these actors have received increasing priority in P/CVE policy and programming,[16] the specific ways in which they contribute to or undermine resilience as a mechanism to counter violent extremism is not well understood.

In previous research, we investigated how the rise of armed actors in border regions in Mali, Niger, and Libya challenged traditional and religious authorities' legitimacy and their ability to govern, and what this means for international interventions seeking to

AS CONFLICT MEDIATORS AND COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES, TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES ARE PIVOTAL PARTNERS

improve stability and governance in the region.[17] We found that, as historic conflict mediators and community representatives, traditional and religious authorities are pivotal partners in stabilization efforts.[18] In addition, experience with providing training in negotiation skills for communities subject to herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria showed that traditional authorities are key mediation partners in such efforts, as they are well-placed to communicate the outcomes of peace dialogues back to their communities to build acceptance and support.[19] Working with traditional and religious authorities on these topics is particularly relevant given extremist groups' ability to capitalize on local fault lines that are often linked to such conflicts over access to natural resources.[20]

Our previous research has also shown, however, that there are some serious challenges to the legitimacy of these authorities. First, contemporary traditional authority structures may reflect (pre-) colonial hierarchical relationships that are increasingly rejected by lower status groups, including women and youth. The relatively recent introduction of municipal elections in some regions has created novel arenas where competition for power between these groups now plays out. The resulting tensions have the potential to turn violent and have led to accusations that traditional authorities are corrupt and self-interested. These dynamics undermine communities' perceptions of traditional authorities as neutral and objective governance actors – which likely stands in the way of their mediation and conflict resolution efforts.[21]

Second, insecurity and the presence of non-state armed groups, self-defense groups, and VEOs in the Sahel affects the way in which traditional and religious authorities govern. Authorities in volatile regions have strong incentives to ally themselves to armed groups – either as a way to protect their position against new (armed) contenders or as a necessary step to ensure their own (and their community's) security and ability to govern.[22] At the same time, VEOs have a strategic interest in engaging with traditional and religious authorities – either co-opting them to cement their power on the ground or targeting those who cannot be easily co-opted or who belong to alternative networks.[23] This seriously questions traditional and religious authorities' abilities to contribute to community resilience against violent extremism.

Thus, this begs the question of how the international community should position itself in relation to traditional and religious authorities. Can these authorities still contribute meaningfully to community resilience against radicalization toward violent extremism – and if so, how could implementers distinguish between those authorities that are best placed to do so and those that are more likely to be constrained by external circumstances and/or more likely to have a detrimental effect? To help address the threat that violent extremism poses to communities in the Sahel, this research seeks to further the understanding of these authorities' roles in strengthening and/or weakening community resilience to violent extremism. Toward this end, the central research question here is:

Do traditional and religious authorities contribute to or weaken community resilience against radicalization toward violent extremism in VEO-affected areas, and if so, in what manner?

Mindful of the fact that local political and security dynamics likely affect traditional and religious authorities' contributions to community resilience on the ground, this comparative report not only presents our overall answers to these questions but also explores the key differences between the various regions we studied. Additional analysis at the regional level can be found in the five accompanying regional reports.[24]

Approach and focus of the study

As a starting point, this study explores whether (and in which regions) traditional and religious authorities' governance contributes to general community resilience. We thereby follow the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's (OSCE) community-based approach to counterterrorism, which holds that communities' security is tightly linked to some key resilience characteristics, such as whether community members work together for the common (security) good and whether they are able to "withstand, respond to and recover from a wide range of harmful and adverse events."[25] We recognize, however, that violent extremism poses particular challenges to community resilience due to the degree of violence and insecurity it inherently entails. To ensure that we pay sufficient attention to those dynamics that matter most for P/CVE, we subsequently zoom in more specifically on traditional and religious authorities' roles in security provision, conflict resolution, and prevention of recruitment by VEOs.

Based on an extensive literature review, we focus in particular on seven key factors that all may either increase or decrease traditional and religious authorities' contributions to general community resilience – as well as the effectiveness of their conflict resolution and prevention of recruitment:[26]

1. Legitimacy: authorities who are widely perceived to be legitimate are likely to contribute more to communities' general resilience than illegitimate ones. We look specifically at whether respondents trust their traditional and religious authorities, and whether they are perceived to work for their communities' benefit or their own.
2. Equality of treatment: we expect that authorities who give equal treatment to subgroups in their community contribute more to general resilience than those who sow or contribute to inter-group discord. We look in particular at the differences between treatment of men versus women, youth versus elders, rich versus poor and herders versus farmers.
3. Relations with state officials/politicization: close ties with other authorities may provide traditional and religious authorities with the necessary means to govern. However, when such close ties are the result of – or contribute to – their politicization, they run the risk of losing their normative standing within their communities, which may harm their ability to govern.
4. Relations with armed actors: on the one hand, ties with armed actors, such as police and security forces, non-state armed actors, or self-defense groups may provide traditional and religious authorities with the safety and enforcement power needed to do their work. In some cases, the distinction may even collapse altogether.[27] On the other hand, such ties may reinforce existing violent dynamics, thereby undermining the community's resilience as a whole.
5. Institutional multiplicity: on the one hand, the presence of a diverse array of governance actors, including traditional and

Table 1 Data collection across regions

Country	Region	Number of surveys	Number of interviews
Burkina Faso	Centre-Nord	256	123
	Est	246	137
	Sahel	238	79
Mali	Gao	264	112
	Ménaka	193	82
Niger	Tillabéri	240	123

religious authorities, means that there are multiple avenues available that citizens can explore when they are faced with problems (which may contribute to resilience). On the other hand, various governance actors may compete and undermine each other and/or citizens may play out various governance actors against each other – thereby decreasing the effectiveness of governance (and resilience by extension).

6. Role in resource management: when traditional and religious authorities control access to resources, or are seen as the key authorities when it comes to the adjudication of disputes over these resources, they may be better positioned to contribute to general resilience than when they do not hold such a position. Nevertheless, they may also be responsible for the lack or the unequal distribution of such resources in the community – thereby harming the community's general resilience.
7. Role in community-building through narrative formation/building social cohesion: traditional and religious authorities can contribute to general resilience by actively producing narratives that improve or build social cohesion during crises. If, however, their narratives are negative ones, such as those that propagate exclusion, this may be detrimental to general resilience.

In the analyses, we control for specific characteristics of the respondents (gender, age, ethnicity, and level of education) and for specific characteristics of their communities (region, perceived security situation, presence of herder-farmer conflicts, presence of land conflicts, general accessibility of traditional and religious authorities).

Research localities

Data collection took place from December 2020 until April 2021 in 29 selected municipalities across six different regions in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. The selected regions – Ménaka and Gao in Mali, Centre-Nord, Sahel, and Est in Burkina Faso, and Tillabéri in Niger – are all subject to the presence of VEOs. For security reasons – for both our local researchers and our research participants – we selected municipalities that are under VEO threat but have not been completely taken over by them. To ensure some degree of variance in resilience against VEOs, we aimed to select at least two municipalities per region located in an area that is known for its VEO presence and at least two municipalities located somewhat further away.[28]

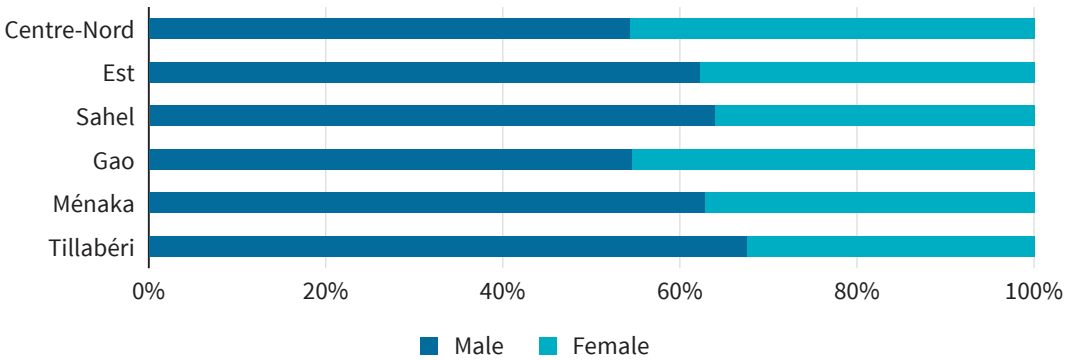
Demographic profile

In total, we collected 1,437 surveys and 656 semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs) across the six regions between October 2020 and April 2021 (see Table 1 above for an overview).

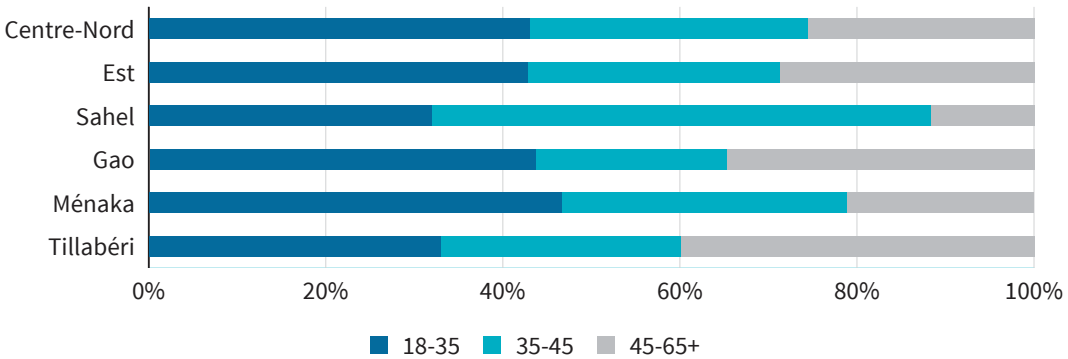
For the survey, we applied a stratified sampling strategy to ensure the participation of three relevant groups of respondents: (1) youth, (2) women, and (3) minority groups. Relevant minority groups were determined beforehand for every municipality on the basis of ethnicity, caste, and religion.[29] We created a customized survey for every municipality, meaning that we could enquire about the relevant minorities in every locality. Our stratified sampling

Figure i Survey Respondent Demographic Information

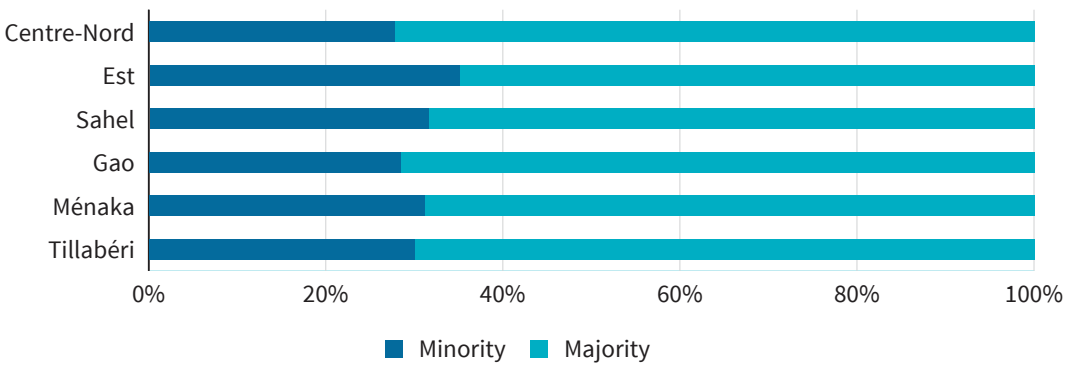
Gender



Age



Min/Maj Status



strategy allowed for the inclusion of women, different age groups, and different minority groups in the survey population. Figure i presents the distribution of respondents across our different respondent categories. Overall, we successfully ensured that at least one-third of respondents were females and one-third of respondents belonged to a minority group. We also sought to include different age groups among our respondents.

Figure ii Distribution of KIIs across main categories of actors

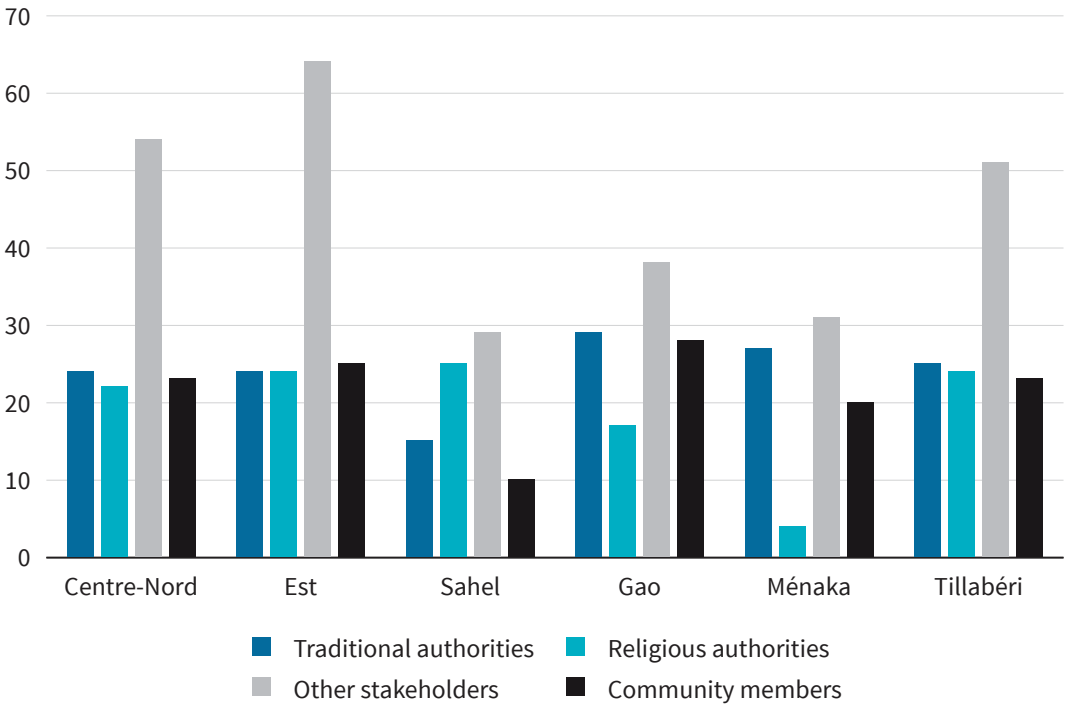
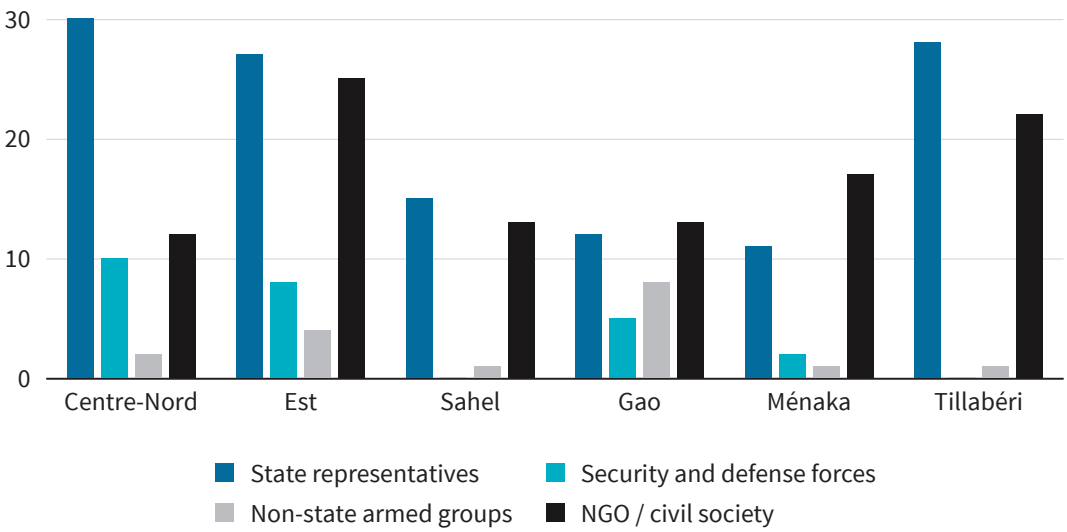


Figure iii Distribution of KIIs across subcategories of other stakeholders



KIIs were conducted with four relevant categories of actors: (1) traditional authorities (n = 144); (2) religious authorities (n = 116); (3) other important stakeholders present in the municipality (n = 267), including state representatives (n = 123), members of state security and defense forces (n = 25), members of non-state armed groups (n = 17), and members of NGOs and civil society organizations, including women and youth leaders (n = 102); and (4) community members of different ages, genders, and ethnicities (n = 129). Figures ii and figures iii present the distribution of KII respondents across different types of actors in the six researched regions.

Traditional authorities mainly included district chiefs (*chefs de quartier*), village chiefs (*chefs de village*), and their representatives, as well as some high-level authorities, such as group chiefs (*chefs de groupement*), canton chiefs (*chefs de canton*), *dimas* (kings), and emirs. Given the demographic characteristics of the researched regions, religious authorities mainly comprised imams and marabouts in Gao, Ménaka, and Tillabéri, while other religious figures such as priests and pastors were also interviewed in the Burkina Faso regions.

Structure of the report

The report is divided into three parts. Part 1 looks at traditional and religious authorities' roles in fostering general community resilience, such as through their efforts at providing basic services and emergency aid, contributing to security provision and conflict resolution, as well as providing justice. It provides a descriptive overview of traditional and religious efforts in these domains across the six regions. Part 2 of the report assesses how traditional and religious authorities perform these roles and the effect this has on general community resilience. It pays particular attention to authorities' legitimacy, whether they engage in equal treatment of the relevant subgroups in their communities, their relations with state officials, and their relations with armed actors. Part 3 of the report subsequently takes a closer look at functions that provide an explicit contribution to strengthening resilience against VEOs, namely security provision and conflict resolution. It also touches upon traditional and religious authorities' efforts to prevent (youth) recruitment and identifies key factors that contribute to their effectiveness in these domains. The conclusion draws together implications for programming responses. For the methodology chapter of this study, please see here.[30]

Box 1 Key terms – as used in our survey

Community resilience: the ability of a community to withstand, respond to, and recover from a wide range of harmful and adverse events.[i]

Local political officials: local administration and locally elected politicians.

National political officials: central administration.

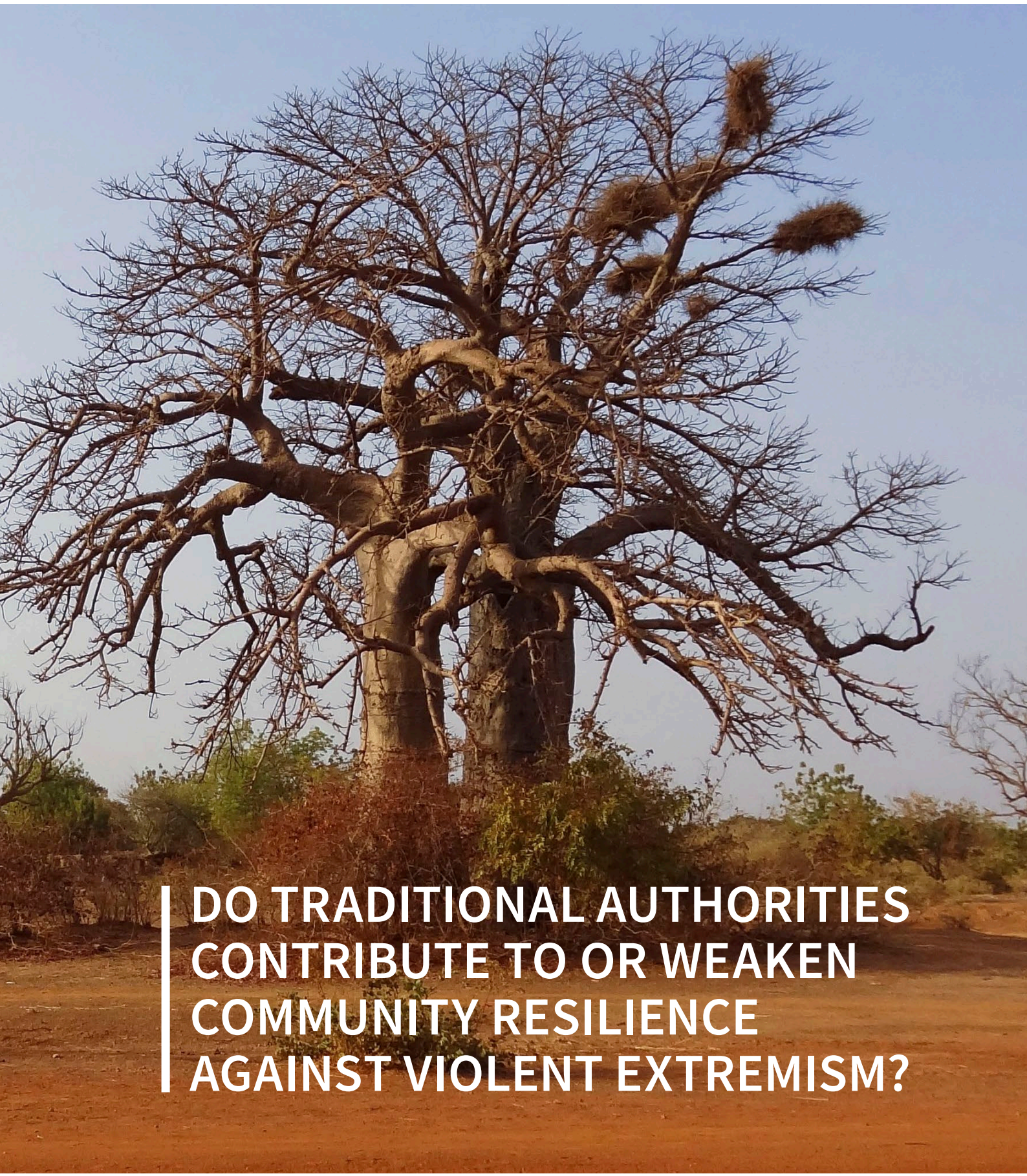
Armed actors: all state and non-state armed actors that are locally present. This includes police and state security forces, non-state armed groups such as the signatory groups to the Malian peace agreement, self-defense groups and local security initiatives, VEOs, and armed bandits.

Resilience against violent extremism: ability to prevent, withstand, and recover from extremist violence/attacks as well as radicalization/recruitment/support for VEOs.

Customary Authorities: comprises both traditional authorities, such as village chiefs, canton chiefs, and kings, and religious authorities, such as imams and marabouts.

i Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2014. "Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Community-Policing Approach."

VIOLENT EXTREMISM POSES PARTICULAR CHALLENGES TO COMMUNITY RESILIENCE DUE TO THE DEGREE OF VIOLENCE AND INSECURITY IT ENTAILS



DO TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES CONTRIBUTE TO OR WEAKEN COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AGAINST VIOLENT EXTREMISM?

PART 1 – TRADITIONAL AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES' ROLE IN GENERAL RESILIENCE

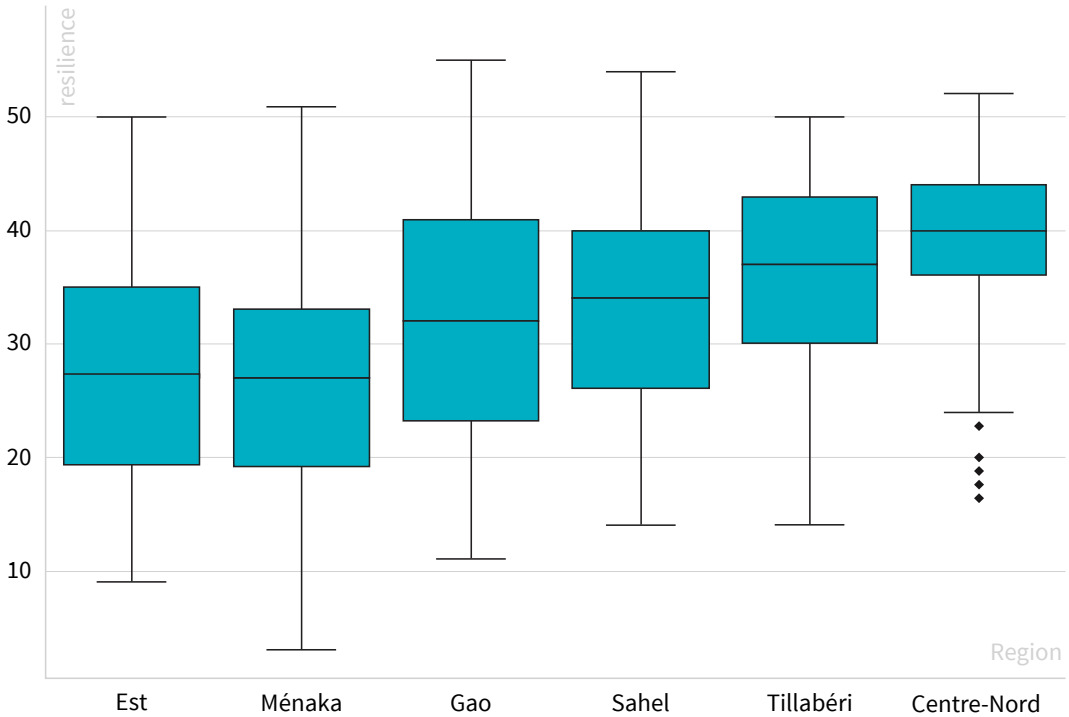
To understand traditional and religious authorities' role in general resilience, this first part of the report explores what general community resilience looks like in the six regions included in this study and provides an overview of the shocks that communities face and the responses they have at their disposal. It subsequently takes a closer look at traditional and religious authorities' role in fostering general community resilience across the six regions, such as through their efforts at providing basic services and emergency aid, contributing to security provision and conflict resolution, as well as providing justice.

General resilience across the six regions

To measure to what extent communities possess general resilience, we asked our respondents a number of questions from the Communities Advancing Resilience Toolkit (CART) Assessment Survey. The survey questions cover four domains: connection and caring, resources, transformative potential, and disaster management. Combined, these questions provide a theory-based, evidence-informed instrument that measures communities' resilience to disaster and their adaptation to mass casualty incidents (see Annex 1 for an overview).[31] Scores on our resultant measure for general resilience range on a scale from 0-55. The measure is based on each individual respondent's perceptions of their communities, and should hence be read as how resilient survey respondents perceive their community to be.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of perceived general resilience across the regions. Communities in Centre-Nord and Tillabéri are generally perceived to be the most resilient, while our respondents perceive their respective communities in Est and Ménaka to be the least resilient. Sahel falls somewhere in between these two extremes. Gao, which also falls in the middle range, is a case apart because it contains municipalities with some of the lowest and highest mean resilience scores of our entire sample (see Annex 2).[32] Given that Gao was perceived to be the most dangerous region at the time of data collection (discussed in more detail in Part 3), this goes to show that it is not just the security situation that explains general community resilience.

Figure 1 Resilience across regions



Community shocks and responses

In our survey, we also asked our respondents whether their household had experienced a shock – such as climatic or economic shocks or an outbreak of violence – over the course of the past two years. Most respondents answered in the affirmative, with Gao (95%) and Centre-Nord (91%) being the most affected by such external shocks (see Figure 2 below). Additional survey data show that recovery from shocks, which constitutes one of the dimensions of general resilience, differs between regions – although it is quite low overall. Gao proved least resilient, as only 9 percent of respondents answered that their households had been able to fully recover from the shock. The figure is somewhat higher for Burkina Faso, with 23 percent of respondents in Centre-Nord, 24 percent of respondents in Sahel, and 27 percent of the Est region stating that their household had been able to fully recover. Tillabéri (32%) and, surprisingly, Ménaka (34%) proved most resilient in the face of external shocks.

We also asked respondents how their households coped with this shock and found that dominant strategies differ per region (see Figure 3 below). Tillabéri stands out as the only region where accepting additional work is an important resilience strategy – arguably the only constructive strategy found among our respondents' answers, as it does not entail the destruction of household capital. The more negative resilience strategy of using one's own savings is a very dominant strategy in all regions but Tillabéri. Selling or slaughtering livestock is a common strategy in all regions but Gao. Other key remedies are taking out a loan (Sahel, Centre-Nord, Tillabéri, and Ménaka) and selling products or household articles (Est, Gao). In addition, Gao stands out as the only region where reception of emergency food aid constitutes a dominant coping strategy.

Figure 2 Exposure and full recovery from shocks over the past two years (per region)

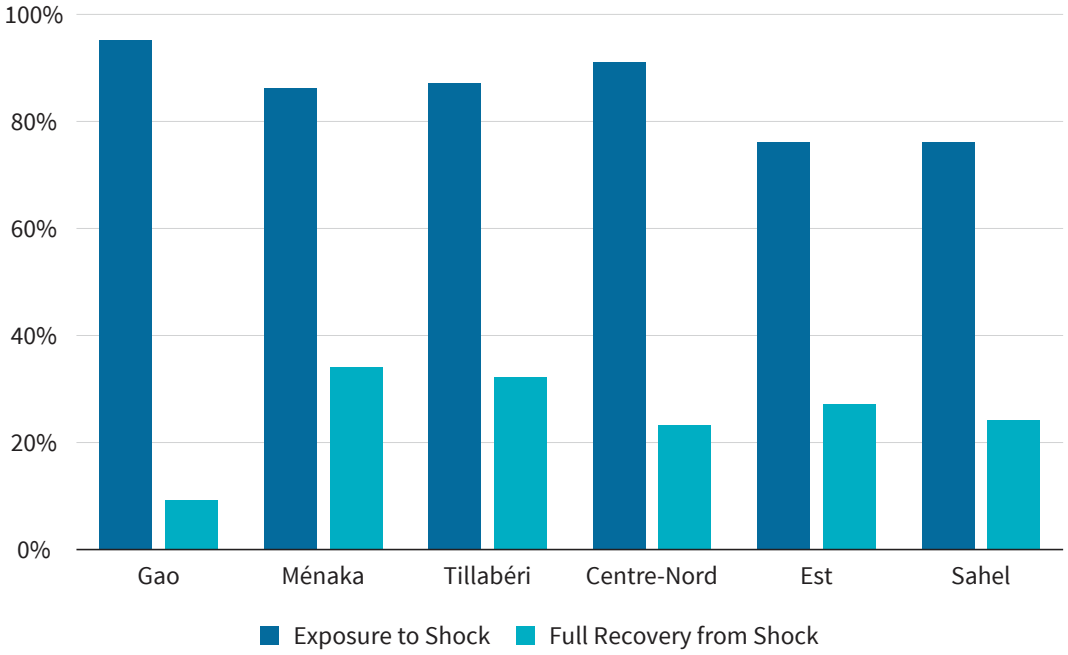


Figure 3 How households cope with shocks (per region)

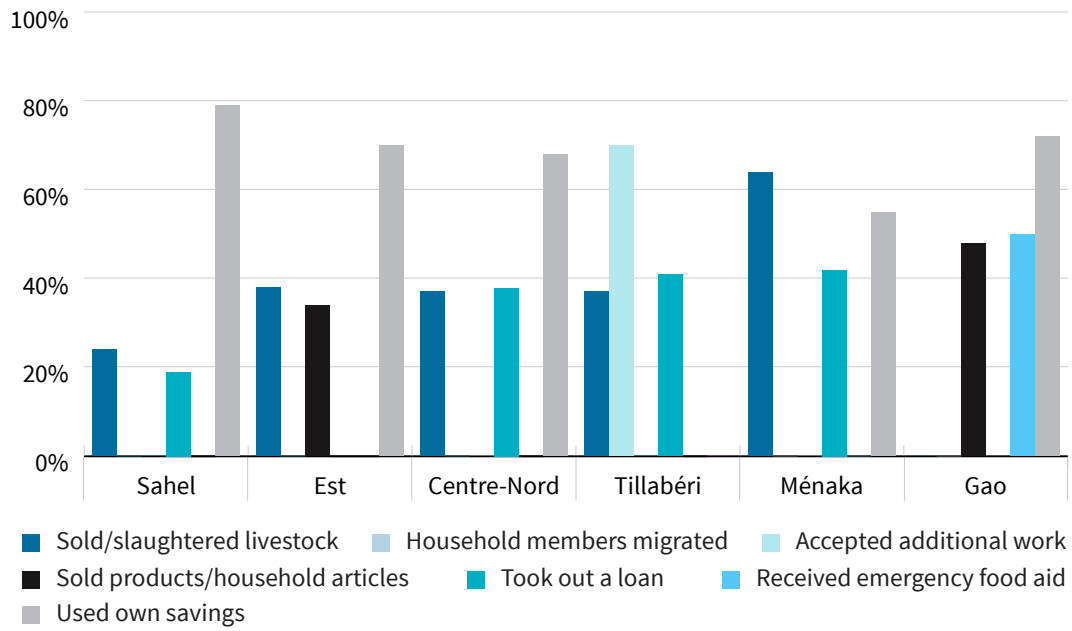
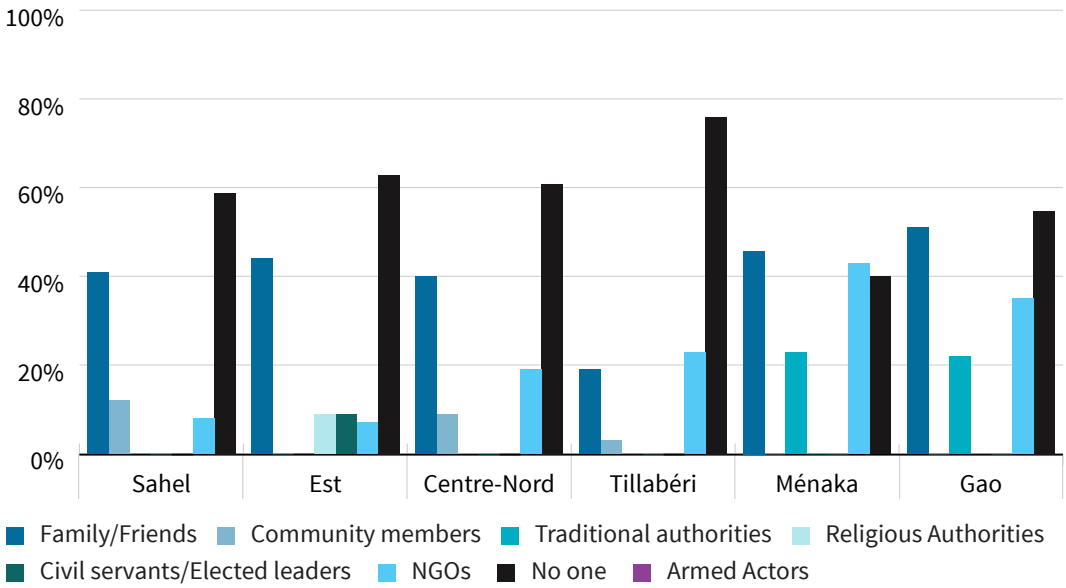


Figure 4 Key person/authority that helped households deal with shocks



The overall picture that emerges is one in which households in these countries are largely left to their own devices when it comes to dealing with external shocks.

The answers we received to the question of which key persons or authorities helped households deal with the external shock in their communities further confirms this view (see Figure 4 above). In all regions but Ménaka, a majority of respondents noted that no one helps them out – for Ménaka, this is 40 percent of respondents. In second place come family and friends, with almost equally high shares in all regions but Tillabéri. In the Tillabéri, Est, and Sahel regions, community members more generally play a minor role as well. NGOs come in second place in Tillabéri, third place in Ménaka, Gao, and Centre-Nord, and in fourth place in the Est and Sahel regions. Traditional authorities are an important actor for a quarter of respondents in Ménaka and Gao only, while religious authorities constitute the fourth important actor in the Est region only. Civil servants and/or elected leaders are only mentioned as minor allies in the Est region. Key allies during times of shock are hence people's own, or their communities', networks.

From the above it should not be deduced, however, that traditional and religious authorities are irrelevant actors when it comes to fostering community resilience, or that they do so in only a select number of regions. It may just as well be the case that they do not have a mandate to support communities in the face of external shocks so much as that their contribution to resilience follows from their key functions as mediators and justice providers.

To investigate the merit of this assumption, we ran a regression analysis to look at the effect of traditional and religious authorities' functions on general community resilience (see Annex 3 for regression table).[33] We included five different types of functions: (1) basic service delivery, (2) provision of aid, (3) security provision, (4) conflict resolution (within the community and with other communities), and (5) justice provision. The analysis shows that traditional and religious authorities' roles in these domains contribute significantly to general community resilience – although for some domains it matters which type of authority we look at. The following sections explore these findings in more detail.

Basic service provision

Traditional and religious authorities are rarely the authorities that people turn to for the provision of basic services, such as food, health, and education. Only 3.34 percent of respondents noted that they turn to traditional authorities, and 1.39 percent to religious authorities, when they require such services (see Table 2). The fact that self-reliance is predominant in the studied regions becomes abundantly clear again, with 34.31 percent of respondents noting that they rely on family and friends for the provision of basic services and 22.27 percent of respondents indicating that they have no one to rely on. Alternatively, some respondents turn to state officials (15.24%) and NGOs (11.48%).

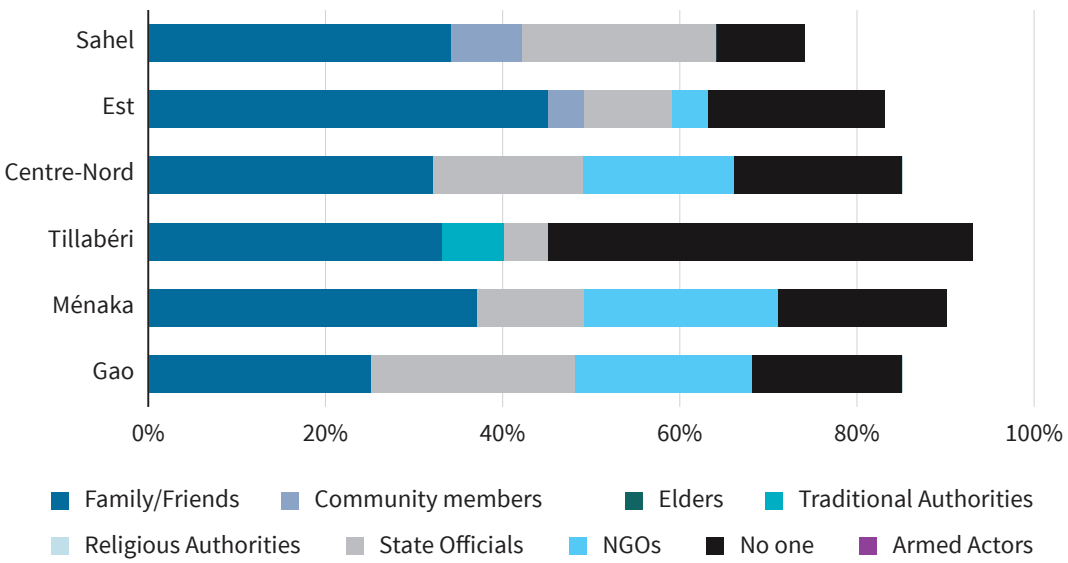
Figure 5 (below) confirms these findings and shows that minor differences exist across the six regions. Respondents overwhelmingly either have no one to turn to or rely on their family and friends. State actors, such as civil servants and elected leaders, and NGOs are important additional service providers. Traditional authorities are only mentioned as relevant actors that support basic service provision in Tillabéri. This is likely explained by the fact that, out of the three countries under study, traditional authorities have been most strongly integrated in formal state structures in Niger and that, as such, they comparatively have a stronger mandate when it comes to getting involved in basic service provision.

Table 2 Actor you turn to for basic service provision[i]

Family/friends	34.31%	**State officials**	15.24%
Community members	3.62%	**NGOs**	11.48%
Elders	0.21%	**No one**	22.27%
Traditional authorities	3.34%	**Armed actors**	0,35%
Religious authorities	1.39%	**Other**	6.68%

i No answer: 1.11%

Figure 5 Community actor contacted for basic service provision (per region)



Our regression model (Annex 3) does show, however, that the limited number of respondents that do turn to traditional and religious authorities for basic service provision perceive their communities to be more resilient than those that do not. This suggests that basic service provision is a way in which these authorities can contribute to their community's resilience.[34]

Distribution of emergency aid

Traditional and religious authorities are more active when it comes to distributing emergency aid. Almost half of our respondents indicated that traditional authorities are involved in such activities, while one-third of respondents indicated that this is the case for religious authorities (see Table 3 below). Again, differences exist between the various regions (see Figure 6 below). Traditional authorities are particularly involved in the distribution of emergency aid in Gao, Tillabéri, and Centre-Nord. They are perceived to be most absent in this capacity in Sahel. Religious authorities are also quite heavily involved in the distribution of emergency aid in Centre-Nord and most absent in Tillabéri and Sahel.

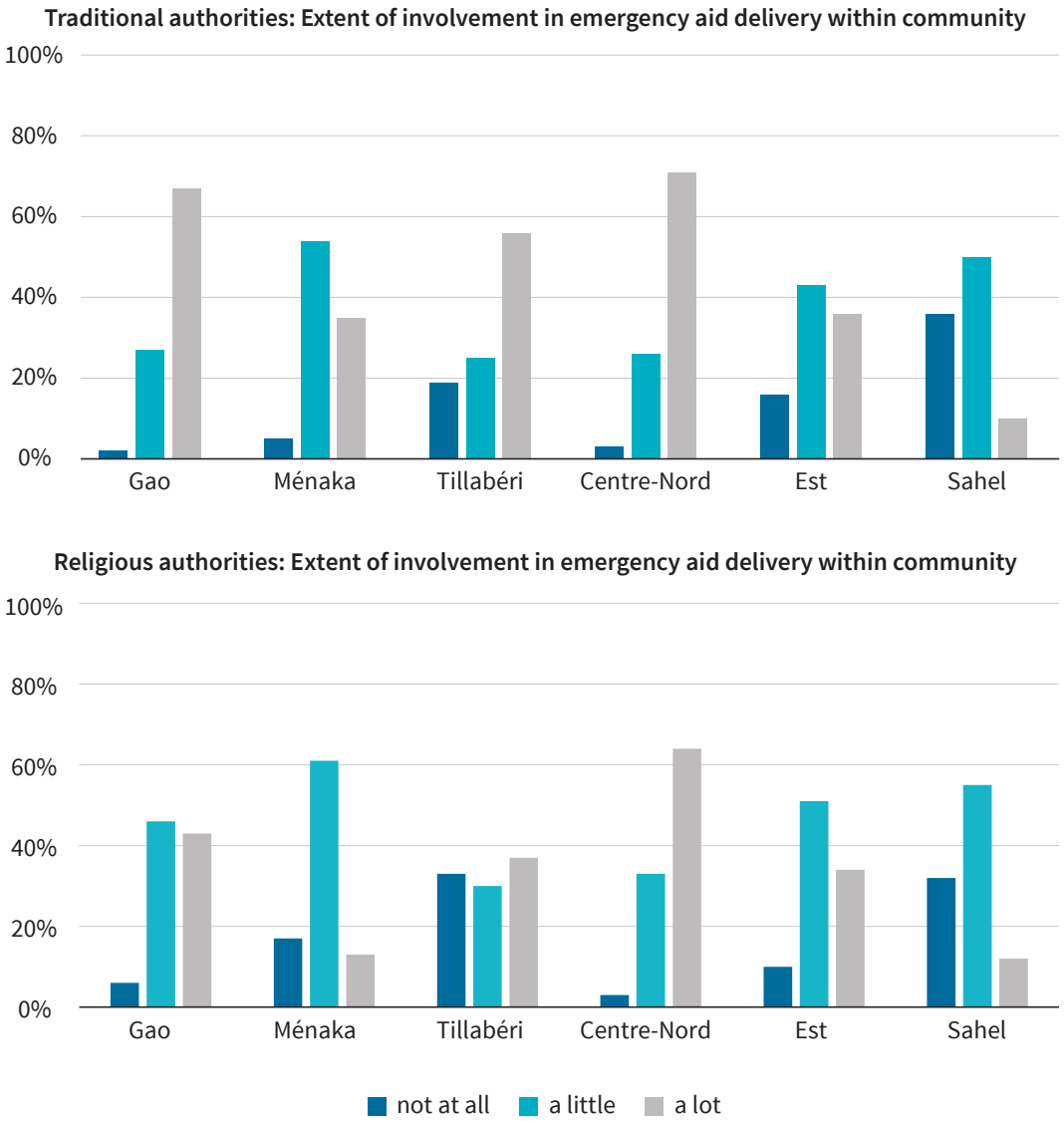
From a P/CVE programming perspective, however, the role of traditional authorities in this function can likely be largely ignored. Our regression analysis (Annex 3) does not find that traditional authorities contribute significantly to general community resilience when they engage in the distribution of emergency aid – this is only the case for religious authorities. Nevertheless, there may still be humanitarian reasons to engage with traditional and religious authorities in this domain, as they are often the key actors who can secure access to and information about local communities. As will be discussed in more detail in Part 2, care should be taken to ensure that the authorities fulfill this role in a transparent and accountable manner so that their work in aid distribution does not undermine their legitimacy.

Table 3 Extent to which traditional and religious authorities are involved in the distribution of emergency aid

	Traditional authorities[i]	Religious authorities[ii]
Not at all	13.5%	16.56%
A little	36.53%	45.37%
A lot	46.83%	34.93%

i No answer: 3.13%
ii No answer: 3.13%

Figure 6 Extent to which traditional and religious authorities are involved in the distribution of emergency aid (per region)



Security provision

When it comes to security provision, traditional authorities are perceived to be much more relevant actors than in the domain of basic service provision. Indeed, one-fifth of respondents indicated they would turn to traditional authorities if they were in need of security provision (see Table 4 below).[35] Traditional authorities come second only to armed actors, which is a category that groups together the police, security forces, self-defense groups, and/or non-state armed groups (such as the Platform coalition and Coordination of Azawad Movements [*Coordination des Mouvements de l'Azawad*, CMA], in Mali).[36] Religious authorities are not a relevant actor, with only 3.69 percent of respondents stating they would turn to these actors for security provision.[37] These findings are reflected in our regression results, which show that – whereas the availability of traditional authorities for security provision contributes significantly to general community resilience – religious authorities' role in this domain does not provide a significant contribution.

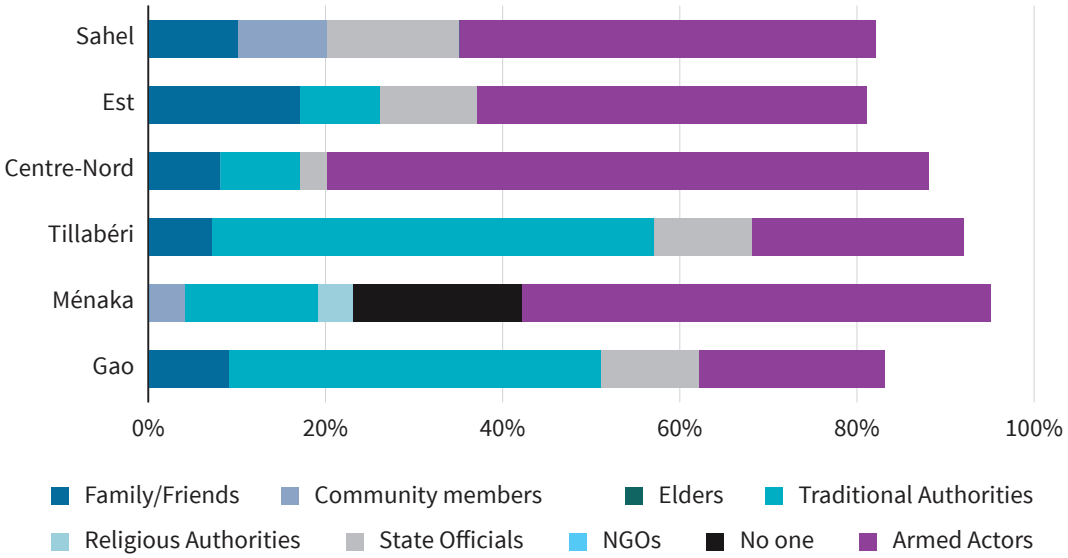
The availability of traditional authorities for security provision differs somewhat across regions. Respondents see traditional authorities as important actors to contact for security provision in Tillabéri (50%) and Gao (42%). They play a minor role in this capacity in Ménaka (15%), Centre-Nord (9%), and Est (9%), where a larger share of respondents reach out to armed actors directly (see Figure 7 below). In Sahel, respondents do not turn to traditional authorities at all. One likely explanation for this is that, whereas traditional authorities in other regions have strong ties to state security forces (Niger), to armed signatories of the peace agreement (Mali), or to self-defense forces (Centre-Nord and the Est region in Burkina Faso), traditional authorities in Sahel have not developed such strong relationships (as discussed in more detail in the regional chapter on Sahel). This may explain why they are seen as less likely allies for security provision, as they lack the actual contacts with enforcement actors that could help address potential security threats and/or they are not capable of acting as intermediaries with these security actors.

Table 4 Actor you turn to for security provision[i]

Family/friends	9.05%	**State officials**	9.32%
Community members	4.11%	**NGOs**	0.21%
Elders	0.84%	**No one**	6.4%
Traditional authorities	21.36%	**Armed actors**	42.59%
Religious authorities	3.69%	**Other**	1.74%

i No answer: 0.7%

Figure 7 Community actor contacted for security provision (per region)



Conflict resolution

When it comes to conflict resolution, respondents identified traditional authorities as the number one actor to contact. Their efforts in this domain contribute significantly to general community resilience (see regression analysis in Annex 3).[38] Across our dataset, 44.61 percent of respondents indicated that they turn to traditional authorities to resolve conflicts within the community (see Table 5).[39] In addition, 50.40 percent of respondents noted that traditional authorities are actors who support other actors' conflict resolution efforts.[40] Police, security forces, and/or armed groups (such as the Platform coalition and CMA in Mali) come in second place, but the distance is quite far apart, as only 15.87 percent of respondents indicated that they would turn to these actors for conflict resolution.[41] Our qualitative data confirm that traditional authorities are generally the first actors responsible for conflict resolution – especially in the domains of land, farmer-herder conflicts, and matrimonial and inheritance disputes. It is often common procedure for respondents to approach traditional authorities first and to bring their conflicts to the police, gendarmerie, or judiciary only after this avenue has been exhausted.

Religious authorities come in third place, with 8.35 percent of respondents turning to religious authorities as a key actor for conflict resolution.[42] Almost half our respondents (48.52%) noted that religious authorities are also actors who support other actors' conflict resolution efforts.[43] Our qualitative data show, for example, that religious authorities may have a seat on, or a consultative role in, dispute resolution mechanisms such as the land tenure commissions in Niger.

An exploration of the data (see Figure 8 and Figure 9) show that there are important differences between regions. Traditional authorities are overwhelmingly identified as actors whom respondents contact for intra-community conflict resolution in Gao (67%), Tillabéri (61%), and Ménaka (50%). On the other hand, religious authorities play a minor role in conflict resolution

Table 5 Actor you turn to for conflict resolution within your community/with other communities[i]

Family/friends	7.38% / 3.97%	**State officials**	5.71% / 12.46%
Community members	5.64% / 3.48%	**NGOs**	0.56% / 0.7%
Elders	5.29% / 4.11%	**No one**	1.95% / 2.85%
Traditional authorities	44.61% / 43.98%	**Armed actors**	15.87% / 10.86%
Religious authorities	8.35% / 6.75%	**Other**	3.27% / 4.38%

i No answer: 1.39%/6.47%

Figure 8 Community actor contacted for conflict resolution within the community (per region)

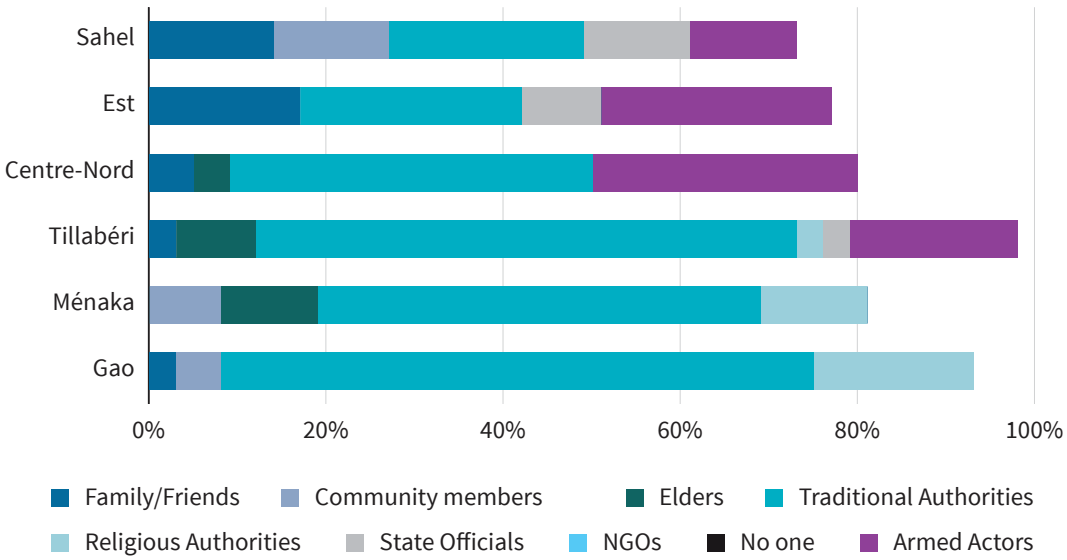
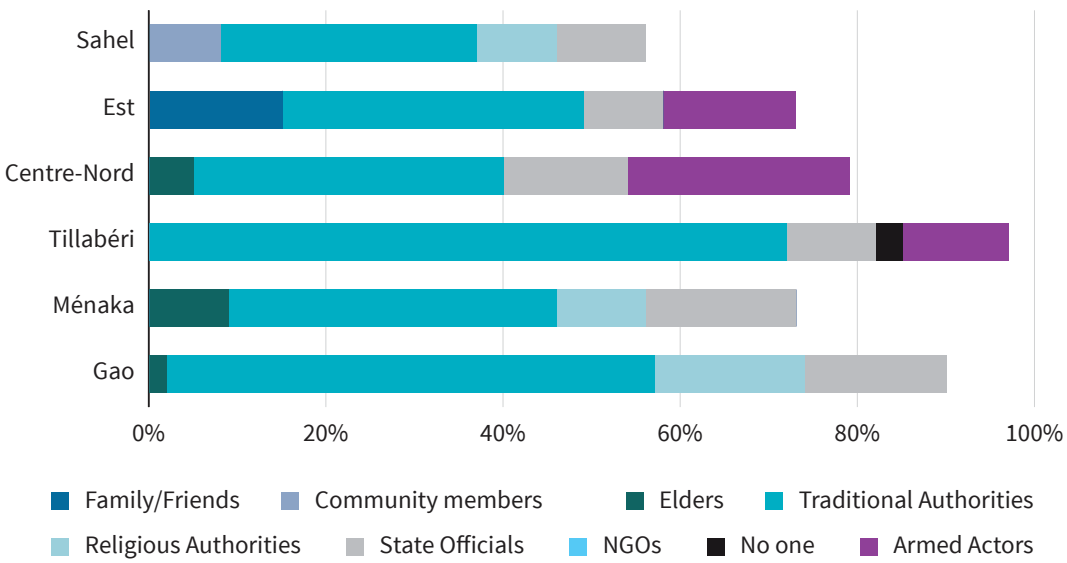


Figure 9 Community actor contacted for conflict resolution outside the community (per region)



in these regions. The scores for traditional authorities are lower for the regions located in Burkina Faso, with Est (25%) and Sahel (22%) scoring particularly low. Armed actors are almost equally important here. Our qualitative data confirm that the first course of action here may also be to go to the police, gendarmerie, and even self-defense groups. These latter groups have come to play an important role in local governance constellations in recent years (a dynamic discussed in more detail in the Burkina Faso regional chapters). Nevertheless, it should be noted that – despite their relatively lower scores – traditional authorities are still the most important actors contacted for conflict resolution in these regions.

Scores differ somewhat for the role that traditional authorities play in conflict resolution outside of the community, such as when different communities clash over access to natural resources. Traditional authorities in Tillabéri (72%) overtake those in Mali as the most important actor contacted by our respondents in this domain. From the data, it follows that traditional authorities in Tillabéri are even more important allies in dealing with conflicts outside of the village as they are within the village itself. For Mali, the importance of traditional authorities drops to 55 percent in Gao and 37 percent in Ménaka. A similar dynamic is visible in Centre-Nord. For the other regions in Burkina Faso, scores remain relatively similar.

Justice provision

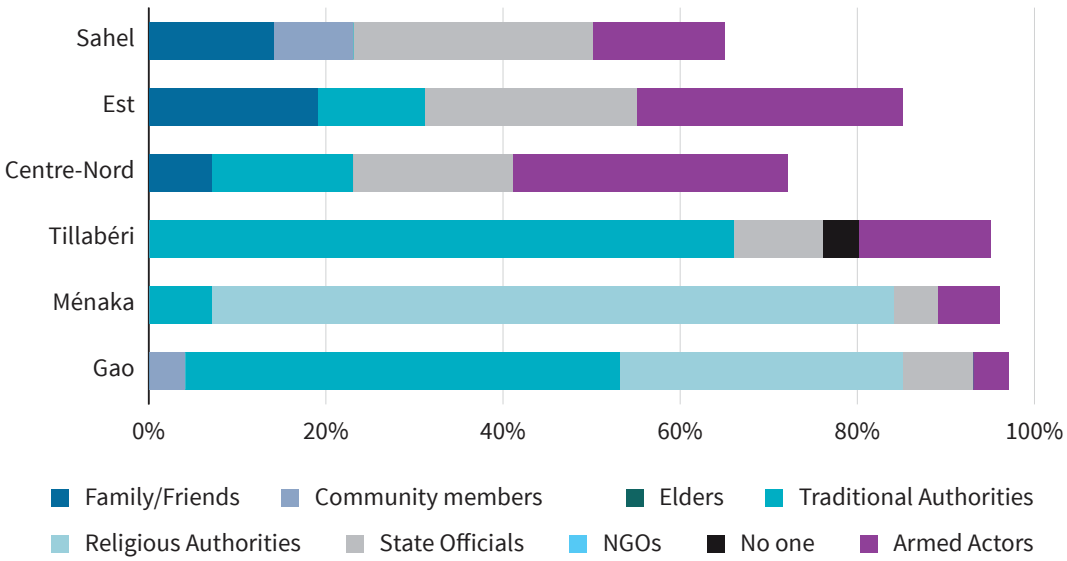
Justice provision is another domain where traditional and religious authorities come up as key actors. Respondents identified traditional authorities as the number one actor they contact for justice provision, although their figures are not as high as for conflict resolution, with just 26.86 percent of our respondents stating they would do so (see Table 6 below). Their supporting role in justice provision appears to be more relevant, with 52.29 percent of respondents stating that traditional authorities do this. Religious authorities play a more important role in justice provision than they do in conflict resolution, with 19 percent of respondents indicating that they are key actors. In addition, 48.52 percent of respondents noted that religious authorities support other actors' justice provision efforts. Police, security forces, and/or armed groups (such as the Platform coalition and CMA in Mali) come in third place (17.19%), closely followed by state officials (15.80%). This shows how dispersed justice provision is across a wide array of actors. This may also explain why traditional authorities' role in justice provision does not come up as a significant explanation for variance in general community resilience (see Annex 3).[44]

Table 6 Actor you turn to for justice provision[i]

Family/friends	7.59%	**State officials**	15.8%
Community members	2.78%	**NGOs**	0.14%
Elders	0.84%	**No one**	3.06%
Traditional authorities	26.86%	**Armed actors**	17.19%
Religious authorities	19%	**Other**	5.64%

i No answer 1.11%

Figure 10 Community actor contacted for justice provision (per region)[i]



i Five actors are listed for Gao because both community members and armed actors have been selected by 4% of respondents.

Again, important differences exist between regions (see Figure 10 below). The primary actors of justice provision in Tillabéri are traditional authorities (66%), whereas religious authorities (77%) rank first in Ménaka. In Gao, both sets of authorities are important actors in justice provision, with traditional authorities being selected by 49 percent and religious authorities by 32 percent of respondents respectively. In Burkina Faso, justice provision is divided across state officials, security actors, and – surprisingly – family and friends. Security actors are most relevant in Centre-Nord (31%) and in Est (30%), which likely points to the important governance role of self-defense groups in these regions (and the issue of extrajudicial punishment this creates). In Sahel, state officials are more important than security actors (27% vs. 15%), which likely reflects the relative absence of self-defense groups there.

Implications for programming

The picture that arises is one in which governance is either absent (such as is the case for basic service provision) or where it is in the hands of traditional and religious authorities and security actors, rather than with state actors. State officials do not rank first in a single domain when it comes to performing these basic governance functions. This explains why traditional authorities' performance of these functions contributes significantly to community resilience. Traditional authorities – and religious authorities to a lesser extent – are the key actors whom people would contact when it comes to conflict resolution, and also important actors in the fields of security and justice provision. This reinforces the vital role that a whole-of-society approach to P/CVE plays. Rather than focusing on conventional, security-focused counterterrorism measures in which state actors are the primary counterparts, programming should reflect the roles that a diverse array of local actors can and do play in order to implement a holistic approach to strengthening community resilience in the face of the growing threat of violent extremism.

In part, this approach may capitalize on traditional authorities' role as intermediaries between citizens and the state. But oftentimes, it may also reflect the fact that traditional authorities have become liaisons between citizens and the dominant security forces present in the regions (be it state security forces in Niger, the Platform coalition and CMA in Mali, or police and self-defense groups in Burkina Faso). This dynamic may also provide an alternative explanation as to why traditional authorities have become key targets of VEOs in the region. Perhaps it is not because they are seen as representatives of the state, but instead because they are regarded as governance actors who are able to organize collective security and justice responses at the local level. As will be discussed in more detail in Part 3, traditional and religious authorities have also become key security interlocutors for populations that have become fearful of reaching out to state actors accused of human rights abuses and extrajudicial killings. At the same time, their role is not completely unproblematic, as they are often also guilty of reinforcing ethnic targeting within local self-defense initiatives.

Another thing that becomes clear is that traditional and religious authorities' contribution to resilience extends beyond the role they may or may not play in responding to shocks or providing aid. By extension, including these authorities in programming that focuses on the provision of aid may therefore not be the most efficient way of seeking to leverage their contributions to resilience at the local level. As Part 2 of this report shows, this might even be counterproductive, as traditional and religious authorities' diversion of aid for their own benefit and that of their families and friends is among the main grievances people hold toward them.

Instead, programming could capitalize on traditional and religious authorities' key strengths, such as contributing to basic service provision in Tillabéri and conflict resolution in Gao, Tillabéri, and Ménaka. For justice provision, it makes more sense to involve religious authorities in Ménaka. Similarly, justice programming in the Sahel region would be wise not to focus too much on traditional authorities.

PROGRAMMING SHOULD REFLECT THE ROLES THAT A DIVERSE ARRAY OF LOCAL ACTORS CAN – AND DO – PLAY

RESILIENCE IS INCREASED WHEN TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES ARE SEEN TO WORK FOR THE BENEFIT OF THEIR COMMUNITIES

PART 2 – TRADITIONAL AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES' PERFORMANCE AND GENERAL RESILIENCE

After defining how and when traditional and religious authorities contribute to general community resilience through the functions they perform, this part of the report looks into the question of whether the ways in which traditional and religious authorities govern have an effect on resilience. Our findings (see Annex 4 for regression results) confirm that four out of the seven factors we identified in the introduction on the basis of the literature significantly affect general community resilience, with similar results for both sets of authorities:[45]

1. Legitimacy:
   - when traditional and religious authorities are seen to work to the benefit of their communities, rather than their own interests or those of their friends and families, this increases general resilience scores significantly
   - more trust in traditional and religious authorities results in significantly higher levels of community resilience
2. Equal treatment:
   - equal treatment of different subgroups means significantly more resilience[46]
   - preferential treatment of one group over others (women, elders, herders) means significantly less resilience[47]
3. Links with local state officials/politicization:
   - resilience is significantly lower when local state officials are perceived to have a lot of influence on traditional and religious authorities[48]
4. Links with armed actors:
   - resilience is significantly higher when police or state security forces have a lot of influence on traditional and religious authorities
   - resilience is significantly lower when self-defense groups or local security initiatives have a lot of influence on traditional and religious authorities

As the discussion below shows, however, there are important differences between the regions when it comes to traditional authorities' performance on these indicators.

Table 7 Perceived interest that traditional and religious authorities serve

	Traditional authorities[i]	Religious authorities[ii]
Their own (family's) interest	27.84%	8%
Their community's interest	69.17%	89%

i No answer: 2.99%
ii No answer: 3%

Legitimacy

For legitimacy, we looked at how much our respondents trust their authorities and whether they perceive them to work for their own benefit or the benefit of their communities. For this, we used decision tree learning, which is a machine learning method that allows users to identify, rank and easily interpret the best predictors of a given outcome variable. The resultant analysis (see Annex 6) shows that out of more than 60 variables, whether traditional authorities are perceived to serve their own interests or those of the community is the best predictor of high community resilience overall. This means that the more traditional authorities are perceived to serve the community, the higher the community's perceived resilience is.

We subsequently explored further to what extent traditional and religious authorities are perceived to work toward the community's interests (see Table 7 above). Overall, a clear majority of respondents (69.17%) perceive this to be the case for traditional authorities. Religious authorities are deemed to work even more predominantly for the community's interests, with 89 percent of respondents perceiving this to be the case.

Nevertheless, traditional authorities' scores on this variable differ across the regions included in this study (see Figure 11 below). In Burkina Faso, traditional authorities are overwhelmingly perceived to serve the interests of the community rather than their own interests, with a large majority of respondents confirming so in Centre-Nord (91%), Sahel (80%), and Est (71%). Traditional authorities are also seen to work predominantly for the benefit of their communities in Niger's Tillabéri (78%). The picture is bleaker in Mali, however. In Gao, only 54 percent of respondents perceive their traditional authorities to serve their community's interests. In Ménaka, a majority of respondents (58%) perceive their authorities to serve their own interests, or their family and friends', rather than those of the community as a whole. This may be a result of the fresh memories many people in Gao and Ménaka still hold of the 2012 rebellion that led to the occupation of the region by a coalition of jihadist groups and the fact that a number of religious and traditional authorities collaborated with either armed actors or VEOs to maintain a certain degree of influence and protect their political and economic interests.[49]

With regard to religious authorities, Ménaka also stands out as a region where a large share of respondents (21%) perceive these actors to primarily serve their own, or their family and friends' interests. The same goes for the Est region (13%), which may be explained by the fact that Christian leaders are generally identified as the most influential religious leaders in the communities we studied – and that Christians are also disproportionally represented across the state apparatus – which may lead to the Muslim and animist communities feeling disadvantaged.

Figure 11 Whose interest are traditional and religious authorities most likely to serve?

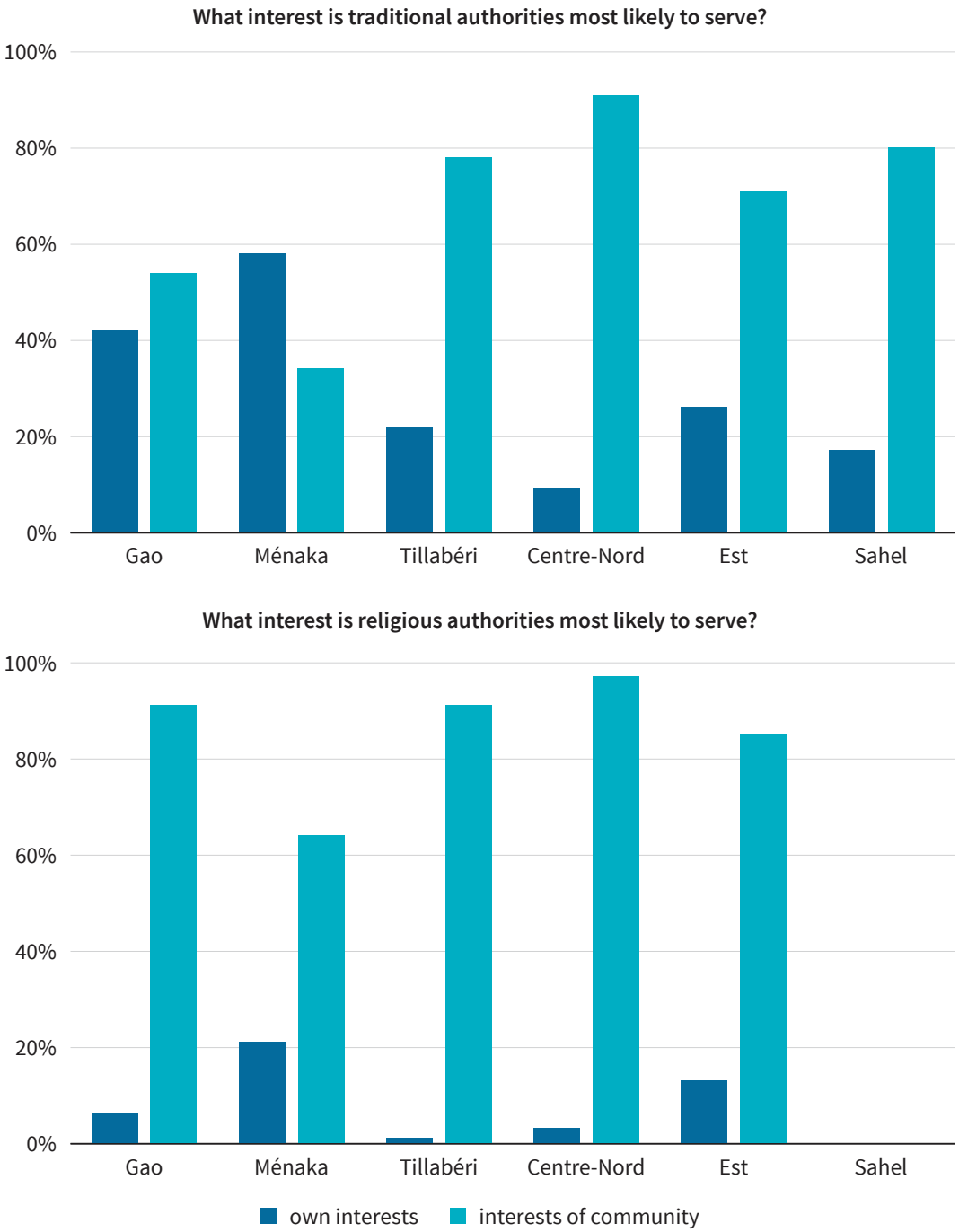


Table 8 Trust in traditional and religious authorities and family/friends

	Family/friends[i]	Traditional authorities[ii]	Religious authorities[iii]
Not at all	1.6%	6.96%	4.11%
A little	14.68%	36.4%	21.02%
A lot	83.3%	55.67%	74.04%

i No answer: 0.42%
ii No answer: 0.97%
iii No answer: 0.84%

Trust – our second measure of legitimacy – also significantly contributes to general community resilience. Trust in traditional and religious authorities is generally quite high. When compared to other actors, only family/friends score higher, with 83.30 percent of respondents having a lot of trust in their family and friends (see Table 8 above). Overall, 55.67 percent of respondents have a lot of trust in traditional authorities, whereas only 6.96 percent do not trust them at all. Trust in religious authorities is even higher, with 74.04 percent of respondents stating that they have a lot of trust in these actors – compared to 21.02 percent stating that they have a bit of trust in them and 4.11 percent of respondents not trusting religious authorities at all. Our qualitative findings show that the higher legitimacy scores for religious authorities (both their trust levels and the degree to which they are perceived to serve their communities' interests) are explained by the fact that religious authorities are less directly involved in the management of the municipality, that they are less politicized (discussed in more detail below), that they are seen as less corrupt, and that respect for religion and ancestral rules also plays a role in some regions.

Figure 12 Trust in traditional (TA) and religious authorities (RA) (per region)

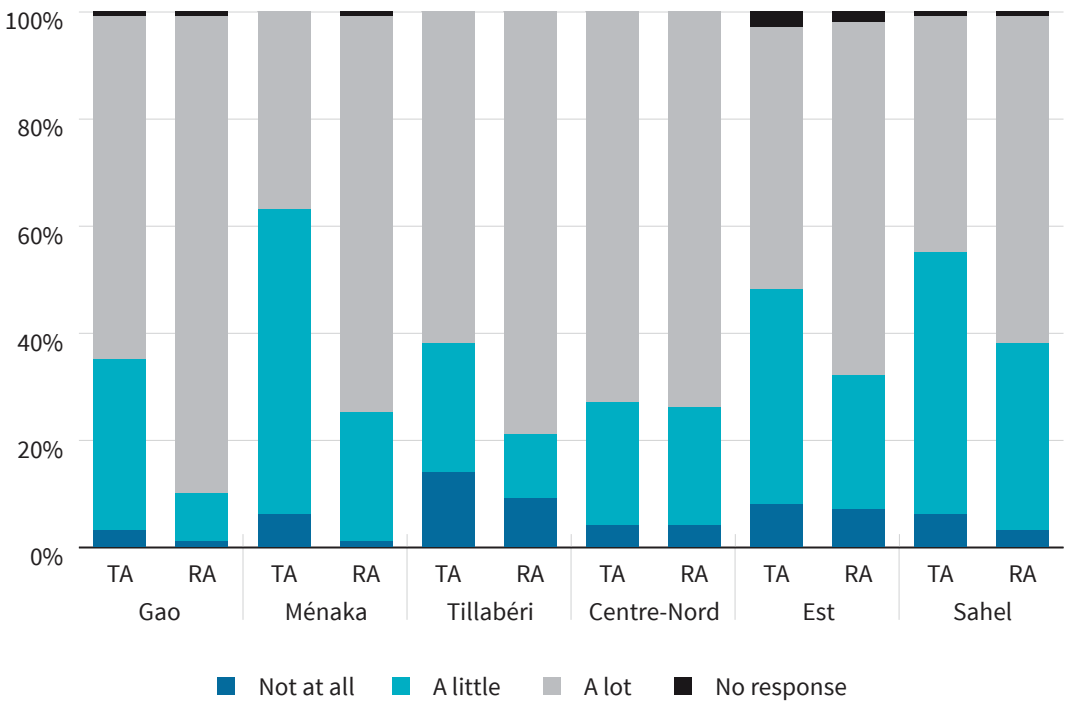


Figure 12 shows the differences across regions, with traditional authorities being trusted the most in Centre-Nord (73%), followed by Gao (64%), Tillabéri (62%), Est (49%), Sahel (44%), and, finally, Ménaka (37%). Religious authorities are trusted the most in Gao (89%), followed by Tillabéri (79%), Ménaka and Centre-Nord (74% each), Est (66%), and Sahel (61%).

These findings have the following implications for programming:

- Traditional authorities in Centre-Nord and Tillabéri are likely best placed to support project implementation that seeks to improve community resilience.
- Gao is a particular case, as trust in traditional authorities is high yet respondents often perceive them to serve their own interests rather than their communities'. Programming here could raise awareness of the need for traditional authorities to operate in a manner that serves the community as a whole. Implementing programming without taking this step would likely only further undermine traditional authorities' legitimacy, and community resilience more generally, as it would provide them with access to even more resources that they could use toward their own benefit.
- Est and Sahel present the opposite cases, where traditional authorities are seen to serve their communities' interests but have relatively low trust scores. In the case of Est, this may be explained by the fact that there are currently two competing chieftaincies (discussed in more detail in the Est regional chapter). Implementers should be keenly aware that this competition exists and that they may risk fueling further tensions and undermining legitimacy if they were to inadvertently pick sides.
- Traditional authorities in Ménaka score so low on both measures that their own behavior should form the prime focus of any programming attempts in this region.
- Religious authorities overall score quite well in terms of legitimacy. This is likely the result of their work being more contained within the religious domain and them not having access to state resources to the same extent that traditional authorities often have. Implementers could seek complementarity between their work and that of religious authorities but we would advise against seeking to instrumentalize them for donors' agendas, as this might undermine their legitimacy.

Equal treatment

Our survey explored various potential fault lines in society, such as the divisions between men and women, youth and elders, rich and poor, and herders and farmers. The regression analyses shows that traditional and religious authorities' treatment of these groups is linked to general community resilience.[50] More specifically, our decision tree analysis (see Annex 6) shows that traditional and religious authorities' equal treatment of men and women is the second most important variable explaining general community resilience. Respondents who report both that (a) traditional authorities do not serve the interests of the community, and that (b) religious authorities do not treat men and women equally, are the most likely to give their communities low resilience scores. In contrast, participants who report both that (a) traditional authorities serve the interests of the community, and that (b) traditional authorities treat men and women equally, are the most likely to give their communities high resilience scores.[51]

Table 9 Traditional and religious authorities' treatment of men vs. women

Favored	Traditional authorities[i]	Religious authorities[ii]
Women	14.48%	7.65%
Equally	39.81%	62%
Men	42.79%	28.53%

i No answer: 2.92%
ii No answer: 1.81%

Overall, however, women are not perceived to receive equal treatment. More than one-third of our survey respondents (39.81%) indicated that they feel both genders receive equal treatment from traditional authorities (see Table 9 above). A slightly higher share of respondents feel that men receive more favorable treatment (42.79%). Religious authorities are seen as much more impartial, with 62 percent of respondents indicating they treat both genders equally and 28.80 percent of respondents stating that men receive preferential treatment.

Figure 13 (below) shows that these figures do differ a lot depending on the region at issue. In Tillabéri, the majority of respondents do not perceive a difference in the treatment of men and women at the hands of traditional authorities (85%) or religious authorities (94%). These figures are twice as high as in any other region in Mali or Burkina Faso, where men are generally seen to be favored, by traditional authorities in particular, although religious authorities also fare worse than they do in Tillabéri. Ménaka has the poorest scores, with only 18 percent of respondents perceiving equal treatment of both genders at the hands of traditional authorities.

Our qualitative data show that there are some interesting dynamics behind these figures. In Tillabéri, where a majority of KIIs confirm that women can speak up and work with traditional authorities, the creation of women's groups and organizations is described as having enhanced women's roles. These groups, which were created with the help of a diverse array of partners, including in the face of the deteriorating security situation, have become essential components of local decision-making bodies (although differences do exist between rural and urban areas). In Ménaka, on the other hand, respondents identify the "weight of tradition" as the key obstacle standing in the way of advancing women's voices. Women are not only prohibited from taking part in most public meetings and talking in front of TAs, but are also excluded from state bodies tasked with the promotion of women.[52] Despite trainings and awareness-raising campaigns for traditional authorities in the municipality of Ménaka, it remains very difficult for women in that region to have their voices heard. Future research could delve into why we find such different dynamics in the two regions.

Figure 13 Traditional and religious authorities' treatment of men vs. women (per region)

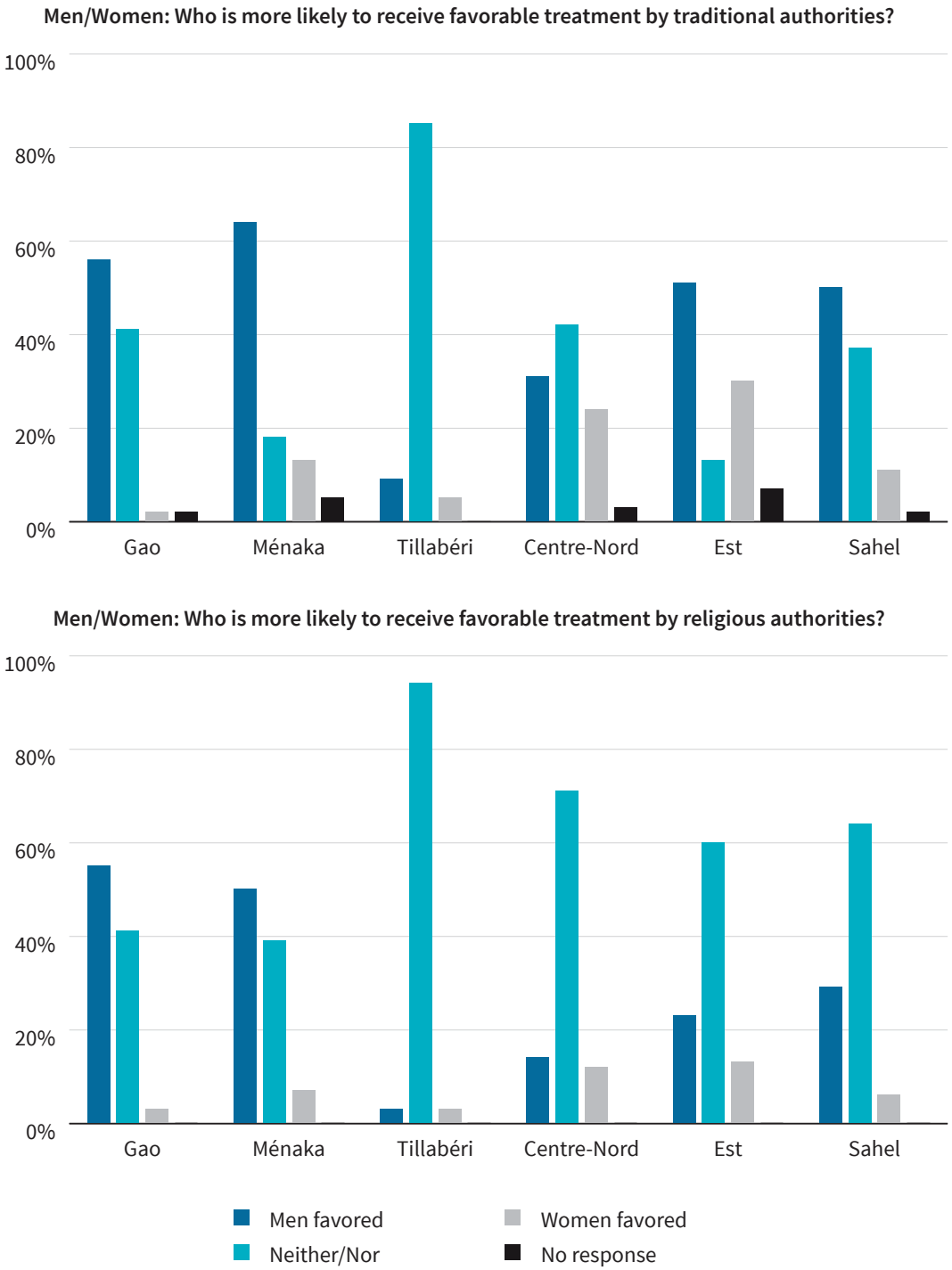


Table 10 Traditional and religious authorities' treatment of youth vs. elders

Favored	Traditional authorities[i]	Religious authorities[ii]
Youth	9.25%	5.56%
Equally	37.02%	55.18%
Elders	50.8%	37.37%

i No answer: 2.92%
ii No answer: 1.88%

Table 11 Traditional and religious authorities' treatment of rich vs. poor

Favored	Traditional authorities	Religious authorities
Poor	10.65%	9.04%
Equally	34.79%	64.51%
Rich	51.99%	24.84%

Table 12 Traditional and religious authorities' treatment of herders vs. farmers

Favored	Traditional authorities[i]	Religious authorities[ii]
Herders	21.36%	12.67%
Equally	55.46%	75.78%
Farmers	19.35%	8.69%

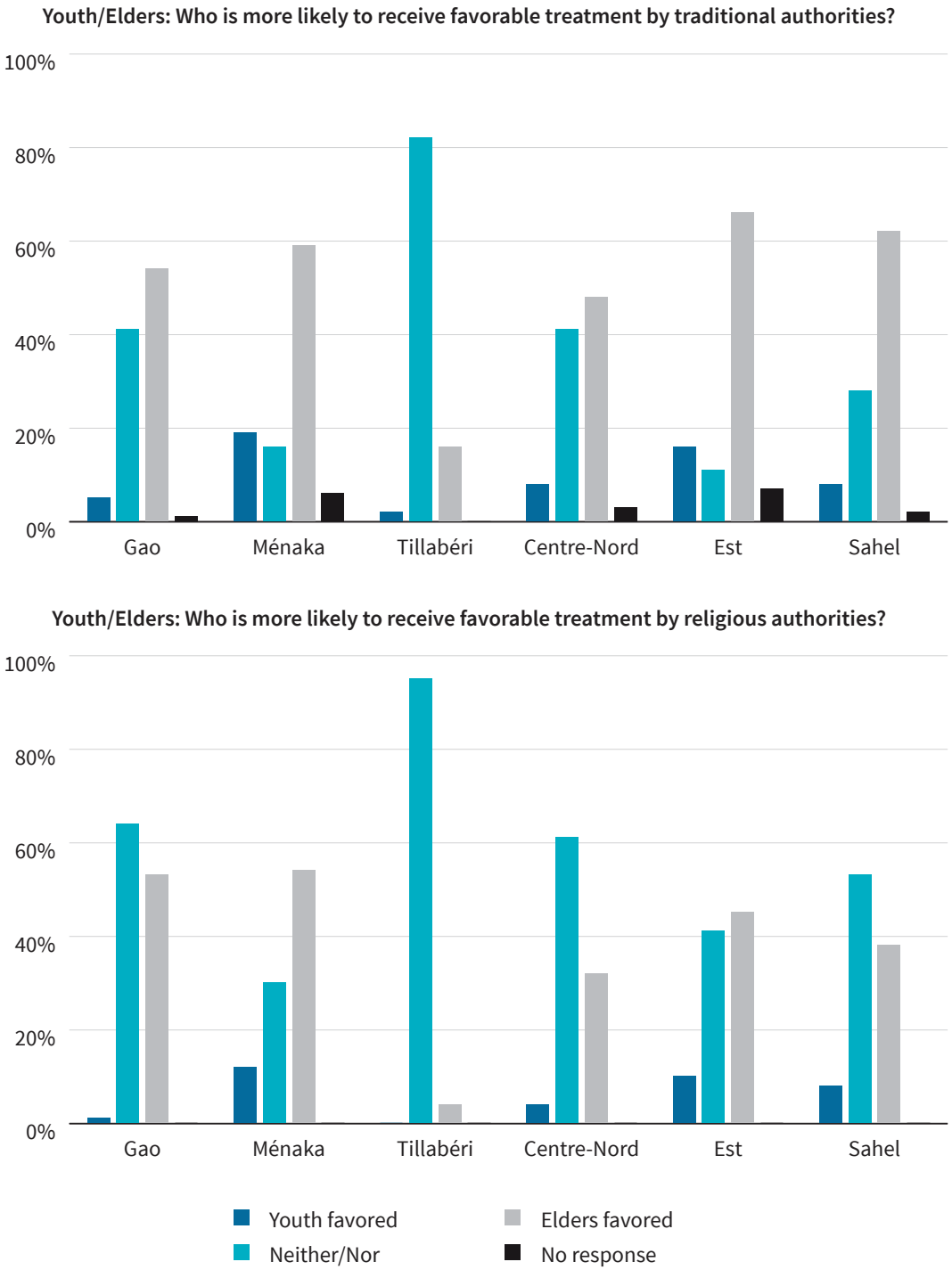
i No answer: 3.83%
ii No answer: 2.85%

An even greater discrepancy is visible in perceptions of the treatment of youth *vis-à-vis* elders. Half of the respondents feel that traditional authorities treat the elderly more favorably, while only 9.25 percent of respondents indicated that youth receive favorable treatment (see Table 10 above).[53] Again, religious authorities are seen as more impartial, with over half of the respondents (55.18%) not perceiving any difference in treatment. Nevertheless, some two-fifths of respondents do perceive religious authorities to treat the elderly more favorably.[54] These figures are problematic, as respondents who indicated that elders receive preferential treatment perceive their communities to be less resilient.

Programming that wants to address this issue should take into account the fact that these figures differ across regions (see Figure 14 below). Traditional authorities in Tillabéri are perceived to be impartial by 82 percent of respondents. This figure is twice as high as it is in the runners-up, Gao (41%) and Centre-Nord (41%). Ménaka (16%) and Est (11%) score most poorly. In all regions but Tillabéri, elders are seen as receiving preferential treatment at the hands of traditional authorities. Religious authorities again score better. In Tillabéri, they are almost universally perceived to not favor any age group (95%). In Gao (46% vs. 53%), Ménaka (30% vs. 54%), and Est (41% vs. 45%), they are nevertheless seen to favor elders more than they are perceived as being impartial.

We also asked respondents about traditional and religious authorities' treatment of rich *vis-à-vis* poorer segments of society (see Table 11 above), and of herders *vis-à-vis* farmers (see Table 12 above). Again, the same pattern is visible, with religious authorities perceived as more impartial than traditional authorities, and traditional authorities being seen as particularly partial toward the richer segments of society.

Figure 14 Traditional and religious authorities' treatment of youth vs. elders (per region)



A comparison of the data on rich vs. poor across the five regions (see Figure 15 below) shows that Tillabéri is still a bit of an exception compared to other regions, but not as much as was previously the case. Although some two-thirds of respondents still indicated that their traditional authorities are impartial, one-third feels that they favor the rich instead. Respondents in Ménaka (68%) and Est (68%) perceive their traditional authorities to be most skewed toward favoring the rich. This is problematic, as equal treatment of poor and rich results in higher general resilience scores. KIIs moreover show that not only are traditional authorities perceived to favor the rich, but they are often also accused of enriching themselves at the expense of the local population, including the most vulnerable, through the diversion of food and development aid. While grievances linked to authorities' partiality and corruption were observed in all research regions, the (perceived) resource gap between traditional leaders and the population was clearly underlined in the Ménaka region.

For religious authorities, however, the picture is a bit different, as they form the one exception to the rule that equal treatment is linked to higher community resilience. The regression analysis shows that when religious authorities are perceived to treat the poor a little bit more favorably than the rich, this has positive results for general community resilience. This may indicate that religious authorities can function as a safety net by supporting those members of the community who are most in need of support. Regional dispersion of the data shows that we find such authorities in all three regions in Burkina Faso and in Ménaka. Our KIIs confirm that religious authorities may at times look after the weakest members of their communities.

When it comes to herder-farmer treatment, the picture is a little bit different from the dynamics in the data described above. The majority of respondents perceive impartial treatment at the hands of traditional and religious authorities. Those that do indicate some partialities are evenly split between those who see traditional and religious authorities to favor herders and those that indicate farmers receive more favorable treatment. We suggest this finding be taken with caution, because we mainly surveyed in sedentary settings, therefore, our findings likely do not fully reflect perceptions of more nomadic groups (such as herders).

Our regression analysis shows that respondents who perceive herders to receive much more favorable treatment award lower general resilience scores to their communities. An exploration of the data across the regions (see Figure 16 below) shows that respondents in Sahel and Ménaka feel that their traditional and religious authorities treat herders more favorably than farmers, whereas we find the opposite in Gao, Est, and, to some extent, Centre-Nord (although in these latter three regions this holds true more for traditional authorities than for religious authorities).[55] This suggests that programming in Sahel and Ménaka should pay particular attention to this dynamic (although we stress again the caveat that we might have a sedentary bias in our data).

Figure 15 Traditional and religious authorities' treatment of rich vs. poor (per region)

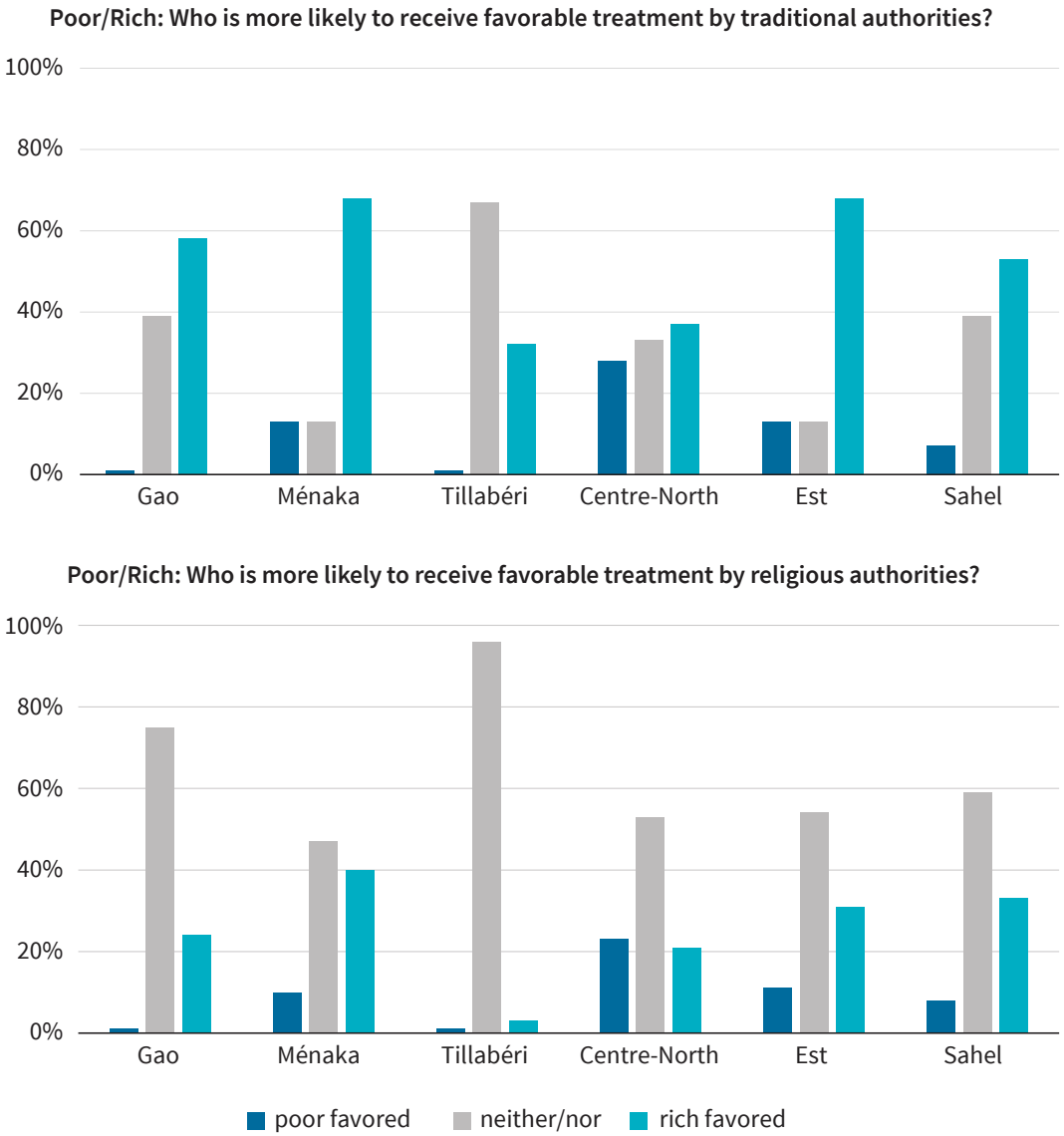
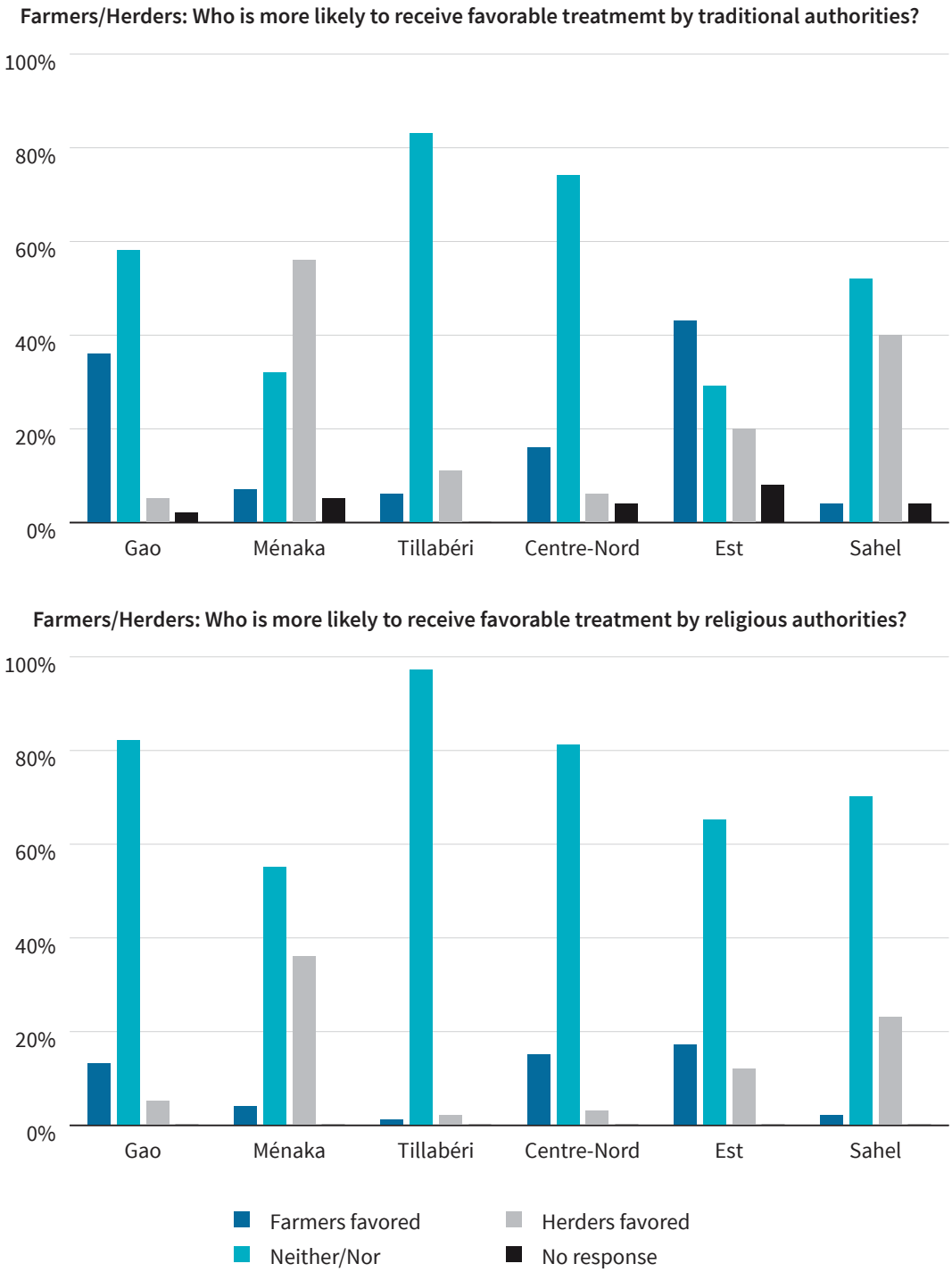


Figure 16 Traditional and religious authorities' treatment of farmers vs. herders (per region)



These findings have the following implications for programming:

- Tillabéri scores best in terms of equal treatment of the various subgroups in society. This makes traditional authorities in this region ideal partners for implementers seeking to improve community resilience. Centre-Nord also does quite well, although implementers should be mindful that traditional authorities tend to be more biased there than they are in Tillabéri.
- Ménaka scores most poorly when it comes to equal treatment of the various subgroups in society. It is followed by Est. This makes traditional authorities in these regions less ideal partners for implementers – or care should at least be taken when working with these actors so that local fault lines are not deepened in the process.
- When working with traditional authorities in Sahel and Ménaka, implementers should be mindful that these may have a pro-herder bias, while those in Gao, Est, and Centre-Nord may hold a pro-farmer bias. These biases may translate into ethnic marginalization and stigmatization – potentially spurring violence.
- Implementers could support the positive role that religious authorities seem to play when it comes to supporting poorer segments of the population – thereby contributing to general community resilience. This dynamic seems to be particularly at work in the three regions in Burkina Faso and in Ménaka. Nevertheless, and as indicated by the fact that a number of surveyed respondents in Ménaka and Est already perceive their religious authorities to be putting their own interests before those of their communities, the danger exists that this might undermine their legitimacy in the long run. In addition, implementers might not be sufficiently aware of the discourses held by the religious leaders they work with.

Relations with state officials/ politicization

As discussed above, our regression analyses show that perceived resilience is lower when local state officials are believed to have a lot of influence over traditional and religious authorities.[56] Table 13 shows that local state officials are commonly perceived to have more influence over traditional and religious authorities than central state officials (although percentages differ minimally) and NGOs. Two-thirds of respondents indicated that local state officials have either a lot or some influence over traditional authorities. For religious authorities, this is about half of our respondents.

Again, regional differences exist (see Figure 17). High influence of local officials on traditional authorities is strongest in Ménaka (46%), followed by Gao (34%) and Est (33%). It is only in Tillabéri that a majority of respondents perceive local state officials to have no influence at all. This is likely explained by the more institutionalized role of traditional authorities in Niger. Similar regional differences hold for religious authorities. Religious authorities in Tillabéri are largely perceived (91%) to be free of the influence of local state officials, whereas those in Ménaka, Gao, and Est are perceived to be more heavily influenced.

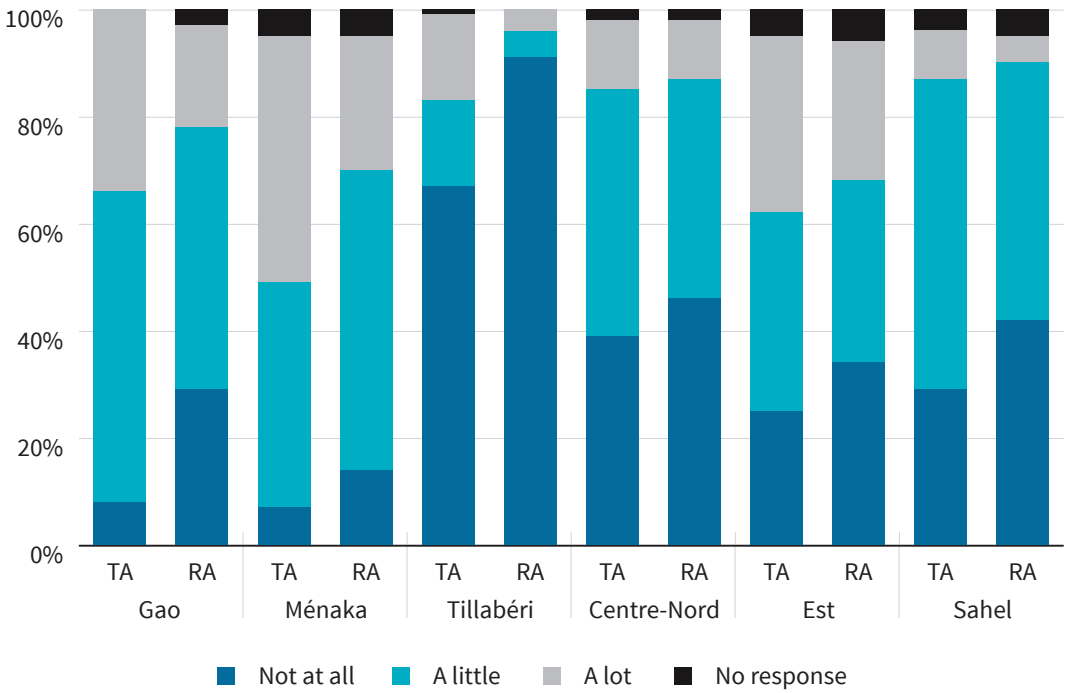
Our KIIs generally describe relations between traditional authorities and local state actors to be rather positive. However, traditional authorities are often accused of being influenced by and/or involved in politics, which is perceived as weakening their ability to be neutral or impartial actors – thereby affecting their legitimacy. Politicization is indeed described as a major source of grievances, especially against traditional authorities, in all researched regions. By contrast, traditional authorities are particularly blamed for not having opposed measures, especially restrictions of movement, imposed by the

Table 13 Influence of state officials and NGOs on traditional and religious authorities

	Local state officials		Central state officials		NGOs	
	Traditional authorities[i]	Religious authorities[ii]	Traditional authorities[iii]	Religious authorities[iv]	Traditional authorities[v]	Religious authorities[vi]
Not at all	29.71%	43.28%	32.64%	44.75%	44.68%	52.61%
A little	43.08%	38.55%	41.13%	36.6%	35.56%	30.97%
A lot	24.43%	14.75%	22.55%	14.68%	14.34%	11.55%

Notes: i No answer: 2.78%, ii No answer: 3.41%, iii No answer: 3.69%, iv No answer: 3.97%, v No answer: 5.43%, vi No answer: 4.87%

Figure 17 Influence of state officials on traditional and religious authorities (per region)



central state in Tillabéri under the state of emergency.

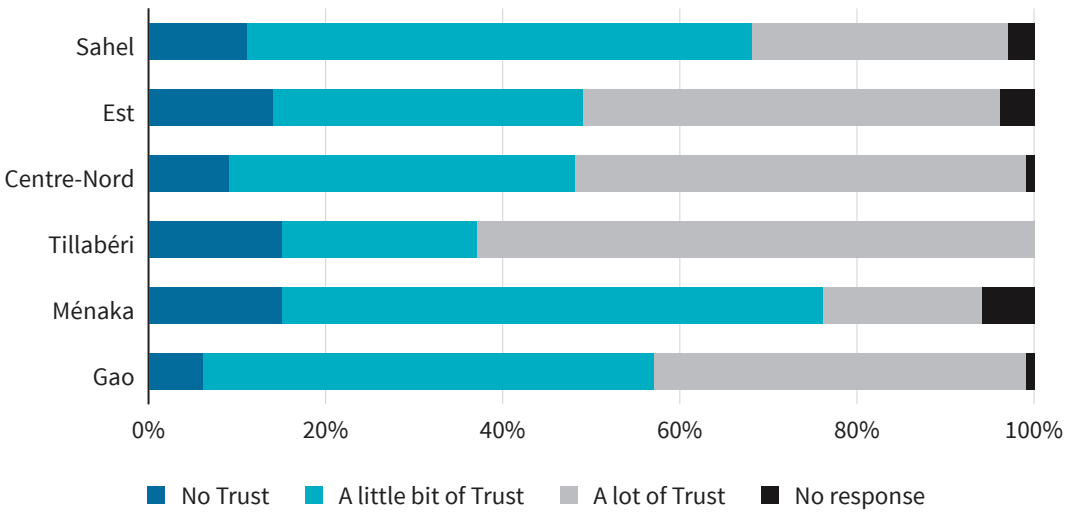
A further exploration of trust figures for state officials and NGOs provides some additional pointers for programming (see Table 14 below). Overall, the trust figures for these groups are only slightly higher than they are for armed actors (discussed in the next section) and much lower than the trust scores for traditional and religious authorities. Some regional differences do exist (see Figure 18 below). NGOs are trusted the most in Tillabéri (63%), Centre-Nord (51%), and Est (47%). The majority of respondents trust them a little in Ménaka (61%), Sahel (57%), and Gao (51%). Ménaka (15%) and Sahel (11%) also score quite high on respondents who do not trust NGOs at all – meaning that it might be most difficult for implementers to intervene in these regions.

Table 14 Trust in state officials and NGOs

	Local state officials[i]	Central state officials[ii]	NGOs[iii]
Not at all	14.68%	15.94%	11.48%
A little	48.85%	45.23%	43.63%
A lot	35.21%	36.53%	42.38%

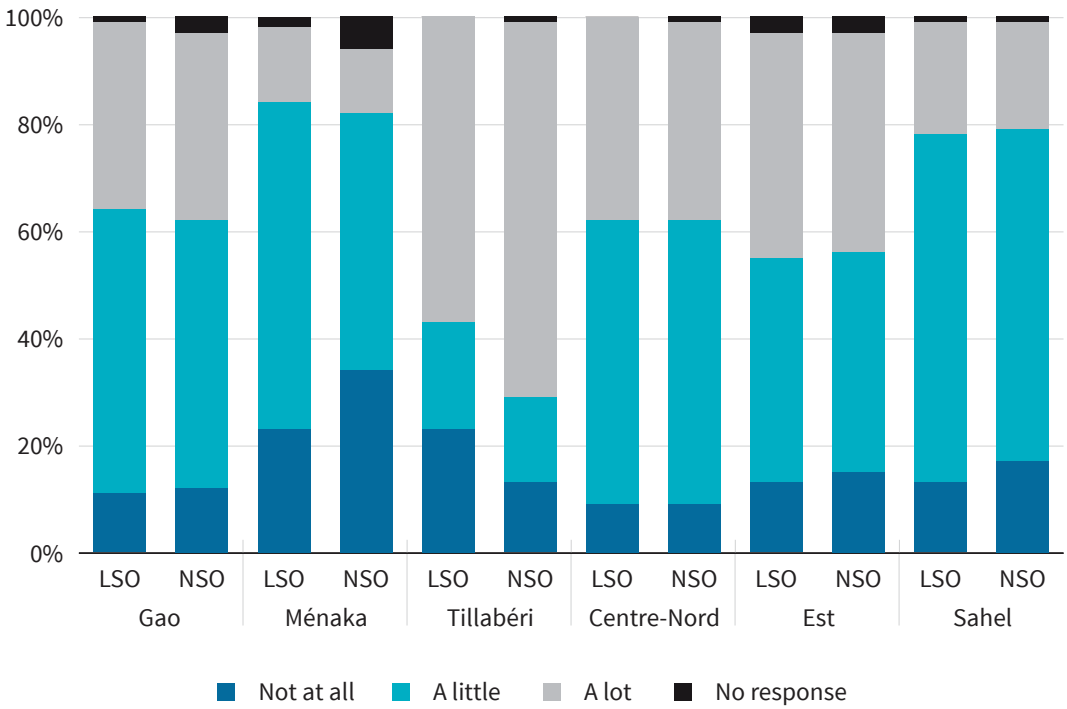
i No answer: 1.25%
ii No answer: 2.3%
iii No answer: 2.51%

Figure 18 Trust in NGOs (per region)



When it comes to central state authorities, they are trusted a lot in Tillabéri – by 70 percent of respondents, compared to 12 percent in Ménaka and 20 percent in Sahel (see Figure 19). Whereas trust figures for local and national state officials are mostly the same in all other regions, corresponding figures for local state officials are worse in Tillabéri (57% trust them a lot). These trust figures highlight that programming that engages state officials at the local level may not always result in more legitimate governance, as local state officials are trusted about as much as their central counterparts (and much less than traditional and religious authorities). It also suggests that – given the lack of state presence in performing basic governance functions identified above – traditional and religious authorities may often be more appropriate interlocutors for programming at the local level.

Figure 19 Trust in local (LSO) and national state officials (NSO) (per region)



However, programming should take into account that

- Traditional and religious authorities in Tillabéri and – to some extent – Centre-Nord are seen as acting most independently from local state officials. This has a positive influence on general resilience – again making these actors key partners for implementers that seek to work in these regions.
- Traditional and religious authorities in Ménaka, Gao, and Est seem to be much more influenced by local state officials. This harms general resilience and makes them less ideal counterparts at the local level.

Relations with armed actors

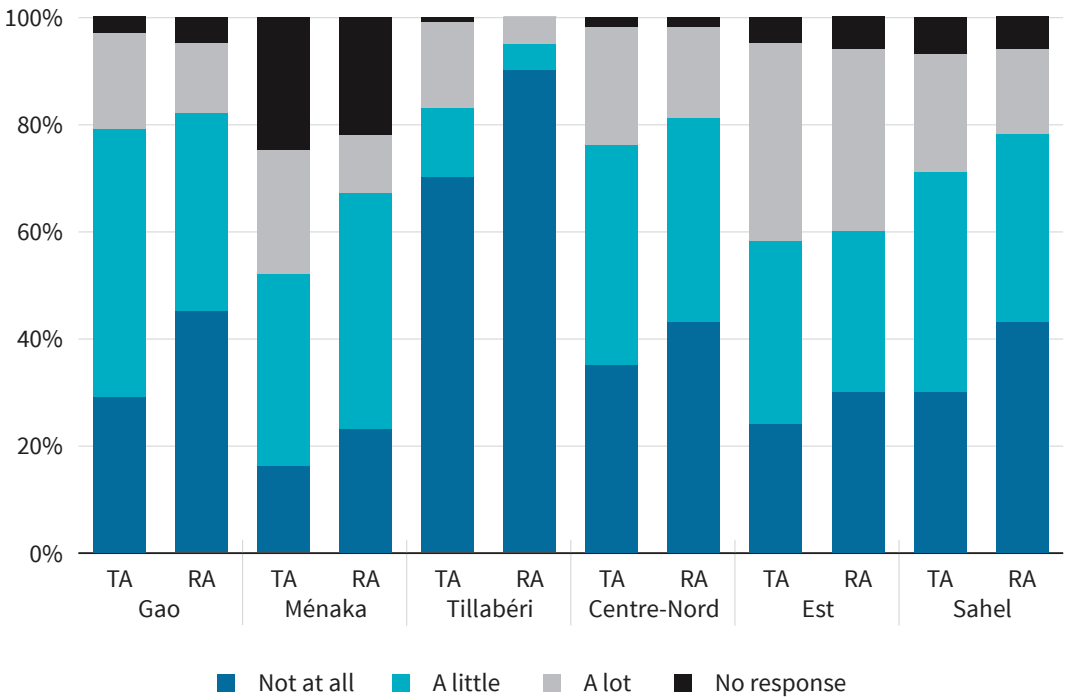
One final variable is that the perceived influence of armed actors over traditional and religious authorities has a significant effect on community resilience. Such influence is quite widespread (see Table 15 below). Two-thirds of our respondents perceive the police and state security forces to have a little or a lot of influence on traditional and religious authorities. In addition, one-third of our respondents perceive the non-state armed actors,[57] as well as self-defense groups and local security initiatives, to have at least a little influence on traditional and religious authorities.

Table 15 Influence of armed actors on traditional and religious authorities

	Police & security forces		Self-defense groups & local security initiatives		Non-state armed actors[i]	
	Traditional authorities[ii]	Religious authorities[iii]	Traditional authorities[iv]	Religious authorities[v]	Traditional authorities[vi]	Religious authorities
Not at all	34.24%	46.07%	47.67%	55.05%	56.65%	60.54%
A little	36.12%	31.45%	19.14%	19.35%	14.54%	15.66%
A lot	23.17%	16.14%	15.94%	9.6%	15.94%	12.32%

Notes: i No answer: 11.48%, ii No answer: 6.47%, iii No answer: 6.33%, iv No answer: 17.26%, v No answer: 16.01%, vi No answer: 12.87%

Figure 20 Influence of police and state security force on traditional and religious authorities (per region)



Our regression analysis shows that respondents who perceive police and state security forces to have some or a lot of influence on traditional and religious authorities give higher resilience scores to their communities than those who perceive these security actors to have no influence on traditional and religious authorities.[58] Figure 20 (above) shows that such influence is perceived to be lowest in Tillabéri and highest in Est (mainly for traditional authorities).

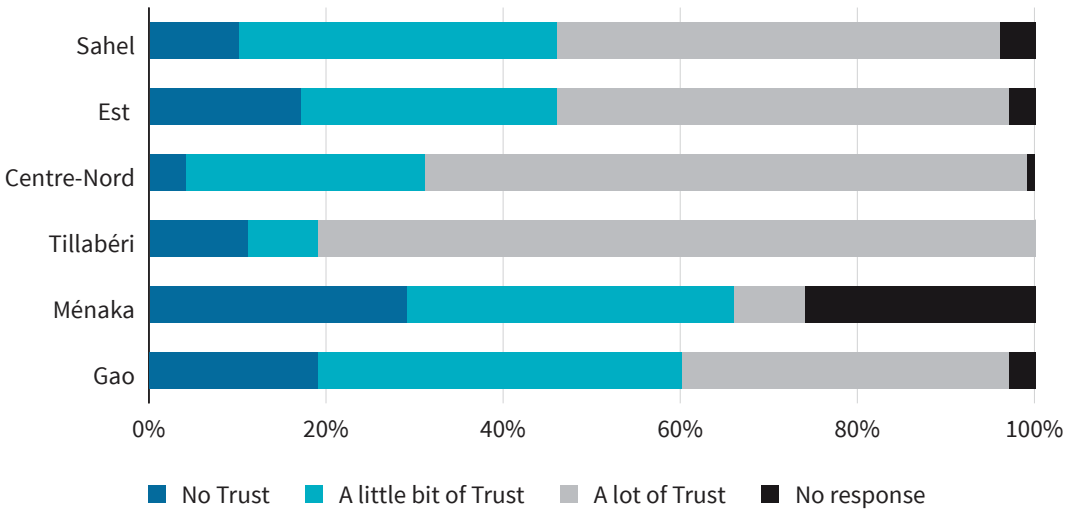
Such a finding is a bit surprising given the degree to which state security forces have become involved in human rights abuses and extrajudicial executions in recent years.[59] Nevertheless, trust scores (see Table 16 and Figure 21) show that these actors are still trusted a lot by half our respondents.[60] A clear difference is visible with other *de facto* security providers such as non-state armed actors and self-defense groups. The former are highly trusted by only 9.88 percent of respondents,

Table 16 Trust in security actors

	Police & security forces[i]	Self-defense groups and local security initiatives[ii]	Non-state armed actors[iii]
Not at all	14.54%	36.19%	67.15%
A little	29.71%	19.35%	14.34%
A lot	50.38%	29.37%	9.88%

i No answer: 5.36%
ii Non-response for this category was quite high (15.1%).
iii No answer: 8.63%

Figure 21 Trust in police and security forces (per region)



whereas self-defense groups and local security initiatives are trusted a lot by one-third of respondents (and equally distrusted by one-third of respondents).

In line with this, our regression analysis finds that respondents who perceive self-defense groups and local security initiatives to have a lot of influence on traditional and religious authorities give lower resilience scores to their communities than respondents who perceive no such influence at all. Est, Ménaka, and, to some extent, Centre-Nord stand out as regions where self-defense groups and local security initiatives are perceived to have the most influence over traditional and religious authorities (see Figure 22 below).

This confirms the common notion that being a *de facto* power holder on the ground does not necessarily confer legitimacy on non-state actors – although a review of the data across regions shows that this is more the case in Gao, Ménaka, and Sahel – where respondents show greater distrust in these actors – than it is in Tillabéri, Centre-Nord, and the Est region (see Figure 23 below). Human rights abuses committed at the hands of these self-defense groups provide a logical explanation for these differences in levels of trust across regions.

Figure 22 Influence of self-defense groups and local security initiatives on traditional and religious authorities (per region)

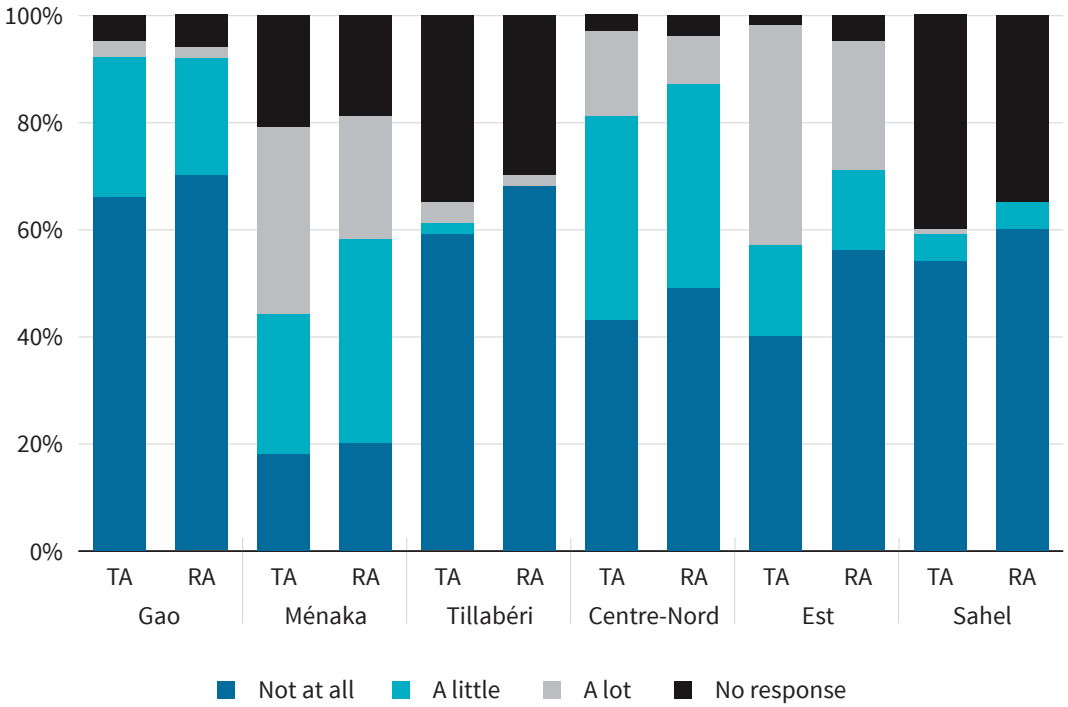
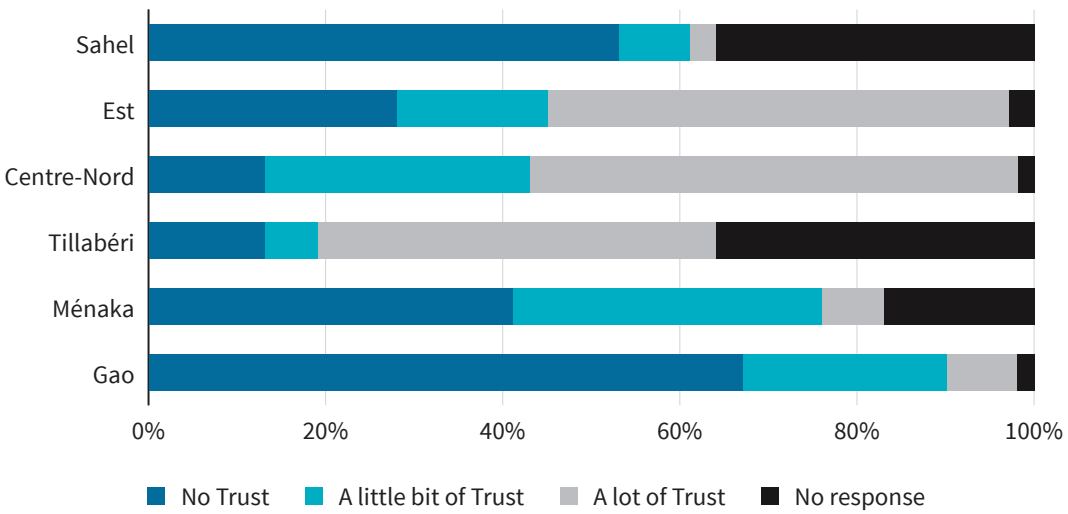


Figure 23 Trust in self-defense groups & local security initiatives (per region)



Qualitative data similarly show that the presence and (perceived) effectiveness of self-defense groups differ from one region to another. In Burkina Faso, self-defense groups such as the Koglweogos and the VDP seem to generally benefit from a positive image among respondents, with KIIs in Est and Centre-Nord in particular underlining their effective contribution to local security. As the regional chapters show, there are strong links between the dominant ethnic majorities in Est and Centre-Nord and the composition of these self-defense initiatives, which may explain the trust people place in them. A downside is that this often translates into abuse of minority groups, such as the Fulani, at the hands of these self-defense groups.[61] Survey respondents in Mali more often exhibit a certain degree of distrust *vis-à-vis* self-defense groups in the region due to their contribution to violent clashes, which KIIs often cited as one of the main crises that have affected people in the region over the past five years.[62]

These findings have the following implications for programming:

- Traditional authorities in some regions may be well-placed to address the human rights abuses committed by self-defense groups. Efforts to address these are most urgent in Burkina Faso's Est region, where we currently are witnessing an increase in stigmatization and abuse of Fulani. Making use of traditional authorities' tight connections to the VDP and Koglweogo, something also seen in Centre-Nord, efforts could be made to work with them in these regions to push back against the human rights abuses committed by self-defense groups and to promote more inclusive recruitment of members of self-defense groups. Unless larger issues of unaccountability and impunity are addressed, however, such actions will likely have limited effect. More preventive measures could be taken in Tillabéri, where the creation of self-policing initiatives is only just starting to appear, although this would require their status to be clarified first (as they are currently not legally sanctioned).

THE MEASURES TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES TAKE TO PROTECT THEIR COMMUNITIES MAKE THEM KEY TARGETS OF VIOLENT EXTREMIST ORGANIZATIONS

PART 3 – TRADITIONAL AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES' ROLE IN FOSTERING RESILIENCE AGAINST VEOS

Violent extremism poses particular challenges to community resilience due to the degree of violence and insecurity it often entails. To ensure that we pay sufficient attention to those dynamics that matter most for P/CVE, we now focus more specifically on traditional and religious authorities' role in security provision, conflict resolution, and building social cohesion in the face of extremism, including the prevention of VEO (youth) recruitment. Below, we identify key factors that contribute to traditional and religious authorities' effectiveness in these domains.

Security provision

In all our regression analyses on general resilience, security came out as a relevant control variable (see Annexes 3, 4, and 5). This means that variance in general community resilience is in part explained by how safe our respondents perceive their communities to be, and/or whether they perceive violence and conflicts to be absent in their communities. Our respondents confirmed what our map of conflict events at the start of this report already highlighted – namely that some regions have been more subject to violent events than others (see Figure 24). Gao is perceived to be particularly dangerous, while Tillabéri and Centre-Nord are perceived to be safest.[63] When asked if they observed an improvement in the security situation over the past year (see Figure 25), a relative majority of respondents indicated that this was the case in all regions but Gao.[64] Needless to say, this is but a snapshot taken at the time of data collection – as underlined by the subsequent increase in violent conflict events in Est in 2021.

We asked our respondents what they currently perceived as the main threats to their security (see Figure 26 below). In three out of six regions (Est, Centre-Nord, and Tillabéri), lack of food was identified as the number one threat. Our KIIs confirmed this finding. While they also frequently mentioned violent extremism and criminality as key threats, respondents cited (chronic) food insecurity among the main crises that have impacted their community in the past five years (especially in Tillabéri). This underlines the fact that local communities' security priorities may not always match those of the international community and that increasing general resilience in these regions will require addressing food insecurity.

Figure 24 Evaluation of security situation in community (per region)

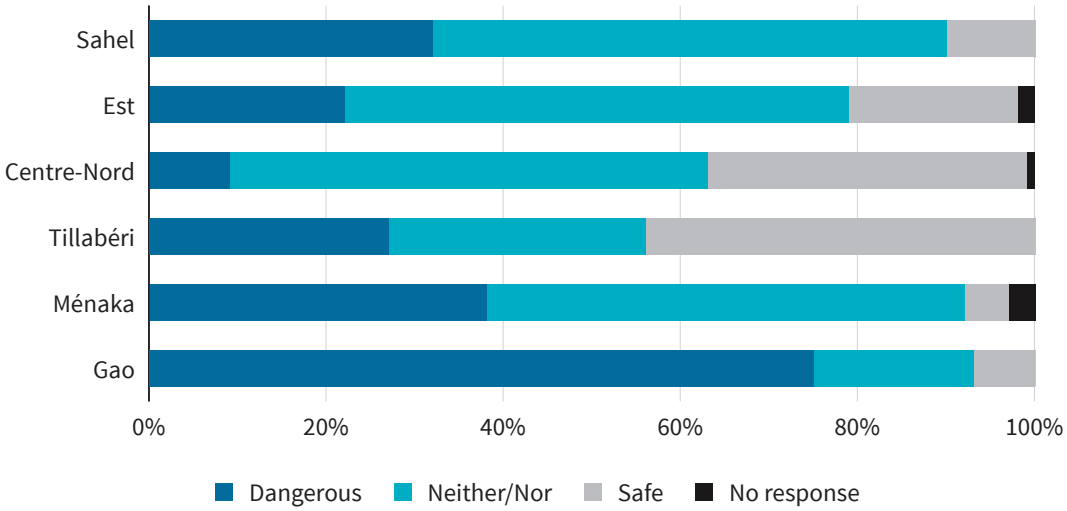
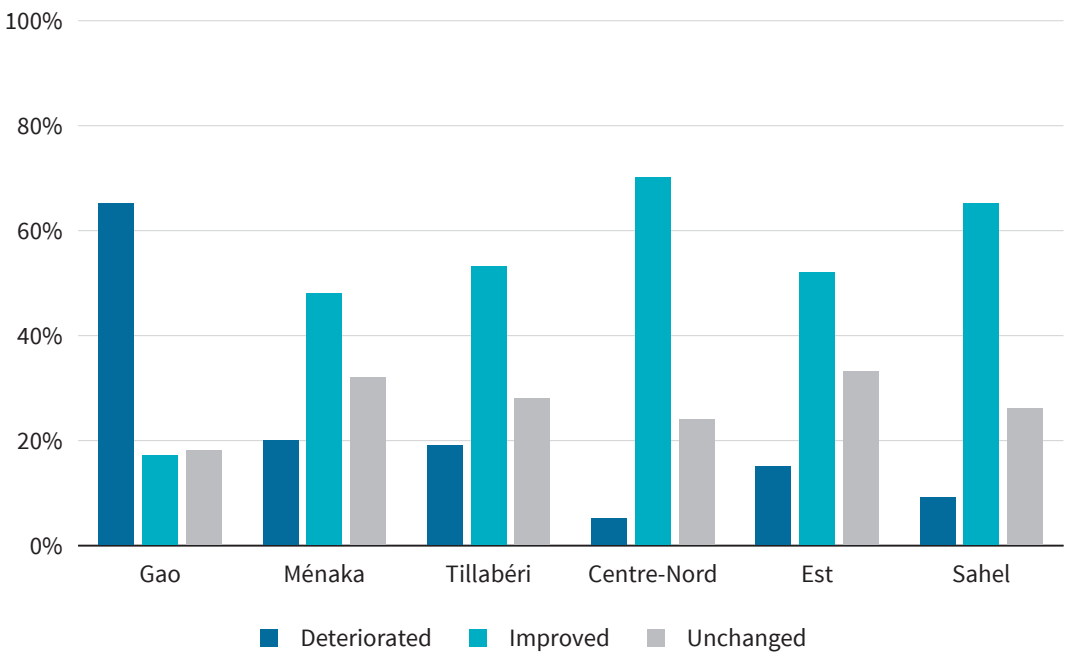
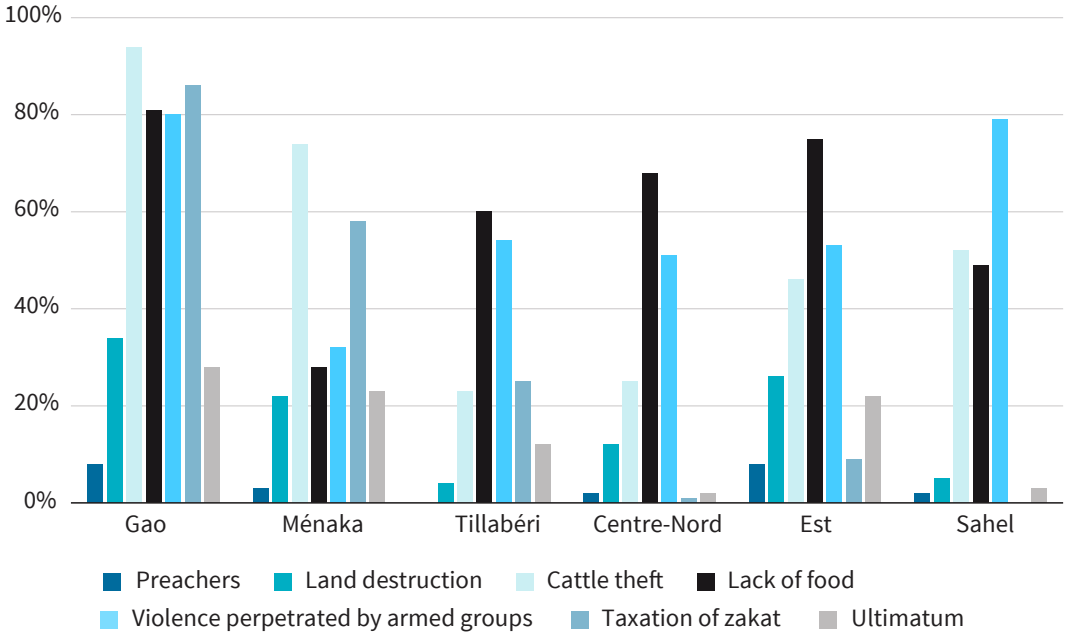


Figure 25 Evolution of the security situation over the past year (per region)



This is not to say that violent extremism is not an issue, as respondents in the three aforementioned regions indicated that violence perpetrated by armed groups is their second largest threat. In the Sahel region, such violence even comes in first place and in Ménaka and Gao it closely follows behind other threats such as cattle theft and taxation of zakat. Both of these latter threats can be linked directly – albeit not exclusively – to the presence of VEOs. Cattle theft is a persistent problem across all regions, while the taxation of zakat[65] was mentioned as a threat by respondents in Tillabéri and Est as well. These findings were again confirmed by our KIIs.

Figure 26 Security threats (per region)



Although traditional and religious authorities are not security actors, Part 1 of this report showed that one-fifth of respondents turn to traditional authorities when they are in need of security provision.[66] We asked the follow-up question of whether the security measures taken by traditional and religious authorities have contributed to respondents' safety (see Figure 27 below).[67] Half of the respondents (50.53%) indicated that this was the case, while a slightly lower percentage (45.66%) felt they had had no impact (for the moment). Only 3.81 percent of respondents stated that traditional and religious authorities' security measures had actually decreased their security.

Figure 27 Impact of traditional and religious authorities' security measures

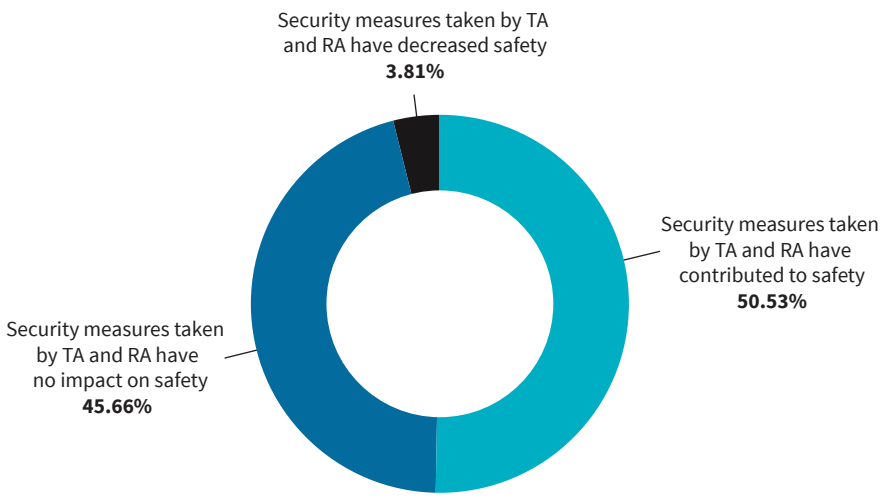


Figure 28 Impact of traditional and religious authorities' security measures (per region)

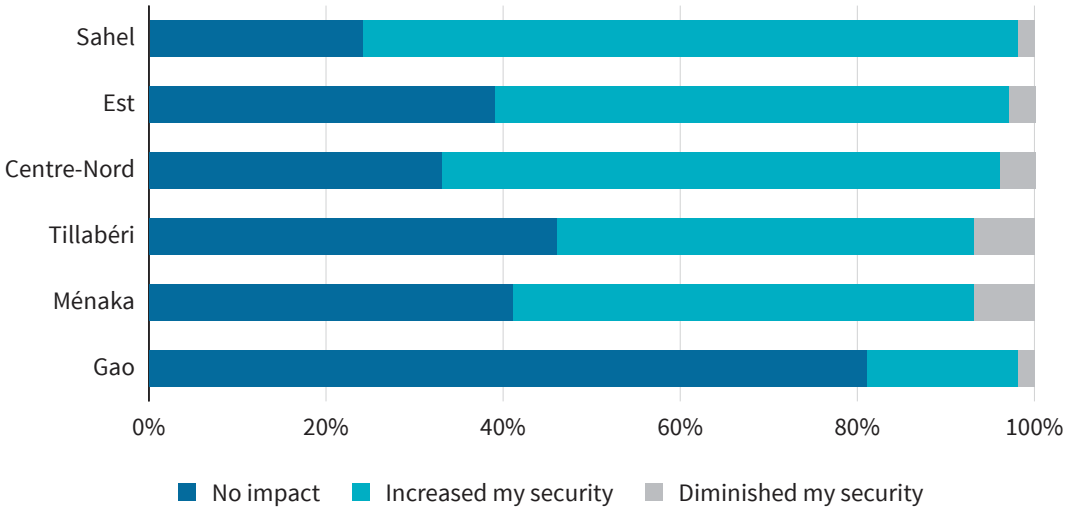


Figure 28 (above) shows, however, that differences exist between regions. Traditional and religious authorities are perceived to be least effective in Gao, where only 17 percent of respondents indicated their measures have increased security. This is likely a reflection of the fact that three of our research locations in Gao are located in the Ansongo Circle or on the road to Ansongo. Security provision in general is nearly nonexistent there and armed robbery is very common along this road.[68] On the other hand, traditional and religious authorities' security provision is perceived to be most effective in Sahel (74%), followed by Centre-Nord (63%) and Est (58%). In Tillabéri and Ménaka, respondents are somewhat divided between traditional and religious authorities having had no impact or having increased security. These are also the two regions with the highest scores of respondents (7%) stating that traditional and religious authorities actually diminished security with their actions.

We subsequently ran an additional analysis to identify what explains variance in the effectiveness of traditional and religious authorities' security measures. This allowed us to identify the conditions under which respondents perceive these authorities' efforts to contribute to more security and under what conditions they perceive such efforts to not make any change. In particular, we tested the effect of the following variables:

1. Range of security measures: traditional and religious authorities have a range of security measures at their disposal. We expect that the more diverse the array of security measures these authorities apply, the more effective their overall security provision will be.
2. Adjustment of intermediary role in the face of insecurity: we expect that authorities who scale up their role as intermediaries within their own community (or with others) in response to changes in neighboring communities' security situations will be seen as more effective security providers than those who do not adapt their behavior.
3. Normative acceptance of negotiations with VEOs: we expect that traditional and religious authorities can be more effective security providers (in the short run at least) when their community members feel it is acceptable for these authorities to negotiate with VEOs.

Our analysis (see Annex 7) shows that all three variables contribute significantly to the effectiveness of traditional and religious

authorities' security measures.[69] The following sections discuss these variables, as well as the differences we find across the six regions, in more detail.

Range of security measures taken by traditional and religious authorities

Based on the literature and our pilot surveys, we identified different actions that traditional and religious authorities may take in the face of violent extremism (see Table 17 below). Our analysis shows that the more diverse the range of actions taken by these authorities to address violent extremism, the more likely it is that their actions are perceived to increase security. Further exploration of the survey data reveal that it is quite common for the authorities to take such measures, with only a small minority of respondents indicating that traditional authorities and religious authorities take no measures.[70]

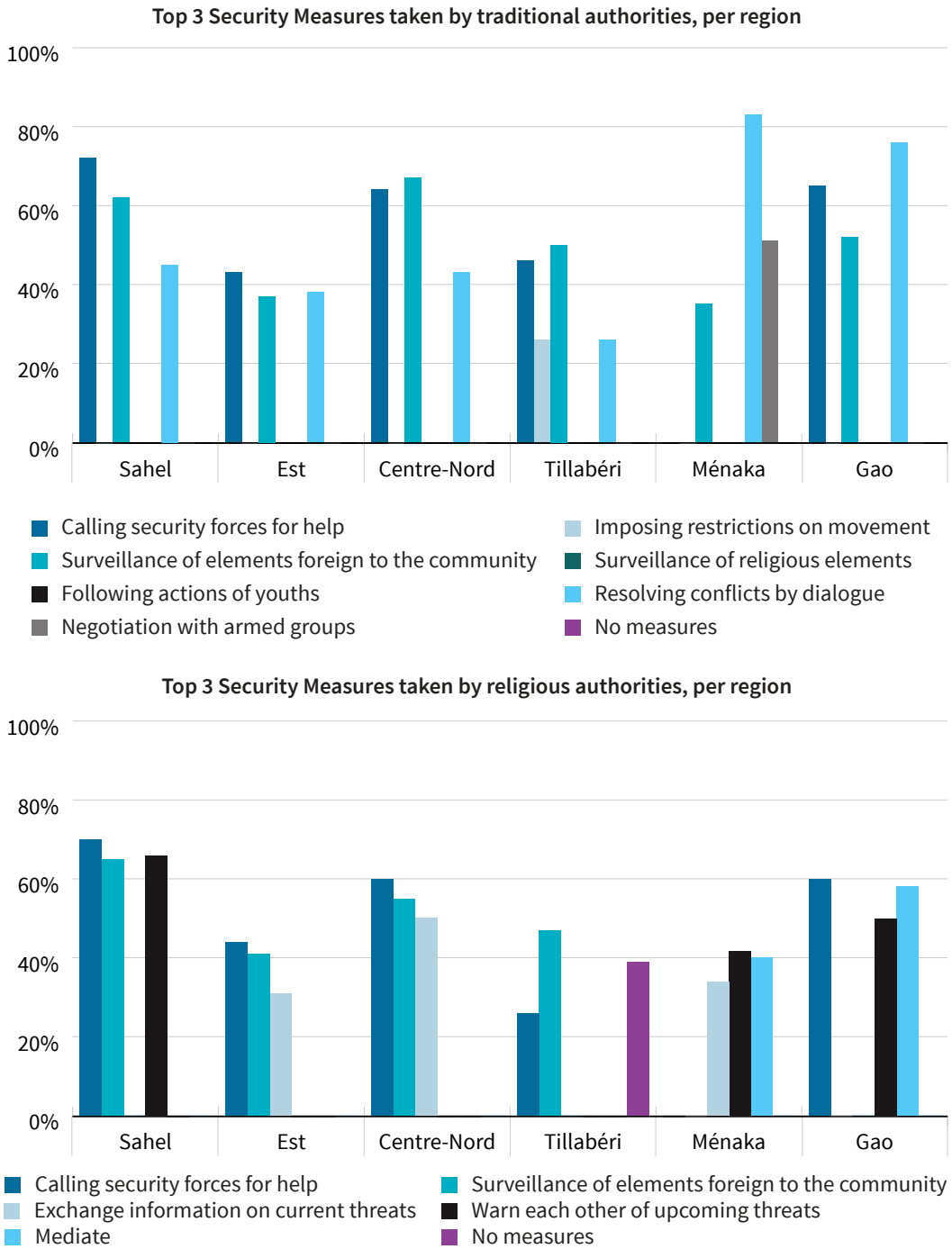
The top three security measures taken differ per region and type of authority (see Figure 29). Traditional authorities often call on the security forces for help, with the exception of Ménaka (where security provision is controlled by the armed groups that are signatories of the peace agreement). It is also common for traditional authorities to surveil foreign elements in the community and to resolve conflicts by dialogue. Only in Tillabéri do traditional authorities impose restrictions on movement, which likely reflects the fact that central authorities in this region installed restrictions on movement – including a ban on motorcycles.[71] Ménaka is the only region where the negotiation with armed groups comes in as an important measure taken by traditional authorities. This likely reflects the reported existence of a pact of nonaggression between the armed signatories of the peace agreement and VEOs. Religious authorities are less involved in conflict mediation and negotiation with armed groups, but take on a larger role in the coordination of information exchanges. This is likely a result of the fact that the theological-legal claims that (Salafi) VEOs make pose direct challenges to the models of authority that some religious authorities draw on, which is the Maliki-Ashari-Sufi model.

Our KIIs noted that communication channels often flow two ways, with traditional and religious authorities acting as useful intermediaries between local inhabitants and state actors, including security and defense forces. In their discourses, both sets of authorities often share information about the security situation, raise awareness on security risks, and incite community members to remain vigilant and to observe security measures. Due to their position as local governance actors and their relations with administrative and security actors, they are regularly informed about security measures being implemented within their municipalities, and able to explain these to their communities and monitor their implementation.

Table 17 Traditional and religious authorities' security actions in the face of violent extremism

Traditional authorities	Religious authorities
Calling security forces for help	Calling security forces for help
Surveillance of elements foreign to the community	Surveillance of elements foreign to the community
Following actions of youth	Exchange information on current threats
Negotiating with armed groups	Mediate with threatening elements
Imposing restrictions on movement	Warn each other of upcoming threats
Surveillance of religious elements	No measures
Resolving conflicts by dialogue	
No measures	

Figure 29 Top 3 security measures taken by traditional and religious authorities (per region)[i]



i Top 4 security measures are listed for Tillabéri as 'imposing restrictions on movement' and 'resolving conflicts by dialogue' have both been selected by 26 percent of respondents.

In a context where security measures are sometimes either resisted or misunderstood by local populations, traditional authorities often play a role in clarifying why the measures are being put in place and how they should be implemented, while encouraging the local population to cooperate with state forces. On the other hand, due to their position within their respective communities and their proximity with locals, traditional and religious leaders are often able to gather the most relevant information on the latest developments occurring in their respective areas and transmit them to state security forces.[72] These leaders thus also play a strategic role in terms of intelligence-gathering and information-sharing.

We would caution, however, against the adoption of programming that puts traditional and religious authorities' security measures center stage. They are first and foremost civilian actors – or intermediaries between society and the state– rather than security actors. This means that they stand unarmed when faced with violent threats. The measures that they take to protect their communities put them in harm's way and make them key targets of VEOs. In addition, and as acknowledged by our KIIs, once a security threat becomes too grave, there is little that traditional and religious authorities can do to turn the tide.[73] Indeed, in our regression analysis, another important (control) factor that influences the effectiveness of their security measures is (unsurprisingly) the security situation itself. This means that when respondents perceive the overall security situation to be very dangerous, they are less likely to perceive traditional and religious authorities' security measures to increase security.

These findings have the following implications for programming:

- Traditional and religious authorities can be useful allies in efforts that seek to increase security. Nevertheless, implementers should realize that putting too strong a focus on this aspect of traditional and religious authorities' functions may put them in harm's way.
- Traditional authorities' intermediary role in conflict mediation are crucial efforts that could be further supported and also shared across communities. Indeed, 58.59 percent of our respondents argued that traditional and religious authorities could best increase their resilience to violence and VEOs by increasing social cohesion in their communities.[74] The section on conflict resolution below will discuss in more detail how this could be achieved.

Improvement of communal authorities' intermediary role

We asked our respondents how the security situation in neighboring communities had improved communal authorities' role as intermediaries within their communities or with other communities.[75] The regression analysis shows that when respondents perceived that better cooperation had been achieved either between the different authorities within the community, between those inside and outside the community, or between authorities and the population, they were more likely to say that traditional and religious authorities' security measures had increased security. Overall, one-third of respondents indicated that no such change took place, whereas two-thirds of respondents did identify some change (see Table 18).

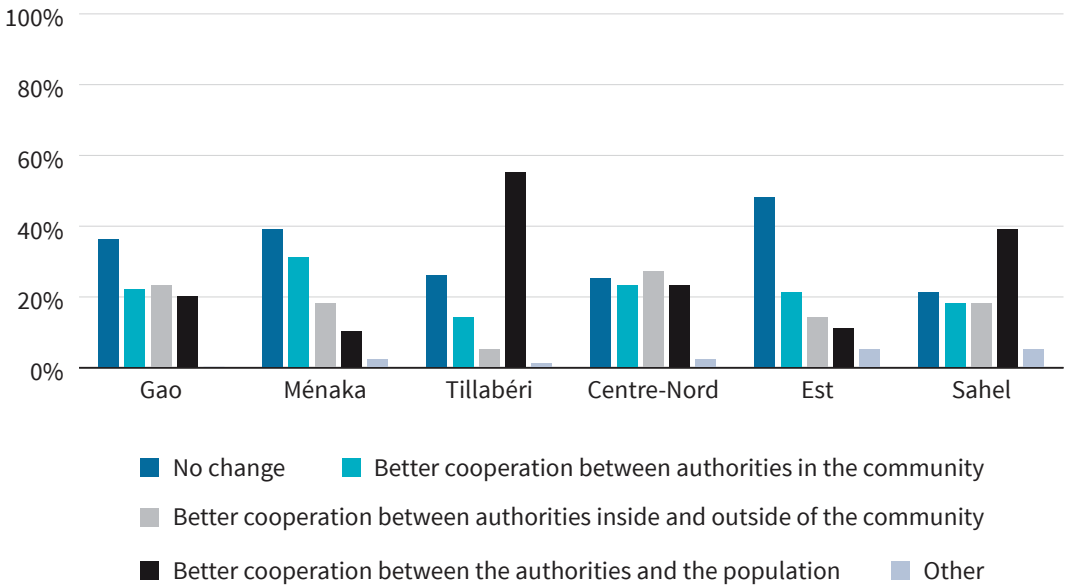
Tillabéri and Centre-Nord stand out as regions where three-quarters of our respondents feel that the security situation in neighboring communities has resulted in the improvement of their communal authorities' intermediary role (see Figure 30). For Tillabéri, this has overwhelmingly taken the shape of improved cooperation between communal authorities and the population. In the Est region, on the other hand, about half of the respondents feel that no changes have occurred. This may reflect that traditional authorities in Est

Table 18 Changes in communal authorities' intermediary role in response to security situation in neighboring communities[i, ii]

No change	32.36%
Better cooperation between the different authorities of the community	21.09%
Better cooperation between the authorities inside and outside the community	17.47%
Better cooperation between the authorities and the population	26.65%

i In hindsight, it would have been better to formulate this question as a multiple-choice question. We now interpret the results as 'the most important change that has taken place'.
ii Other answer: 2.44%

Figure 30 Change in communal authorities' intermediary role (per region)



have become involved in a range of succession conflicts (as discussed in more detail in the Est regional chapter), which harms cooperation between them. In all regions but Tillabéri, between one-fifth and a quarter of respondents identified improved cooperation between authorities inside and outside of the community as the most important change that has taken place.

These findings have the following implication for programming:

- With perhaps the exception of the Est region, there is a clear willingness and reality of communal authorities responding to security challenges in their own neighborhoods by improving their cooperation with others. Modalities could be explored to bring the lessons learned to Est.

Normative acceptance of negotiating with VEOs

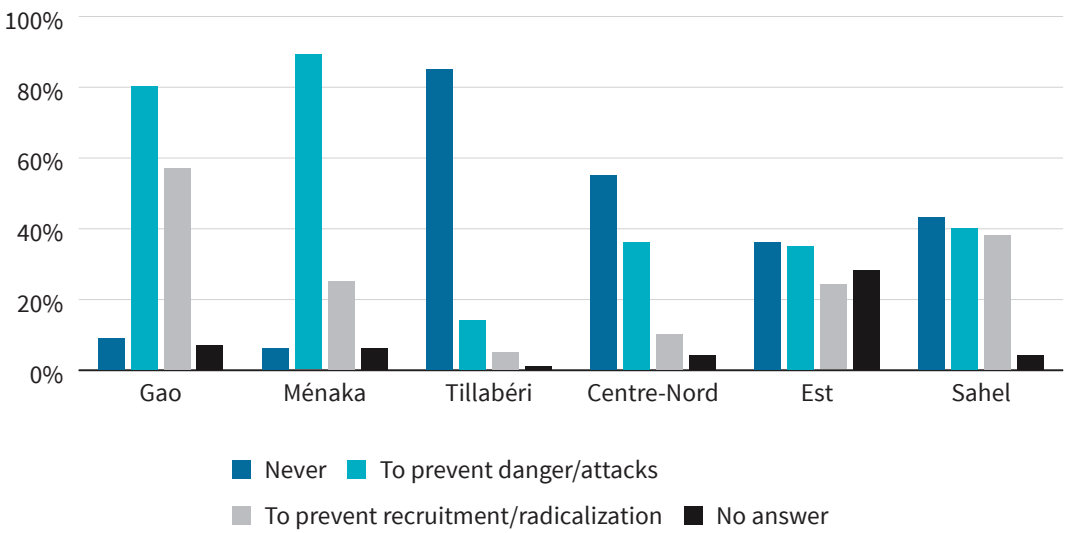
One final factor that influences whether respondents perceive that traditional and religious authorities' measures have contributed to security is their normative acceptance of negotiations with VEOs. Respondents who feel traditional and religious authorities can negotiate with VEOs were two times more likely to indicate that their security measures increased their safety than those who

Table 19 When is it acceptable for traditional and religious authorities to negotiate with VEOs (multiple choice)[i]

Never	35.13%
To prevent dangers/attacks	52.04%
To prevent recruitment	29.65%

i No answer: 8.67%

Figure 31 When is it acceptable for traditional and religious authorities to negotiate with VEOs (per region)



oppose such negotiations. About half of our respondents indicated that it is appropriate for traditional and religious authorities to do so in order to prevent dangers or attacks (see Table 19 above). Another 30 percent of respondents feel that it is (also) acceptable for traditional and religious authorities to negotiate with VEOs to prevent recruitment. Yet another 35 percent of respondents absolutely oppose negotiations with VEOs.

Normative acceptance of negotiations with VEOs differs across the various regions (see Figure 31 above). For Tillabéri, we find a clear rejection (85% of respondents) of such negotiations. In Ménaka and Gao, on the other hand, respondents are very open to such negotiations – especially if this will help prevent danger or attacks. This may reflect the lack of clear security alternatives, the residents' exhaustion with violence, or the fact that these negotiations are already taking place on the ground – something that our KIIs hinted at. The picture is more mixed in Burkina Faso. In Centre-Nord, where our research sites were located in the relatively secure southern part of the region, the majority of respondents oppose such negotiations. Respondents in Sahel and Est, which are more directly threatened by VEOs, are more likely to accept such negotiations, for the purpose of preventing both danger/attacks and recruitment.

These findings have the following implication for programming:

- Recognition is needed that local communities in some regions, and at this point in time, look rather favorably upon negotiations with VEOs as a way to increase security in their regions and that traditional authorities may play a role in these negotiations. This creates tension with the existing international normative standard that opposes any engagement with VEOs, as well as with any actor who actively engages with such groups.

Conflict resolution

Part 1 of this report showed that respondents identify traditional authorities as the number one actor to contact when it comes to conflict resolution. In addition, the section on security measures above showed that traditional authorities' intermediary role in conflict mediation is a crucial security measure that could be further supported and also shared across communities.[76] We therefore also explored how effective respondents perceive their traditional and religious authorities' conflict resolution efforts to be and what explains this effectiveness (see Table 20 below). For traditional and religious authorities alike, three-quarters of our respondents indicated that their work either eased tensions or improved the situation significantly. Only very minor shares of respondents find that these authorities exacerbated tensions (3.73%-2.41%) or had no impact (9.58%-10.46%).

When comparing the results across the different regions (see Figure 32 below), Sahel and Centre-Nord stand out as regions where traditional authorities have had the biggest positive impact on conflicts. Tillabéri and Gao follow suit, with traditional authorities in Gao being perceived as having most significantly improved the situation across all six regions. In Ménaka, only half of our respondents indicated that traditional authorities were successful at easing tensions, or improving them significantly. Traditional authorities were mainly perceived to have exacerbated tensions in Est (8%), Tillabéri (5%), and Ménaka (5%). In Est, this is likely the result of strong existing bias against Fulani among traditional elites (see the chapter on Est), as well as the infighting currently taking place between competing traditional authorities (discussed in the section on institutional multiplicity below).

Religious authorities are more generally seen to contribute positively to the resolution of conflicts, with the exception of the Est region, where about 40 percent of respondents found them to have had no impact or to have even exacerbated tensions (4%) – a likely consequence of the fact that animists noted they feel discriminated against by the influential Christian religious leaders. A similar (small) percentage of respondents found that religious authorities in Ménaka and Tillabéri had exacerbated tensions. In this latter region, KIIs mentioned that divisions exist between religious authorities, with many respondents pointing out the rivalry between Izala (a radical Sunni sect) and Tijaniyya leaders. Even though they seem to coexist peacefully in Abala,[77] religious authorities are most often accused of creating important divisions in Bankilaré and Gotheye,[78] with some respondents even talking about "hatred."[79] At times, local state officials have had to intervene to resolve disputes between religious leaders – such as by appeasing tensions and allowing both communities to organize their respective celebrations.[80] Some respondents warned about the potential danger of these religious tensions escalating into conflicts.[81]

Table 20 Effectiveness of traditional and religious authorities' conflict resolution efforts

	Traditional authorities[i]	Religious authorities[ii]
Exacerbated tensions	3.73%	2.41%
No impact	9.58%	10.46%
Did not have a conclusive result despite an attempt at resolution	7.9%	4.61%
Eased tensions	55.82%	55.3%
Improved situation significantly	22.53%	25.24%

i No answer: 0.44%
ii No answer: 1.98%

Figure 32 Effectiveness of traditional and religious authorities' conflict resolution efforts (per region)

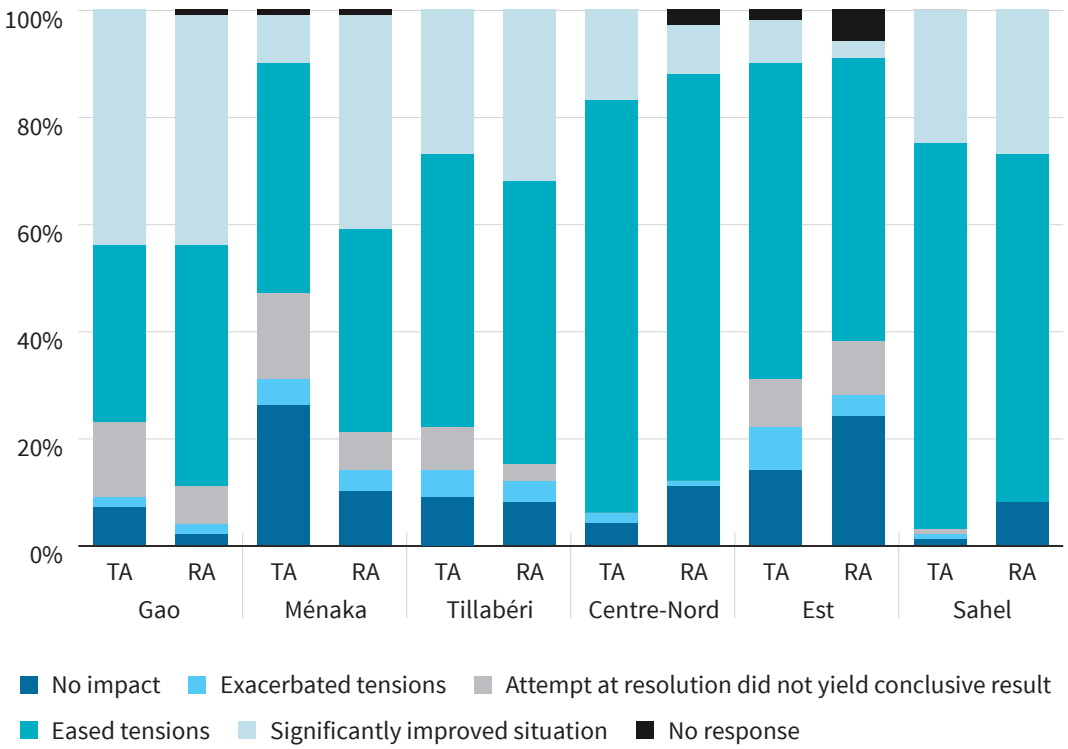
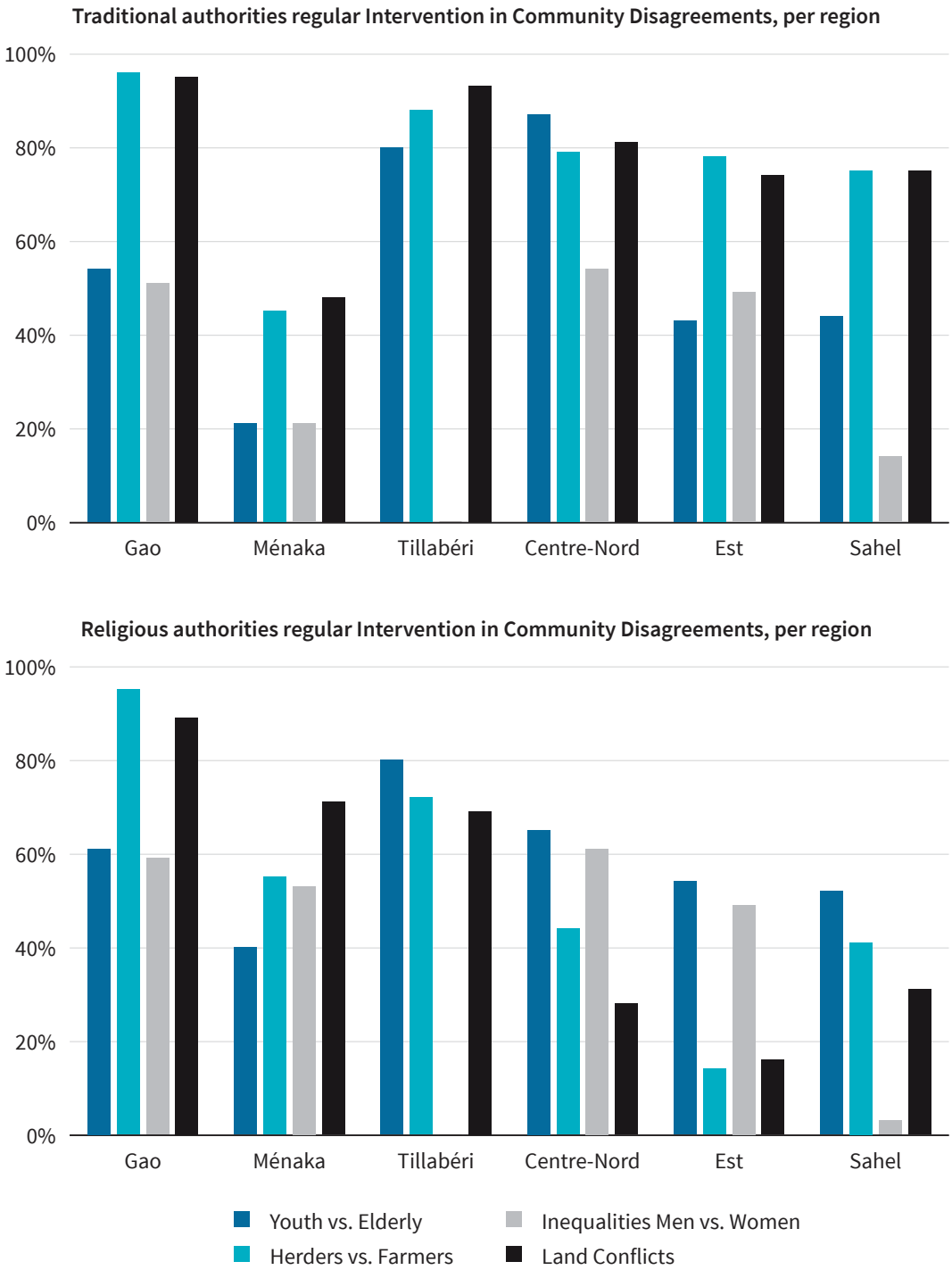


Table 21 Extent to which traditional and religious authorities intervene in community conflicts

	Traditional authorities				Religious authorities			
	Men vs Women[i]	Youth vs Elders[ii]	Tenure/ Land use[iii]	Herders vs Farmers[iv]	Men vs Women[v]	Youth vs Elders[vi]	Tenure/ Landuse[vii]	Herders vs Farmers[viii]
Not at all	20.2%	9.21%	1.82%	0.83%	11.4%	6.58%	18.88%	12.06%
A little	41.04%	45.61%	17.71%	20.37%	37.46%	39.04%	28.26%	32.02%
A lot	37.79%	44.74%	79.69%	78.48%	50.16%	53.07%	51.56%	54.89%

Notes: i No answer: 0.98%, ii No answer: 0.44%, iii No answer: 0.78%, iv No answer: 0.31%, v No answer: 0.98%, vi No answer: 1.32%, vii No answer: 1.3%, viii No answer: 1.04%

Figure 33 Extent to which traditional and religious authorities intervene in community conflicts (per region)



A review of the various types of conflicts that both sets of authorities intervene in shows that there are some interesting differences (see Table 21 above). Overall, traditional authorities are least likely to intervene in the realm of social conflicts, meaning those between men and women and those between youth and elders. Religious authorities are a bit more likely to intervene here, as these are typically conflicts (matrimonial and inheritance issues) that can be solved based on religious law. Traditional authorities overwhelmingly intervene in conflicts over land use and in conflicts between herders and farmers, which seems to be a bit less of a domain for religious authorities.

Some relevant regional differences exist (see Figure 33 above). Traditional authorities' involvement in community disagreements is much higher in Gao than it is in Ménaka. Traditional authorities' involvement in Burkina Faso is strongest in Centre-Nord, where they intervene in a multitude of community conflicts, including conflicts between farmers and herders, land conflicts, and conflicts between youth and elderly. Traditional authorities' intervention in conflicts between herders and farmers over land are equally strong in all three Burkinabé regions, but these authorities are less involved in other community disagreements in Est and Sahel.

Religious authorities are also more involved in community disagreements in Gao than in Ménaka. In both regions, conflicts between herders and farmers and over land experience the most frequent interventions by these actors. In fact, religious authorities intervene more frequently in these community conflicts in Ménaka than traditional authorities do, which likely reflects their role in justice provision. In both Centre-Nord and Est, religious authorities regularly intervene in conflicts between youth and elderly, between men and women, and in disagreements on how to respond to threats, albeit more frequently in Centre-Nord than in Est.

Explanations for effectiveness of conflict resolution

Additional regression analysis showed that the effectiveness of traditional authorities' conflict resolution efforts – but not those of religious authorities – contributes to general community resilience (see Annex 5). We subsequently ran a regression analysis to identify what explains variance in the effectiveness of traditional authorities' conflict resolution efforts. This analysis (see Annex 8) shows that the following variables contribute significantly:[82]

- Legitimacy:
  - when traditional authorities are seen to work to the benefit of their communities, rather than their own interests or those of their friends and families, this increases the perceived effectiveness of their conflict resolution efforts;
  - more trust results in significantly more effective conflict resolution.
- Equal treatment:
  - preferential treatment of elders means significantly lower effectiveness of conflict resolution efforts.
- Relations with armed actors:
  - effectiveness of conflict resolution is significantly lower when police or state security forces have a lot of influence on traditional authorities;
  - effectiveness of conflict resolution is lower when self-defense groups or local security initiatives have a lot of influence on traditional authorities (borderline significant);
  - effectiveness of conflict resolution is significantly higher when non-state armed actors have a lot of influence on traditional authorities.
- Institutional multiplicity:
  - effectiveness of conflict resolution is significantly higher when respondents turn to traditional authorities for conflict resolution than when they turn to other actors.

- Role in community-building through narrative formation/building social cohesion:
  - the more diverse the ways in which traditional authorities engage in communal narrative formation around events, the more effective respondents perceive their conflict resolution efforts to be.

One relevant control variable that comes up significantly is the presence of herder-farmer conflicts, which have a positive impact on the effectiveness of conflict resolution. As discussed above, such conflicts are the most typical disputes that traditional authorities intervene in. It hence makes sense that respondents perceive traditional authorities as more effective at conflict resolution when they operate in a context where herder-farmer conflicts – their key prerogative – occur.

The importance of legitimacy and of equal treatment have already been discussed in detail above. The following section will therefore focus in particular on the findings as they relate to traditional authorities' relations with armed actors, institutional multiplicity, and narrative formation.

Relations with armed actors

Part 2 already discussed how our respondents generally trust police and state security actors twice as much as they trust self-defense groups (including local security initiatives) and five times as much as they trust non-state armed actors (which may include both signatories of the peace agreement in Mali and VEOs). It also showed that general community resilience is higher when respondents perceive police and state security forces to have some or a lot of influence on traditional and religious authorities. Yet when it comes to conflict resolution, traditional authorities' efforts are perceived to be more effective when non-state armed actors have a lot of influence on traditional and religious actors and less effective when either the police and state security actors or self-defense groups are seen to have such influence on them.

Based on the information from our KIIs and the country chapters, we expect the following logic to be at work here:

- High influence of police and state security actors on traditional authorities may mean a general context of deteriorating security (which has led state security actors to move in). Traditional and religious conflict resolution may subsequently have lost its relevance as interactions between conflicting parties are becoming increasingly violent;
- High influence of self-defense groups on traditional authorities may mean a situation in which intra- and intercommunity conflicts have escalated to the extent that the community has started to organize its own defense. This results in the breakdown of (non-violent) traditional and religious conflict resolution as citizens turn to more violent alternatives instead;
- High influence of non-state armed actors on traditional authorities may mean a situation in which – amid general insecurity – some traditional authorities have been able to forge ties with armed groups and VEOs that provide them with the enforcement power they need to resolve conflicts in an otherwise anarchic setting.

Our regional report on Gao and Ménaka provides evidence of such dynamics and illustrates what this may look like on the ground. A key takeaway, which we also underlined in earlier work,[83] is that there are clear short-term incentives for traditional authorities to align with non-state armed actors when security is generally absent. It helps them remain relevant under a new set of circumstances. In the long run, however, this risks undermining their legitimacy, and – as we now see – their communities' resilience. The same goes for alliances with self-defense groups, which contribute neither to community

resilience nor to the effectiveness of traditional authorities' conflict resolution efforts. Their formation mainly contributes to of a process of decivilization of society, described by Rachel Kleinfeld as follows:

> *[V]iolence will grow as the state relinquishes its monopoly on force, particularly if it encourages repression and private violence. A government at turns absent and predatory loses trust. For many more marginalized citizens, laws twisted in the service of privilege begin to be seen as unjust, illegitimate, and eventually, optional. Meanwhile, pathological individuals who would normally be ostracized are tolerated when they are needed to protect one's neighborhood, racial, or ethnic group.*[84]

Institutional multiplicity

The presence of an array of governance actors, including traditional authorities, means that there are multiple avenues available that citizens can explore when they are faced with problems (which may contribute to conflict resolution). However, these authorities may also compete with one another, or citizens may play out various governance actors against each other – thereby decreasing the effectiveness of conflict resolution. In our regression analysis (Annex 8), we tested which logic is dominant in practice and found that when respondents turn to traditional authorities for conflict resolution, their efforts are perceived to be more effective than when respondents turn to other actors.

Our qualitative data provide strong additional support for the finding that institutional multiplicity has a negative effect on conflict resolution, and highlights that it is mainly competition between different sets of traditional authorities that is the issue here. Several municipalities in Est are faced with the presence of two competing traditional chiefs, which has created tensions within the population itself, dividing the community into two blocs while weakening both leaders' positions within the broader community. In addition to the confusion this creates among the local population about which chief to turn to when faced with a problem, it makes it more complicated for other important local actors, including state security forces, to perform their functions while remaining neutral.

Most importantly, some respondents highlighted the reluctance shown by some community members, including youth, to reach out to any of the traditional authorities to avoid creating more disagreements. When parties seek the help of one authority, the other may end up feeling neglected, which may create further tensions. The situation seems to be even more problematic when one of the chiefs holds more power than the other, as it creates frustration within the opposite camp.

These findings have the following implication for programming: The succession conflicts in Est currently undermine traditional authorities' role as conflict mediators. Implementers could invest in mediation – and should otherwise remain alert that any programming in this region that involves traditional authorities might do more harm than it solves. The regulation of succession might provide a fruitful way forward.

Narrative formation/building social cohesion

Based on the literature and our pilot surveys, we identified different ways in which traditional and religious authorities may respond to public discussions in the face of a major crisis (see Table 22). Our analysis shows that the more diverse the range of discursive actions taken by traditional and religious authorities to address a major crisis, the more likely it is that their actions are perceived to result in effective conflict resolution. Further exploration of the survey data reveal that it is quite common for traditional and religious authorities to take such measures, with calls

Table 22 Traditional and religious authorities' discursive actions in the face of a major crisis[i]

	Traditional authority	Religious authority
Explain what happened	47.32%	44.89%
Call for communication/ mediation with the source of the threat	36.19%	36.12%
Call for unity	75.85%	79.96%
Organizes a ritual	27.77%	36.6%
Call for peace	81.77%	85.59%
Other	9.05%	6.05%

i No response: 1.88% and 1.04% respectively.

for peace and unity being the types of discursive actions deployed most frequently by traditional and religious authorities alike.

A couple of interesting differences exist across the various regions (see Figure 34 below). Traditional authorities more frequently resort to the organization of (animist) rituals in Burkina Faso (particularly so in Centre-Nord and Est) than they do in Mali and Niger, which is explained by the larger degree of religious diversity in these two regions. Qualitative data similarly show that among the main contributions of traditional authorities to local security in these regions is the organization of protection rituals calling upon the spirits of ancestors, while religious authorities instead contribute through prayers and religious addresses. Vice-versa, religious authorities more frequently organize rituals in Mali and Niger than they do in Burkina Faso. In Gao and Ménaka, and to some extent in Est as well, traditional authorities call more frequently for the need to communicate or mediate with the source of threats.[85]

Box 2 Examples of interview responses on rituals

In the face of violence we organize protection rituals, give protection talismans to our Koglweogos and invoke our ancestors to protect our defense and security forces and all the families here in Boulsa because they are the ones who are on the ground day and night to ensure our security and the security of our property.[i]

The traditional and religious authorities are already contributing through rituals and awareness-raising on social cohesion and tolerance, and they have also contributed to the setting up of self-defense groups through the protection rituals they organize.[ii]

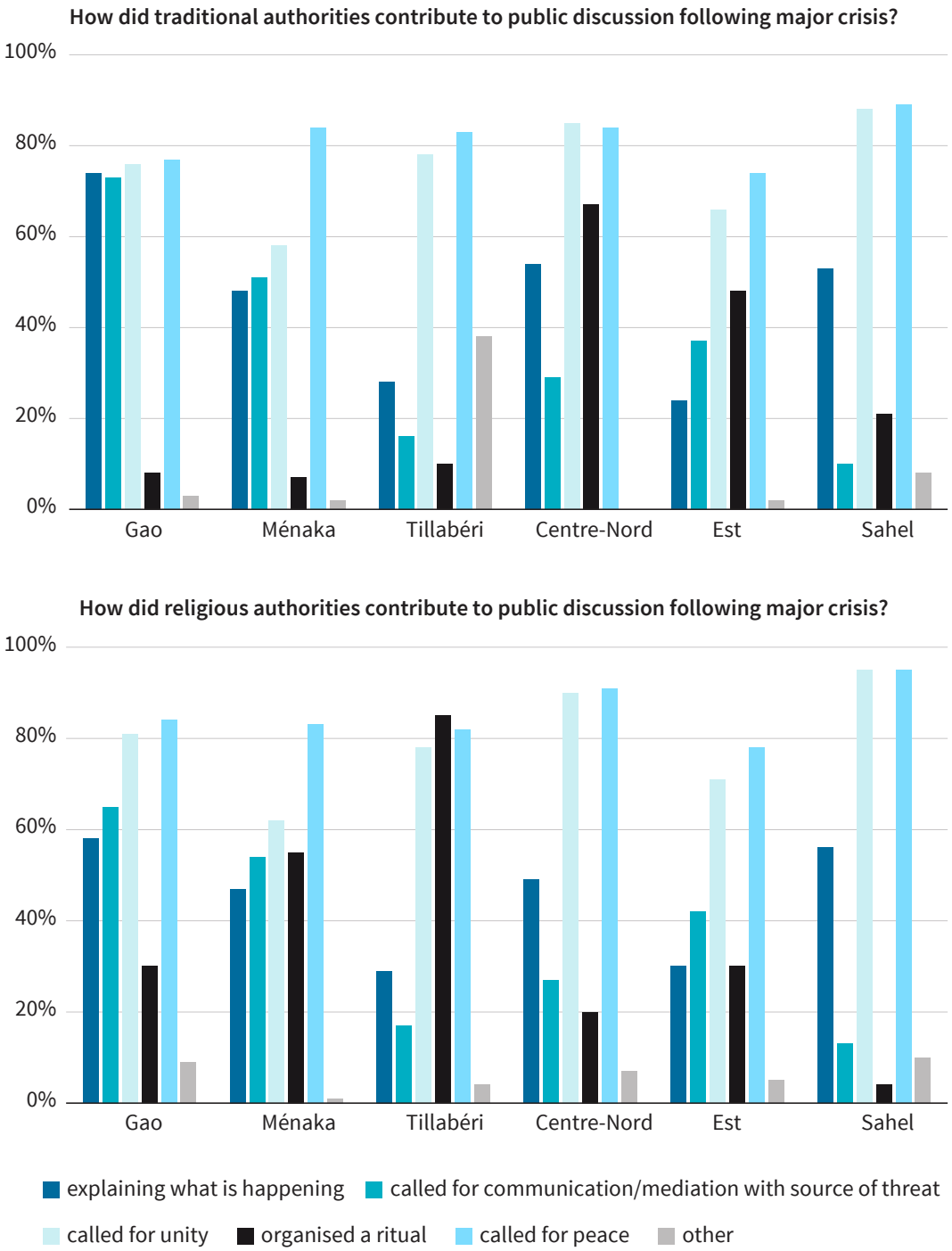
As for the traditional authorities, in addition to raising awareness, they mystically accompany all those involved in this fight by performing rituals and giving magic powder to protect themselves against sudden attacks.[iii]

i Interview with a minister of fetishes (items or objects that possess supernatural powers or house spirits) of a traditional leader, Respondent, Boulsa, Centre-Nord region, 18 February 2021

ii Interview with a traditional leader, Respondent, Pissila, Centre-Nord region, 17 February 2021.

iii Interview with a community member, Respondent, Kongoussi, Centre-Nord region, 15 February 2021.

Figure 34 Traditional and religious authorities' discursive actions in the face of a major crisis (per region)



Our KIIs gave further examples of how traditional and religious authorities can contribute to improving local security and strengthening community resilience by raising awareness of, and sharing information on, social cohesion, tolerance, forgiveness, mutual understanding, and solidarity. They thereby speak out against the values that underpin violent extremism and intercommunal conflicts more generally. In order to do so, authorities use different communication channels, including regular meetings with the population, awareness-raising campaigns on the radio,[86] and *inter alia,* interventions during cultural events, such as intercommunal festivals. A district chief in Abala (Niger) noted:

> *The measures we have taken [to address insecurity] are denunciation, collaboration with the authorities, and meetings between the different communities in the municipality, such as the "tchintia" festival, to discuss, engage in dialogue, and find solutions, the implementation of which is monitored by a committee. [...] It is a festival that has greatly contributed to bringing the communities together and to solving intercommunal conflicts, mainly between the Fulani and the Tuareg. It has also contributed to a considerable reduction in cattle rustling and armed attacks before the jihadists came and ruined everything.*[87]

In some instances, particularly in the Ménaka region, traditional authorities have also initiated inter-communal dialogue and reconciliation efforts in order to ease tensions following conflicts.[88] Similarly, religious authorities develop discourses, which often take the form of prayers and religious addresses, aimed to foster positive feelings of cohabitation and to prevent divisions, notably by explaining that violent extremism is not a consequence of Islam. When asked which event was most beneficial to this community in the past five years, for example, an imam from Abala (Niger) answered:

> *For me, it was the organization of an organized religious address that brought together all the ulema from the different communities in the area, supported by Mercy Corps. The speeches of the different ulema were recorded and rebroadcast on the community radio. All the speeches focused on peace and social cohesion. It was a meeting that helped to bring together and ease tensions between the faithful of different religious groups.*[89]

Our interview respondents had mixed opinions, however, as regards the actual impact of these communication strategies. Many respondents were quite critical about the effectiveness of such awareness-raising efforts, especially when it comes to deterring youth from joining VEOs and other armed groups. Indeed, our qualitative data overall show that traditional and religious authorities' main – and, in many cases, only – tool to prevent youth from joining armed groups is through the use of awareness-raising initiatives, which can take different forms. In addition to the narrative actions described above, traditional and religious authorities may also intervene in schools and on local radios, and organize debate sessions,[90] youth camps, and cultural and recreational activities, such as inter-religious sports competitions. Some authorities also engage with parents to advise them on how to educate their children and to make sure awareness-raising efforts are pursued at home.[91]

Box 3 Examples of interview responses on radio interventions

The imam also intervenes on the local radio stations to clarify what Islam really is, especially by drawing the attention of young people not to be taken in by these false doctrines.[i]

These traditional and religious authorities influence the behavior of young people by giving them advice. On the radio, you can hear a religious leader (imam, pastor...) advising young people not to give in to the temptation of these bandits. Even if times are hard at home and armed people come and offer you a large sum of money, but on condition that you follow them to kill people, you must refuse.[ii]

i Interview with a religious leader, Respondent, Kantchari, Est region, 16 December 2020.
ii Interview with a community member, Respondent, Gayeri, Est region, 15 December 2020.

In most regions, traditional authorities are also said to encourage youth to look for employment and to launch lucrative activities. Some authorities in the Est region moreover affirmed they organize vocational trainings and practical workshops for youth,[92] while some respondents in Tillabéri indicated that an additional means of pressure traditional authorities have on youth is their ability to influence their recruitment into state forces. A community member from Bankilaré (Niger) noted:

> *The group chief has a certain number of places allocated to him during recruitment to the police, the guard, and the gendarmerie. He influences the young people, telling them that if they stay under his control, he will designate them for recruitment. As these young people are idle, they obey the orders of the head of the group.*[93]

In addition to these positive awareness-raising initiatives, authorities in Burkina Faso, especially in Sahel and Centre-Nord, also seem to resort to threats to deter youth from joining VEOs. In some localities in Est, traditional authorities have also set up a strict surveillance mechanism to detect suspicious behavior among youth, along with dissuasive sanctions.

Respondents indicated, however, that the perceived effectiveness of these efforts varies between regions. In Tillabéri, the authorities' influence on youth seems very limited, just like in Gao and Ménaka, where many – including traditional and religious authorities themselves – admit that, as long as youth remain without jobs and economic opportunities, there is little they can do to discourage them from finding another way to make a living (i.e. by joining armed actors). Respondents in Burkina Faso, especially in Sahel and Est, overall showcased more confidence in traditional and religious authorities' ability to play an efficient and positive role in preventing youth from joining VEOs, due mostly to the legitimacy, respect, and moral authority they exert. Nevertheless, other respondents underlined that their influence is declining, due either to the progressive erosion of traditional beliefs and values among young people – a cultural factor that was also mentioned in Tillabéri – or to traditional authorities' own behavior.

The P/CVE literature shows, however, that it is not the lack of economic opportunities *per se* that drives (young) people into the arms of extremist groups, but that it is about having a meaningful role in society.[94] Given that youth, especially young men, are the group who are generally most vulnerable to radicalization to violence, the perception of favorable treatment of elders is problematic not only because it generally creates a fissure in Sahel societies, but because of the risk of further marginalizing youths and making them more prone to being radicalized to violence. Traditional authorities could create a feeling of inclusion and purpose by creating a space for youths' voices.

These findings have the following implications for programming:

- Create awareness that involving youth in local decision-making processes can form a key measure to prevent recruitment and radicalization;
- Teach young people the skills needed to be more politically engaged, including advocacy skills, public speaking, and communication;
- Given that the relationship between these authorities and youth is often of a teacher-pupil nature, dialogue-type interactions could also be promoted to rethink the relationship.

Box 4 Examples of interview quotes on threats to deter youth from joining VEOs

In order to prevent the population in general and the youth in particular from joining the terrorists, we are obliged to scare them sometimes because with the advice, those who are well educated follow, but those who are recalcitrant we can only scare them by telling them that if they go with the terrorists we will send the defense and security forces to hunt them down and kill them because whoever joins the terrorists we consider as an enemy.[i]

We try to make young people understand that disobeying their parents is a curse and if they kill someone they will never be able to sleep because it will haunt them and God will not forgive them.[ii]

The traditional and religious leaders sensitize young people on the harmful effects of terrorism on living together. In addition to these awareness campaigns, the traditional leaders do not hesitate to curse young people who try to join terrorist groups and generally young people are afraid of suffering the fate of their ancestors and put the terrorist option out of their minds.[iii]

i Interview with a traditional leader, Respondent, Djibo, Sahel region, 2 March 2021.
ii Interview with a religious leader, Respondent, Sampelga, Sahel region, 26 February 2021.
iii Interview with a community member, Respondent, Kongoussi, Centre-Nord region, 15 February 2021.

THE ONLY WAY TO DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE P/CVE APPROACH IN THE SAHEL IS BY WORKING WITH ALL ACTORS WHO CONTRIBUTE TO COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AGAINST VIOLENT EXTREMISM

CONCLUSIONS

Taking the whole-of-society approach seriously

The *Customary Characters in Uncustomary Circumstances* study finds that state officials are generally not the first actors our respondents contact for key governance functions, such as basic service provision (which is basically absent), security and justice provision, and conflict resolution. Instead, it is traditional and religious authorities and security actors – including self-defense groups and non-state armed groups – that are often the first points of contact in these domains. This reinforces the vital role that a whole-of-society approach to P/CVE plays in countering radicalization in the Sahel. Rather than focusing on traditional, security-focused counterterrorism measures in which state actors are the primary counterparts, in order to be effective, programming must engage a diverse array of local actors, which, given the key roles they play within their respective communities, includes traditional and religious authorities. It should also recognize that tick-the-box exercises will not suffice. The only way to develop an effective CVE approach in the Sahel is by working with all actors who contribute to community resilience against violent extremism.

On a related note, the study finds that food security is perceived to be a bigger threat than violent extremism in a number of regions included in this study (most notably in Est, Centre-Nord, and Tillabéri, but to some extent in the Gao and Sahel regions as well). The question that arises is whose interests programming is, or should be, serving. An overall implication for programming is that there is an over-focus on "hard" counterterrorism measures in this region (as elsewhere in the world). Projects focused on overall development (meeting basic needs of the populations), reducing interethnic tensions, and promoting social cohesion are likely to be more effective than hard security measures when it comes to strengthening community resilience to violent extremism in the long term. Care should be taken to not label such efforts as P/CVE projects, as not only are participants less likely to engage in them, given the stigma attached to such labels, but also because it may render participants as targets.

Strengthening traditional and religious authorities' core capabilities

Integrating traditional authorities in P/CVE programming is not a silver bullet. Supporting them across the board without tailoring the interventions to the areas in which they are most impactful is likely to be an inefficient use of resources – specifically given the regional differences we identify in our study.

Programming should capitalize on traditional and religious authorities' key strengths, as identified in this study. This includes contributing to basic service provision in Tillabéri, and conflict resolution in Gao, Tillabéri, and Ménaka. For justice provision, it makes more sense to involve religious authorities in Ménaka. Similarly, justice programming in the Sahel region would be wise not to focus too much on traditional authorities as they are not an important actor that respondents would contact in this domain. The differences that exist between traditional and religious authorities' governance performance across the various regions – and even across the various municipalities we studied in these regions – highlights the need for programming to build upon clear political economy assessments before engaging with authorities. Our online data dashboard, which allows for further exploration of the relevant data for each municipality included in this study, provides a starting point.[95]

One specific area where traditional authorities serve as key actors for conflict resolution and mediation is herder-farmer conflicts. Given the pervasiveness of these conflicts in the region, programming could focus on further developing the capacities of traditional authorities to help resolve or de-escalate tensions between these groups. This should be based on principles of providing equal treatment to both groups, but could also include mediation techniques and ways to promote social cohesion, tolerance, and pluralism. Our accompanying regional chapters identify a number of local initiatives which might provide important insights for programming, such as the establishment of village land conciliation committees or the organization of community dialogues in Est.

One of traditional and religious authorities' core capabilities that significantly contributes to the effectiveness of their conflict resolution is their role in raising awareness of, and sharing information on, social cohesion, tolerance, forgiveness, mutual understanding, and solidarity. Many authorities use their discursive power to speak out against the values that underpin violent extremism and intercommunal conflicts more generally. In order to do so, authorities use different communication channels, including, *inter alia,* regular meetings with the population, awareness-raising campaigns on the radio,[96] and interventions during cultural events, such as intercommunal festivals. Our study has found that the more active traditional and religious authorities are in this domain, the more effective respondents perceive their conflict resolution efforts to be. Yet it is also these activities that may make them prime VEO targets.

Addressing traditional and religious authorities' key weaknesses

Legitimacy

Overall, it is vitally important to raise awareness among traditional and religious authorities about the need to serve their communities' interests, as our study finds that this is the most significant contribution they can make to strengthen resilience. Many respondents complained that their authorities are too self-serving – particularly when it comes to the distribution of resources to their communities. Any programming that engages with either traditional or religious authorities therefore needs to take into consideration how working with either state actors or other stakeholders like USAID will impact how much communities trust these actors. This needs to be at the forefront of program design.

At this point in time, traditional and religious authorities in Centre-Nord and Tillabéri are likely best placed to support project implementation that seeks to improve resilience against violent extremism, due to their relative strength and contributions to community

resilience compared to authorities in other regions. Traditional authorities in Ménaka, on the other hand, currently score so low on key legitimacy indicators that improving their own capacities in and of itself should form the prime focus of any programming attempts in this region. The same applies in part to Gao, where traditional authorities are seen to primarily serve their own rather than their communities' interests, and to Est and Sahel, where trust in traditional authorities is relatively low. Failure to take these elements into account in programming would likely only further undermine the authorities' legitimacy and may even risk fueling local tensions.

Equal treatment

Traditional authorities' equal treatment of men and women comes out as a key factor contributing to their communities' general resilience. As was the case for legitimacy, Tillabéri scores best when it comes to such equal treatment, followed by Centre-Nord.[97] Ménaka again comes in last – despite the fact that measures have been taken to promote the inclusion of women in public discourse and governance in this region.[98] Further research is needed to explore why efforts to support the inclusion of women have been successful in Tillabéri but not in Ménaka, and whether these efforts could be transported across regions. Our findings suggest it may be that external values are seen to be imposed on the community in the latter case, rather than being internalized. Programming that seeks to address the international push to include women in anti-radicalization measures, such as the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda,[99] should take these regional differences into account and develop localized approaches based on a good understanding of local contexts and values.[100] It is vital that efforts to promote gender equality and the WPS agenda be perceived as drawing upon local norms and values, rather than being an externally imposed requirement.

When it comes to youth and the prevention of VEO recruitment, we find that the authorities' influence on youth seems very limited in Tillabéri. The same applies to Gao and Ménaka, where many – including traditional and religious authorities themselves – admitted that, as long as youth remain without jobs and economic opportunities, there is little they can do to discourage them from finding another way to make a living (i.e. by joining armed actors).[101] Respondents in Burkina Faso, especially in Sahel and Est, overall showcased more confidence in traditional authorities' ability to play a positive role in preventing youth from joining VEOs, due mostly to the legitimacy, respect, and moral authority they exert. Nevertheless, other respondents underlined that their influence is declining, due either to the progressive erosion of traditional beliefs and values among young people – a cultural factor that was also mentioned in Tillabéri – or to traditional authorities' own behaviors.

Programming could pay particular attention to the need to include youths' voices. This would require working with traditional and religious authorities to stress the need for equal treatment. Regional differences again apply, with Tillabéri doing best in this domain, followed by Centre-Nord.[102] Est and Ménaka again come in last. In addition, initiatives could be developed that teach young people the skills needed to be more politically engaged, including advocacy skills, public speaking, and communication. These would enable young people to more productively engage with a variety of actors, including traditional and religious authorities, to advocate for their own needs. Given that the relationship between these authorities and youth is often of a teacher-pupil nature, dialogues could also be promoted to redefine the relationship to be one that is more egalitarian and inclusive.

Politicization of traditional authorities

Some of the most questionable aspects of the current positions of chiefs is their politicization and lack of real autonomy relative both to the central state and to local communities. To ensure credibility in the eyes of those in their jurisdiction, ways and means must be found to insulate chiefs from politics. In regions where regulation does not yet exist, such as Burkina Faso, chiefs could benefit from the legal regulation of their position, including a prohibition against running for public office or joining political parties (as exists in Niger) and the specification of clear criteria for succession questions. Yet regulation is not a panacea, as it may create institutional spoils that could instigate further inter-elite competition and there is often pressure from the national political parties for chiefs to choose electoral sides. Any programming should hence take into account the linkages that exist between the national political arena and local governance structures that involve traditional and religious authorities.

TO ENSURE CREDIBILITY IN THE EYES OF THOSE IN THEIR JURISDICTION, CHIEFS MUST BE INSULATED FROM POLITICS

Traditional authorities also need training and a code of conduct to help them secure some autonomy relative to special community interests and other potentially improper influences. But this would likely require more resources. A financing scheme – including contributions from NGOs – could be set up to provide them with a budget, which in turn would demand accountability and transparency on their part. This latter point is crucial to avoid further allegations of corruption and the self-serving behavior that undermines the legitimacy of traditional authorities.

Refrain from instrumentalizing traditional and religious authorities as security actors

The biggest factor influencing traditional authorities to do their jobs is the security context. Conflicts over land and access to resources are turning increasingly violent – making traditional authorities and their reliance on conciliation less equipped to handle them. The increase in resort to violence in conflicts therefore compels traditional authorities to transfer such conflicts to the security and defense forces – which, as we have seen, are themselves contributing to instability and radicalization to violence due to the perpetration of human rights violations of local populations. As a result, their role in conflict resolution processes diminishes, eroding the bedrock of legitimacy they draw from it.[103]

Moreover, traditional and religious authorities very often require protection, as they are currently very vulnerable VEO targets. From a programming standpoint, if stakeholders (such as USAID or even the respective state governments) are going to work with the traditional or religious authorities, this should not be publicized. At a minimum, projects that seek to engage with traditional and religious authorities should not be framed as P/CVE projects, as this will likely increase the targeting they experience. Such project should obviously contain a local risk assessment at the outset to ensure they do no harm.

This study has shown that traditional and religious authorities can be useful allies in

security provision. Their contribution follows mainly from their role as intermediaries between the population and the state and/or armed actors. State actors, most notably security forces, therefore need to include traditional and religious authorities in their discussions concerning security provisions. The authorities often know their communities better than the actors making the security decisions. Their involvement can help ensure that security measures will be more responsive to the actual needs of the community, and will likely increase buy-in at the local level (seeing that traditional and religious authorities have substantively contributed to the decisions being made *vis-à-vis* security). One suggestion from the Est region is the organization of consultations with traditional, religious leaders, administration, and security and defense forces – so that chiefs can express themselves freely about what is really happening in the village.

Nevertheless, we stress again that implementers should realize that putting too strong a focus on this aspect of traditional authorities' functions may put them in harm's way. In addition, our findings suggest that traditional and religious authorities are not necessarily the best or most effective actors in terms of security provision, but rather that there are such high levels of mistrust of the state's security forces, that they become the default option. This is likely a direct consequence of the extrajudicial killings and other abuses carried out by security forces throughout the region. Thus, in addition to looking at how traditional and religious authorities can contribute to local security, it is worth reflecting upon how human rights and the rule of law can be mainstreamed among security forces in the three project countries. Traditional and religious authorities may have a role to play here, as they are well-placed to collect first-hand testimonies and experiences.

In addition, traditional authorities in some regions are well-placed to address the human rights abuses committed by self-defense groups. Efforts to address these are most urgent in Burkina Faso's Est region, where we currently are witnessing an increase in stigmatization and abuse of Fulani. Making use of traditional authorities' tight connections to the VDP and Koglweogo, something we also are witnessing in Centre-Nord, efforts could be made to work with them in these regions to push back against the human rights abuses committed by self-defense groups and to promote more inclusive recruitment of members of self-defense groups. Unless larger issues of unaccountability and impunity are addressed, however, such actions will likely have limited effect.[104] More preventive measures could be taken in Tillabéri, where the creation of self-policing initiatives is only just starting to appear, although this would require their status to be clarified first (as they are currently not legally sanctioned).

TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES OFTEN KNOW THEIR COMMUNITIES BETTER THAN THE ACTORS MAKING THE SECURITY DECISIONS

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1 – **COMMUNITIES ADVANCING RESILIENCE TOOLKIT (CART) ASSESSMENT SURVEY**

To what extent to do you agree with the following statements:

Connection and caring
- People in my community feel like they belong to the community
- People in my community are committed to the well-being of the community
- My community treats people fairly no matter what their background is

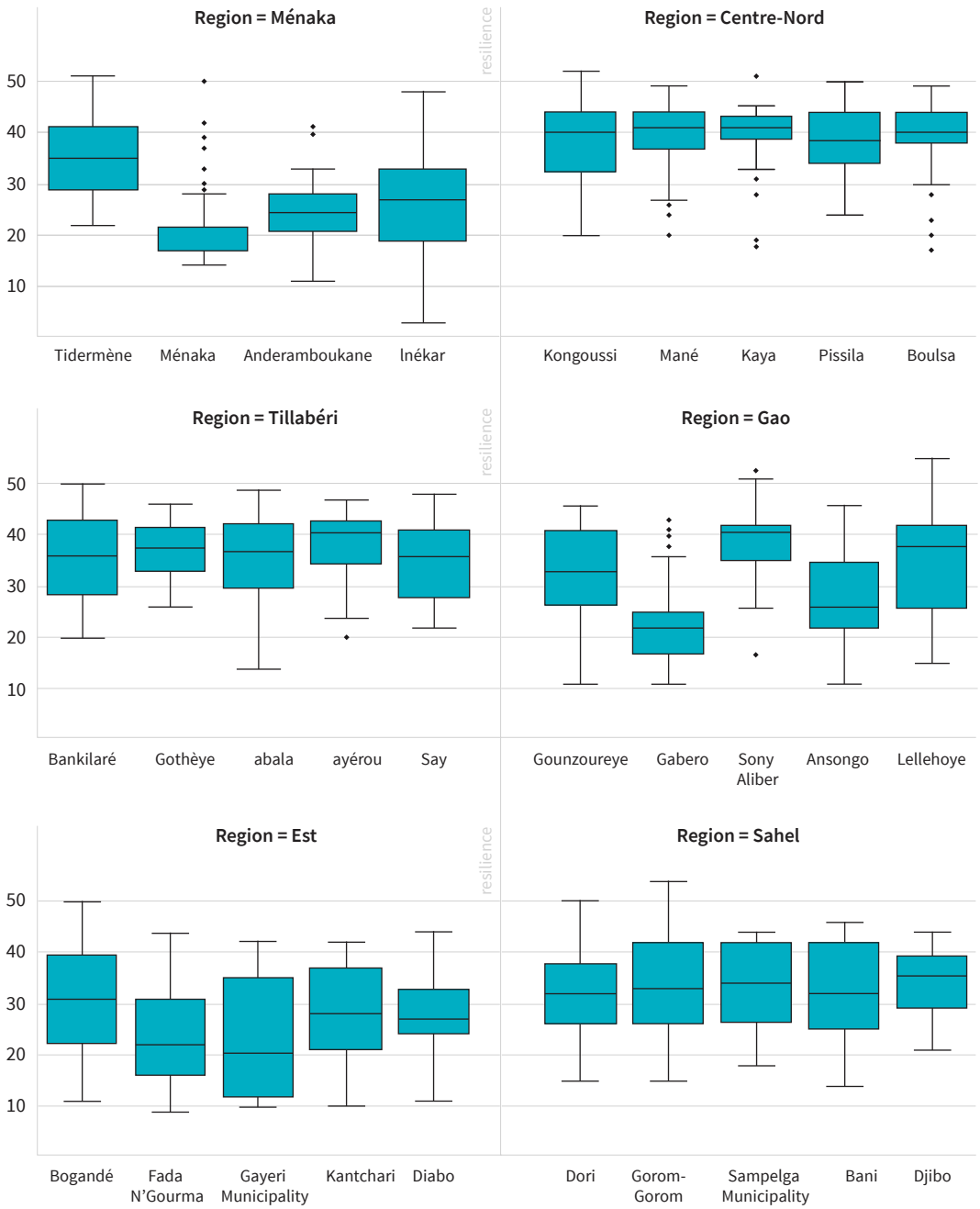
Resources
- My community has resources it needs to take care of community problems (resources include, for example, money, information, technology, tools, raw materials, and services)
- My community has effective leaders
- My community has leaders that listen to my opinion

Transformative potential
- My community works with organizations and agencies outside the community to get things done
- People in my community discuss issues so that they can improve the community
- My community looks at its successes and failures so it can learn from the past

Disaster management
- My community tries to prevent disasters
- My community organizes a collective response when there is a security threat

Answers:
1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither disagree nor agree
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree

ANNEX 2 – **GENERAL COMMUNITY RESILIENCE ACROSS REGIONS**



ANNEX 3 – REGRESSION MODEL: TRADITIONAL AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES' ROLES AND GENERAL COMMUNITY RESILIENCE[105]

Table 23 Dependent variable: General community resilience (range 0-55)

Variable	Predictor	Estimate	SE	Sig
Intercept		28.3924	2.0906	<.001
Basic service delivery	TA vs. non-TA/RA	4.2944	1.5404	.005
	RA vs. non-TA/RA	6.0651	2.5206	.016
Emergency aid – TA	Not at all vs. a lot A little vs. a lot	-0.7217 1.2449	1.1102 0.7289	Not significant Not significant
Emergency aid – RA	Not at all vs. a lot A little vs. a lot	-4.8748 -2.7016	1.051 0.765	<.001 <.001
Security provision	TA vs. non-TA/RA	2.2798	0.7716	.003
	RA vs. non-TA/RA	0.4614	1.4066	Not significant
Contact when faced with violence	TA/RA vs. non- TA/RA	-0.6992	0.8590	Not significant
Range of security measures	TA	0.1541	0.2280	Not significant
	RA	-0.0902	0.2678	Not significant
Conflict resolution within community	TA vs. non-TA/RA	1.9249	0.6547	.003
	RA vs. non-TA/RA	2.7825	1.0438	.008
Conflict resolution with other communities	TA vs. non-TA/RA	1.5781	0.6124	.01
	RA vs. non-TA/RA	-0.2149	1.0838	Not significant
Justice provision	TA vs. non-TA/RA	-1.2855	0.8034	Not significant
	RA vs. non-TA/RA	-1.9343	0.978	.048
Narrative formation	TA	0.1927	0.3082	Not significant
	RA	-0.5545	0.3160	Not significant
N = 1,042; R^2 = 0.364; p <.001				

Significant control variables: age (p = .025), education (p = <.001), region (p = <.001), security situation (p = <.001). Insignificant control variables: gender, respondent's majority/minority status, presence of herder-farmer conflicts, presence of land conflicts, general accessibility of traditional authorities, general accessibility of priests, general accessibility of imams.

Across this model, and all following models, the highest Variance Inflation Factor observed was 2.05, whereas the lowest Tolerance value was 0.48, indicating that there were no to small collinearity issues. Likewise, all Durbin-Watson statistics observed were between 1.27 and 1.74, indicating no to small autocorrelation issues. Finally, across models, residuals were approximately normally distributed as assessed with Q-Q plots.

ANNEX 4 – REGRESSION MODEL: TRADITIONAL AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES' PERFORMANCE AND GENERAL COMMUNITY RESILIENCE[106]

Table 24 Traditional authorities – Dependent variable: General community resilience (range 0-55)

Variable	Predictor	Estimate	SE	Sig
Intercept		1.13972	0.28039	<.001
1. Legitimacy	**Trust** Not at all – A lot A little – A lot	-1.98697 -1.68132	0.8489 0.4651	.019 <.001
	Community interest – own interest	-4.99855	0.5328	<.001
2. Equal treatment	**Men vs. women** Men bit more vs. women much more Equally vs. women much more	2.42191 3.79373	1.1532 1.1921	.036 .001
	Youth vs. elders Elders much more vs. equally	-1.95913	0.8066	.015
	Rich vs. poor Poor much more vs. equally Rich much more vs. equally	-4.24070 -1.42714	1.2483 0.7045	<.001 .043
	Herders vs. farmers. Herders much more vs. equally	-2.66523	0.9036	.003
3. Links with state officials and NGOs	**Local state officials** Not at all – A lot	2.02924	0.9985	.042
	National state officials			Not significant
	NGOs			Not significant
4. Links with armed actors	**Police** Not at all – A lot A little – A lot	-2.0017 -2.39034	0.8086 0.6772	.013 <.001
	Self-defense groups Not at all – A lot	1.58190	0.7464	.034
	Non-state armed actors			Not significant
5. Institutional multiplicity	**Conflict resolution** (TA – Not TA) **Justice provision** (TA – Not TA)	0.78102 0.27048	0.4356 0.5291	Not significant Not significant
6. Role in resource management	Control of resources Handles disputes over resource conflicts	0.27266 0.54799	0.1969 0.1849	Not significant .003
7. Narrative formation		0.07130	0.1798	Not significant
N = 1,437; R^2 = 0.517; p <.001				

Significant control variables: gender (p = .018), age (p = .010), education (p < .001), region (p < .001), security situation (p < .001), general accessibility of traditional authorities (p < .001). Insignificant control variables: respondent's majority/minority status, presence of herder-farmer conflicts, presence of land conflicts.

Table 25 Religious authorities – Dependent variable: General community resilience (range 0-55)

Variable	Predictor	Estimate	SE	Sig
Intercept				
1. Legitimacy	**Trust** Not at all – A lot A little – A lot	 -4.1964 -2.6402	 1.095 0.546	 <.001 <.001
	Own interest – community interest	-3.5188	0.13	<.001
2. Equal treatment	**Men vs. women**			Not significant
	Youth vs. elders Elders much more vs. equally Elders a bit more vs. equally	 -1.9449 -1.7801	 0.876 0.682	 .027 .009
	Rich vs. poor Poor a bit more vs. equally	2.0427	0.96	.033
	Herders vs. farmers Farmers much more vs. equally Herders a bit more vs. equally Herders much more vs. equally	-5.16 -3.1934 -2.5948	1.163 0.919 1.154	<.001 <.001 .025
3. Links with state officials and NGOs	**Local state officials** A little – A lot	2.791	1.071	.009
	NGOs Not at all – A lot A little – A lot	 -2.6602 -1.8486	 1.057 0.903	 .012 .041
	National state officials			Not significant
4. Links with armed actors	**Police** Not at all – A lot A little – A lot	 -2.9982 -2.6348	 1.014 0.844	 .003 .002
	Self-defense groups Not at all – A lot A little – A lot	 2.3869 2.1183	 1.025 1.037	 .02 .041
	Non-state armed actors			Not significant
5. Institutional multiplicity	**Conflict resolution** (RA – Not RA) **Justice provision** (RA – Not RA)	0.3395 -0.6599	0.788 0.748	Not significant Not significant
6. Role in resource management	Control of resources Handles disputes over resource conflicts	2.2012 0.2053	2.325 0.611	Not significant Not significant
7. Narrative formation		0.1962	0.203	Not significant
N = 1,437; R^2 = 0.452; p <.001				

Significant control variables: age (p = .005), education (p < .001), region (p < .001), security situation (p < .001), general accessibility priests (p < .001). Insignificant control variables: gender, respondent's majority/minority status, presence of herder-farmer conflicts, presence of land conflicts, general accessibility of imams.

ANNEX 5 – REGRESSION MODEL: TRADITIONAL AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES' EFFECTIVENESS AND GENERAL COMMUNITY RESILIENCE[107]

Table 26 Dependent variable: General community resilience (range 0-55)

Variable	Predictor	Estimate	SE	Sig
Intercept		23.237	2.2491	<.001
Effectiveness TA conflict resolution		1.227	0.3153	<.001
Effectiveness RA conflict resolution		-0.152	0.3169	Not significant
Effectiveness TA/RA security provision	No impact – increased security	-1.468	0.6134	0.017
N = 1,066; R^2 = 0.292; p <.001				

Significant control variables: age (p = .002), education (p < .001), region (p < .001), security situation (p < .001), general accessibility of traditional authorities (p = .011). Insignificant control variables: gender, respondent's majority/minority status, presence of herder-farmer conflicts, presence of land conflicts, general accessibility of priests, general accessibility of imams.

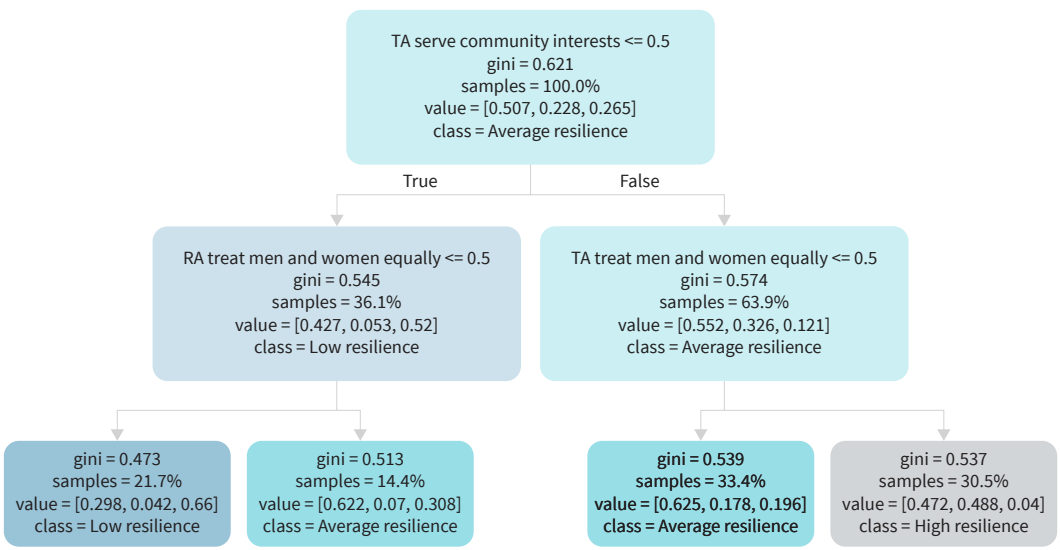
ANNEX 6 – GENERAL COMMUNITY RESILIENCE: DECISION TREE LEARNING

We used decision tree learning to identify the strongest predictors of general community resilience, using all 61 variables from our regression models (Annexes 3, 4, 5). We subsequently built a decision tree to classify participants into three categories of resilience: low resilience, average resilience, and high resilience.[108] We then fit a series of decision trees with a range of depths (from 2 to 8) and obtained the following results.

Figure 35 below represents a tree of depth = 2. The best classifier of resilience is whether or not traditional authorities are perceived to serve the interests of the community. It is followed by whether religious authorities and traditional authorities are perceived to treat men and women equally. The accuracy of the tree is 59%, which means that just knowing the values of these three variables (out of 61 variables) for a respondent means we will correctly predict if he perceives his community to be of low, average, or high resilience in 59% of cases.

Reading the tree from top to bottom, this means that participants who report both that (a) traditional authorities do not serve the interests of the community and that (b) religious authorities do not treat men and women equally are the most likely to score low on resilience. In contrast, participants who report both that (a) traditional authorities serve the interests of the community, and that (b) traditional authorities treat men and women equally are the most likely to score high on resilience. Other combinations of variables (for example, reporting that traditional authorities do not serve the interests of the community but that religious authorities do treat mean and women equally), lead to average resilience.

Figure 35 Decision Tree Classifier for Resilience
(depth = 2, accuracy = 0.59)



ANNEX 7 – REGRESSION MODEL: EFFECTIVENESS OF TRADITIONAL AND RELIGIOUS AUTHORITIES' SECURITY MEASURES[109]

Table 27 Dependent variable: Effectiveness of traditional and religious authorities' security measures

	Predicted		
Observed	**No impact**	**Increased security**	**% Correct**
No impact	347	99	77.8%
Increased security	79	459	85.3%

Variable	Predictor	Estimate	SE	Sig
Intercept		-6.5656	0.8332	<.001
4. Links with armed actors	**Police**			Not significant
	Self-defense groups			Not significant
	Non-state armed actors			Not significant
5. Institutional multiplicity	**Security provision** TA or RA – Not TA or RA **Contact when faced with violence** TA or RA – Not TA or RA	0.1869 -0.0238	-0.28867 -0.62882	Not significant Not significant
8. Range of security measures	TA RA	0.3193 0.3381	0.0847 0.096	<.001 <.001
9. Intermediary role	No change – Better cooperation	-0.5908	-0.99168	.004
10. Acceptance VEO negotiations	They can negotiate – They cannot	0.749	0.2372	.002
N = 984; pseudo R^2 = 0.410; p <.001; overall accuracy = 81.9%				

Estimates represent the log odds of "increased security" vs. "no impact"

Significant control variables: education (p = <.001), region (p = <.001), security situation (p = <.001). Insignificant control variables: age, gender, respondent's majority/minority status, presence of herder-farmer conflicts, presence of land conflicts, general community resilience.

ANNEX 8 – REGRESSION MODEL: EFFECTIVENESS OF TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES' CONFLICT RESOLUTION EFFORTS[110]

Table 28 Dependent variable: Effectiveness of traditional authorities' conflict resolution efforts

Variable	Predictor	Estimate	SE	Sig
Intercept		1.13972	0.28039	<.001
1. Legitimacy	**Trust** A bit – A lot	0.12490	0.05948	.036
	Community interest – own interest	0.29637	0.0696	<.001
2. Equal treatment	**Youth vs. elders** Elders a bit more vs. equally	-0.25306	0.08521	.003
	Men vs. women			Not significant
	Rich vs. poor			Not significant
	Herders vs. farmers			Not significant
3. Links with state officials and NGOs	**Local state officials**			Not significant
	National state officials			Not significant
	NGOs			Not significant
4. Links with armed actors	**Police** Not at all – A lot	0.25458	0.10258	.013
	Self-defense groups Not at all – A lot	0.1814	0.09432	.055[i]
	Non-state armed actors Not at all – A lot	-0.20868	0.09193	.023
5. Institutional multi-plicity	**Conflict resolution** (TA – Not TA) **Justice provision** (TA – Not TA)	0.12363 0.00435	0.05476 0.06647	.024 Not significant
6. Role in resource management	Control of resources Handles disputes over resource conflicts	-0.00650 -0.01370	0.02499 0.02359	Not significant Not significant
7. Narrative formation		0.13619	0.02333	<.001
N = 1,361; R^2 = 0.287; p <.001				

i Borderline significant

Significant control variables: age (p = .001), region (p = <.001), security situation (p = <.001), presence of herder-farmer conflicts (p < .001). Insignificant control variables: gender, education, respondent's majority/minority status, presence of land conflicts, general accessibility of traditional authorities, general community resilience.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NOTES

1 These border regions are Gao and Ménaka in Mali, Tillabéri in Niger, and Centre-Nord, Sahel, and Est in Burkina Faso.

2 We follow the OSCE's 2014 definition of community resilience as "the ability of a community to withstand, respond to and recover from a wide range of harmful and adverse events." Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2014. "Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Community-Policing Approach".

3 For security purposes, we could not further specify our questions when it came to these actors.

4 Clingendael Institute and International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT). 2021. Data dashboard Customary Legitimacy

5 First highlighted in UN Security Council, 2000. "Resolution 1325."

6 International Crisis Group, 2020. Enrayer la communautarisation de la violence au centre du Mali. Report Africa no. 293.

7 Yahaya Ibrahim, I. and Zapata, M. 2018. Regions at Risk: Preventing Mass Atrocities in Mali. Washington: Simon-Skjodt Center for the prevention of genocide.

8 UN Security Council, 2021. "Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General ", S/2021/519. Consequently, Fulani militias started to emerge and engage in retaliation against Dogon villages. This endless cycle of ethnic-based violence was instigated by the ethnicity card played by JNIM's Macina brigade to establish itself in Central Mali. Consequently, Fulani militias started to emerge and engage in retaliation against Dogon villages. This endless cycle of ethnic-based violence was instigated by the ethnicity card played by JNIM's Macina brigade to establish itself in Central Mali.

9 International Crisis Group, 2020 *op. cit.*

10 Lyammouri, R. 2021. Tillabéri Region, Niger: Concerning Cycle of Atrocities. Rabat: Policy Center for the New South.

11 Agency for International Development Fact Sheet, "Countering Violent Extremism in West Africa", U.S. West Africa Regional.

12 UN General Assembly, 2015. "Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism Report of the Secretary-General", A/70/674.

13 Englebert, P. 2002. "Traditional Political Resurgence in Tropical Africa", *Mondes en développement*, no. 118.

14 Logan, C. 2013. "The roots of resilience: Exploring popular support for African traditional authorities", *African Affairs*, vol. 112/448, pp. 353-376.

15 Ursu, A. 2018. Under the gun: Resource conflicts and embattled traditional authorities in central Mali. CRU report, The Hague: Clingendael Institute.

16 See, for example:
Williams, M. Walsh Taza, R. and Prelis, S. 2016. Working together to address Violent extremism: a strategy for youth-government partnerships. Washington: Search for Common Ground.
Mercy Corps, 2015. Building resilience during violent conflict: Lessons learned from Mercy Corps' Stabilizing Vulnerable Communities Program in the Central African Republic.

17 Molenaar, F. Tossell, J. Schmauder, A. Idrissa, R. and Lyammouri, R. 2019. The Status Quo Defied The legitimacy of traditional authorities in areas of limited statehood in Mali, Niger and Libya, CRU Report, The Hague: Clingendael Institute.

18 Also supported by other research such as: Boone, C. 2017. "Sons of the Soil Conflict in Africa: Institutional Determinants of Ethnic Conflict Over Land", *World Development,* vol.96, pp. 276-293.

19 Van Kemenade, E. 2018. Training to strengthen peace initiatives, Academy, negotiation and mediation in conflict resolution, The Hague: Clingendael Institute.

20 Théroux-Bénoni, L. and Dakono, B. "Are terrorist groups stoking local conflicts in the Sahel?", Institute for Security Studies Africa, October 14, 2019.

21 Molenaar, F. et al 2019, *op. cit.*

22 *Ibid.*

23 ACLED data, see: Raleigh, C. and de Bruijne, K. 2015. "Where Rebels Dare to Tread: A Study of Conflict Geography and Co-option of Local Power in Sierra Leone", *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* vol. 61, pp. 1230-1260.

24 For ease of reference, we combined our analysis of Gao and Ménaka in one report. The other reports address the situation in Tillabéri (Niger) and in Centre-Nord, Est and Sahel region in Burkina Faso.

25 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2014. "Preventing Terrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism: A Community-Policing Approach".

26 For all these dimensions, we asked our respondents questions about the 'traditional authority most accessible to them' and about the 'religious authority most accessible to them.' This ensured that we could compare our findings across the entire sample.

27 This is the case, for example, for Alghabass ag Intalla, the Tuareg Amenokal in Kidal. See : Molenaar, F. et al 2019, *op. cit.*

28 As can be gauged from map 1 above, this strategy proved successful except for the case of Centre-Nord, where due to security concerns during the data collection stage all five municipalities covered are located in the relatively secure south of the region. The relative homogeneity of Centre-Nord's municipalities is taken into account in the discussion of our results below.

29 Additional sampling criteria were applied within the majority/minority group, in order to ensure a balanced sample that is comparable across all municipalities. Besides these terms of reference, the local researchers were encouraged to seek a diverse sample within each municipality, for example by trying to reach neighborhoods and communities that are located outside of the center of the village.

30 De Bruijne, K. 2021. Methodology "Customary Characters in Uncustomary Circumstances". The Hague: Clingendael Institute and ICCT.

31 Pfefferbaum, R. Pfefferbaum, B. Van Horn, R. Klomp, R. Norris, F. and Reissman, D. 2013. "The Communities Advancing Resilience Toolkit (CART): An Intervention to Build Community Resilience to Disasters", Journal of Public Health Management and Practice, no. 19/3.
After our pilot phase, the initial 22 questions were brought down to 11 questions (with care being taken to ensure that all 4 domains were still covered). Subsequent statistical analysis showed that these questions still scaled together and could be combined into one measure of resilience.

32 Centre-Nord, on the other hand, is the most homogeneous region, but this may in part be explained by the fact that all included municipalities are located in the relatively more secure southern part of the region (as discussed above).

33 Full regression results are available from the authors upon request.

34 Part 2 will however discuss in more detail that this is only the case when they do so in a manner that benefits the entire community, rather than just their own families and friends.

35 51.75% of respondents note that TA's are actors who support other actors' security provision efforts. When faced with a shock, 10.09% of respondents note that traditional authorities provided them with security.

36 The same is the case for who respondents would turn to when faced with violence. They would go to the police first (52.21%) and to traditional authorities second (37.43%).

37 45.52% of respondents note that RA's support other actors' security provision efforts. When faced with a shock, 8.95% of respondents note that religious authorities provided them with security.

38 The only exception is the role of religious authorities in conflict resolution with other communities, which does not have a significant effect on general community resilience.

39 For conflicts outside of the community, 43.98% of respondents would contact traditional authorities.

40 Data not visualized here.

41 For conflicts outside of the community, 10.86% of respondents would contact these security actors. More importantly, 12.46% of respondents would turn to state officials.

42 For conflicts outside of the community, 6.75% of respondents would contact religious authorities.

43 Data not visualized here.

44 In the case of religious authorities, respondents that indicate that they turn to religious authorities for justice provision even perceive their communities to be less resilient than those that turn to other actors.

45 The extent to which traditional and religious authorities control access to natural resources, such as water, land, pasture, and herd corridors, does not significantly affect general resilience levels, nor does the range of actions they take to form community narratives around crisis events. We also find no evidence for the importance of institutional multiplicity. This may also be a function of the way in which we measured this variable, however, as we only asked about multiplicity between traditional and religious authorities and other actors. Our qualitative data show that traditional and religious authorities may also compete among themselves, as is the case in Est (traditional authorities) and Tillabéri (religious authorities), which may also weaken community resilience.

46 For traditional authorities, we find a significant impact of equal treatment of the poor vs. rich.

47 For traditional authorities, we find a significant negative impact of preferential treatment for women, elders, and herders. For religious authorities, we find a significant negative impact of preferential treatment of elders. One exception exists: when religious authorities are perceived to give the poor some

favorable treatment, this results in higher general resilience scores. The section on equal treatment below discusses this finding in more detail.

48 Perceived links between traditional and religious authorities and national state officials and NGOs have no effect on general community resilience.

49 Molenaar, F. et al 2019, *op. cit.*

50 Depending on the regression model at issue, equal treatment means significantly more resilience while preferential treatment of women, elders, and herders corresponds to respondents perceiving their communities to be significantly less resilient. While this makes sense for elders and herders, as this touches upon some of the key conflicts in society, it is less clear why preferential treatment for women would be linked to lower resilience. One potential explanation is that the relationship is perhaps the other way around, meaning that women may benefit from more favorable treatment in communities that are not resilient and that rely on outside support. With gender equality and women inclusion being a key focus and criteria for donors and development partners, this might result in women being perceived to receive preferential treatment by their local leaders. Preferential treatment of men, youth, and farmers did not correspond with significant differences in perceived community resilience.

51 Other combinations of variables (for example, reporting that traditional authorities do not serve the interests of the community but that religious authorities do treat men and women equally), lead to average resilience.

52 Interview with a community member, Respondent, Ménaka, Ménaka region, 26 February 2021: *"It is true that some women emerge because of their education, their culture or their social position, but in reality they are relegated to the background. Despite the laws and the favorable conditions that the legislations grant to the promotion of women and their public commitment, they always remain on the margin of the big decisions. For example, here, women's organizations do not know that they must be present during the validation of the commune's budget, in order to have lines favorable to gender equity inserted. Worse still, in my commune, the regional directorate for the promotion of women, which is a state structure dedicated to the promotion of women and the family, does not have any women working in it. All the staff of the directorate for the promotion of women are men. So even if no one puts his hand on a woman's mouth when she wants to speak publicly, it is obvious that women have fewer opportunities and less favorable conditions to express themselves and give their point of view than traditional authorities and some men do."*

53 37.02% of respondents perceive both groups to receive similar treatment.

54 Only 2.85% perceive the youth to receive slightly more favorable treatment and 2.71% a lot.

55 Tillabéri once again stands out as a region where traditional and religious authorities are generally seen as impartial.

56 In our survey, the category 'local state officials' included both civil servants and elected leaders.

57 Our local enumerators pushed us to keep this label relatively vague for their own – and their respondents' – security. Unfortunately, this makes it impossible to distinguish whether respondents referred to non-state armed actors such as the Platform coalition and Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) in Mali or to VEOs.

58 Below, we explore an alternative explanation, which holds that traditional and religious authorities who are influenced by the police or security forces are more effective at conflict resolution (through the potential enforcement power this creates for their decisions). We find no evidence for this.

59 Dufka, C. "Sahel: Atrocities by the security forces are fueling recruitment by armed Islamists", Le Monde, June 29, 2020.
Nsaibia, H. 2020. "State atrocities in the Sahel: the impetus for counterinsurgency results in fueling government attacks on civilians", Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project.

60 Regional comparison of the data shows this trust to be highest in Tillabéri (81%), Centre-Nord (68%), Est (51%), and Sahel (50%). Gao and Ménaka, where state security forces are largely absent, score 36 percent and 8 percent respectively. A comparison of the data across ethnicities shows trust to be highest among Mossi (63%) and Fulani (57%) respondents and lowest among Bella (35%) and Tuareg (31%). This is likely explained by the fact that the Tuareg have been historically underrepresented in state security forces.

61 Caulier, T. 2021. Customary Characters in Uncustomary Circumstances: The case of Burkina Faso's Centre-Nord region. The Hague: Clingendael Institute and ICCT; Schmauder, A. 2021. Customary Characters in Uncustomary Circumstances: The case of Burkina Faso's Est region. The Hague: Clingendael Institute and ICCT.

62 Interview with a traditional leader, Respondent, Tidermène, Ménaka region, 6 December 2020: *"Over the last 5 years, we have experienced a conflict between the self-defense groups and the CMA, which has been very damaging to our community because our community joined the CMA and was displaced by the GATIA in the municipality. The leaders of the two movements were all natives of the Tidermène municipality, which led to much hatred within the communities."*

63 This latter finding is partially driven by the fact that we conducted our surveys in the relatively safe south part of Centre-Nord

64 The deterioration of the security situation in Est in particular goes to show, however, that this particular set of survey data is but a snapshot of the situation at the time of data collection.

65 Islamic concept of obligatory alms that has been appropriated by VEOs to a form of violent extremist taxation. Thurston, A. "Why jihadists are collecting 'zakat' in the Sahel," Political Violence at a Glance, July 12, 2021.

66 Religious authorities are not relevant in this regard, as only 3.69% of respondents stated they would turn to these actors for security provision.

67 Due to the way in which the question was formulated, it is impossible to distinguish between traditional and religious authorities in the answers to this question.

68 In the early summer of 2021 members of ISGS arrested and punished armed robbers in Ansongo circle.

69 The one variable that did not have a significant effect on the effectiveness of traditional and religious authorities' security measures was their links to armed actors, such as armed groups and self-defense groups and other local security initiatives.

70 12.48% and 16.99% respectively.

71 Our KIIs lament the fact that traditional and religious authorities did not oppose these measures – despite their detrimental effect on the local economy. One respondent notes in particular how this has led to an increase in youth unemployment, which makes them vulnerable to recruitment by terrorists. Interview with a local civil servant, Respondent, Say, Tillabéri region, 6 December 2020.

72 Interview with a traditional leader, Respondent, Djibo, Centre-Nord, 2 March 2021: *"The measures taken are respect for the instructions given by the defense and security forces, so we invite everyone to do the same. The discourse we are holding is to ask everyone to be vigilant and collaborate with the defense and security forces in order to facilitate their tasks."*

73 Molenaar, F. et al 2019, *op. cit.*

74 33.96% indicate that traditional and religious authorities should reinforce their cooperation with security forces and 5.92% that they should update their communities about security threats.

75 NB. The term 'communal authorities' may be interpreted to include other types of authorities beyond traditional and religious authorities.

76 Indeed, 58.59% of our respondents state that traditional and religious authorities could best increase their (the respondents') resilience to violence and VEOs by increasing social cohesion in their communities rather than more CVE types of measures.

77 Interview with a member of the civil society, Respondent, Abala, Tillabéri region, 5 January 2021:*"We have two religious leaders who are listened to in the village. The Izalists go to the Izala leader who is the most accessible authority and the Tidjannists go to the Tidjanist leader who is the most accessible to them. The two get along well and visit each other from time to time."*

78 Interview with a member of the civil society, Respondent, Bankilare, Tillabéri region, 25 November 2020: *"As far as the marabouts are concerned, it is mainly the contradictions in their messages and divisions. Many people blame them for dividing and opposing people. Because of their positions and their preaching, some people consider others as not being good Muslims. On the one hand we have the Izalists and on the other hand the Tijanists."*

79 Interview with a local civil servant, Respondent, Gotheye, Tillabéri region, 30 November 2020: *"As far as the religious are concerned, it is mainly the divisions of the last few years that are criticized by the population. In some villages, this has created divisions, zizanias, and many social problems within the communities. In our area it is especially between the Izala group and the Tidjania group that we see a lot of rivalry and hatred."*

80 Interview with a local state representative, Respondent, Gotheye, Tillabéri region, 1 December 2020: *"Among the religious authorities, they are deeply divided between Izala and Tijaniyya so they want to drag the people into this division. For example, on the last anniversary of the Prophet's birth, I intervened with the Izalists to allow the Tijaniyya to organize their festival."*

81 *Ibid. "The disagreements and rivalries between religious groups are a real threat to our community. If a solution is not found for this, it will certainly lead to serious conflicts."*

82 We find no evidence for the importance of relations with state officials/politicization, nor for the extent to which traditional authorities control access to natural resources.

83 Molenaar, F. et al 2019, *op. cit.*

84 Kleinfeld, R. 2019. "A Savage Order: How the World's Deadliest Countries Can Forge a Path to Security", New York, Vintage: 91.

85 Traditional and religious leaders in Est are less likely to call for unity and peace than is the case in other regions of Burkina Faso, which may be a result of the institutional multiplicity discussed above.

86 Interview with a community member, Respondent, Gotheye, Tillabéri region, 4 December 2020: *"The role of traditional and religious authorities in the field of security in the municipality is to raise awareness in the communities. They intervene on the community radio to call for vigilance and peace.".* Interview with a civil servant, Respondent, Dori, Sahel region, 16 February

2021: *"They also often go on the radio to call on people to show solidarity and unity in order to avoid falling into the trap of the terrorists."* Interview with a traditional leader, Respondent, Gounzoureye, Gao region, 5 January 2021: *"The radio is a good means of communication for us traditional and religious authorities. It allows us to further raise awareness in the community."*

87 Interview with a traditional leader, Respondent, Abala, Tillabéri region, 3 January 2021.

88 Interview with a traditional leader, Respondent, Tidermène, Ménaka region, 3 December 2020: *"Over the last five years, we have experienced a conflict between the self-defense groups and the Coordination of the Azawad Movements (CMA), which has been very damaging for our community. As a measure taken: the organization of inter-community meetings bringing together all layers of the commune. The aim of these meetings is to raise awareness, restore security and peace, and promote understanding between the communities of the municipality. The message was to raise awareness among the population on peace and social cohesion."*

89 Interview with a religious leader, Respondent, Abala, Tillabéri region, 4 January 2021. Another example comes from an interview with a traditional leader, Respondent, 17 February 2021: *"We also organized an activity within the framework of social cohesion which brought together the president of the Muslim community, the bishop who was represented by the parish priest of the town of Kaya, his Majesty (the chief of Kaya) was also represented, which was a success."*

90 Interview with a religious leader, Respondent, Kantchari, Est region, 17 December 2020: *"Very often we organize interactive radio programs to raise awareness among our youth. Sometimes we organize "tea debates" to discuss the harmful side of terrorism. I think these awareness campaigns are very effective."*

91 Interview with a religious leader, Respondent, Boulsa, Centre-Nord region, 18 February 2021: *"We have the chance to interact with all social strata, namely the children, the youth, the adults and the elderly, so as a message we transmit, it is already a message of peace, tolerance and forgiveness. For the youngest, it is respect for parents and elders. To the young people, respect for parents, authority, neighbor, and to have a fulfilled life according to the teachings of the Gospel, to follow the commandments of God, to avoid easy gain. Also we ask the adults to help us once at home, to perpetuate this exercise once at home, because they are usually the family leaders, and as we are not always present, they serve as a relay."*

92 Interview with a representant of a traditional leader, Respondent, Bogande, Est region, 7 March 2021: *"To prevent members of our municipality, especially young people, from joining bandits or armed groups, we have set up training workshops in manual activities for young people in sewing, carpentry, masonry, mechanics, etc. And at each training session we give them advice on how to never give in to ease. And at each training session, we give them advice to never give in to the easy way. Frankly, this initiative is really effective."*

93 Interview with a community member, Respondent, Bankilare, Tillabéri region, 25 November 2020.

94 Krueger, A. , and Malečková, J. 2003 "Education, Poverty and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?" *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, vol. 17/4. Kruglanski, A. Gelfand, M. Bélanger, J. Sheveland, A. Hetiarachchi, M. and Gunaratna, R.. "The Psychology of Radicalization and Deradicalization: How Significance Quest Impacts Violent Extremism." Political Psychology, vol. 35, 2014, pp. 69–93.

95 Clingendael Institute and International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT). 2021. Data dashboard Customary Legitimacy

96 Interview with a community member, Respondent, Gotheye, Tillabéri region, 4 December 2020: *"The role of traditional and religious authorities in the field of security in the municipality is to raise awareness in the communities. They intervene on the community radio to call for vigilance and peace."* Interview with a civil servant, Respondent, Dori, Sahel region, 16 February 2021: *"They also often go on the radio to call on people to show solidarity and unity in order to avoid falling into the trap of the terrorists."* Interview with a traditional leader, Respondent, Gounzoureye, Gao region, 5 January 2021: *"The radio is a good means of communication for us traditional and religious authorities. It allows us to further raise awareness in the community."*

97 Both regions also score relatively good on equal treatment of other subgroups, such as youth vs. elders, poor vs. rich, and herder vs. farmers.

98 Ménaka also comes in last when it comes to the equal treatment of other subgroups. This makes traditional authorities in these regions less ideal partners for implementers – or care should at least be taken when working with these actors so that local fault lines are not strengthened in the process.

99 First highlighted in UN Security Council, 2000, "Resolution 1325", S/Res/1325.

100 It should also take into account the fact that research has shown that women play a key role in radicalization processes in the Sahel. Raineri, L. 2020. "Dogmatism or Pragmatism? Violent extremism and gender in the central Sahel", London: International Alert.

101 The regional reports do highlight interesting examples of such efforts, but we would argue that it is not necessarily the traditional authorities' purview to set up job creation schemes.

102 Both regions also score relatively good on equal treatment of other subgroups, such as youth vs. elders, poor vs. rich, and herder vs. farmers.

103 One encouraging operation to ensure security in Ménaka – Ménaka Sans Armes – is discussed in more detail in the Mali country report.
104 Kleinfeld, R. 2019. *Op. cit.*
105 For readability, when predictors contain various levels, only significant levels are included in the table. The full statistical analysis is available upon request.
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107 For readability, when predictors contain various levels, only significant levels are included in the table. The full statistical analysis is available upon request.
108 Total samples: 992, composed of 263 in Low Resilience, 503 in Average Resilience, and 226 in High Resilience. Low Resilience is a Resilience score smaller or equal to 24. Average Resilience is a Resilience score higher than 24 and smaller or equal to 40, and High Resilience is a Resilience score higher than 40. We did not split data into train and test sets since our aim was to classify existing data, not new or unseen data, as a complement to regression analyses.
109 For readability, when *predictors* contain various levels, only significant levels are included in the table. The full statistical analysis is available upon request.
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