

RESILAC*

*REDRESSEMENT ÉCONOMIQUE ET SOCIAL
INCLUSIF DU LAC TCHAD

LESSON-SHARING REPORT

ON THE
LOCALISATION

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LOCALISATION



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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACF	Action contre la faim
CBHW	Community-based Health Workers
IGA	Income Generating Activities
VSLA	Village Saving and Loans Associations
PIB	Public Investment Budget
LCB	Lake Chad Basin
MJTF	Multinational Joint Task Force
NSAG	Non-state Armed Group
NRM	National Resource Management
LIPW	Labour-intensive Public Work
HACP	Haute Autorité à la Consolidation de la Paix
CBO	Community-based Organisations
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
PM+	Problem Management Plus
PM	Pillar Manager
SFCG	Search for Common Ground
GBV	Gender-based Violence

INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT

The Lake Chad Basin covers parts of the four countries bordering Lake Chad (Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad) and extends 1000 km from north to south and 500 km from east to west. In 2015, it was estimated that the active watershed of Lake Chad was home to nearly 50 million people. Considered essential to the food security of 13 million people and two metropolises - N'Djamena, the capital of Chad, and Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State in Nigeria - in recent decades it has been faced with a number of major challenges of different kinds: environmental (vulnerability of ecosystems to climate change and the pressure maintained on natural resources) ; socio-economic (rapid population growth, religious tensions, poverty, etc.) ; and political (corruption, repeated political crises and geopolitical issues).

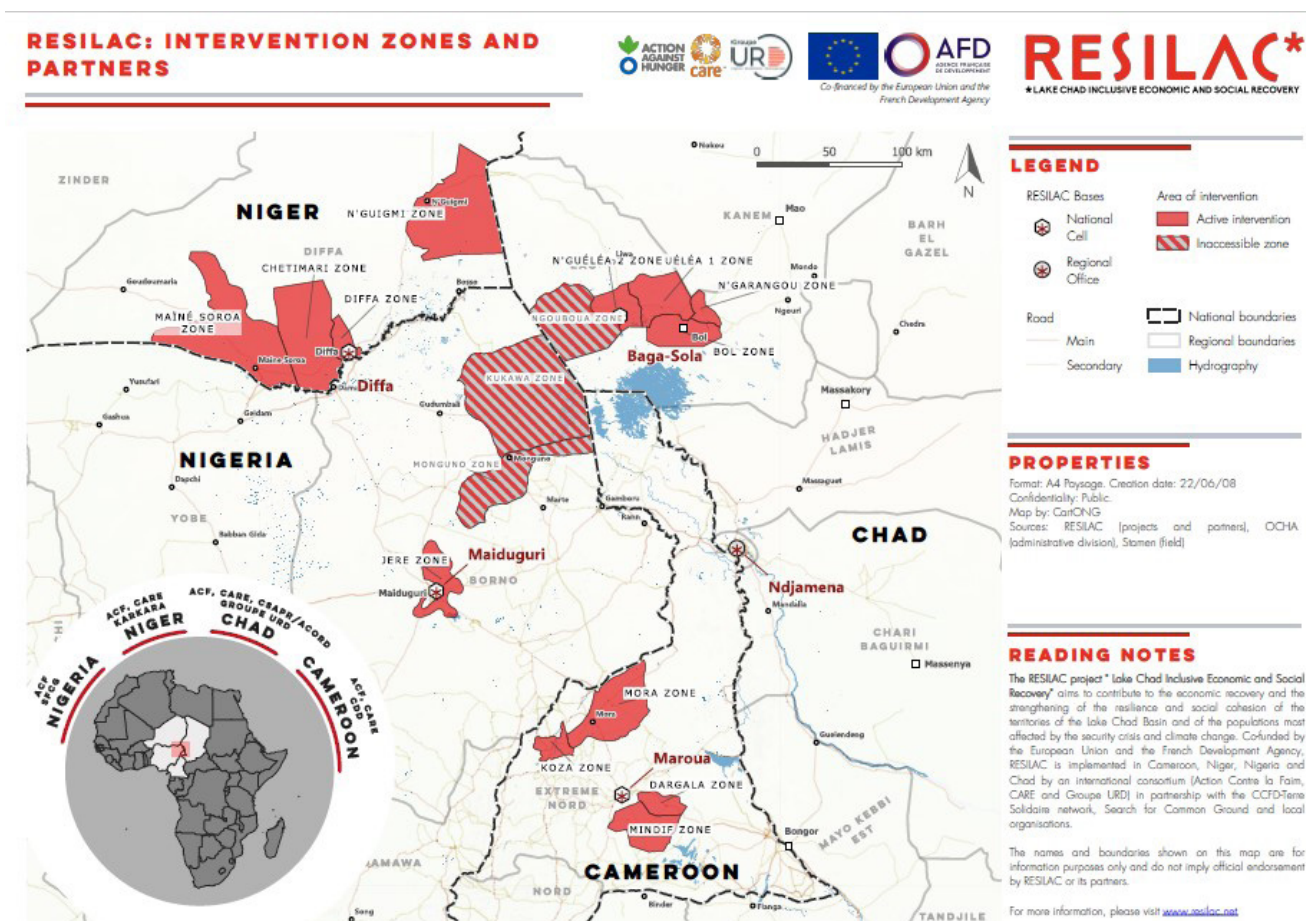
Since 2009, the region has also been subject to an unprecedented security crisis linked to the insurgency of various non-state armed groups (NSAGS). Their attacks, exactions and territorial expansion since 2013-2014 have had a major impact on the regional economy (halting of trade flows) and on the population (murders, kidnappings, mass population displacement, etc.). The NSAGs' terror strategy, and the responses by the national defence and security forces, combined with the chronic challenges of the region, have resulted in the reinforcement of pre-existing conflicts (agro-pastoral conflicts induced by the scarcity of natural resources, inter- and intra-community conflicts, etc.) while promoting new forms of conflict (between displaced and host populations, between different religious and ethnic groups, the creation of citizen-based self defence militias leading to an increase in violence, etc.). In 2017, this region was considered one of the most vulnerable in Africa and subject to one of the worst contemporary humanitarian crises.

PRESENTATION OF THE RESILAC PROJECT

It is in this multidimensional crisis context that the RESILAC project «Inclusive Economic and Social Recovery around Lake Chad» was launched in 2018. Co-funded by the European Union (Emergency Trust Fund for Africa) and the French Development Agency for a duration of 4 years (2018-2021), RESILAC is implemented by an international consortium: Action Contre la Faim - lead partner, CARE and Groupe Urgence Réhabilitation Développement (URD), in partnership with the CCFD - Terre Solidaire network, Search For Common Ground and local organizations in the four countries (Niger, Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad). This project aims to contribute to economic recovery and increased resilience and social cohesion in the territories of the Lake Chad Basin most affected by the security crisis and climate change. The RESILAC project is structured around four operational areas (pillars):

- **Pillar 1:** Strengthening human capital and social cohesion, by improving the social cohesion of the population, particularly through support for territorial development and psychosocial support for victims of armed groups.
- **Pillar 2:** Economic recovery and resilience, creating jobs through community infrastructure rehabilitation and supporting agricultural micro-entrepreneurship and apprenticeships.
- **Pillar 3:** Institutional capacity building, by improving the governance of municipalities for better management of territories and natural resources.
- **Pillar 4:** Knowledge production to contribute to the quality of project activities, and to inform the decisions made by local actors.

OPERATIONAL AREAS



STUDY RATIONALE AND METHODOLOGY

This report aims to share the results and lessons learned during the RESILAC project, after more than four years of implementation. It focuses on the localisation approach adopted by the project, and has three objectives:

1. To share the **results** of the project with the team, as well as with donors, aid actors, the authorities, local actors, etc.;
2. To formalise **lessons learned** (challenges, good practices, innovative approaches, etc.) during the project in order to share them with internal and external stakeholders;
3. To share these **lessons** with donors and the authorities to help with decision-making and changes in practice at a more systemic level.

The methodology of the report is based on:

- A **literature review** (Groupe URD research, evaluations, midlines, internal reports, success stories);
- Twenty **interviews** with project team members in the four countries.

This lesson sharing exercise aims to highlight the main aspects of the project related to localisation as seen by those involved in the project, their partners and the beneficiaries. Based on their experience, it formalises the lesson learned on certain aspects of the project.

Limitations

- The availability of participants to provide information for the lesson-sharing process during the final phase of the project;
- The impossibility of travelling to the operational areas.

1. LOCALISATION: CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

1.1 THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

The current global crisis is forcing us to rethink how international aid is delivered and increase its localisation. Humanitarian needs related to conflict, climate change, epidemics and economic shocks are growing due to increasingly complex and long-lasting crises. By 2022, 274 million people will need humanitarian assistance, the highest number in decades¹. A great deal of thought is being given to how to respond to this changing environment, by carrying out both short-term relief and long-term reconstruction. Since the early 2000s, the international community has emphasised the importance of localisation and made it a priority objective in 2016 with the 'Grand Bargain'². The definition that was established of 'localization' was the transfer of humanitarian action to the local level, with more support and financial means for local and national actors³. In addition to this **operational** dimension, there is a **political** dimension: localisation aims to rebalance power relations between organisations, with strategic and financial decisions taken by local and national partners themselves⁴.

Localisation is therefore not just about the total **disintermediation** of aid, and breaking the ties that exist between local and international actors. They are interdependent on the ground, and their contributions are complementary. Local stakeholders have knowledge of the context and affected populations, while international actors can provide support in advocacy, management, reporting and other technical skills⁵. According to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)⁶, localisation aims to «make humanitarian action as local as possible and as international as necessary».

With the aim of establishing complementarity roles and allowing local actors to play their full part, localisation can be implemented in a holistic way. There are three «**entry points**» to this approach⁷ :

- **the project:** localisation is considered in terms of how roles are distributed between local and international actors and formalised through partnerships. Who is in charge of activities, decisions and financing?

1 - Groupe URD, « La solidarité internationale à l'épreuve des crises », March 2022.

2 - The 'Grand Bargain', launched in May 2016 at the World Humanitarian Summit, is a unique agreement between the world's largest donors and humanitarian agencies who have committed to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian action.

3 - Grand Bargain, Commitment 2 (WHS 2016): «More support and funding for local and national actors», including 25% of the annual budget of the humanitarian system received by these actors as directly as possible by 2020 (<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain-official-website/quest-ce-que-le-grand-bargain>).

4 - Coordination Sud, « La localisation de l'aide : plus de proximité permet-il d'assurer l'autonomie des projets déployés », March 2020.

5 - Ibid.

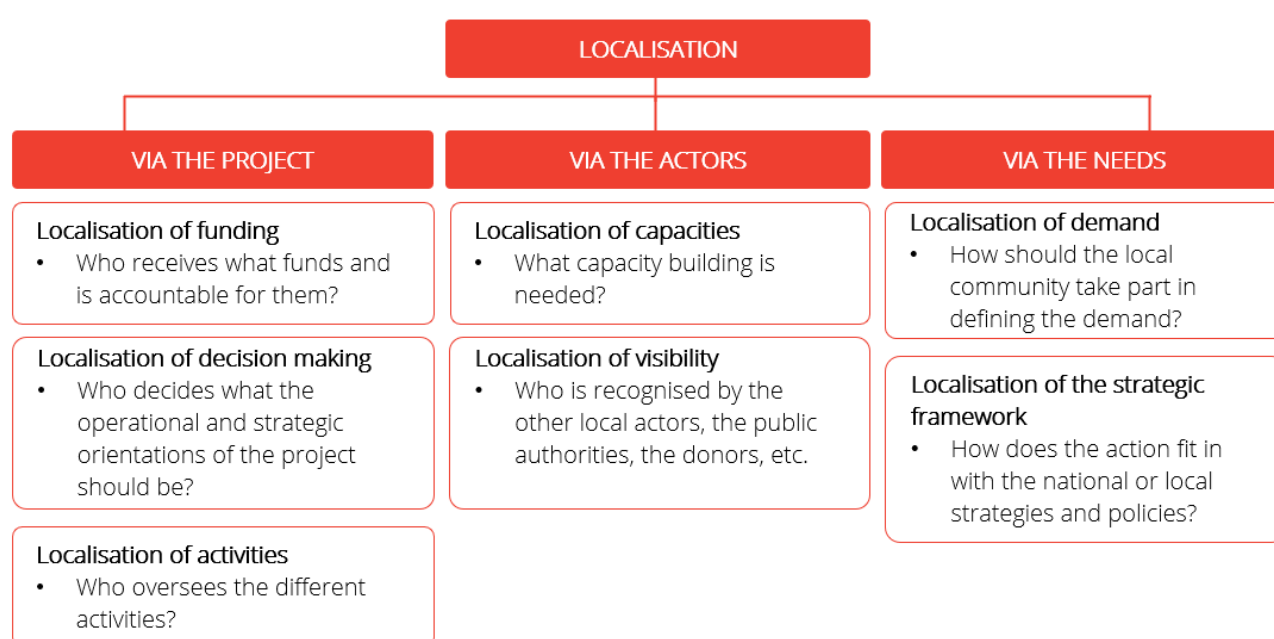
6 - The IASC is an inter-agency body for coordination, policy development and decision-making, involving key UN and other humanitarian partners. It made this statement at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit.

7 - Coordination Sud, « La localisation de l'aide : plus de proximité permet-il d'assurer l'autonomie des projets déployés », March 2020.

• **local actors:** localisation is considered from the point of view of local actors themselves, in order to question their capacity to act, their autonomy and their visibility. This approach to localisation can take the form of capacity building for local organisations.

• **local needs:** localisation is considered in terms of the role of local communities in identifying needs, defining actions and monitoring interventions that target them. This can be done through a participatory approach, which is defined as the involvement of the populations affected by the crisis in one or more aspects of the intervention: diagnosis, design, implementation, and monitoring or evaluation of activities⁸. Above all, it is based on a mindset that considers affected people as the ones most able to understand the crisis situation and the response to be provided. Participation can be direct when it involves members of the affected population in the different phases of the programme, or indirect when it involves structures that represent the affected population.

Figure 1: Implementing localisation⁹



Localisation varies according to the context of intervention and the nature of the project. Some **contexts** are more conducive to localisation thanks to a stable political environment, openness to international aid and strong local civil society organisations. Conversely, areas that are characterised by insecurity, a low level of decentralisation and a limited number of independent and effective civil society organisations (CSOs) are less favourable. The **nature of the intervention** may also influence the approach taken to localisation. Humanitarian projects aim for a rapid and effective response (to save lives or provide essential services) and are more time constrained. The development sector appears to be more conducive to localisation, with aid actors more focused on working with stakeholders on

8 - Groupe URD, *Participation Handbook for humanitarian actors*, 2009.

9 - Infographic based on Coordination Sud's report, «La localisation de l'aide: plus de proximité permet-il d'assurer l'autonomie des projets déployés», March 2020.

the ground and incorporating local resources, as well as aiming to make projects sustainable¹⁰.

1.2 THE CONTEXT IN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN

The Lake Chad Basin is characterised by multi-dimensional and long-lasting crises that have forced the aid sector to revise its operational methods and increase their localisation. Global warming has had multiple impacts in the region (rising temperatures, irregular rainfall, soil erosion, etc.) which have led to the reduction of agricultural land and a decline in its fertility¹¹. Combined with the lack of economic opportunities and limited access to natural resources, this has encouraged the emergence of local conflicts and the spread of extremist groups in the region. Since 2009, the region has been subject to an unprecedented security crisis linked to an insurgency by various NSAGs¹² which has caused mass displacement throughout the Lake Chad Basin. In this context of multi-dimensional and recurrent crises, it is therefore necessary to strengthen the resilience of the affected communities, and the capacities of local actors which are limited in some areas of the region. Indeed, this area is characterised by a geographical and political remoteness from government decision-making bodies, and in some countries the decentralisation process is relatively recent. Local state technical services have limited resources (human, technical and financial), and CSOs and communities are still in the learning phase of their development mission at the local level. Depending on the country, the context is more or less favourable to supporting institutions and civil society organisations. In Niger and Cameroon, communes seem to be the most relevant level for local action and a possible entry point for strengthening local actors. Their place and legitimacy are growing in terms of managing territories. In Chad, on the other hand, the power of the national government and customary structures remains strong and can sometimes limit the emancipation of local actors. Finally, in Nigeria, a federal system is in place: the local governments of the various Local Government Areas (LGAs)¹³ mean that power is decentralised, even though, at the same time, traditional chieftaincies retain their influence¹⁴.

10 - Ibid.

11 - Cairn, *Global warming and migration to the shores of Lake Chad*, 2016.

12 - Groupe URD, «Can a territorial approach help to reinforce resilience in a crisis context?»

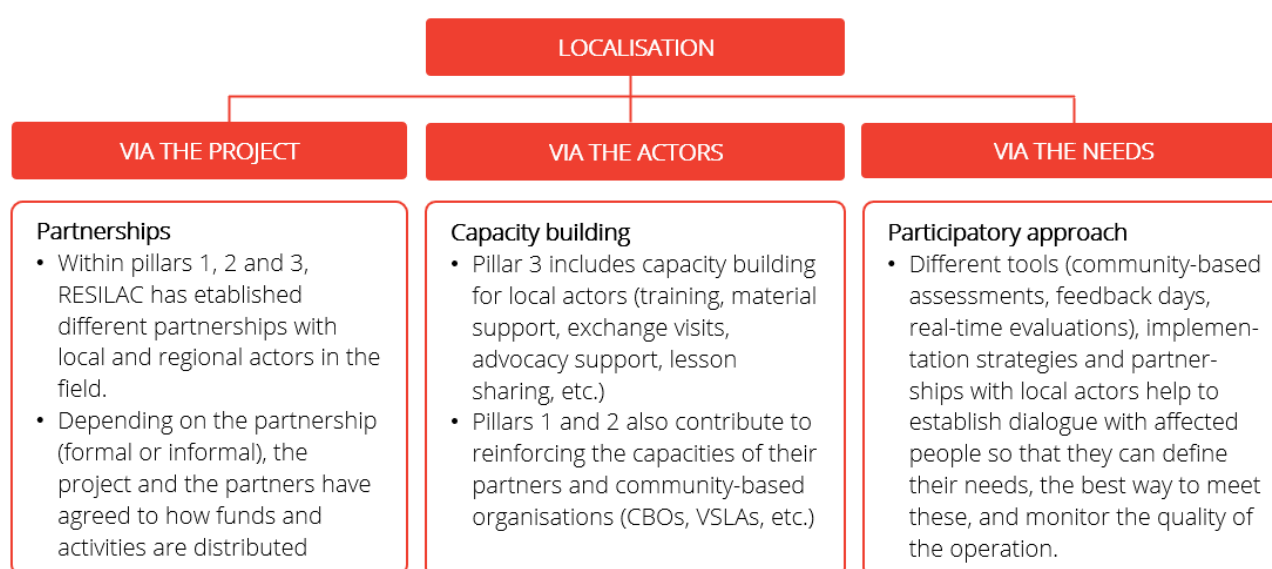
13 - Each LGA is managed by a Local Government Council, whose chairperson is the head of the executive in the area, assisted by elected councillors. Each LGA is further subdivided into 10 to 15 districts.

14 - RESILAC, *Project proposal*, 2016.

2. RESILAC'S APPROACH TO LOCALISATION

In this context of multi-dimensional crises, the general objective of the RESILAC project is to contribute to the economic recovery and strengthen the resilience and social cohesion of the Lake Chad Basin territories. Localisation is seen as a way of adapting the project to the realities of these different territories, to the specific needs of their communities and to the socio-cultural, economic and security contexts that characterise them. RESILAC involves local people and partners in a participatory and inclusive process, while also helping to reinforce their capacities.

Figure 2: The implementation of localisation within the RESILAC project



• Partnerships:

- They are implemented at different **levels**: local, regional and national.
- They can be with several **types of actors**: institutions (ministries, municipal authorities, etc.), universities, national NGOs, civil society organisations (CSOs)¹⁵ or community members (community-based organisations¹⁶ - CBOs, community leaders, religious authorities)¹⁷.
- They can be **formal**, through the signing of a protocol establishing a formal division of activities and funds, or **informal**, in the form of exchanges, information sharing and joint

15 - In RESILAC, this refers to any locally established association that is officially registered with the government.

16 - In RESILAC, this term refers to any group/association (of youth, women, producers, neighbours) based on mutual support and mobilisation for group activities to achieve a common goal, but operating 'informally' and not officially registered with the administrative authorities.

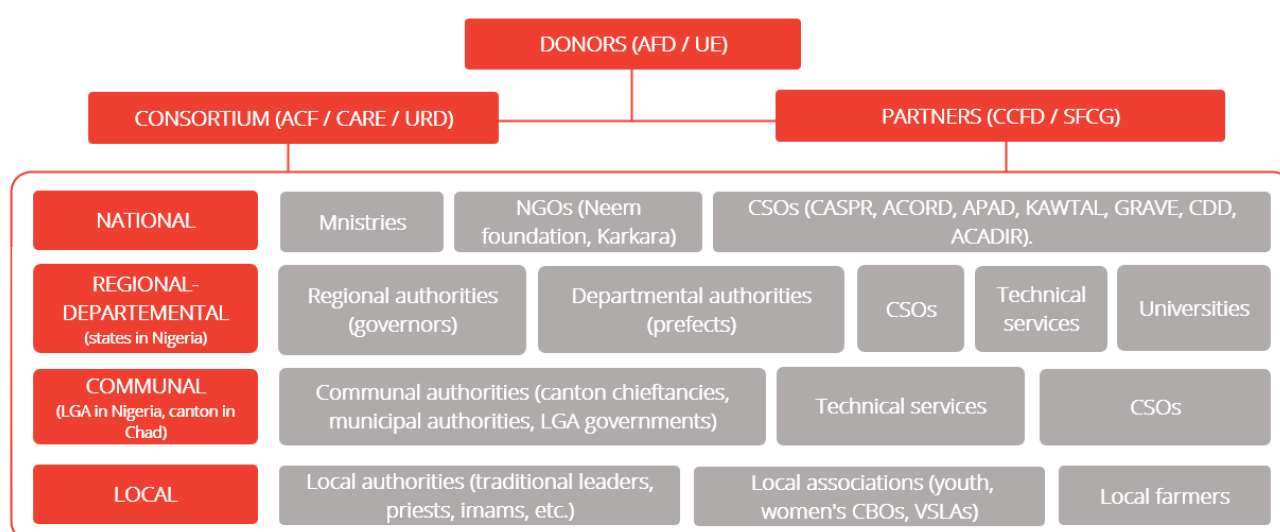
17 - Groupe URD, «RESILAC, iterative evaluation with mini-seminar n°4» (EIMS 4), May 2022.

missions.

- They can **involve partners** in three ways: as an implementing partner for the whole project (formal contract), for one-off support to implementation (formal contract or informal collaboration) or as an information-sharing partner (formal contract or informal collaboration).

Within the RESILAC project, there are at least **fifty formal partnerships** in the four countries (about fifteen implementation partners for the entire project, plus about ten partnerships providing ad hoc support for implementation and information sharing within each country). These formal partnerships are complemented by more informal collaborations in the field, the exact number of which is difficult to assess.

Figure 3: The different types of partners (formal and informal) within the RESILAC project¹⁸



• Capacity building:

- This concerns all the pillars, with Pillar 3 essentially strengthening the organisational capacities of local actors, and Pillars 1 and 2 strengthening technical capacities in the different areas of activity (mental health, social cohesion, economic recovery, agriculture, etc.);

-> **Pillar 3** aims to strengthen local actors in their structure and organisation (reporting, management, advocacy, financing, etc.), mainly CSOs and municipalities (or their equivalent depending on the country), through training, experience sharing (exchange visits, multi-country workshops), material and financial support (organisation of round tables, supplying equipment, etc.), strengthening information systems and cooperation

¹⁸ - This diagram is based on the results of EIMS 4, Groupe URD, «RESILAC, iterative evaluation with mini-seminar n°4», May 2022. It is not exhaustive and aims to illustrate the different types and levels of partnership within the project as a whole.

frameworks. This support from Pillar 3 has also made it possible, to a certain extent, to improve certain more technical capacities, particularly through exchange visits.

-> **Pillars 1 and 2** contribute to strengthening the more technical capacities related to the different areas of activity, most often through training. These are aimed at institutional partners (local state technical services, municipal authorities, community health workers, etc.) but also at more informal structures, such as CBOs or VSLAs, for better planning of activities, account management, networking, etc.

- **Participatory approach:**

- The RESILAC project aims to adopt a participatory approach and involve the affected populations more or less directly in the design, implementation and monitoring of activities. To this end, the teams use several tools (community-based assessments, feedback days, market studies, etc.) and implementation strategies to strengthen their participation in the execution and monitoring of activities.

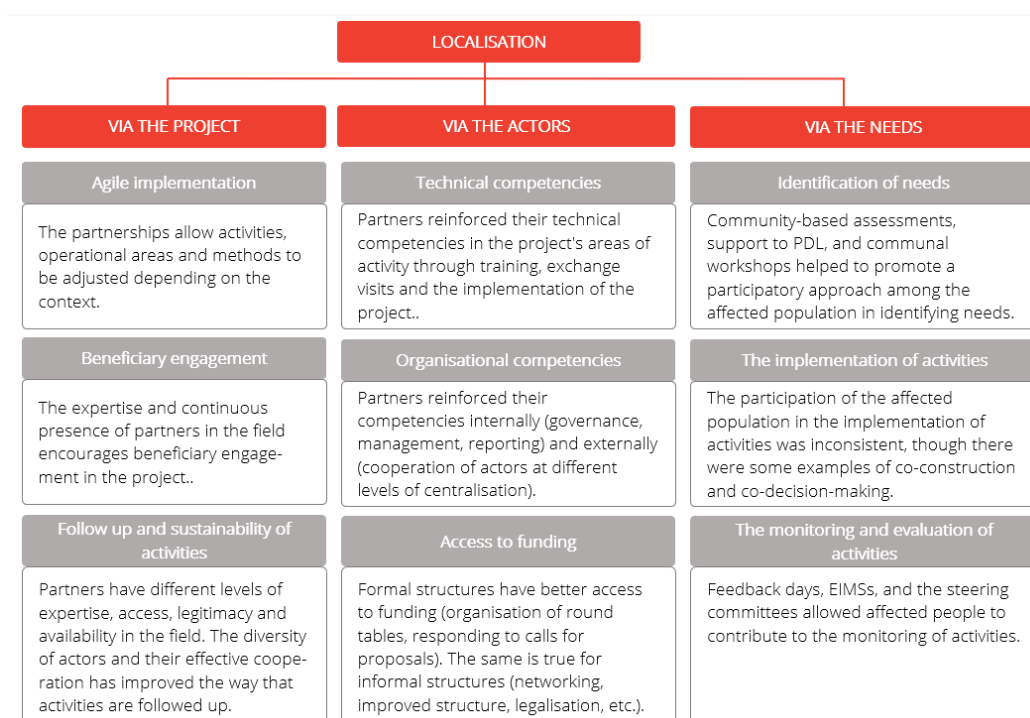


Community event, Cameroon © RESILAC

3. RESULTS

RESILAC's approach is «participatory and inclusive» throughout the project. This is reflected in a willingness to give a central role to local actors (CSOs, CBOs, local authorities, national authorities, local state technical services, etc.) and to the affected population itself. This three-tiered approach to localisation (via the project, actors and needs) has allowed RESILAC's activities to be implemented in a flexible and appropriate manner, while also strengthening the capacities of the implementing partners on the ground and beneficiary engagement.

Figure 4: The results of RESILAC's localisation approach



3.1 LOCALISATION VIA THE PROJECT

The project is the principal means of applying a localisation approach. This concerns the division of roles between local and international partners, the ownership of activities, the question of funding (who receives the funds?) and decision-making at the operational and strategic levels. The RESILAC project has included partnerships with a wide range of actors. This has strengthened the localisation of activities and facilitated their implementation and monitoring.

AGILE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Partnerships with a diversity of local actors on the ground can facilitate the agile implementation of activities. Agility is defined as the ability to adapt and respond effectively to the dynamics and uncertainties of the operational context. With respect to RESILAC, partnerships have played a major role in allowing activities, operational areas and methods to be adjusted to the contexts in each country, and how these evolved. The familiarity and connection of the local stakeholders with the villages, their knowledge of local languages and the social recognition they enjoy make it easier for them to adjust activities to the different socio-economic and cultural contexts of the intervention areas¹⁹. In Cameroon, for example, the CSO partners of Pillar 2 have helped to adjust micro-projects to the different constraints of the operational areas.

When there were attacks on some villages, beneficiaries were encouraged not to engage in livestock or agricultural micro-projects, but rather in masonry or sewing, because if the attacks continue, they might lose their livestock or their fields, whereas sewing or masonry activities can be done anywhere if they have to move.

Local partner, Cameroon

The local ties that certain partners have also allows them to have better access to certain unstable areas. Compared to international actors, they have more contacts on the ground, fewer security constraints imposed by their structures, and less risk of being targeted by attacks²⁰. During the RESILAC project, local partners were able to facilitate access to certain unstable areas, with the agreement of the lead partner (ACF), in order to avoid any 'risk transfer' to the local organisation²¹. This was the case in Nigeria, where the expansion of NSAGs forced the teams to change their **operating areas**.

NIGER: LOCAL PARTNERS AND RISK MANAGEMENT

In Nigeria, increasing threats from NSAGs forced teams to stop implementing activities in Monguno commune, located on the shores of Lake Chad. Not all partners had the same analysis of the risk threshold, but according to the consortium, the attacks targeted all aid actors indiscriminately. The project therefore changed its operating area, focusing its activities in and around Maiduguri, where the security situation was more stable. Local partners had more access to beneficiaries, particularly in Gongulong. This allowed CSO partners to monitor and ensure continuity of activities there, as ACF teams had to remain mainly in Maiduguri, or seek special permission to go beyond the city limits.

19 - Coordination Sud, « La localisation de l'aide : plus de proximité permet-il d'assurer l'autonomie des projets déployés », March 2020.

20 - Groupe URD, «More than the money, localisation in practice», July 2017.

21 - See section 4.2 for more about risk transfer.

At the **operational** level, partners' ties and connection with an area can also help to make a project agile. They have good knowledge of the terrain, local procedures and the key actors for the implementation of different activities. In Chad, for example, cooperation with customary authorities is crucial to facilitate the implementation of labour-intensive public works and access to the land used for these. The customary authorities can help to establish conventions with landowners to ensure access to land to carry out the public works and subsequently. In Niger, the NGO Karkara knows all the service providers and contractors in the region, which allows it to quickly evaluate the various proposals when issuing a call for tenders and to choose the suppliers it considers reliable and efficient.

BENEFICIARY ENGAGEMENT

Local partners are considered to have a certain legitimacy by the beneficiaries who are therefore more likely to get involved in the project. From the community's perspective, the continuous presence of local actors on the ground, and their knowledge of the socio-cultural context, are a guarantee of competence and that the activities are sustainable. They can also help to clarify certain activities with the population, and encourage their support and participation. In terms of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) activities, for example, the traditional authorities help to organise psycho-education sessions. They bring together community leaders and the population to introduce the MHPSS activities, raise awareness of mental disorders and their symptoms, and emphasise the importance of psychosocial support, which is still not widespread in the Lake Chad Basin. Finally, the involvement of the customary authorities makes it possible to intervene if certain beneficiaries disengage from the activities, as was sometimes the case in Niger where some of them no longer attended the Pillar 2 training courses and sold their kits, which they then had to reimburse to the project teams, at the request of the local authorities.

MONITORING AND SUSTAINABILITY OF ACTIVITIES

The continuous presence of local partners in the field strengthens the monitoring of activities and the sustainability of the project. The consortium's RESILAC teams (less than ten people per country) cannot always ensure regular monitoring of activities in all of the intervention villages (about forty in Chad alone, for example). They may also be limited by security constraints and cannot access certain unstable areas, or only a few hours a day. Local state technical services have fewer security constraints, and have the technical expertise and legitimacy to monitor activities. This is in line with their mandate and with the objective of increasing local ownership of the project to ensure its sustainability. However, lack of resources, availability or political will sometimes limits their involvement to this exercise. They are often solicited by all the projects implemented in the operating area and, more often than not, they participate in the monitoring of activities as part of formal missions, the costs of which are entirely covered by the project. The municipal authorities - key actors for the implementation of the project and its sustainability - are

involved to varying degrees depending on the country, playing a significant role in Cameroon²² but doing very little in Chad. CSOs, particularly in Cameroon and Nigeria, facilitate the monitoring of activities. They are available and have ties with communities, which allows them to carry out regular monitoring on the ground, while providing their technical expertise. Finally, the more informal community-based organisations have a strong local base, legitimacy with the beneficiaries, and can support different actors in monitoring activities.

CAMEROON: COOPERATION BY LOCAL ACTORS FOR THE EFFECTIVE MONITORING OF ACTIVITIES IN THE COMMUNE OF KOZA

In Koza, the municipal authority plays an important role in monitoring activities. The communal economic and social development agents (ACDES), as well as the community relays of the Association de jeunes pour le développement du monde rural (AJED-MR, a CSO partner of RESILAC in Cameroon), divide the commune into several zones in order to carry out weekly monitoring of activities in as many villages as possible. The municipal authority has also established a network of youth groups who accompany the monitoring of activities in the field thanks to their presence in all the villages. Finally, the local state technical services sometimes support the monitoring of activities, and can take action to increase their sustainability. For example, they helped beneficiaries by vaccinating all their livestock free of charge to limit the impact of an epidemic.

3.2 LOCALISATION VIA ACTORS

For the impact of localisation within a project to be sustainable, the capacity of local actors needs to be reinforced. This more holistic approach to localisation is increasingly common in NGOs and calls into question not only the role of local stakeholders in the project, but also the role of international structures and the support they can provide. Within the RESILAC project, this is not only a question of technical capacity building, which is useful for the implementation of project activities, but also of more organisational support (management, reporting, advocacy, etc.) in order to enable local partners to gain autonomy and visibility in the long term.

TECHNICAL COMPETENCIES

Local partners were able to strengthen their technical skills on various project-related topics. The RESILAC teams provide technical support to local stakeholders in terms of project implementation through multiple training sessions organised within the different pillars. In the field of mental health, for example, they have trained community-based

²² - See section 3.3 for more on the partnership with municipal authorities in Cameroon.

health workers (CBHWs) in the PM+ protocol²³, which has improved their care of patients through stress management, calming, listening and empathy techniques. This protocol seems to be appreciated by the local authorities who are committed to supporting its sustainable implementation at the community level as they consider it innovative, accessible for local health actors and adapted to the beneficiaries. In relation to institution building, local partners received training on decentralisation and the notion of local governance, in order to better understand the official texts, their role as elected officials and their levers for action. In Chad, in Baga Sola, it was following this training that the local elected officials decided to collect taxes to finance sanitation in a neighbourhood. The RESILAC project also aims to strengthen partners' capacities by getting them to **exchange** experiences and good practices.

NIGERIA: THE RESULTS OF EXCHANGE VISITS

One of the best practices for capacity building in the different areas of activity is exchange visits: 13 have been organised since the beginning of the project. They consist of visits between actors from different communes (CSOs, local state technical departments, CBOs, municipal authorities, etc.) so that they can share their experiences and integrate certain practices into their daily activities on their return. It is a learning method that allows practices to be introduced, understood, assimilated, validated and then applied. In Nigeria, local elected officials from Borno visited Kano and Jigawa States to learn about the local development process and youth employment. Since their visit, the Borno State Social Welfare Policy is being amended to include the promotion of youth employment so that these aspects are covered by state budgets.

Finally, in a cross-cutting manner and through the **implementation of the project**, partners have become familiar with new concepts and implementation approaches, in particular the Nexus approach (humanitarian-peace-development) and its operationalisation through inter-pillar coordination.

ORGANISATIONAL COMPETENCIES

Local partners have also strengthened their internal organisation and cooperation competencies. The RESILAC project offers **organisational** support (governance, management, reporting, etc.) to enable stakeholders to be more effective in implementing their activities, but also more autonomous in the long term. Strengthening these governance and management capacities enables them to strengthen their credibility in the eyes of donors, to access direct funding and, for some, to move out of their role as implementers. For communes and CSOs, Pillar 3 asked each partner to self-assess its

23 - The PM+ Health Protocol (WHO) is a psychosocial intervention protocol based mainly on the cognitive behavioural strategy of problem solving: it aims to improve the state of well-being and functioning of adults exposed to difficult environments. PM+1 training consists of 6 theoretical sessions and 7 supervision sessions.

capacities so that the training could be adapted to their needs. Through the ECOAS (Organisational Capacity Assessment and Structural Support) diagnostic tool, six areas were identified²⁴ to strengthen the structure and governance of the partners concerned. Since the beginning of the project, 19 organisations have been accompanied and assessed using the ECOAS tool: 13 territorial entities (4 communes in Cameroon, 4 communes in Niger, 3 local government areas²⁵ in Nigeria and 2 prefectures in Chad) and 6 CSOs (4 in Nigeria and 2 in Cameroon)²⁶.

RESILAC also helps local actors to improve their **cooperation**. At the informal level, the project has helped CBOs and CVEs to establish a network that allows them to discuss relevant issues, strengthen their advocacy messages, pool their funds and make joint applications for funding. In Chad, in Baga Sola, the project brought together three youth platforms that were competing for leadership among associations in the department of Kaya into a single structure. This is now recognised as the departmental section of the *Coordination des Associations pour le Développement du Lac* (CADELAC). At a more formal level, RESILAC has also helped to establish forums to allow dialogue between the various actors in the commune.

CAMEROON AND NIGERIA: STRENGTHENING COOPERATION BETWEEN LOCAL ACTORS AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

In **Cameroon**, RESILAC has provided technical and financial support for the establishment of a Cadre de Concertation de Développement Économique et Social (CCODES) in several communes to enable the planning and monitoring of development activities implemented in the area. Each quarter, this body brings together all the key actors in the commune²⁷ so that they can discuss the activities carried out in the area, follow them up, improve their complementarity and provide an opportunity for the local population to make recommendations and express their priority needs.

In **Nigeria**, in the Jere LGA, the project supported the establishment of 12 Community Development Committees (CDCs), which are made up of different community leaders who work together to define the priority needs of the area. With the help of external consultants, the members of the CCDs were able to formalise these needs in the form of Local Development Plans (LDPs), which previously did not exist in Jere.

24 - i) Identity and Governance; ii) Human Resource Management; iii) Financial Resource Management; iv) Strategies and Planning; v) External Relations and Partnerships; vi) Organisational Learning.

25 - Local government areas or LGA.

26 - Midline.

27 - The mayor of the commune, the secretary-general, the communal development officer, representatives of the projects present in the commune, sectoral representatives (ministries) of the projects' areas of intervention, CSOs and community representatives (women, young people, people living with a disability, etc.).

ACCESS TO FUNDING

More coordination and capacity building has also enabled local partners to strengthen their funding arrangements. Partners came together to define the needs of their territories and seek the necessary funds to meet them. They also received training in budget management and tendering, which will help them to find ways to become self-financing in the long term.

NIGER: FUNDING THE COMMUNAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN VIA A ROUND TABLE

A round table was organised to raise funds for the Communal Development Plan (CDP) of the urban commune of Nguigmi. The aim was to invite several development actors, raise awareness of the real needs of the population, prioritise the objectives set out in the CDP and raise the funds necessary for its implementation. The total budget for financing the Nguigmi CDP is estimated at CFAF 9,445,779,000 over the period 2019-2023, of which CFAF 1,600,000,000 was raised during the workshop, i.e. 17% of the total budget, not counting other potential commitments.

The project has also improved access to funding for more local and informal structures, such as VSLAs and CBOs, by improving their organisation and establishing ties with actors who can support them financially.

CAMEROON: ACCESS TO FUNDING FOR VSLAS

In Cameroon, the project started with a legalisation phase to have the VSLAs recognised as cooperatives (SCOOPS). This status will allow them to borrow from microfinance institutions (MFIs) and to bid for tenders to increase their ability to fund themselves. The project also provided CBOs with training and material resources, and some subsequently found ways to fund themselves. In Cameroon, the young people at the centre in Dargala rent out the meeting room donated by RESILAC to the community, have established a subscription system that allows people to use the library or watch matches in the theatre, using the money they raise to fund their social cohesion activities.

3.3 LOCALISATION VIA NEEDS

In order to establish an appropriate and sustainable localisation approach, affected people should be given an increased role in defining needs. The RESILAC project has used different methodological tools and implementation strategies to

facilitate this participatory approach. Affected people have been involved in defining priority needs and most appropriate actions to meet these, and then have been involved in implementing and monitoring these actions.

IDENTIFYING NEEDS

Different methodological tools have helped to strengthen the role of beneficiaries and local actors in defining priority needs and the actions required to meet these.

The RESILAC project has adopted this needs-based approach right from the project design stage. When the consortium responded to the EU and AFD call for tender in May 2016, the project plan already included some local partners, who were then invited to a regional workshop in September 2016 to finalise the project proposal. During 2017, several national workshops were set up with these local partners and the main institutional actors in each country to refine the RESILAC approach. At the start of the project, the Pillar 1 teams carried out territorial assessments that analysed the physical, social, economic and political characteristics of the municipalities that had been identified for the project. These assessments were preceded by multi-stakeholder communal workshops that brought together local elected officials, government services and local civil society organisations to draw up a list of the main problems and potential target villages. This approach helped to gain more in-depth understanding of the intervention context and to adapt the activities to the different needs of the territories and their populations. The territorial assessments, and the communal workshops that precede them, are evidence of RESILAC's participatory approach, with the population contributing to the identification of needs and, for certain activities, deciding how best to meet these²⁸.

CAMEROON AND NIGER: THE EFFECTS OF GLOBAL WARMING AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS

In Cameroon and Niger, the community assets rehabilitated via the labour-intensive public works were chosen according to the priorities set out in the local development plans, and through multi-actor workshops at the communal level. This made it possible to take into account the needs of the population, which can differ from one territory to another for the same issue. In Cameroon, in the commune of Mindif, for example, the inhabitants wanted a dam to be built to limit water shortages caused by climate change. In Niger, in the village of Adebou, the inhabitants identified the silting up of the land as the main impact of climate change and prioritised the stabilisation of dunes for labour-intensive public works projects, which led to the planting of 40,000 trees to stabilise 80 hectares of dunes in the village²⁹.

28 - Groupe URD, «Can a territorial approach help to reinforce resilience in a crisis context?». April 2022.

29 - Ibid.

Some of RESILAC's activities were part of strategic frameworks predefined by local actors themselves, and have helped to strengthen these. RESILAC supports local development plans in order to improve and implement them. This support varies according to the country and how much the LDP has progressed. In Cameroon, the Local Development Plans are currently being operationalised and RESILAC teams have been lobbying the communes to include the results of the assessments, for example to include mental health needs. Finally, in Niger, RESILAC is helping to revise local development plans (staff training, equipment and computer materials for town halls) and their funding³⁰.

IMPLEMENTATION

For the implementation of activities, the levels of participation vary, but some examples of co-construction or co-decision-making have been noted. Beyond the involvement of affected people in identifying needs, a needs-based approach also calls into question the term «beneficiary», which is seen as someone who passively receives external aid, to make him or her an «actor» in the response to his or her own needs³¹. This approach has been present in certain RESILAC activities, such as the education-training-integration pathway. Young people participate in labour-intensive public works, through which they receive a monthly income³² in order to build up their savings and then finance the launch of their micro-projects themselves. Beneficiaries are also involved in co-construction for some activities. In relation to local natural resource management (NRM) agreements, local people are first asked to help map natural resources and the tensions they raise. Representatives of the different parties are then invited to take part in writing the agreements, which they then present to the rest of the community in a workshop for validation. Finally, another example of co-construction within the project is the involvement of municipal authorities in the implementation and financing of activities in Cameroon.

CAMEROON: A PARTICIPATORY PARTNERSHIP WITH MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES

The RESILAC project has signed a partnership agreement with municipal authorities for the progressive co-financing of activities: RESILAC's contribution was 100% for the first year, 75% for the second year, and so on, down to 0% for the last year. The ACDES – who facilitate RESILAC's field activities with municipal authorities - are recruited and paid by the co-funding between the municipal authorities and RESILAC. The facilitators are already on the municipal staff registers which allows RESILAC's activities to continue with a person recognised for his or her skills in economic and social development activities³³.

30 - Groupe URD, Report «Can a territorial approach help to reinforce resilience in a crisis context?», April 2022.

31 - Coordination Sud, «The localisation of aid: does more proximity ensure the autonomy of the projects deployed», March 2020.

32 - We refer to a 'monthly income' rather than a 'salary' as the beneficiaries are not registered as employees with the governments of the various countries of intervention, and are therefore not subject to taxes and do not benefit from social security.

33 - Groupe URD, «RESILAC, iterative evaluation with mini-seminar n°4», May 2022.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF ACTIVITIES

Different methodological tools and implementation strategies have strengthened the role of beneficiaries and local actors in the monitoring of activities. The latter feel that they are informed about the implementation of the project and its evolution in a regular and transparent manner. According to the midline report of August 2021, 88% of the people surveyed among the beneficiaries feel sufficiently informed about the activities. According to an evaluation carried out in April 2022, with more than 160 interviews with various local actors working more or less directly with the RESILAC project, the feedback concerning communication within the partnerships was generally very positive.

RESILAC informs us and involves us in everything they do, they are very different from other partners. There are NGOs that come here, we see them like this, we don't know what they do.

Representative of an administrative authority, Niger³⁴

The different local stakeholders also participate in the monitoring of activities by attending the operational steering committees (every 3 to 6 months) and national steering committees (once or twice a year). The project's main partners (CSOs, CBOs, local and institutional authorities) are invited, as well as different representatives of the community (traditional chiefs, religious leaders, youth representatives, women's representatives, etc.).

Although affected people were not directly involved in setting up **the monitoring system**, various methodological tools meant that they were regularly consulted throughout the project³⁵. Despite the establishment of 'classic' feedback and complaint management mechanisms, and supervisory field visits, the Pillar Managers (PMs) were not regularly informed of beneficiaries' experiences and were unable to draw operational lessons to improve implementation. The Pillar 4 teams therefore introduced 'Feedback Days', an internal evaluation tool to consult people every quarter on the quality and impact of activities implemented.

"FEEDBACK DAYS": AN EVALUATION TOOL FOR AGILE PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Each quarter, the Pillar 4 Manager (PR4) conducts a survey of around 40 beneficiaries in each country and immediately presents the results to the operational team to jointly identify any necessary adjustments. Since their launch in January 2020, 21 surveys have been organised in the four countries, and 55 recommendations have been made. 65% of them have already led to adjustments and improvements in practices. For

³⁴ - Ibid.

³⁵ - See section 4 for limits.

example, communication between the project team and stakeholders improved in Niger following awareness-raising on the project's approach and objectives. In Chad, the schedules of labour-intensive public works were adjusted during the agricultural season to fit in with early morning work in the fields³⁶. One year after their launch, feedback days are appreciated not only by the project stakeholders, but also by the teams and external evaluators, who see them as a «new» way of working together with beneficiaries to achieve collective results³⁷.

Pillar 4 of the project also sets up annual EIMSs (iterative evaluations with mini seminars). These allow for more in-depth feedback from beneficiaries and, as they are carried out by Groupe URD evaluators who are not directly involved in the project, they also allow the implementing partners to take a step back and receive additional support from a constructive and independent perspective.

EIMS: AN ITERATIVE EVALUATION METHOD TO STRENGTHEN COLLECTIVE AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING

The EIMSs were carried out by Groupe URD consultants based on literature reviews, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and direct observation. EIMS 4, for example, focused on partnerships within RESILAC and included interviews with over 160 stakeholders who work more or less directly with the project³⁸. These evaluations allow staff to take a step back from project implementation and discuss difficulties in the field. The second EIMS highlighted several of these obstacles: the lack of an operational approach to cross-pillar cooperation, the difficulties for local authorities in appropriating the local conventions set up for NRM, and the lack of access to credit for young entrepreneurs. The preliminary results of the EIMS are then discussed at a seminar (at least half a day). Representatives of the stakeholders consulted take part to complement the information collected in the field and jointly identify recommendations. EIMSs thus complement existing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and help to develop collective learning. The outputs include the key points discussed with stakeholders in the form of written reports which are shared with staff.

36 - RESILAC, «RESILAC Listening: Capitalisation and learning, feedback days», 2021.

37 - As there was interest in this activity among practitioners, a report was produced to document the experience (<https://www.resilac.net/apprentissage>).

38 - Groupe URD, «RESILAC, iterative evaluation with mini-seminar n°4», May 2022.



Farmer Field School, Cameroon © RESILAC

4. LESSONS LEARNED

Implementing localisation in a multi-country, multi-partner project involves numerous challenges on the ground. Within RESILAC, localisation is based on partnerships with local actors, capacity building, and the involvement of affected communities. However, operational and political constraints can sometimes limit the degree of localisation and its long-term impact.

4.1 THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LOCALISATION

The RESILAC project involves a number of different actors operating in multiple, evolving contexts. This brings operational challenges on the ground that make the implementation of a participatory, partnership-based approach long and complex.

CONSTRAINTS AT THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL

Applying a localisation approach to the RESILAC project is complex as it is implemented in the unstable Lake Chad Basin region, and in 4 countries with different operational contexts. In the context of a **multi-country** project, it is difficult to establish a general partnership strategy because the localisation approach needs to be adapted to each context, particularly the political context, in each operational area. Each country has its own specific characteristics in terms of its national administrative structure (e.g. Nigeria is a federal state) and its degree of decentralisation (more developed in Cameroon), as well as the level of citizen participation and the maturity of civil society organisations³⁹. In Cameroon, for example, there was a higher degree of localisation due to partnerships with municipal authorities and the introduction of progressive co-financing of RESILAC activities⁴⁰. In other countries, such as Chad and Nigeria, funding and decision-making power are concentrated at the central and regional levels, while the implementation of project activities is carried out by partners at the local level. With regard to a participatory approach, tools such as Feedback Days and EIMSs also need to be adapted to the different operational contexts. For Feedback Days, for example, the approach adopted for data collection can vary from one country to another. In Niger, the process begins with a village assembly and the public formation of single-sex focus groups. In Nigeria and Chad, where there are still latent inter-community tensions, sensitive issues are discussed in individual interviews to ensure that answers are transparent and confidential⁴¹.

Furthermore, the **volatility** of the context also raises the issue of «risk transfer». Compared to international actors, staff from local partners often have better access conditions,

39 - Groupe URD, «RESILAC, iterative evaluation with mini-seminar n°4», May 2022.

40 - See Section 3.3

41 - RESILAC, «RESILAC Listening: Capitalisation and Learning», 2021.

fewer security constraints imposed by their organisations, and are less likely to be targeted by attacks (although this does of course vary depending on the context). However, local partners are also limited by their lack of logistical resources (vehicles, means of communication, physical protection) and are less well prepared in terms of security procedures⁴². Within the RESILAC project, these decisions are made by the lead organisation, who adapt the involvement of local actors depending on the different security contexts, as was the case in Nigeria. In Monguno, the cessation of activities concerned local and international actors, all of whom were targeted by the NSAGs, who essentially targeted anyone involved in humanitarian aid. In Maiduguri, the risk was lower and ACF was able to apply more flexible security rules for local partners whose teams were more familiar with the context, less targeted by attacks and more involved with local communities. Regarding participation, security and accessibility criteria influenced the selection of operational areas chosen to conduct EIMs, Feedback Days and territorial assessments.

Implementing localisation in a multi-partner project brings many challenges in the field, at the logistical, administrative, financial and communication levels. A partnership is much more than a contractual relationship: it is based on a relationship of trust and a desire to work together to achieve a common goal. Regular and transparent **communication** is therefore crucial to avoid any misunderstanding and/or frustration that could hamper the implementation of the project⁴³. The majority of partners are very satisfied with the efforts of the RESILAC project to transmit information in a fluid and transparent manner, but a few points of vigilance have been noted. As soon as the partnerships were set up, the local actors were chosen through different selection processes: after the territorial assessments, following an evaluation of their capacities, in response to a call for tenders, etc. Although these processes are generally considered to be transparent and consensual by all the actors, they still need to be clarified for those who feel they have been wronged or excluded from the project⁴⁴. Clarification of the contractual clauses is also useful between the various institutional actors (public or semi-public). With the latter, partnerships are established at the regional level between the consortium members and local actors, without the contract clauses being communicated to the communal or departmental level, which is responsible for implementing the activities. Some local partners are also located in remote or unstable operational areas, which are not always accessible by RESILAC teams or covered by a stable internet or telephone connection. Finally, the complexity of the project itself can also hamper the fluidity of exchanges. There are many partners and some, busy with the implementation of a wide range of activities, communicate little or too late. As a result, various partners (particularly sector-based partners and national CSOs) consider that they are informed too late for activities that have been planned in advance, and ask for requests to be made earlier⁴⁵.

The multiplicity of partners also poses challenges at the administrative level, particularly regarding the signing and renewal of **contracts**, which can sometimes delay implemen-

42 - Groupe URD, «More than the money, localisation in practice», July 2017.

43 - Groupe URD, «Participation Handbook for Humanitarian Field Workers», 2009.

44 - Groupe URD, «RESILAC, iterative evaluation with mini-seminar n°4», May 2022.

45 - Ibid.

tation. Furthermore, at the beginning of the project, ACF and CARE had not harmonised their contractual approaches, which meant that local actors had to formalise their partnerships with each NGO. Groupe URD, which does not have offices in the operational countries, was unable to contract local partners to implement pillar 4, or incur expenses in the field, without going through ACF or CARE. Negotiating and signing the contract can also be time-consuming, which can put pressure on staff who also have to ensure that they are keeping up with the project. The same is true of contract renewal, which can take up to four or even six months, as the partnership has to be assessed with the various project actors in relation to contractual commitments and the partner's capacities (progress made on activities, finances, etc.).

The multiplicity of partnerships also poses a challenge in relation to the **transfer of funds**, sometimes slowing down the implementation of activities. Donor compliance requirements impose long and complex administrative procedures on consortium members to transfer funds. Local partners therefore have to plan their activities well in advance of implementation in order to receive funding on time, which is not always easy in a changing context. On the other hand, when local partners work with their own funding, they are less constrained by these administrative procedures, but it may take them some time to build up the necessary funds to implement activities. In Cameroon, for example, in some communes, the municipal authorities were not always able to fund the project activities as planned because they had not received the funds promised by the state in time, or had not managed to raise sufficient taxes.

INTERNAL ORGANISATION

To limit the impact of these operational constraints, RESILAC has adapted its working methods to the instability of the context and the variety of partners. The consortium members have invested in communication, based not only on data feedback tools but also on the planning of regular exchanges between all project stakeholders through face-to-face meetings at several levels⁴⁶. In Cameroon, a meeting of field officers is organised each month within each pillar, and information is then passed on to the inter-pillar meeting with the various pillar managers and partner project leaders, who then communicate with the national coordinator at the monthly coordination meeting. In addition, there are the operational steering committees which take place every six months (in the presence of local partners and state representatives at the community level) and the annual national steering committee (in the presence of national donors and state representatives).

To facilitate communication within partnerships, the project promoted both **formal and informal** relationships⁴⁷. With certain local actors, often from institutions, RESILAC favoured formal partnerships to ensure official and transparent collaboration. With others (some CSOs, CBOs, customary authorities), RESILAC chose informal partnerships, based

⁴⁶ - Ibid.

⁴⁷ - Ibid. For more details on communication within partnerships.

on a verbal agreement, thus avoiding slow administrative procedures and establishing a more direct link with partners. However, these informal agreements are limited and cannot be applied to all models or types of partnerships. They are mainly used for collaborations that aim to share information, because when a project delegates the implementation of an activity, cooperation needs to be formalised. Furthermore, in some cases, the lack of formality in the modes of communication used (WhatsApp or calls) can compromise the sustainable functioning of the partnership. It means that there is no follow up or written trace of important decisions, which can lead to confusion between the partners, create tensions and delay the implementation of activities.

Finally, **human relations** within the teams also can help to adapt to the operational constraints imposed by a volatile context. In addition to professional competencies, people's interpersonal skills are important. They need patience to deal with the lengthy procedures, but they also need to be committed and attentive to each person's problems. They need to be open and honest enough to discuss what needs to be improved, adapt the implementation accordingly and facilitate decision-making⁴⁸.

4.2 THE DEGREE OF LOCALISATION

The feedback from the partners on their collaboration within the RESILAC project is generally very positive⁴⁹. However, the constraints at the operational level imposed by the complexity of the project and its operational context may have favoured a participatory approach that was more consultative than interactive, and a variable degree of involvement of the partners during the project.

PARTICIPATION

The complexity of the project and the operational context sometimes limited the participation of affected people, making it more consultative than interactive. The **territorial assessments** made it possible to consult and inform the populations about the project so that they were able to define the priority needs of the different territories. However, this was a long and complex process, slowed down by security constraints and limited access to certain communities, and often finalised after the activities had been launched. Although the territorial assessments helped to improve knowledge of the operational context, they only partially influenced the implementation of the project, which was mainly designed upstream by the donors, the consortium members and certain local partners. Co-construction or co-decision-making is not relevant and realistic for all RESILAC activities. However, in some areas, it could help to adapt the response more to territorial dynamics and make it more sustainable. In the mental health sector, for example, local actors (imams, marabouts, healers) were involved in raising aware-

48 - Groupe URD, « La solidarité internationale à l'épreuve des crises », March 2022.

49 - See Section 3.3.

ness and supporting the implementation of project activities. Actors of this kind could help to establish mental healthcare that was more adapted to the needs of the patient, using modern and traditional practices that are both effective and legitimate in the eyes of the population, which would vary from one country to another.

As regards the monitoring of activities, **Feedback Days and EIMs** provide project teams with information from beneficiaries and partners, which are translated into a series of operational recommendations. In order for these recommendations to have an impact on implementation, they need to be taken into account by staff from the different pillars, which is more likely when they have participated in their development. This depends on staff being available to participate in the various learning processes, which is not always easy in emergency contexts, or when the feedback on their activities is negative.

BALANCE AND TRANSPARENCY IN PARTNERSHIPS

The level of involvement of partners also varied at different stages of the project: while they felt they were involved in identifying needs, their role in the subsequent implementation was limited due to the way the partnership evolved. The partners were mainly asked to report to the donors, without being able to speak to them directly, as most of them were based in Europe or in capital cities with little travel to the field. Local partners therefore had little opportunity to establish a relationship of trust with donors. This is necessary to counter the image that donors have of local structures (lack of fund management capacity, of certified accounts, of governance, etc.), which limits their direct funding and their ability to cover operating costs⁵⁰. Lack of dialogue with donors also prevents local actors from contributing to the strategic orientations of the project and taking part in the planning of activities.

The demand to have a greater role in strategic decisions is particularly strong among some local actors who have implemented the project **autonomously and efficiently**. Some were able to maintain activities despite the health and security constraints imposed on international actors. Others feel that they have strengthened their competencies during the implementation of the project, and could now be contracted directly by the donor if there was a RESILAC II. In Niger, for example, the NGO Karkara managed a budget of CFA 800 million, without any delays in the implementation of activities or inconsistencies during audits. Similarly, the Neem Foundation in Nigeria - a national NGO with strong local expertise in mental health - was not contracted directly by the donor or consortium members, but by SFCG, the implementing partner in Nigeria for Pillar 1. This raises the question of cascading partnerships, and the complex set-up of the RESILAC project. Are all the different levels necessary?⁵¹ In the case of the Neem Foundation, for example, the activities were supervised by SFCG teams, even though the latter are more specialised in social cohesion than in psychosocial support.

⁵⁰ - Only those who have a direct contract with donors have part of their operating costs covered. Coordination Sud, «La localisation de l'aide : plus de proximité permet-il d'assurer l'autonomie des projets déployés», mars 2020.

⁵¹ - Groupe URD, «La solidarité internationale à l'épreuve des crises», March 2022.

Lack of transparency about the clauses and motivations of the partnership can also hinder its proper functioning, as has been observed with regard to per diems and their amounts. For some actors, this is the primary motivation. They agree in principle to collaborate, but then try to renegotiate the amount of the per diems when the activities are launched, thus running the risk of delaying the project. Clarifying this point upstream of the activities helps to avoid delays, while taking care not to monetise all activities by local actors, as some are already part of their mandate. Some team members also criticise the **politicisation** of partnerships in relation to the experts appointed by state actors to support the project. Sometimes, these experts are chosen on the basis of personal relations rather than expertise in the relevant field.

Finally, some clauses are not always respected by local partners, due to a lack of transparency or political will, or because of the **limited means** at their disposal. This sometimes explains the lack of expertise of some local state technical services who have not been able to receive training within the ministries, or the lack of material support they give to the RESILAC project. In Nigeria, for example, in the Jere LGA, the project provided 58 processing machines under Pillar 2. The local authorities could not mobilise the resources needed to provide shelters to install these machines, despite having made a commitment to do so. As a result, RESILAC was forced to keep the equipment in a warehouse and provide the materials needed to build the shelters (roofing sheets, wood, nails, cement, etc.).

4.3 LOCALISATION IN THE LONG TERM

The localisation efforts during the RESILAC project help to promote ownership of the project by affected people. However, the lack of material and financial support from local actors, as well as the lack of follow-up of capacity building activities and partnerships, may limit the sustainability of the localisation approach and its achievements.

MATERIAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The sustainability of capacity building and partnerships can be limited by the partners' lack of human and financial resources. Local structures have benefited from technical and organisational capacity building, but they do not all have the tools needed to maintain these skills in the long term (printers, offices, computers, etc.). Other local structures mentioned their lack of means of transport. This makes it difficult to maintain the relationships created during the RESILAC project via its different cooperation groups. With regard to local state technical services, for example, these groups are most often located in different areas of the territory, and their representatives ask for *per diems* and means of transport to be able to attend the meetings. This feedback from partners raises the question of the technical and financial support that RESILAC could increase to strengthen capacities in the long term. However, the lack of monitoring of

the equipment that has already been distributed (computers or other technical devices) prevents us from knowing the impact that they have had within the various bodies. Indeed, the equipment is not always adapted to the different skills of local teams or to the areas of intervention (power cuts, no internet coverage, etc.). Similarly, the construction or rehabilitation of certain buildings is only relevant if the local populations have the capacity and the will to use them. In Chad, for example, a restored site made it possible to host literacy training courses. However, the RESILAC team realised that the premises were no longer being used by the local population due to a lack of funds to pay literacy facilitators for the training courses.

MONITORING OF THE LOCALISATION APPROACH

The sustainability of capacity building and partnerships may also be limited by the lack of close monitoring of these activities. Concerning the **exchange visits**, there was often a low level of implementation of lessons learned: only 5 good practices were replicated following 48 exchange visits. This can be explained in part by the lack of monitoring and support for the replication of lessons learned, which is necessary to raise awareness of the new practice and explain its value, but also to help implement it and acquire new skills to do so.

Similarly, the **roundtables** also need to be followed up after the meeting to ensure that the participants respect their commitments. In Niger, the roundtable in Nguigmi produced a roadmap and a set of commitments that were to be presented to the technical partners who were not present at the meeting. However, no follow-up committee was set up, and no one took responsibility for passing on information to those absent who could have provided additional funds.

Finally, the lack of close monitoring may also have limited the sustainability and smooth functioning of partnerships within the RESILAC project. It is important to monitor the partnerships in order to remain attentive to local actors' needs, to check their degree of involvement and to adapt collaboration to the way partners' roles evolve in the project. Monitoring of the various contracts also ensures that the partnerships work well over time despite the mobility of the teams within the RESILAC project. The project has a partnership monitoring file (with the type of partners, activities, contract and its duration), but it is not kept up to date by staff because they have not appropriated the tool. In addition, the small number of staff in Pillar 3 (one person per country) makes it difficult to monitor all the partnerships on a regular basis, not to mention those that are based on informal agreements, with no written record⁵².

52 - Groupe URD, «La solidarité internationale à l'épreuve des crises», March 2022.



Agricultural value chain, Niger © RESILAC

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 STRATEGY

1. Continue to implement the localisation approach on the ground via several «entry points»:

- Localisation via the **project, actors and needs**, allows for the flexible and continuous implementation of activities, better monitoring of the project and more commitment from the beneficiaries⁵³. This holistic approach also helps to strengthen the technical and organisational skills of local partners and increase both the sustainability of the project's achievements and the resilience of the territories involved⁵⁴.
- Formalise and share with the teams **the global approach to localisation** implemented within the RESILAC project.

2. Strengthen localisation by ensuring that partnerships with local actors are properly balanced:

- Localisation is an operational but also a political approach that aims to **rebalance power** between local, national and international actors.
- If there is a RESILAC II, increase **the involvement of certain partners in the strategy and planning of activities**, and give them more financial independence in order to strengthen their autonomy in the long term.

3. Strengthen the participatory approach:

- The participatory approach is linked to a set of reflections on the position of beneficiaries as the main «actors» of operations. It is not only a question of integrating their feedback about the activities either before or during their implementation, but of adopting a truly participatory approach, by involving them in a **process of co-decision-making and co-construction** on certain project activities.
- If there is a RESILAC II, target the activities for which **co-decision-making and co-construction** would be the most relevant, before involving the actors concerned. This approach can already be seen within pillar 1.2 where the teams are discussing with traditional mental health actors to improve the treatment provided by the project.

53 - Coordination Sud, « La localisation de l'aide : plus de proximité permet-il d'assurer l'autonomie des projets déployés », mars 2020.

54 - Ibid.

- Strengthen the **sharing of results and recommendations** from the different participatory tools (Feedback days, EIMS, community assessments) with project staff, but also with beneficiaries and community members.

5.2 IMPLEMENTATION

1. Ensure that there is good communication between all project partners. A multi-partner project implies that there are a number of actors of different kinds (state actors, members of civil society, academics, national NGOs, community members) who are involved at several levels (village, commune, region, nation).

- Whatever tools are used to share data, face-to-face **meetings** are necessary and more effective in terms of information sharing and collective decision-making.
- Informal exchanges help to go more quickly and to get closer to the partner, but certain **exchanges need to be formalised** to facilitate the coordination and monitoring of the partnership, in particular between the official level (which signs agreements) and the operational level (which implements them), and within the project team⁵⁵.
- Good communication between all the partners also depends on the **interpersonal skills** of team members and good interpersonal relations based on listening, patience and commitment to the project⁵⁶.

2. Make partnerships more balanced and involve local actors throughout the project:

- Develop new methods of communication so that local partners are more involved at the **strategic level**. Integrating some of them into national steering committees would allow them to dialogue directly with donors present at the national level and with institutional actors, and would help them increase their visibility and be more involved in the planning of activities⁵⁷.
- Strengthen **partnerships** with local and national authorities with more binding clauses on both sides.

55 - Groupe URD, «RESILAC, iterative evaluation with mini-seminar n°4», May 2022.

56 - Groupe URD, «Crisis-proofing international solidarity», March 2022.

57 - Ibid.

3. Monitor partnerships for effective, sustained collaboration:

- Strengthen the **partnership management and monitoring system**, by building on and updating the existing partnership monitoring file⁵⁸.
- To carry out this monitoring, increase the **resources and staffing** of Pillar 3, which currently consists of only one Pillar Manager per country, without a support team, and clearly designate the persons responsible for monitoring partnerships.
- To facilitate the monitoring of partnerships, their evaluation and their renewal, develop a single **evaluation tool to be used** by the 3 NGO members of the consortium and which is adapted to the different partners involved in the project.

4. Strengthen the sustainability of capacity building achievements:

- Strengthen the **local monitoring** of activities, with the setting up of monitoring committees before the organisation of round tables, for example, to ensure that the commitments made during the meeting are respected. Similarly, for exchange visits, support should be given to the beneficiaries of the visit to help them implement good practices, even if this means reducing the number of visits to be organised.
- Establish a **strategy for the provision of material aid**:
 - by continuing to provide ad hoc support (desks, printers, means of transport, etc.) while strengthening the monitoring of these distributed goods.
 - by continuing to provide more structural support (construction of schools, offices, etc.) based on discussions with local actors about an economic model that ensures the sustainability of these structures, and thanks to increased cooperation with external actors who already support these structures.
- Strengthen **support to local actors** to carry out advocacy actions to raise funds to pay for material aid.

58 - Ibid.

5.3 ADVOCACY

1. Continue to stress to donors the importance of a holistic approach to localisation:

- Localisation approaches often focus on the **project**, and the local implementation of activities without investing enough in capacity building for their partners, which is nevertheless necessary for the effectiveness, sustainability and impact of activities.
- However, an **approach based solely on the actors** (strengthening their capacities and autonomy) which does not seek, in the long term, to achieve a reversal of roles in the projects carried out (the localisation of funding and project steering) runs the risk of eternally maintaining a top-down model of partnership.
- Finally, prioritising a stakeholder approach while ignoring **affected people** and the participatory approach runs the risk of not being adapted to local realities and accepted by communities⁵⁹.

2. Emphasise to donors the time, and the human and financial resources this requires, as well as the flexibility needed in terms of transferring funds:

- Clarify the RESILAC project's **localisation approach** and the operational constraints it may face, and thus the time, and the human and financial resources that it requires.
- Encourage donors to be more **flexible** in their administrative procedures for transferring funds to local partners, particularly with regard to the selection and evaluation of partners (their structure, transparency, etc.). Some partners, such as local authorities, do not always accept to be evaluated, and others do not always meet the criteria established by donors in terms of fiduciary risks, transparency, governance, etc., which are sometimes too strict.

3. Support local partners in lobbying donors for more direct funding and more balanced partnerships:

- Share the results of RESILAC partnerships, and demonstrate **how autonomous and effective certain local actors are**, so that they can be integrated into strategic discussions and directly contracted by the donor.

⁵⁹ - Coordination Sud, « La localisation de l'aide : plus de proximité permet-il d'assurer l'autonomie des projets déployés », March 2020.



Market gardening site in Adebour, Niger © RESILAC

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