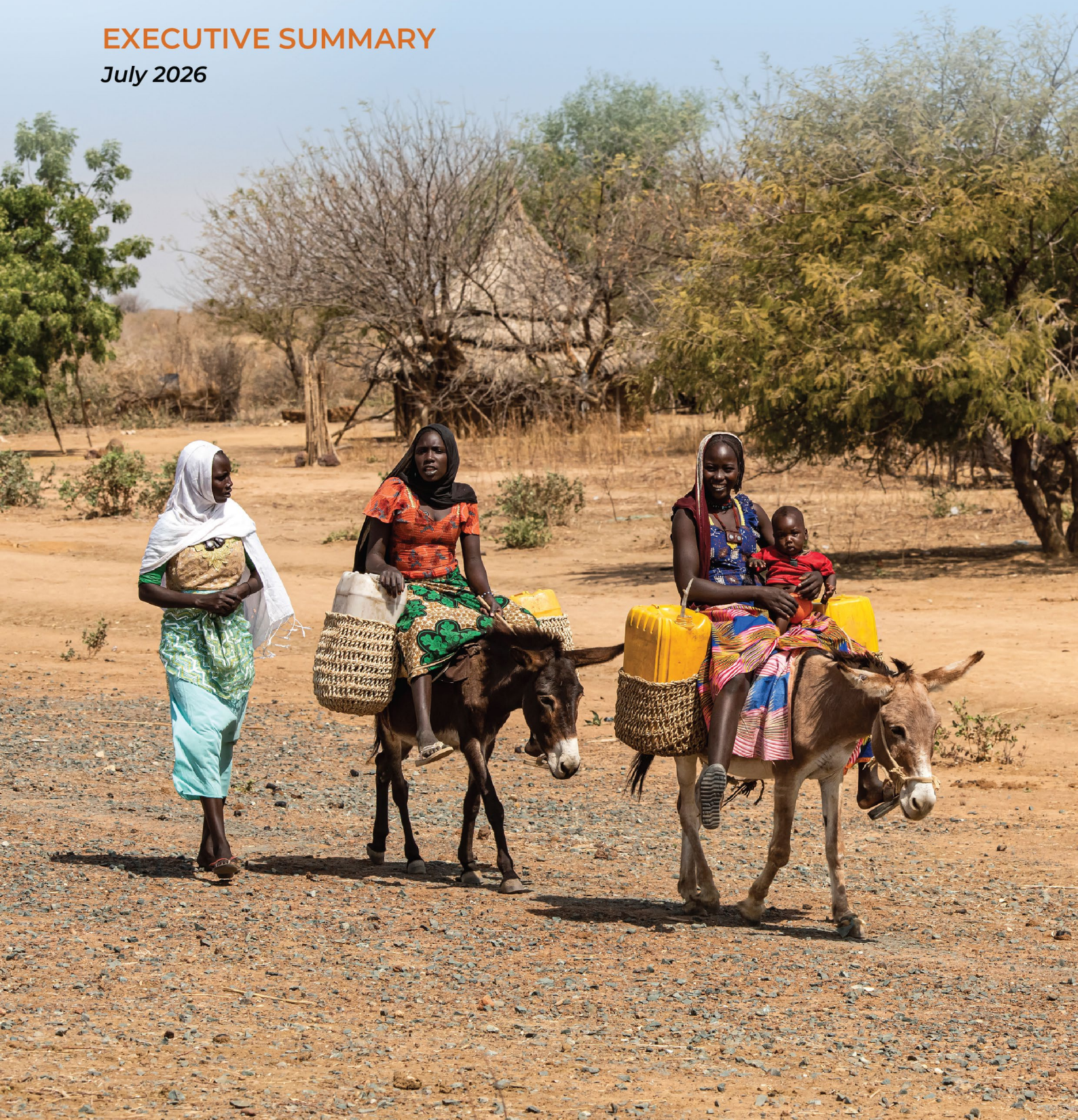


Doing Research in **CHAD**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

July 2026



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Introduction

Chad, a vast crossroads of cultures, languages, and civilizations at the heart of Africa, remains, paradoxically, one of the least studied countries on the continent, particularly in the field of the social sciences. Yet, Chadian authorities formally recognize research and higher education as strategic drivers of the country's sustainable development and socioeconomic transformation. This ambition, however, faces deep-seated structural constraints. Since independence, decades of political instability, armed conflict, and institutional fragility have significantly hindered the development of the education system and limited the emergence of an environment conducive to scientific production.

Despite these difficulties, Chad's academic landscape has gradually expanded over the past few decades. The country now has ten public universities, several specialized institutes and 'grandes écoles', as well as fifty-three private higher education institutions. However, this quantitative expansion has not yet translated into a sustainable consolidation of research capacity. Scientific activity remains in its infancy, underfunded, and heavily centralized in the capital N'Djamena, while infrastructure, qualified human resources, funding mechanisms, and knowledge dissemination systems remain limited.

This report offers the first comprehensive assessment of the social science research system in Chad. Conducted by the Centre de Recherche et des Études Socioéconomiques et Politiques (CRESPO), in partnership with the Global Development Network (GDN), as part of the Doing Research global initiative (DR), this study analyses the main institutional, political, economic, and organizational factors influencing the production, dissemination, and use of research. Based on an international methodology (2017), the 'Doing Research Assessment', adapted to the Chadian context in 2024, it adopts a mixed-methods approach combining literature review, quantitative data collection, and qualitative investigations. The process was structured around three main pillars: analysis of the national context, mapping of research system stakeholders, and primary data collection through surveys and interviews among researchers, institutional leaders, and public policymakers. The study thus highlights the sector's main challenges, as well as opportunities to strengthen a scientific ecosystem capable of contributing more effectively to public policy and national development.

Key Findings

A challenging socio-economic context: Chad's research system operates within a structurally challenging environment marked by a very low level of human development and persistent economic constraints. Ranked 190th out of 191 on the HDI, the country suffers from limited access to higher education, with an average of only 2.6 years of schooling. This situation significantly reduces the potential pool of researchers. Furthermore, public funding remains insufficient, with approximately 0.3% of GDP allocated to research, and budgetary priority given to security rather than social sectors. The digital divide is also deep: internet access remains low (barely above 10% after 2020) and costly, limiting access to international scientific resources and academic collaborations.

Limited capacity for scientific output: Social science research output in Chad is constrained by a structural lack of human, financial, and material resources. Available funding is largely absorbed by salaries and operating costs, leaving little room for equipment, fieldwork, or databases. The country has a relatively small number of researchers, and research outcomes fall short of standards, with certain sub-dimensions, such as scientific outputs and training, being assessed as significantly below standard by Chadian researchers. Added to this is significant gender inequality, with a very low presence of women in the academic workforce, which limits diversity and the renewal of scientific potential.

Low circulation and visibility of research: The dissemination of research is the system's main weakness, marked by an acute deficit in scientific communication. Products for research translation and public outreach are virtually non-existent (about 4%), which drastically limits the social and political impact of the research. The few national journals are generally not indexed in international databases and are rarely accessible online, reducing the global visibility of Chadian researchers. The absence of structured digital platforms and national databases exacerbates this isolation, hindering integration into international scientific networks.

Limited use of research in public policy: The integration of scientific findings into public action remains marginal, illustrating a weak link between research and policy-making. Authorities rarely consult academics to inform public policy, and the majority of research is not commissioned by institutions. This situation is largely due to a weak culture of research demand, opaque

governance mechanisms, and a lack of interfaces between researchers and policymakers. Consequently, even when relevant knowledge is produced its use remains limited, reducing its potential contribution to addressing the country's social and economic challenges.

Levers of Change

1. Strengthened institutional reform. The first lever involves consolidating the institutional framework for research, which is still marked by incomplete implementation of policy guidelines. Although the government officially defines scientific priorities, these often remain merely declarative and not very operational. Strengthening the mandate of the National Center for Development Research (CNRD) appears essential, particularly by explicitly integrating the social sciences into its remit. Such a reform would improve system coordination, clarify institutional responsibilities, and better align national priorities with research activities, which are currently fragmented and poorly structured.

2. Strengthening human capacity and training. The shortage of human capital is a major constraint on research development, with a limited number of researchers and a concentration of doctoral programs. The system currently has only two doctoral schools, which severely limits advanced training and specialization. Expanding to include several specialized doctoral schools, combined with incentive policies to mobilize the scientific diaspora, would sustainably strengthen national expertise. This lever also aims to improve the diversity of profiles, particularly by promoting greater inclusion of women in academic careers.

3. Structural and sustainable funding mechanisms. Current research funding, estimated at a small share of GDP and largely absorbed by personnel expenses, severely limits the system's operational capacity. The establishment of a dedicated mechanism, such as a national fund focused on the social sciences, would allow for better targeting of resources toward research activities themselves (data collection, equipment, fieldwork). Beyond increasing funding levels, this lever also involves reforming funding procedures to ensure transparency, efficiency, and alignment with national development priorities.

4. Redefining international partnerships. Chad benefits from significant openness to international cooperation, but this cooperation often remains unbalanced and focused on technical support or data collection. Transforming these relationships into genuine partnerships for scientific co-production is a key lever. This involves strengthening the role of national

researchers in defining research agendas, leading projects, and disseminating results. Such a shift would enhance scientific quality, international visibility, and local ownership of the knowledge produced.

5. Societal anchoring and valorisation of results. The limited use of research results in society and public policy constitutes a major constraint. The system suffers from a lack of outreach and a shortage of interfaces between researchers, policymakers, and economic actors. The development of transfer mechanisms (such as public policy briefs) and greater private-sector involvement would help strengthen the impact of scientific work. This lever aims to make research a concrete tool for decision-making and socio-economic transformation, rather than an activity isolated from the rest of society.

6. Improving academic governance. Finally, the quality of governance directly influences the credibility and performance of the research system. Current practices, which are sometimes characterized by politicization, favouritism, or a lack of transparency, undermine the sector's effectiveness. Strengthening academic governance mechanisms involves ensuring researchers' independence, promoting scientific ethics, and protecting research on sensitive issues. This lever is essential for establishing an environment of trust, stimulating scientific output, and ensuring the relevance of research to public discourse.

Conclusions

An analysis of the social sciences research system in Chad reveals an ecosystem that remains fragile, marked by deep-seated structural constraints but also offering significant room for improvement. The observed shortcomings—in terms of funding, scientific output, dissemination of results, and integration into public policy—arise within a particularly constrained socioeconomic context, where budgetary priorities and conditions for access to education limit the sector's growth.

However, this situation does not reflect a lack of momentum, but rather a system in transition, where institutional foundations exist but remain insufficiently consolidated. The identified levers highlight that transformation is possible provided action is taken simultaneously across several dimensions: strengthening institutions, investing in human capital, reorganizing funding mechanisms, and rethinking the relationships between research, society, and public decision-making. The development of more balanced partnerships and the improvement of academic governance also appear

crucial for establishing the system's credibility and long-term structure.

Ultimately, the challenge for Chad lies not only in increasing resources, but in the ability to build a coherent, integrated ecosystem oriented toward national development needs. Research that is better structured, more visible, and more actively engaged by policymakers could play a central role in understanding social dynamics and in developing more effective public policies. In this context, social science research must be viewed not as a peripheral sector, but as a strategic lever to support the country's economic, political, and social transformations.

Key Points

- **190th out of 191 on the HDI (2022):** Chad ranks among the lowest in the world in terms of human development, which severely limits the pool of researchers and the system's overall capacity.
- **0.3% of GDP allocated to research (2016):** Public funding for research remains extremely low, well below the levels observed in other comparable African countries.
- **Expenditures dominated by salaries:** The majority of university budgets go toward personnel costs, leaving very few resources for equipment, data, or fieldwork.
- **Only 2 doctoral schools in the entire country:** A very limited capacity for research training, concentrated mainly at the University of N'Djamena.
- **Historically very low scientific output (377 publications between 1980 and 2017):** Chad lags far behind other Sahelian countries such as Senegal and Burkina Faso.
- **Virtually non-existent scientific communication outputs (~4%):** Dissemination is the weakest link, with very little popularization or promotion of research results.
- **Very limited internet access (barely >10% after 2020):** The digital divide hinders access to databases, international publications, and scientific collaborations.
- **Limited interaction with policymakers:** Authorities rarely consult researchers, and the use of scientific findings in public policy remains marginal.

Strategic Recommendations

A. Institutionalize central coordination of the social sciences

Officially assign the CNRD a mandate that includes the social sciences through a revised regulatory text, then define a multi-year action plan (research priorities, laboratory coordination, project monitoring). Systematically involve the CNRD in sector-specific public policies to integrate research into the decision-making process at an early stage.

B. Rapidly expand specialized doctoral programs

Gradually create 4 new doctoral schools (minimum target: 6) by targeting key disciplines (political science, sociology, development economics). Establish a national program of competitive, contract-based doctoral fellowships (funding + requirement for scientific output), and strengthen partnerships for doctoral supervision.

C. Establish a competitive research fund

Launch a National Research Fund (FNR) with an initial allocation of 2 to 3% of the national budget, accompanied by transparent and competitive calls for proposals. Establish thematic funding streams (national priorities) and open funding to co-contributions from the private sector and technical partners.

D. Create a national platform for scientific publication

Establish a Chadian open-access scientific journal with a structured editorial board, a peer-review process, and systematic online publication. Implement a strategy for international indexing (academic databases) and support researchers in publishing (training, writing workshops).

E. Fund targeted action research programs

Launch calls for proposals focused on national priority themes (conflicts, drought, migration), requiring the involvement of local stakeholders and the production of actionable results (operational reports, public policy briefs). Prioritize interdisciplinary projects with a direct impact on sectoral policies.

F. Institutionalize ethics committees in every university

Create independent ethics committees with standardized procedures (project review, methodological validation, monitoring). Train researchers in ethical standards and integrate these requirements into funding and

publication criteria to improve scientific quality and credibility.

G. Structure the research–public policy interface

Establish formalized transfer mechanisms (policy briefs, regular researcher-decision-maker workshops, expert units within ministries). Introduce dissemination requirements in funded projects and monitor the actual use of results in public policy.

H. Rebalance international cooperation toward co-production

Make international partnerships contingent on substantial participation by Chadian researchers (co-leadership, joint production, access to data and re). Develop structured research agreements that enable sustainable skills transfer and greater international visibility for national teams.



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