

Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced (RISE)

Recurrent Monitoring Survey 2018-19: Key Findings and Program Implications

The goal of the Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced (RISE) program is to increase the resilience to shocks of chronically vulnerable populations in agro-pastoral and marginal agriculture livelihood zones of the Sahel. The five-year program was implemented in targeted zones of Burkina Faso and Niger in West Africa (see maps) from 2014 to 2019.



The purpose of a recurrent monitoring survey (RMS) is to collect real-time data over the course of a shock in order to understand the nature and evolution of shocks, how they affected households' well-being, how households coped with them, and what helped them recover. The RMS 2018-19 was launched in response to signs that shock exposure was escalating in the RISE program area in its fourth year of operation. Quantitative data were collected from a representative panel sample of 828 households over five rounds, two months apart, starting in August 2018 and ending in April 2019. Qualitative data were collected in each round employing focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs). The RMS follows baseline (April 2015) and midline (April 2017) surveys and proceeds an endline survey planned for 2020. Its objectives were to (1) understand the severity and evolution of the shocks households faced; (2) document the coping strategies households used; (3) assess how resilient they were to the shocks; and (4) explore how their resilience capacities (the determinants of resilience) and the RISE program to-date have affected their resilience.



Burkina Faso Program Area



Niger Program Area



This brief was made possible by the generous support and contribution of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of the REAL Associate Award and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the U.S. Government.

This brief reports the key findings of the analysis, summarized here:

1. Households experienced five main shocks over the RMS period: drought, flooding, army worm invasions, violent extremism, and food price increases;
2. 55-65% of household were resilient to the shocks;
3. Their resilience capacities prior to the shocks' onset helped them recover, especially their social capital, assets, savings, access to informal safety nets, human capital, exposure to information, access to financial resources, and access to markets, services and infrastructure;
4. The analysis finds suggestive evidence that the RISE program's interventions were successful in strengthening households' resilience to the shocks.

Shock Exposure and Coping Strategies

Shock exposure has progressively increased over the course of the RISE program and was especially high in the year prior to the start of the RMS 2018-19. During the RMS period itself, the surveyed areas were afflicted by four kinds of “exogenous” shocks over which households had no control: multiple climate shocks, army worm infestations, an influx of violent extremism, and food price increases. The climate shocks were drought, excessive rains leading in some cases to severe and widespread flooding, lack of rain at critical times in the agricultural cycle, and high winds that led to lodging of crops in the field. Violent extremism spread into all three regions in which the RISE program operates in Burkina Faso (Sahel, Centre-Nord and Est) and into Tillabéri in Niger. This extremism disrupted households' livelihoods, disrupted markets, led to a large influx of displaced populations, and limited access of humanitarian actors to villages. It also caused a great deal of fear and disruption of daily household life.

“The poorest families collected waste flour from the mills.”

(Focus Group Discussion in Centre-Nord, Burkina Faso)



Some downstream impacts of the above shocks were animal disease outbreaks and deaths, lack of food and water for livestock, lack of water for household consumption, and elevated levels of human illnesses, especially malaria and respiratory illnesses. Poor harvests meant that households ran out of home-produced food earlier than usual and were forced to rely on high-priced market purchases.

The quantitative data show that shock exposure was much higher in the

Burkina Faso area than in the Niger area due to greater exposure to drought, poor rainfall timing, animal disease outbreaks, and food price increases.

The most common coping strategies households used to deal with the shocks were:

- selling livestock or sending livestock in search of pasture and water,
- drawing down on savings,
- reducing the number of meals in a day or limiting portion sizes,
- reducing regular household expenses,

- migration,
- relying on friends or relatives for food or money, and
- alternative food acquisition methods, such as hunting wild animals, fishing, foraging and gathering termites.

Some turned to negative coping strategies:

- selling productive assets,
- consuming seed stock,
- taking children out of school and/or sending them to work for money, and
- borrowing from money lenders.

These strategies can undermine households' ability to recover from future shocks.

"To cope with animal diseases, many farmers tried to sell the animals before they died."

(FBD Maradi, Niger)

Food Security and Resilience

As found from the baseline and midline surveys, food insecurity is very high in both the Burkina Faso and Niger program areas. It is highest in the Niger area, where the percent of households severely food insecure rose to nearly 75 percent during the first round of RMS 2018-19, when shock exposure was at its peak. Food security has remained relatively stable since the baseline in the Burkina Faso area. However, in the Niger area it had fallen by 30 percent by the end of the RMS period and showed a highly fluctuating pattern.

Analysis of the RMS quantitative data shows that the shocks experienced by households over the RMS period had a decidedly negative effect on their food security in both program areas. The types of shocks that had particularly negative effects were: drought, flooding, insect invasions (in the Niger area), conflict shocks, food price increases, illnesses of household members (in the Burkina Faso area), and sudden increases in household size. The latter is possibly associated with the welcoming of displaced persons into host households.

With regard to resilience, 62 percent of households were able to recover from the shocks they faced over the RMS period, defined as maintaining or increasing their food security. Fifty-five percent maintained stability in their food security, another indicator of resilience. Burkina Faso households were better able to recover than Niger households, despite the fact that they experienced greater shock exposure. This finding may be due to Burkina Faso households' higher resilience capacities, the stronger positive influence of resilience capacities on resilience in the area (see below), and/or greater local government responsiveness to community needs. The program areas had roughly the same percentage of households who were able to maintain stability in their food security.

Has resilience increased since the baseline? This question was answered using an experiential indicator of households' ability to recover from shocks that is time-comparable across the baseline, midline, and RMS (round 1) surveys. The analysis found that resilience has *increased* in the Burkina Faso area despite greatly increased shock exposure. By contrast, it has *decreased* in the Niger area over this period of similarly rising shock exposure.



Photo: Thatcher Cook / Mercy Corps

Shock Recovery: The Role of Households' Resilience Capacities

Analysis of the quantitative data indicates that households' initial resilience capacities before the onset of the shock period did indeed strengthen their resilience. They boosted their ability to recover and to maintain stability of their food security in the face of the shocks. Evidence is provided more specifically that they reduced the negative impacts of the shocks they faced on their food security, a further indication that they strengthened their resilience.

Households' own initial resilience capacities played a stronger role in boosting resilience in the Burkina Faso area than the Niger area. All three dimensions of resilience capacity—absorptive, adaptive and transformative—boosted resilience in the Burkina Faso area. Only households' adaptive capacities may have done so in the Niger area.

A wide range of specific resilience capacities helped strengthen households' resilience to the shocks they faced over the RMS period, including:

- Social capital (Bonding, bridging and linking)
- Access to informal safety nets
- Holdings of savings
- Asset ownership
- Access to financial resources
- Human capital
- Exposure to information
- Access to markets, infrastructure and services.

Three capacities stand out as having likely strengthened households' resilience to the shocks they faced prior to all three RISE surveys (the baseline, midline, and RMS 2018-19):



Bonding social capital



Bridging social capital



Access to financial resources

Others that showed up for at least two of the surveys are holdings of savings, asset ownership, linking social capital, human capital, and access to infrastructure. These and the others listed above are the actionable programming and policy levers that can potentially strengthen households' resilience in the future.

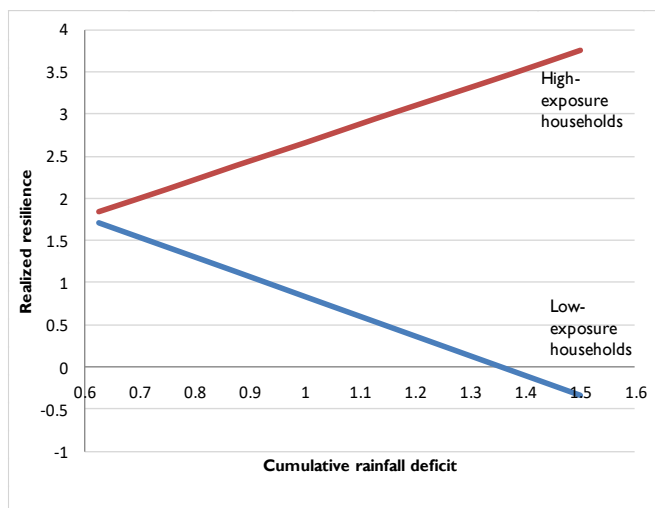
Exploratory Analysis: The Impact of RISE on Households' Ability to Recover

Appropriate data for a formal impact evaluation of the RISE program will be collected as part of the endline survey. Meanwhile, an exploratory analysis of the effect of the program to date on households' resilience to shocks was undertaken. The analysis drew on the differences across groups of households residing in RISE low exposure villages (the "control group") and high exposure villages (the "treatment group"). The high-exposure villages are benefiting from comprehensive resilience programming while low exposure villages are not.

The analysis provides suggestive evidence that the RISE program's interventions to date *have* had a positive impact on households' ability to recover from shocks. Further, the interventions helped Niger households maintain stability in their food security in the face of drought. Other indications that the program helped to strengthen households' resilience is analysis signaling that it reduced the negative impact of drought on Niger-area households' ability to maintain their food security (see graph) and reduced the negative impact

of flooding on Burkina Faso-area households' food security. Overall, it appears that RISE interventions have had a stronger positive impact in the Niger program area than the Burkina Faso area.

Estimated recovery trajectory as drought deepened over the RMS period for high- and low-exposure households



The positive associations between RISE program interventions and resilience seen here are likely due to the program's efforts to strengthen households' resilience capacities. It will be possible to pinpoint which resilience capacities have been strengthened when new data on the capacities are collected as part of the final impact evaluation.

Implications for Programming

The analysis provides suggestive evidence that the RISE program interventions have had a positive impact on households' resilience to shocks. However, additional investments may be necessary to have a greater impact on food security and resilience.

The following are the recommendations for programming:

- Redesign and expand safety nets
- Expand the focus of disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities beyond droughts to include floods
- Deal with rising violent extremism, implement interventions that focus on conflict mitigation
- Continue to invest in savings groups to strengthen social capital, especially in areas where social capital is beginning to erode
- Continue to strengthen households' resilience capacities, especially their adaptive and transformative capacities.



Photo: Talitha Brauer

About the RISE Program

Stated Goal: To increase the resilience to shocks of chronically vulnerable populations in agro-pastoral and marginal agriculture livelihood zones of the Sahel.

Intervention Areas: Sahel, Centre-Nord and Est in Burkina Faso; Tillabéri, Maradi and Zinder in Niger.

Implementation Period: 2014-2019

Reach: The program is expected to benefit 1.9 million of the area's most vulnerable.

Primary Focus Areas:

1. Increased and sustainable economic well-being through
 - Diversified economic opportunities;
 - Intensified production and marketing;
 - Improved access to financial services; and
 - Increased access to market infrastructure.
2. Strengthened institutions and governance through
 - Improved natural resources management;
 - Disaster risk management;
 - Strengthened conflict management systems; and
 - Strengthened government and regional capacity and coordination.
3. Improved health and nutritional status through
 - Increased access to potable water;
 - Improved health and nutrition practices, particularly for mothers and children;
 - Improved family planning; and
 - Better sanitation practices.

Baseline Survey: Conducted from April 29, 2015 through May 30, 2015. Sample size: 2,492 households residing in 100 villages.

Midline Survey: Conducted from April 6 to May 4, 2017. Sample size: 2,492 households resampled from the same 100 villages as the baseline survey (a village panel).

Funding Source: United States Agency for International Development

Implementing Organizations: The RISE initiative includes USAID/Food for Peace-funded activities implemented by Catholic Relief Services, Mercy Corps, Save the Children, and ACDI/VOCA. It also includes the Resilience and Economic Growth in the Sahel – Enhanced Resilience (REGIS-ER) project and the Resilience and Economic Growth in the Sahel – Accelerated Growth (REGIS-AG) project. Implementing partners for these activities include: Cultivating New Frontiers in Agriculture (CNFA), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Association Nigérienne pour la Dynamisation des Initiatives Locales (Karkara), Association for Catalyzing Pastoral Development in Niger (AREN), Association Nodde Nooto (A2N), the Association pour la Gestion de l'Environnement et Développement (AGED), and National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA International.



This summary brief was prepared in April, 2020, by TANGO International.
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