2.5 Chad Waterways Assessment
In Chad, river and lake transport are almost exclusively an informal sector of activity, but they have always played an important role in the cross-border trade, especially in the Lake Chad region, whose four countries are Niger and Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad share common borders.

There is no an organized "river or lake transport" network, nor a service of the Administration responsible for ensuring the same seasonal navigability on the two rivers Chari and Logone or on Lake Chad (signaling, marking, dredging, etc.). With limited navigation conditions due to the low water periods and the drafts that allow only small boats, the river transport services are mainly limited to crossing the Chari and Logone rivers provided by ferry operations or informal sector activities operating on wooden canoes with an average load of one tone, which are easy to build and maintain, and are estimated between 5,000 and 7,000 units.

The river network, little developed and especially dependent on the seasons, includes the Chari (1,200 km) tributary of Lake Chad and its tributary the Logone (1,000 km). The second is only navigable 2 months per year while the Chari is navigable almost permanently downstream from N'Djamena, and 4 months per year from Sarh to N'Djamena.

Lake Chad is located on east of the African Sahel and on the southern edge of the Sahara, constituting in 1963 a large freshwater area of 25,000 km² shared between Cameroon to the south (8%), Niger to the north-west. (17%), Nigeria to the west (25%) and Chad to the east (50%).

In 2001, its area drops to 4,000 km² and only Cameroon and Chad are bordering Lake Chad. The former lake area incorporating Niger and Nigeria is taken over either by vegetation, sand or human settlements.

In 2008, Lake Chad only covers an area of 2,500 km² at the mouth of the Chari and Logone rivers, only 10% of the area it occupied in 1963.

Its shallow depth, at most 7 meters, makes it fragile and highly dependent on seasonal fluctuations.

Navigation is only possible for small boats of low draft.

The transport activities on the lake are provided by motorized canoes of fifteen to twenty meters long and a maximum load of about 40 tons. Navigation conditions are very difficult and lake transportation costs are high due to silting or obstruction of navigable waterways by swampy vegetation or bunkers.
However, there are a couple of transporters who are willing to move cargo such as the “Union des transporteurs fluviaux” based in Bol and Bagasola. The fleet Union in Bol is represented by 20 boats of 40 Mt, 16 boats of 30 Mt and 14 boats of 20 Mt. All boats are equipped with an engine of 40 cc.

The loading bay is in Guite and depending on the season and the type of boat, the cargo could reach Bol and/or Bagasola within one to two days. The rate per Mt is estimated between 25,000 and 45,000 FrCFA. As per the Union knowledge, the lake is navigable between October and February.

In Guite, the president of the Union of fluvial transporters is estimating a number of 20 boats of different size (10 to 40 Mt) with an engine of 40 cc.

Few small stores available at the loading bay – 20 to 40 Mt capacity.

Route: N'djamena to Guite by road (110 km – tar road/ good condition) – Guite to Bol/ Bagasola/ Lake Islands by boat (One to two days).

Security information:

In March 2017, the first river security post between Cameroon and Chad was inaugurated. 360 Chadian policemen were trained and equipped to ensure security all along the fluvial border between the two countries. The policemen equipped with 11 motorized boats (different size 8 or 15 pax/ engine 110 or 115 cc) will control eight security posts from Bongor in the south through N’djamena to Lake Chad.