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NBCA CLUSA
The National Cooperative Business Association • CLUSA International

RESILIENCE AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
IN THE SAHEL -
ENHANCED RESILIENCE (REGIS-ER)

COMMUNITY-LED DEVELOPMENT

FOR RESILIENCE AND
SELF-RELIANCE



ABOUT NCBA CLUSA

NCBA CLUSA works to build a better world and a more inclusive economy that empowers people to contribute to shared prosperity and well-being for themselves and future generations. By leveraging the values of the cooperative movement (ownership, control and benefit), NCBA CLUSA seeks to engage, partner with and empower people from all walks of life—particularly those left behind by a shifting economy and facing the greatest economic and societal barriers. NCBA CLUSA achieves this vision through collaborative partnerships in development, advocacy, public awareness and thought leadership.

With more than 100 years of experience in the United States, NCBA CLUSA has supported communities empowering themselves in over 85 countries around the world since 1953. Areas of

support include building resilient communities, promoting economic opportunities and strengthening cooperative and producer groups.

NCBA CLUSA'S APPROACH TO RESILIENCE

Resilience is the ability of people, households, communities, countries, and systems to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates sustainable, inclusive growth. Resilience is not an outcome, but an essential set of capacities that enables outcomes to be achieved and maintained in the face of compound and complex risks. NCBA CLUSA builds more resilient communities so vulnerable people can face uncertainty with confidence. It helps people acquire the assets, knowledge and connections to anticipate and bounce back from shocks and stresses, without compromising future generations.

The Resilience and Economic Growth in the Sahel – Enhanced Resilience (REGIS-ER) is a seven-year activity (2013-21) of the RISE portfolio, supported by USAID. It aimed to increase the resilience of chronically vulnerable populations in marginal agro-pastoral areas in Burkina Faso and Niger by strengthening livelihoods, governance and the health and nutritional status of communities. From November 2013 to November 2018, REGIS-ER worked in six regions, 25 municipalities, reaching 570 villages across the RISE zone of intervention in Burkina Faso and Niger. From October 2019, the project entered cost-extension phase, concentrating on eight municipalities in three regions of Burkina Faso and Niger.

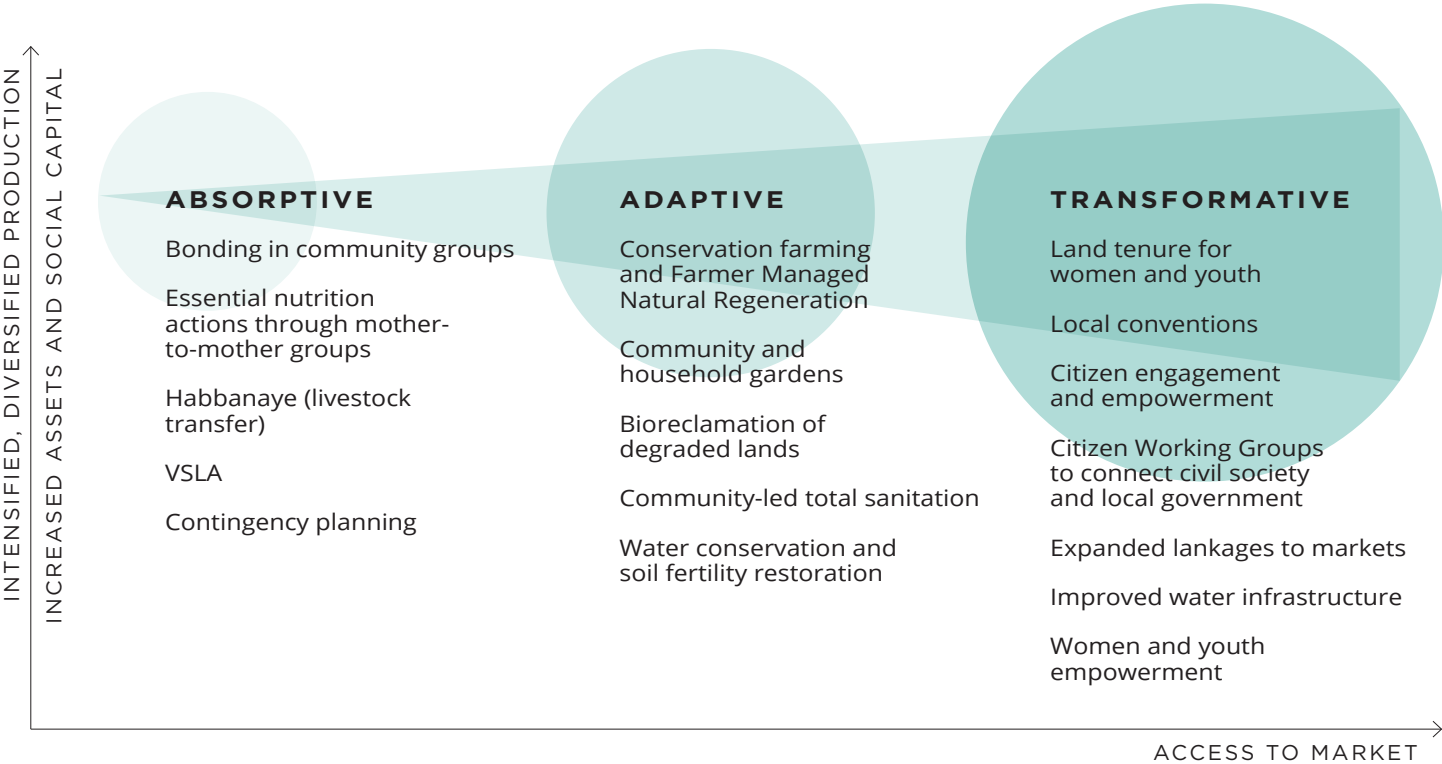
NCBA CLUSA considers social capital to be the primary asset for resilience and strengthens it in its three forms: (1) bonding within households and between individuals and the community, (2) bridging connections between communities and groups, and (3) linking community or social networks to public institutions, civil society organizations or other development initiatives in the area.¹ These establish a sense of belonging (bonding and bridging), purpose, and trust in government (linking), and strengthen the social fabric that people can draw on in time of need. Coupled with economic empowerment, particularly for women and youth, this is transformative.

¹ Lisa Woodson, Tim Frankenberger, et al. The Effects of Social Capital on Resilience Capacity: Evidence from Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Niger and Burkina Faso. ILRI, TANGO International, 2016.

REGIS-ER ACTIVITIES: A PATH TO RESILIENCE

REGIS-ER dramatically contributed to enhanced resilience of chronically vulnerable populations in marginal agricultural and agro-pastoral areas in Burkina Faso and Niger. NCBA CLUSA successfully demonstrated, scaled-up and disseminated resilience activities centered on conservation farming, health and nutrition, water, sanitation, and

hygiene, local governance, and shock responsiveness for the benefit of nearly 320,000 families in Burkina Faso and Niger. The project’s activities were designed to build absorptive, adaptive and transformative resilience capacities to enable vulnerable households and communities to mitigate, respond to and recover from shocks and stresses.



PROJECT RESULTS AT A GLANCE

LIVELIHOODS RESULTS <p>92% of project households reported increased income from off-farm economic activities.</p> <p>5,747 full-time equivalent jobs created.</p> <p>181,976 farmers applied improved technologies or management practices.</p> <p>92,246 hectares under improved management practices.</p>	GOVERNANCE RESULTS <p>19 local conventions drafted.</p> <p>1,875,000 hectares directly under natural resource management plans.</p> <p>659 hectares of farmland registered for women.</p> <p>Up to 75% reduction in conflicts over access to natural resources such as pastures or farmland.</p> <p>12 commune resilience plans drafted and adopted.</p>	HEALTH AND NUTRITION RESULTS <p>123,350 people have access to an improved water source.</p> <p>137 villages certified Open-Defecation Free.</p> <p>334,747 people trained in child health and nutrition.</p> <p>150,290 children under 5 reached by nutrition programming.</p> <p>50 safe spaces established reaching 848 adolescent girls.</p>
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REGIS-ER TIMELINE: ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT IN PRACTICE

START-UP, PILOTING AND TRUST-BUILDING: NOVEMBER 2013 – JANUARY 2016

At its inception, REGIS-ER covered the regions of Centre-Nord, Nord, Est and Sahel regions in Burkina Faso; and Maradi, Tillabéri and Zinder in Niger.

The project originally was structured around four objectives:

1. INCREASED AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC WELL-BEING: Diversified economic opportunities, intensification of climate-smart agricultural and animal production and marketing, increased access to financial services.

2. STRENGTHENED GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONS: Reinforced management of

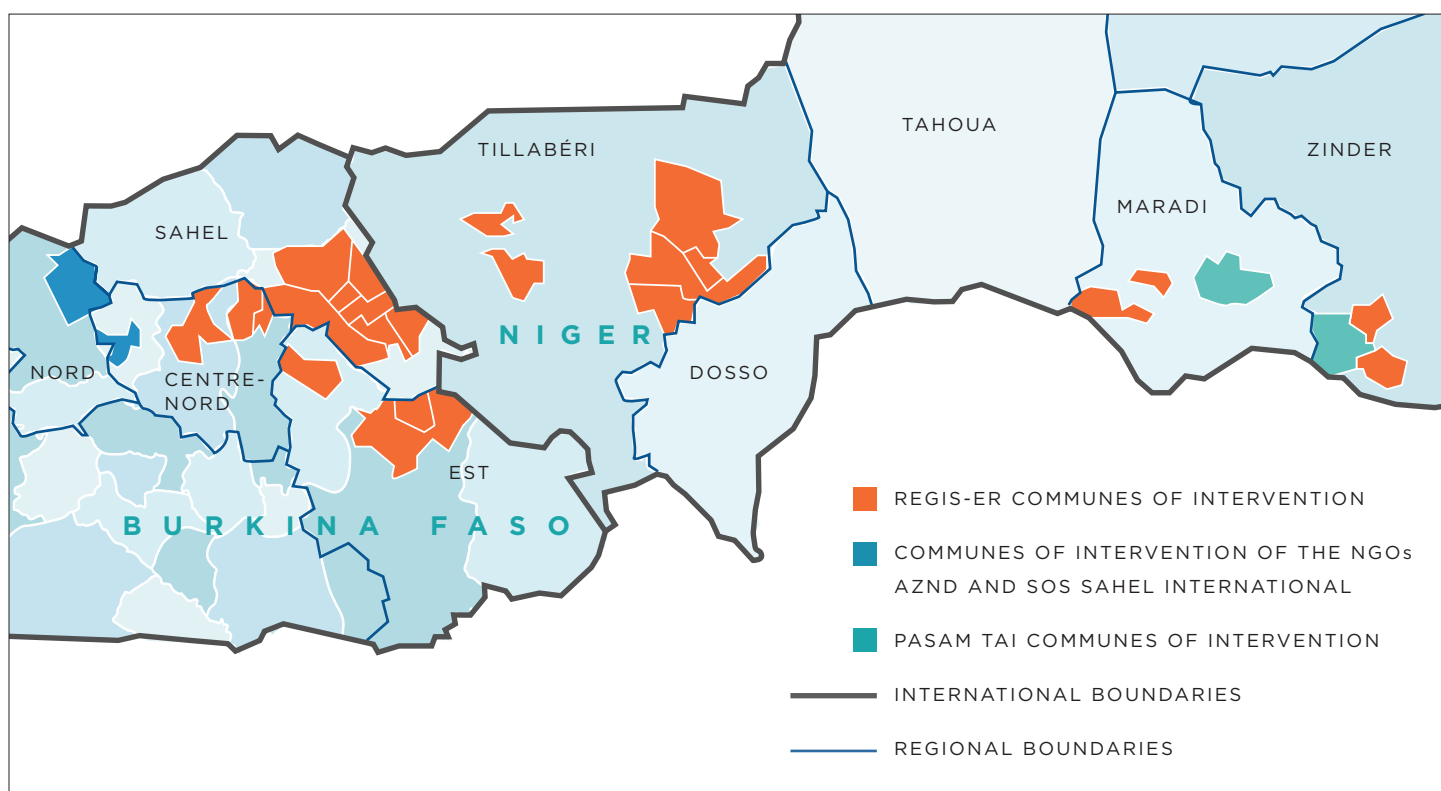
natural resources, disaster risk management, conflict prevention and management, increased coordination between regional and local governance structures.

3. IMPROVED HEALTH AND NUTRITION: Increased access to drinking water, improvement of health and nutrition practices.

4. EMBEDDED HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE: A crisis modifier component and coordination at the nexus of humanitarian and development assistance. This component would only be activated in the event of a humanitarian crisis.

The project launched an impressive array of resilience-building activities across this vast. Communities selected the activities that interested

REGIS-ER'S COMMUNES OF INTERVENTION AND THOSE OF REGIS-ER-FUNDED NGO PARTNERS



them, they vetted our field agents as part of the recruitment process and they contributed, financially or in kind, to the implementation. Although this process takes time to achieve results, it was an important step in the project's ultimate sustainability.

However, the project team observed that the structure around the three objectives created silos—participants were effectively dealing with three separate projects. Opportunities for synergy were lost. After reflection, REGIS-ER underwent restructuring to create multi-disciplinary teams that worked across objectives. This ushered in a new project phase.

RESTRUCTURING AND SCALING-UP: FEBRUARY 2016 - OCTOBER 2018

Restructuring facilitated scale-up, enabling the project to reach over 1,980,000 people by the end of the performance period. At its peak, REGIS-ER worked in six regions, 25 municipalities and reached 570 villages.

More autonomy was granted to the regional offices and the project ramped up activities that had proven successful during the first phase and for which there was great community demand. During this period, the project increased the number of water points built or repaired by 282 giving access to potable water to over 87,100 additional people; registered land tenure for women on 283 more hectares (a 180% increase); and increased the number of farmers applying new technologies by over 113,600 (a 225% increase).

In October 2017, REGIS-ER launched a sustainability strategy to capitalize on what emerged as two foundational project elements: capacity strengthening of local institutions and Community-Based Solution Providers (CBSPs). These two project focus areas fostered sustainability by ensuring the effective local ownership and management of resilience activities and built private sector networks for continued access to inputs and technical expertise.

LOCAL INSTITUTION CAPACITY STRENGTHENING:
As the team's experience grew and deepened with the project, selected staff graduated from

facilitators to coaches. Coaches were trained to provide advisory services to local institutions and transition leadership and responsibility for project activities to the institutions themselves. This included municipal councils, Citizen Working Groups, Village Development Councils (CVD in Burkina Faso) or Local Development Committees (CLD in Niger), and the community-based groups supported by REGIS-ER such as producer organizations, mother-to-mother groups, husband schools, support groups for female adolescents (GASA), conservation farming groups, habbanaye groups, women's garden groups, village savings and loan associations (VSLA), and water user groups.

COMMUNITY-BASED SOLUTION PROVIDERS (CBSPs): CBSPs are last-mile social entrepreneurs who work with their communities to address social and market needs and challenges. During the scaling-up phase, REGIS-ER increased the diversity of CBSP services, facilitated the formation of CBSP networks and linked CBSPs to buyers and suppliers for bulk input purchases and aggregated sales.

CONSOLIDATION PERIOD (NO-COST EXTENSION): NOVEMBER 2018 - DECEMBER 2019

REGIS-ER withdrew from about half of its 25 communes and concentrated interventions in 13 selected communes. The mayors of the thirteen communes identified nine "successful activities"² that they wanted to continue and scale-up to other villages:

1. Habbanaye (livestock asset building)
2. Community and household gardens
3. Self-managed community savings and loan system (SECCA in French or VSLA)
4. Conservation farming and farmer-managed natural regeneration (FMNR)
5. Soil and water conservation, and soil protection and restoration (CES/DRS)
6. Local Conventions covering natural resource management, disaster risk management, conflict management, and land tenure
7. Water services (this activity was selected only in Burkina Faso)

² A successful activity is an activity that generates positive and noticeable change, the process of which is adopted and owned by communities, and which can be scaled up.

8. Community-led total sanitation, and
9. Mother-to-Mother groups.

Per the sustainability strategy, REGIS-ER coaches intensively worked to strengthen the capacity of municipal councils, Citizen Working Groups and CBSP networks in each of the 13 communes of concentration, and of 238 village-level CLD/CVDs to take responsibility for the resilience activities.

With new Food for Peace development food security activities, in October 2019, REGIS-ER withdrew from three regions (Centre Nord in Burkina Faso, and Maradi and Zinder in Niger) and further reduced its intervention zone to eight successful communes, selected in part due to their vulnerability to extremist groups and their need for continued resilience-building:

COST-EXTENSION PERIOD: JANUARY 2020 - MARCH 2021

During the cost-extension period, REGIS-ER focused on consolidating the resilience capacities of the eight communes in the face of mounting insecurity. This period also marked a greater focus on youth. The project adopted a Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach and trained commune leaders in PYD. The project also intensified its support for youth through its grant fund and issued 218 grants totaling \$275,000 to support youth enterprise development in all eight communes. In addition, 288 young men and women benefited from habbanaye (animal exchange) of 1,152 goats. 140 CBSPs under the age of 30 joined the CBSP networks during this period. Finally, the project made community grants for 14 borehole rehabilitation initiatives.

COUNTRY	REGION	COMMUNE
Burkina Faso	Sahel	Sebba
		Seytenga
	Est	Manni
Niger	Tillabéri	Gayéri
		Sakoira
		Tagazar
		Tondikandia
		Filingué

A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO LOCALLY LED DEVELOPMENT

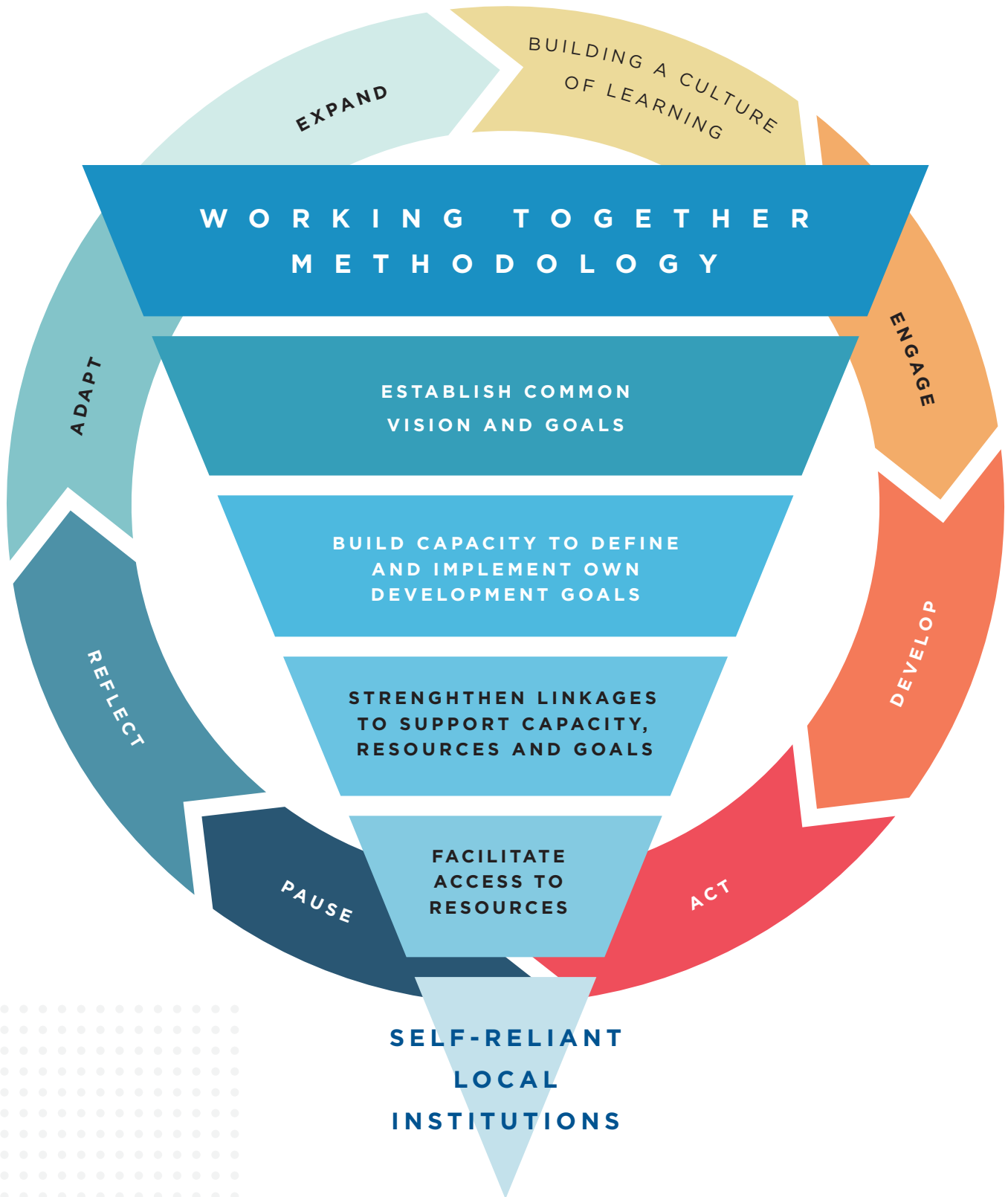
NCBA CLUSA's multi-stakeholder engagement methodology brings local actors together to create a shared vision, identify a common objective, and then execute an action plan to achieve them. This whole-of-system approach to development engages all actors within that system to work together through a common framework.

Our facilitative role ensures that the process is led by the community, not dictated by the project. From our first meetings with stakeholders, we leverage local resources, strengthen local capacity and target strategic leverage points for intervention. When the project ends, the community is left with the skills, resources, will, and power to drive their own development.

As part of REGIS-ER's sustainability strategy, the project focused on four local institutions to reinforce the commune resilience system:

1. Municipal Councils
2. Citizen Working Groups
3. Village Development Councils in Burkina Faso or Local Development Committees in Niger (CVD/CLD)
4. Community-Based Solution Providers (CBSPs) and Local Resource Persons Networks

REGIS-ER facilitated system-level change by reinforcing relationships between local stakeholders. Municipal councils were better connected to their constituents through Citizen Working Groups and village development councils. Citizen Working Groups coordinated links between communities, municipal councils, and service providers such as CBSPs. Vertical links clustered CBSPs at the commune level and suppliers at the regional or national level, and horizontal links networked CBSPs for complementarity and exchanges about innovations and new business opportunities. All served to reinforce the local system's ability to absorb, respond and adapt to stresses and to build resilient communities.



PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

CITIZEN WORKING GROUPS: STRENGTHENING THE SYSTEM FOR RESILIENCE

REGIS-ER's community engagement spurred the revitalization of the Burkinabe village development councils (CVD) and Nigerien local development committees (CLD), but the project noticed that there were limited avenues for civil society actors to formally engage with the commune government and vice versa. In response, REGIS-ER worked with community groups and commune government to form citizen working groups that operate at the commune level to facilitate two-way communication between villages and municipal government. REGIS-ER has formed 15 functional Citizen Working Groups in Burkina Faso and Niger that encompass 1,200 villages.

A citizen working group consists of representatives from CVDs or CLDs and other village groups, such as mother-to-mother groups, VSLAs, youth groups or farmers' associations and the private sector. A citizen working group is an inclusive, participatory platform that gives voice to citizens' interests, communicating needs and priorities. In collaboration with the municipal council and development partners, the citizen working group plans, builds awareness of, and monitors development activities.

The citizen working groups have proven to be instrumental at closing the gap between villages, commune governments and NGO partners; reinforcing the system for resilience.



THE CITIZEN WORKING GROUP IN ACTION

When the first COVID-19 cases were detected in Niger in March 2020, the Tagazar citizen working group in Tillabéri Region of Niger stood out for its proactive engagement. Understanding the threat of the disease, the local citizen working group took the initiative to

“THE INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL ACTORS MADE IT POSSIBLE TO IDENTIFY USEFUL ACTIONS FOR THE COMMUNITIES; IT IS NOT THE PROJECT THAT DECIDED WHAT WILL BE DONE; WE OURSELVES SAID WHAT WE CAN AND WANT TO DO, AND HOW..”

—MAYOR OF SEYTENGA, SAHEL REGION, BF

use its WhatsApp group, “Groupe Tagazar Ma Zaada,” to raise awareness of the pandemic.

Noting the impact of the citizen working group’s initiative, the prefect of the Department of Balleyara decided to use the WhatsApp group to relay government announcements and other important messages relating to the number of cases and measures to limit the spread of COVID-19. Messages shared by the Tagazar citizen working group WhatsApp group included communications from influential local leaders such as

the President of the Tagazar Special Delegation and the president of the Municipal Youth Councils, a youth non-governmental organization, who shared dozens of awareness messages.

The Tagazar citizen working group chairman undertook awareness-raising sessions in six villages (Téguef, Sassaba, Gao Tawey, Tinkafa, Kogori Tondikiré and Kogori Bangoubi) with small groups of five CLD members (to respect social-distancing guidelines), who in turn continued to raise awareness in other villages in compliance with social distancing and safety requirements. The citizen working group pivoted from its regular development work to focus on COVID-19 precautions:

- The installation of hand washing stations, and
- The designation of a compliance officer to remind community members to observe the social distance of at least 2 meters and to wear face masks.

The response of the Tagazar citizen working group to COVID-19 demonstrates its integration and

contribution to the local development system. Its reach expands beyond the initial project zones of intervention and it has grown into a trusted and leading local institution.

COMMUNE RESILIENCE PLANS: INSTITUTIONALIZING COMMUNE RESILIENCE

REGIS-ER facilitates a truly participative process for the development of Commune Resilience Plans (Plan Communal pour la Promotion de la Résilience). These plans detail the commune’s strategy for resilience against food and nutrition insecurity, including the implementation, monitoring, partnerships and budgeting for these actions. At their final stage, the Commune Resilience Plans are integrated into the Commune Development Plans.

It is a multi-stakeholder process led by municipal councils that engages civil society and citizens. By building the capacity of local institutions in advocacy and coordinated action, REGIS-ER has encouraged communes to source and negotiate additional resources to further their resilience goals. These strategies entail incorporating resilience activities into commune budgets, negotiating with development partners to support commune-led initiatives, and generating revenue from the community for specific development goals.

“AS THE SAYING GOES, “YOU CAN’T COLLECT FLOUR WITH ONLY ONE FINGER”. THAT’S WHY WE WILL INVOLVE ALL STAKEHOLDERS OF THE COMMUNE TO ACHIEVE OUR MISSION.”

THE SYSTEM IN ACTION: SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION OF THE HABBANAYE ACTIVITY TO LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

Habbanaye (small ruminant asset transfer) proved to be a popular and successful activity that communes wanted to continue and expand. A 2018 Cost-Benefit Analysis sponsored by USAID confirmed that “the Habbanaye intervention when coupled with the animal husbandry training is an efficient way to assist the most vulnerable households.” REGIS-ER developed simplified

BARSALOGHO CITIZEN WORKING GROUP, CENTRE-NORD REGION, BF

tracking and monitoring tools for the municipal councils and Citizen Working Groups and then coached them on the management of the habbanaye activity, gradually reducing the project role as direct implementers. Municipal councils assigned habbanaye focal points to monitor and report on the activity and to ensure the animals are vaccinated and connected to veterinary services during transfer. They also took over responsibility for funding the expansion of the initiative.

LOCAL CONVENTIONS: COMMUNITY-DRIVEN LAND USE PLANNING

As part of the project's governance and natural resources management activities, REGIS-ER drafted 19 local conventions covering communes totalling over 27,500 km² – an area the size of the state of Massachusetts. Local conventions are community-developed natural resources management

In Sebba (Sahel Region, Burkina Faso), the municipal council convinced the NGO Humanité et Inclusion to support their habbanaye operation for the benefit of all 18 villages and the 5 districts of Sebba town. The Sebba Mayor said of the experience: "As mayor, I personally saw evidence that habbanaye produced successful results in our commune. We, the municipal council, want to sustain and scale-up this activity which has been properly managed by local institutions and the Citizen Working Group. We contacted the RESA project and presented the municipal council's proposition, explaining the merits of habbanaye and informing them that we were ready to support the communities in implementation. We also emphasized that this would create real happiness in the communities as they are quite familiar with and appreciate habbanaye, which they have already conducted with USAID | REGIS-ER."

plans that promote equitable and sustainable management of resources, improve soil fertility and reduce conflicts between user groups in the communes that have adopted them. The natural resources that fall within the purview of the plans include farmland, pastures, water resources such as ponds, and woodland including non-timber products. The overall goal of the local convention is to ensure the conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources of a rural community in order to satisfy growing demands, while maintaining productivity, and ecological and social wellbeing. The local convention has five specific objectives:

- Regulate in a consensual manner access to and use of a commune's natural resources.
- Include citizens in the sustainable management of their own natural resources.
- Ensure that all citizens can access the natural resources they need to meet their needs without compromising the needs of others or the long-term viability of the environment.
- Prevent conflict and reduce the degradation of natural resources.
- Promote good governance (transparency and accountability).

Local conventions exemplify REGIS-ER's multi-stakeholder systems approach whereby all system actors are brought together around a shared vision. Unlike top-down natural resource management plans, local conventions are a collective effort. As a result local conventions don't just sit in a drawer gathering dust, they are adopted and championed in the community.

COMMUNITY-BASED SOLUTION PROVIDERS: BUILDING OUT A LOCAL PRIVATE SECTOR NETWORK

The Community-Based Solution Provider (CBSP) approach developed by NCBA CLUSA is a variation of a market-based, local service provider. A CBSP is an individual entrepreneur based in the community who is designated and trusted by the community to facilitate access to useful products, services and information and find solutions to problems communities face. In contrast with other market-based service provision approaches which are sector oriented, employing specialized providers, the CBSP approach has a broad focus, responding

“CONFLICTS RELATED TO THE USE OF WATER POINTS LIKE PONDS HAVE DECREASED. FROM THE HARVEST PERIOD (OCT-NOV 2016) TO APRIL 2017, NO SUCH CONFLICT WAS REPORTED IN THE COMMUNE. WE ARE ALSO PROUD BECAUSE PEOPLE RESPECT GRAZING AREA LIMITS. FARMS NO LONGER INTERMINGLE WITH PASTURE AREAS AND LIVESTOCK CORRIDORS. DROUM COMMUNE RESIDENTS INSISTENTLY REQUEST THE MARKING OF LIVESTOCK CORRIDORS BECAUSE THEY UNDERSTAND THAT IT IS EFFECTIVE IN PREVENTING CONFLICT BETWEEN FARMERS AND HERDERS AND SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVES THE SITUATION OF LIVESTOCK. WE TRULY THANK GOD FOR ALL THIS PROGRESS.”

MAOUDÉ DAN SOUFOUA, PERMANENT SECRETARY OF DROUM'S LAND COMMISSION

THE CBSP NETWORK IN MANNI

The CBSP network in Manni (Burkina Faso) joined forces to achieve economies of scale in their individual activities, such as by collaborating to place bulk orders for agricultural inputs. In 2020, the network joined together to order 2.5 tonnes of fertilizer for market gardening. The CBSP network also cooperated in the acquisition of 150 tonnes of livestock feed valued at \$29,000. These inputs are then sold in communities in small doses that are more affordable, particularly among women. The network is now mobilizing a working capital fund for making ongoing bulk orders of inputs, increasing level of sophistication of their operation, as well as its effectiveness.

to demand and looking for opportunities to address the needs of their communities.

At the root of the CBSP approach is the recognition that communities best know their own needs and should be empowered to take charge of their own socio-economic development. This philosophy identifies the critical role of client-oriented, community-based entrepreneurs who serve as change agents by providing market-based solutions to development challenges. CBSPs serve as a bridge between development agencies or private enterprises and rural communities by facilitating access to products, services and information and introducing innovations, while at the same time generating a livelihood for themselves. The CBSP approach is based on five principles:

1. **ENTREPRENEURIAL:** CBSPs realize financial gain from their activities.
2. **DIFFERENT TYPES OF PROVIDERS:** To respond to community demand for different types of products and services, one or more different types of CBSPs may operate in the same community.
3. **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND LINKAGES:** Local institutions work with and support CBSPs and community involvement ensures that providers are accepted and trusted by their communities.
4. **STRONG SUPPORT FROM PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS:** CBSPs work with and are supported by a range of organizations including private firms (e.g. agricultural input companies, agricultural machinery companies), agricultural research and advisory (extension) agencies, government sectoral agencies, producer organizations and NGOs. Collaborators provide technical and business training and serve as a source of innovation which is critical for the sustainability of the approach.
5. **COMPLEMENT EXISTING SERVICE PROVIDERS:** CBSPs work alongside, but do not substitute for public and private sector service providers such as extension/rural advisory services and NGOs.

CBSPs became a key element of the project's sustainability strategy after demonstrating the transformational impact they brought both for the individual CBSPs themselves as well as the communities they serve. In the last few years of the project, promising CBSPs emerged as highly-successful entrepreneurs. These promising CBSPs became central agents who coordinated efforts with other CBSPs to aggregate services to access larger contracts and to purchase inputs in bulk. This evolution strengthened the CBSP network and its ability to meet the growing demand for their services. Several CBSP networks in Burkina Faso have formally registered as associations and cooperatives and are generating local off-farm employment.

GENDER INTEGRATION: EMPOWERING WOMEN IS A DRIVER OF RESILIENCE

REGIS-ER emphasized women's inclusion in all activities. This was a purposeful and conscious

decision based on the important role that women play in their family's health and nutrition. To elevate women's voice and agency, the project targeted their economic and social standing within their communities, ensuring that community leaders and their husbands supported this transformation. REGIS-ER's locally led systems approach ensured that the whole community was engaged in resilience and thus created an enabling environment for women to succeed.

Mother-to-Mother groups were the primary village-level platform for reaching women in the community. Unlike care groups, the Mother-to-Mother groups went beyond child health. While the groups addressed nutrition and sanitation behaviors, they also integrated asset building and income generating through participation in village savings and loan associations, habbanaye and market gardens. Lead mothers of Mother-to-Mother groups and women CBSPs are regarded as prominent voices in their communities and participate in local decision-making



through the CVDs or CLDs and Citizen Working Groups. Men participated in Husband Schools to elevate their role in the care of their children and pregnant or breastfeeding wives.

A MOTHER'S RESOLVE: THE UNBREAKABLE ALIMATA KOROGO

A 40 year old mother of six, Alimata Korogo lived until 2019 in her native village of Kegléssé (Barsalogho Commune, Burkina Faso), where she became a model of enhanced resilience thanks to her ingenuity and determination, and to support from USAID | REGIS-ER. Prior to REGIS-ER, Alimata and her family struggled with chronic food insecurity, poor health and debt. In 2014, Alimata participated in several trainings from REGIS-ER. With the skills and knowledge she gained, Alimata became a community leader, a successful producer and entrepreneur. Her life was transformed from crushing challenges to opportunities to generate income for her family.

Then in 2019, the growing insecurity in the Sahel decimated Alimata's home area. Deadly attacks by unidentified armed groups in a nearby village caused many residents of Kegléssé, including her family, to flee. Alimata sought refuge in the town of Barsalogho, making her family internally displaced persons (IDP).

Having left everything behind, Alimata drew on her resourcefulness and quickly adapted to her new life as an IDP. "Upon arrival in Barsalogho, I spent most of my time with the REGIS-ER coaches who provided us much needed moral support." Once again Alimata relied on the training, coaching, savings and ingenuity to restart her business activities.

The new challenges as an IDP did not impede Alimata's determination to succeed. Alimata says, "I think I have remained resilient because my motivation and adaptation persist unaltered despite the deterioration of our situation. I quickly got back to work despite our internally displaced situation, and I embraced other activities to improve my wellbeing and contribute to that of the community." Alimata continues to nurture her entrepreneurial spirit and generously shares her business talent with local residents,

despite being an IDP. She is living proof of the REGIS Enhanced Resilience.³

OASIS GARDENS: A MODEL FOR INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT

Oasis Gardens or community gardens offer a prime example of REGIS-ER's integrated development approach. While often simply seen as means to income generation and more nutritious diets, for REGIS-ER the garden is also a platform to support multi-stakeholder, multi-dimensional, regenerative interventions. Intentionally framing the gardening activities within a broader set of development goals and systems creates an opportunity for synergism and prevents unintended consequences.

³ <https://medium.com/usaaid-2030/the-unbreakable-alimata-korogo-495e38935ad6>



Rabi Ousmane is one of many women whose household income has increased significantly through Oasis Gardening. Rabi grows a variety of crops in the Iguéfane

Oasis Garden, such as moringa and leafy vegetables. She uses the profits from the sale of these crops to provide more diverse nutritious food to her family. Rabi used to weave tangaras, or straw mats, to sell in the market but this earned her very little income. She often struggled to meet the needs of her family. "Now we can take care of our own needs and we can even take care of other's needs," Rabi said. In addition to meeting the needs of her family, Rabi uses her income to reinvest in the garden to keep production going.

In REGIS-ER, Oasis Gardens created a nexus for women's empowerment, governance, and enhanced nutrition, incomes, and social capital. As with all REGIS-ER interventions, Oasis Gardens began with community engagement. The project negotiated for land, often degraded land that could be restored, and then trained women participants in group governance in addition to the techniques to transform the land into fertile gardens. Most of the garden members were active participants in other project interventions such as Mother-to-Mother groups, which reinforced nutrition knowledge and behavior change, and VSLAs, which established a culture of saving and solidarity. This holistic approach fostered sustainability of the garden activities.

BIO-RECLAMATION OF DEGRADED LANDS: KOUDOUMA WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

With support from REGIS-ER, fifty women from Koudouma (Droum Commune, Niger) established a garden on a degraded site identified for bio-reclamation. The land had been over-exploited, stripped of its vegetative cover and biomass, and finally abandoned. Using water retention and soil restoration techniques, the land was brought back into cultivation.

The group was formed by a local facilitator who trained women in horticulture techniques. For their effort at restoring the soil fertility, and to guarantee that they reap the benefits over the long term, the group obtained title to the land from the local land commission. Members of the group now grow lettuce, cabbage and moringa during the dry season, and okra during the rainy season. In 2019, the group's revenue was \$13,560. With a 50% reinvestment, each woman earned approximately \$135 that year—an enormous contribution to the household economy in one of the poorest countries in the world. The Oasis Garden provides more stable income than cutting hay and is more sustainable than collecting firewood in the rapidly dwindling woodlands.

CONSERVATION FARMING: CLIMATE-SMART FOOD PRODUCTION AT SCALE

The combination of conservation farming and farmer-managed natural regeneration is one of REGIS-ER's most successful interventions. By the project's end, over 92,000 hectares of land was under improved management and technologies – 112% of the project's target.

Conservation farming and farmer-managed natural regeneration employs three main methods:

1. Low tillage (leaving soil undisturbed so it does not lose its structure and dry out)
2. Covering the soil with mulch and using compost to retain water and combat erosion and transpiration, and
3. Rotating crops to build and maintain the nutrients in the soil.

REGIS-ER also promoted the systematic protection of native tree species, which are best adapted to the environment and provide products such as wood, fodder or fruit, reduce erosion and enhance soil fertility. Farmers were shown soil and water conservation techniques, such as half-moon water catchment basins or contour bunds, to reclaim degraded land. Together, the package of conservation farming, soil improvement, increased water infiltration and increased tree cover has enabled families to increase yields, feed themselves and sell surpluses. Meeting immediate needs, through reliable harvests, and ensuring long-term environmental sustainability are the hallmarks of Resilience Enhanced. The farming techniques were disseminated through demonstration fields, farmer visits and broadcasts on local radio. Coaching by lead farmers enabled quick scale-up and affordable access to inputs through the CBSP network ensured sustainability. Conservation farming was an early success of REGIS-ER. It spread rapidly, including spontaneous adoption by farmers outside the REGIS-ER intervention zone, and with training from the REGIS-ER team, it was adopted and disseminated by other RISE implementing partners.





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