



Summary

Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced (RISE) Gender Analysis

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This summary was prepared by the United States Agency for International Development Sahel Regional Office. The analysis and recommendations are adapted from the RISE Gender Analysis prepared by Dr. Batamaka Some at the request of the United States Agency for International Development.

The full Gender Analysis is accessible at:

https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/content/Detail_Presto.aspx?vID=47&ctID=ODVhZjk4NWQtM2YyMi00YjRmLTkxNjktZTcxMjM2NDhmY2Uy&rID=NTEwMDQw

The authors' views expressed in the Gender Analysis and in this summary do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide a summary of the USAID Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced (RISE) Gender Analysis¹ to support RISE II applicants in designing more gender-transformative approaches that guide implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Initiated in 2012, RISE seeks to address chronic vulnerability in Niger and Burkina Faso by strategically layering, sequencing, and coordinating USAID and other humanitarian and resilience-building investments, with the goal to “increase the resilience of chronically vulnerable people, households, communities, and systems in targeted agro-pastoral and marginal agriculture livelihood zones in Niger and Burkina Faso.” USAID is cognizant of women’s and men’s acute and uneven challenges and opportunities in development. Consequently, under RISE II, USAID urges a departure from a business-as-usual approach to gender equality and female empowerment to one that is more context-specific and targeted.

Burkina Faso and Niger are both characterized by deep-rooted gender inequalities and inequities in social, economic, political, and civic rights. Both countries rank towards the bottom end of the global Gender Inequality Index (GII): Burkina Faso ranks 146/157 and Niger ranks 157/157. In Burkina Faso, women’s mean years of schooling is 1 versus 2 for their male counterparts, while the mean years of schooling for Niger women is 1.1 versus 2.3 for men. The Gender Analysis underscores that each RISE II intervention approach should have a gender strategy based on the specific context of that zone and the population living in it, while taking into account the institutional frameworks and customary laws – and the dynamics between them – in each country.

This summary includes:

- Key findings of the Gender Analysis;
- The gender context of women within the different ethnic groups in Burkina Faso and Niger;
- Lessons learned under RISE;
- Recommendations for RISE II.

2. Key findings of the RISE Gender Analysis

- a) The analysis supports findings from other literature that deep-rooted historical and perpetuating inequalities between men and women contradict national legal frameworks to address women’s inequality in both Niger and Burkina Faso, making it impossible to build resilience in households and communities without also addressing systemic, culturally-rooted gender inequalities.

¹ The full RISE Gender Analysis is available on USAID’s Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC). The documents selected for the Gender Analysis derived from USAID’s core partners for resilience, comprising existing Food for Peace (FFP) development programs and marginal agricultural livelihood zones in Burkina Faso and Niger, and USAID’s Resilience and Economic Growth in the Sahel Enhanced – Accelerated Growth (REGIS-AG) and Resilience and Economic Growth in the Sahel – Enhanced Resilience (REGIS-ER). This was supplemented with relevant USAID policy and guidance documents, the Sahel Resilience Learning (SAREL) and WFP documents, non-RISE humanitarian organizations and NGOs, and relevant academic and grey literature.

- b) Using households as the primary unit for measuring development results is a fundamental obstacle to the effective targeting of women and the measuring of results in a gender-sensitive way.
- c) RISE II's approach to women's equality is female empowerment, with important nuances between the two terms.
- d) While all women from both countries and all ethnic groups face common challenges, dynamics and/or issues, there are important differences between groups within Niger and Burkina Faso, and between Niger and Burkina Faso as a whole. These differences have implications for development programming and may impact development results in different ways.

Key finding: Contradictory national and customary laws complicate any gender equality approach

Burkina Faso and Niger are characterized by contradictory national and customary laws regarding gender. With the support of development partners, the governments of Burkina Faso and Niger have placed women and gender equality at the center of their national poverty eradication strategies and ratified regional and international gender equality agreements. Notable progress has been achieved in the domains of education, health, and social protection. However, acute disparities remain. This is because gender equality strategies have focused on the symptoms rather than the underlying causes of inequities and injustices between men and women in development processes, and because in many cases, customary practices take precedence over institutional policies.

Key finding: Using households as the primary unit for measuring development results is a fundamental obstacle to mainstreaming gender equality

Under RISE, the household is the unit of measurement for results. There is an assumption that when the household thrives all members thrive. Due to intra-household power dynamics, such an understanding needs to be more nuanced. Using households as the unit of measurement does not account for different power and decision-making relationships, the uneven distribution of household assets, and other internal inequities between males and females living in that household. It also does not differentiate between polygamous and monogamous households. In a polygamous family, households are as many as the number of wives. Each wife and her children should be considered to represent one household with divergent interests vis-a-vis the other wives/households.

Key finding: USAID's gender approach for RISE is female empowerment

RISE's approach to gender equality is through female empowerment. This means that the initiative targets women and girls with the goal of reducing the inequality gap. During RISE implementation, there was confusion regarding the differences between female empowerment and gender equality. Clarifying this gives the initiative a clearer pathway for gender-specific implementation. RISE II activities will need to view "gender" more consciously as an overarching set of social categories with vulnerabilities. Capturing the different vulnerabilities within vulnerable populations will allow for more targeted, inclusive, and context-specific programming.

Female empowerment can be understood as an approach to gender equality that targets women and girls specifically, with the aim to give them more access to opportunities to increase their power and voice in decision making and their control over resources – but not to the exclusion of men. Not making this clarification could lead program and project staff to focus on women and girls, with little to no consideration of the hidden categories among them. It could also exclude socially and economically vulnerable men and boys whose inclusion could lead to the attainment of the household resilience and female empowerment goals, as well as the overall RISE gender equality objectives.

Key finding: Despite common challenges in Burkina Faso and Niger, women and girls from different cultural groups face different challenges

In Burkina Faso, Mossi and Gourmantche women generally have a higher degree of autonomy to pursue economic opportunities with the consent of a male, while Peulh women tend to live in more restrictive and male-dominated settings, but are able to pursue an income-generating activity (selling off surplus cow's milk) without a husband's consent. In Niger, Hausa women have decision-making power over the returns from crops from their personal plots, while Zarma women face more constraints in accessing land and agricultural production assets. Peulh women of Niger generally share the same experiences as Peulh women in Burkina Faso. However, the Bororo Peulh, a tiny sub-group, approximately about 10% of the Niger Peulh population, abide by a matriarchal system in which men carry out household and other similar tasks; which allows women to look after their business and exert full control over their income and wealth.

3. Context-specific gender issues among ethnic groups in Burkina Faso

Mossi, Gourmantche, and the Peulh are the main ethnic groups in the RISE Zones in Burkina Faso. Mossi and Gourmantche are mostly agriculturalists and pastoralists, while the Peulh tend to be pastoralists. Among the targeted groups mostly practicing agriculture and agro-pastoralism in Burkina Faso, women access land through men. They do not inherit land from their families and cannot pass land to their sons or daughters. Rather, all land that a married woman has used throughout her lifetime is the property of her husband – or another male – who will normally bequeath it to his family. For example, among the Gourmantche, a woman cultivates the family field with her husband as soon as they marry. But by the next season she can ask for a small piece of land to grow her own crops. As the woman grows older, she gains status and faces less time constraints, and can have her farm increased in size. Studies have shown that despite the close social organization between Mossi and Gourmantche societies, Gourmantche women have better decision making power than Mossi women.

Among the Mossi, men and women are socialized in a spirit of submissiveness to authority, starting at the household level. Submissiveness is further expected from women vis-à-vis men. Married women normally receive a plot of land from their husband or husband's father the year following their marriage. This woman's farm, which is used to farming the woman's personal crop, is called the "beolgo". In the case of a polygamous home, the last married woman works with her co-wife during the first year. She receives her own plot the second year. There are cases when she receives the farm only after she has her first child. As the married woman ages and obtains status, she's given a larger plot that she can use

as she pleases, the only exception being she cannot let it lay fallow. The woman's rights to such a farm are quite strong, except in the case of divorce. Simultaneously, she is responsible for feeding herself exclusively through cultivation of this field.

Besides agricultural activities, livestock plays a central role in the personal economies of Mossi and Gourmantche women in "providing income, creating employment opportunities and providing food and nutrition security across different production systems and along different value chains" (Njuki and Sanginga, 2013:1). In addition to poultry, many Mossi and Gourmantche women raise goats, sheep, or in rare cases, cattle. The women usually access small ruminants (a goat or a sheep) by investing money derived from their other income-generating activities (including chicken sale) or returns from their participation in savings and lending communities. They mainly engage in sheep raising where they fatten the sheep and sell them during religious periods. Although they can consult their husbands before selling an animal for the sake of household harmony, the women make the decision to sell on their own, and control the returns from the animal's sale.

By contrast, Peulh women in Burkina Faso normally provide little to no contribution to mobilizing household food needs. They evolve in a stratified society made of nobles, merchants, and caste groups. It is considered inappropriate for a noble woman to evolve in the public space and engage in economic activities outside of the household. However, Peulh women do enjoy some level of economic autonomy by selling surplus milk from cows. A woman who marries into a new family is normally given a cow by her husband's family. She is entitled to the milk derived from that cow and the husband's cows, and can undertake income generating activities from surplus milk. If she divorces her husband, she leaves the cattle, and can only claim them after the death of the divorced husband.

4. Context-specific gender issues among ethnic groups in Niger

The Zarma (Djerma), Hausa, and Peulh – with some Gourmantche in Tillaberi – are the main ethnic groups in RISE Zones in Niger. The Zarma and Hausa are mostly agriculturalists and pastoralists, while the Peulh are usually pastoralists.

The Zarma and Hausa make up most of the inhabitants of the Tillaberi and Maradi Regions. Of the more than 22 million Nigeriens, 50% are Hausa, and about 20% are Zarma. In the Maradi region, women enjoy several modes of access to agricultural land. Besides inheritance, purchase or loans, women also enjoy a traditional mode of access called the Gamana, a customary gift of a small plot of land to a wife on behalf of a husband. As land has a high market value in this area, women, who have saved through various trade activities, can extend their plots by buying additional land without a need to consult their husband. Hausa women have decision-making power over the returns from crops grown on their personal plots. Zarma women face more constraints in accessing land and agricultural production assets. Peulh women of Niger generally share the same experiences as those in Burkina Faso. However, the Bororo Peulh, a tiny sub-group, approximately about 10% of the Niger Peulh population, abide by a matriarchal system where men carry out household and other similar tasks, which allows women to look after their business and exert full control over their income and wealth.

As is the case for the Mossi and Gourmantche women of Burkina Faso, livestock plays a central role among the agro-pastoralist Hausa and Zarma of Niger. The livestock mostly include goats, sheep, and poultry, but some better-off women own cattle. Women of these ethnic groups most commonly acquire animals through gifts, purchase, inheritance, habbanae, and barter. Many Hausa women mostly acquire livestock by using money from their trade or returns from their crops. It is also common to see women keep livestock from relatives residing in the city; in return, the two parties will share the offspring of those animals. These Niger women acquire livestock more easily than land, as there is no gender barrier to owning livestock, which are important means for increasing income: "While in the 1990s income from livestock sale was a negligible part of women's total income, at present it contributes a substantial part of women's income and savings. The woman has the liberty to use the proceeds as she wishes" (Djibo and Ibro, 1993: 11). The manure derived from her livestock belongs to her husband or head of household. Poultry, which are commonly raised by women, are easily sold for cash. Women feed their livestock from the stalks and grass of their husbands' fields, in exchange for providing labor, and they are required to care for the husbands' livestock as well. However, both husband and wife purchase animal feed during the dry season. The major challenges to more effective livestock production are a woman's labor load and the frequent occurrence of infectious and parasitic diseases.

5. Learning from RISE implementation about empowering women and engaging men

Successes

- RISE partners increased their organizational capacity to advance and measure gender equality and female empowerment by training staff, disaggregating key performance indicators by sex, and by hiring gender advisors.
- All participating programs have conducted at least one gender analysis and implemented the recommendations. Some of the participating programs even developed their own gender strategy and action plans based on analysis conducted the previous year.
- Women's participation in savings and lending groups enabled them to secure income, which they use to support business endeavors and/or household expenses such as preventive health care, food, school fees, and other expenses.
- All RISE partner activities included impressive numbers of women in most activities.
- Safe Spaces proved to be an effective behavior change communication medium within participating communities. The inclusion of female adolescents in reproductive health in the Safe Spaces activity appears to have changed girls' perceptions about modern contraception and their ideal first pregnancy age. For instance, girls participating in the program voted 19.4 years as the acceptable age for having a first child while their non-Safe Space counterparts chose 16.2 years. There is qualitative indication that perception changes contribute to preventing girls' early marriage.
- Maternal, infant, and young child nutrition behaviors went beyond focusing on the mothers of young children to exploring ways on how nutrition practices can be supported by involving other household members, such as mothers-in-law and husbands.
- Including older women and men (religious and customary leaders) in health and nutrition behavior change activities has a strong influence on younger women. The engagement of older

women and community leaders helped to create some level of peer pressure so that practices such as exclusive breastfeeding, delivering at the health center, and attending four antenatal consultations are being normalized.

- Food assistance seems to be a motivation for participating in work and health programs. In some communities, the Food for Peace (FFP) food assistance approach has proved to be an effective element in attracting members to fully participate in the creation of community infrastructure and assets. Similarly, having more access to food encourages pregnant and lactating women to visit health centers and seek health education.
- The addition of the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) component, which added more water points in villages, improved health outcomes and women's stretched time budgets. Less time spent finding water means women have more time for childcare and more flexibility to be more active in their communities.
- The Sahel Resilience Learning (SAREL) activity is an effective medium to mainstream learning and collaboration between RISE partners' staff. SAREL offered a space for RISE partners to test their gender assumptions and share best practices on gender equality and female empowerment.
- The recruitment of gender specialists, inclusion of gender in value chain assessments, development of a gender implementation plan, and holding fairs outside of the traditional livestock market structure all contributes to increased market access and participation by women.
- The availability of qualified gender staff ready to provide gender training to other staff, though not sufficient to achieve gender goals by itself, sends strong messages about the prioritization of gender equality to partners and stakeholders.
- Increasing the number of women in leadership positions within community-based organizations is best achieved using a culturally-appropriate approach.
- Strengthening women's and adolescent girls' self-confidence and improving their phone use through literacy, life skills, and nutrition trainings are key to female empowerment.

Challenges

- In the social contexts of RISE interventions, it is culturally inappropriate for many women, even widows who head households, to claim that they are the head of a household. They attribute it to a husband's brother. This is also valid for women whose husbands migrated to urban areas. Therefore, knowing if a woman is a widow, the wife of an emigrated husband, or a divorced woman is important for program staff.
- Though cowpeas, small ruminants, and poultry are good crops for engaging women, RISE activities do not target other crops that can have value for women. For instance, while groundnut is not in the RISE value chain basket in Eastern Burkina, women are involved in groundnuts farming in the Gourmantche and Hausa areas. Similarly, little known nutgrass is a very nutritious and lucrative crop for Hausa women of the Maradi Region.
- There is an assumption in value chain analyses that once women are integrated in the various value chains they improve their household incomes automatically. That is not the case. For

example, selling may not mean selling at a fair price. Women, who usually face mobility challenges, may not be able to access marketplaces.

- It is unclear who takes part in the Gender and Resilience Community of Practice advocated by SAREL. It is unclear if participants are project staff and other specialists or if this network involves core field actors such as farmers and other beneficiaries. Membership should be clear, broad, and inclusive.
- Low numbers of female staff coupled with limited gender and social analysis and staff gender training leads to a lack of uniform gender integration knowledge, practices, and budgeting across all program components and among all staff and community-based service providers. These observations can be made about most RISE partners.
- Some partners implemented gender activities with neither a gender strategy nor an action plan. As a result, good gender integration and female empowerment approaches were not incorporated into larger planning, budgeting, training, and evaluation structures.
- RISE activities often work in the same geographic zones with overlapping objectives. They often duplicate research and work on issues of common interest due to lack of coordination or communication.

6. Recommendations for RISE II

- Each activity should develop a concise Gender Strategy which builds on the USAID RISE gender strategy to develop a gender action plan or implementation plan that focuses on the activity's agro-ecological, geographical, and sociocultural specificities. The strategy will articulate the ultimate desired change for female beneficiaries (distinguishing among different sub-groups of women – adolescent, elderly, etc. – as needed). The desired outcomes need to be ambitious yet realistic and culturally-relevant given the extent of gender inequity in the given context.
- In addition, a gender assessment must precede every action in the project cycle. This will allow programs to articulate and integrate gender appropriately, from budgeting during design to implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.
- Women should be targeted according to their vulnerability status and context. Delivering certain training might be useful for one category of women within a group, but not for all, and some activities might be more effective if they were carried out on a needs-basis, allowing women to choose for themselves which activities are best for them.
- Activities might need to go beyond targeting commonly known and assumed challenges to focus on the unspoken and sociocultural group/community dynamics that potentially affect a programs' gender effectiveness.
- A program's or activity's gender issues are not only the gender specialist's or focal person's concern. Gender is a cross-cutting objective and should be "everybody's business".
- Promote the participation of men in female empowerment activities. Female empowerment is not synonymous with male disempowerment. By being and feeling included, some men can prove to be real change champions, as they end up grasping the rationale behind gender equality and female empowerment.

- Identify the gaps in gender equality using sex-disaggregated data that will enable the development of a gender action plan to close those gaps. Be cognizant that inclusion is one initial step toward gender equality; it is not necessarily the result.
- Capture agricultural women's, men's, pastoralist women's and migrants' understanding of vulnerability vis-a-vis land and water resources.
- Be sensitive to gender-based violence that can result from female empowerment activities. Train women, men, and adolescents in successful household negotiations for harmonious household relationships.
- Leverage the implementation of land and pastoral laws to allow women, youths, and marginalized populations access to land and other productive resources.
- Increase activities in women's poultry and small ruminant production.
- Be sensitive to women's lack of time to pursue activities outside of their usual chores and duties, and ensure that female beneficiaries have the time to engage in implementation activities.