Irish Aid
Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

GOAL

CASE STUDY
ARC-D IN NIGER

WHY CONDUCT AN ARC-D ANALYSIS / WHAT DID YOU SEEK TO CHANGE BY CONDUCTING AN ARC-D ANALYSIS?

Tillabéry, the western region of Niger, has seen a dramatic increase in the number of violent events. Humanitarian needs in this region, particularly in the Ouallam department, were already high due to climatic stresses such as drought and flooding and are increased due to persistent violence perpetrated by jihadist groups. The border regions of Tillabéry and Tahoua are hosting sites for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Malian refugees. Kidnappings and civilian casualties occur frequently, and non-state armed groups regularly target humanitarian actors.

In the province of Tillabéry, acute malnutrition threatens 12% of the population while severe acute malnutrition levels are at 2.6%. Health services are overwhelmed, vaccination coverage is weak and the nutritional situation is deteriorating in the region. Climatic stresses lead to significant agricultural losses. Moreover, the increase in attacks reduces the ability to freely transport goods, including basic necessities. As a result, supplies to local markets have been significantly reduced, leading to prices of basic commodities rising sharply.

Some displaced and refugee populations are already receiving some form of aid through humanitarian projects funded by ECHO or set up by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee (UNHCR).

Furthermore, some critical services, such as the system for monitoring and treating malnutrition, are being supported by various NGOs in the region. Nevertheless, this aid is limited to the most urgent emergencies and is restricted to specific groups (children under 5 years old, refugees, etc.).

At the end of 2019, GOAL Niger, which had not been present in this region, sought to develop a comprehensive programme, by preparing a context analysis which included various needs assessments and two 'Analyses of the Resilience of Communities to Disasters' (ARC-D) in communities around the town of Ouallam. The ARC-D studies sought to better understand the different risk scenarios (shocks and stresses) to which the communities were exposed, as well as their problems, constraints, vulnerabilities and capacities, to identify possible strategies. Additionally, specific activities were selected to build resilience in these communities and integrate them into the overall programme proposal.

For these studies, the communities of Samtigue and Bardouga around the town of Ouallam were selected, considering a range of criteria, including accessibility, security, level of exposure to various shocks, etc. The Zarma people inhabit Samtigue and Bardouga, which have populations of around 4,600 and 6,020, respectively. The main livelihoods in both communities are millet, beans and sorghum cultivation carried out by men and women alike; fishing, carried out mainly by men; livestock and small-scale trading; and market gardening, carried out mostly by women.

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Box 1: What is the ARC-D Toolkit? How is it structured?

The ARC-D toolkit assesses a community's resilience to disasters from a qualitative perspective. It consists of a practical assessment guide through a Focus Group Discussion, an orientation manual for the user and a digital platform for data gathering (CommCare).[1]

Since 2015, the ARC-D has been applied in 15 countries in three continents: Honduras, Nicaragua, Cuba, Colombia, Haiti, Niger, Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, Philippines, Sierra Leone and Mexico. It has been widely used in Honduras and Haiti, with more than 260 evaluations carried out to monitor and evaluate GOAL's programmes and other donor programmes, including from the European Union and USAID.

The practical assessment

Part A

Part A assesses the general context of the community and determines the risk scenario.

It captures essential data about the local population, governance structures, the natural and built environment, livelihoods, education, religion, existing organized groups, the groups with specific vulnerability, the shocks and stresses and the existing coping mechanisms.

Operationally, Part A requires the completion of tasks and activities such as deskwork and document revision, interviews with key informants, and in-field observations. The scope of Part A is defined by the context, meaning varying degrees of information often result.

Part B

Part B evaluates the level of community resilience to the risk scenario identified in Part A. The evaluation is a Focus Group Discussion session centered around 30 questions or components, linked each to a particular component of resilience.

Each question is given a score from 1-5 where 1 indicates characteristics of very weak resilience (you assign 1 point), and 5 indicates characteristics of strong resilience (you assign 5 points). At the end of the evaluation process, a total resilience score of the 30 questions is assigned, equivalent to the level of community resilience to disasters.

A) The 30 components can be classified in 4 thematic areas, corresponding to the Sendai Framework 2015-30 on DRR:

1. Understanding disaster risk
2. Strengthening governance to manage disaster risk
3. Reducing vulnerability to improve resilience
4. Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective response and to "Build Back Better" in recovery

B) These 30 components are also grouped in 8 key system sectors: education, economic, environment, political/governance, health, infrastructure, social/cultural, and disaster risk management.

HOW DID YOU CONDUCT THE ARC-D?

The ARC-D studies were conducted in several stages.

Preparation

Firstly, team members - the Programme Director and the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) Coordinator - with the support of a representative from the Council of Ouallam, visited the communities to carry out reconnaissance and briefly put forward the ARC-D process to community leaders. Beforehand, they also identified the different people within the communities who met the criteria and profiles to participate in the two main stages of the study (Part A and Part B) and thereby ensured appropriate representation (including people with disabilities and young people). The dates for carrying out parts A and B were also agreed upon with the community leaders.

Another important aspect when preparing the studies concerned the logistical, financial and security aspects (organization of travel and accommodation for the team), as well as recruiting two translators, which the Council of Ouallam recommended. An executive from the Planning Department and an executive from the Agriculture Department, who had a good command of the local language and knew the communities well, offered support in the studies. They were given a short briefing by the GOAL team before the fieldwork, particularly on the ARC-D guide and on respecting the purpose of the questions and answers in the group discussion.

During this phase, some time was set aside for researching secondary data on the two communities. The ARC-D teams requested to examine documents on several occasions, but to no avail, as no institutional documents were available for these communities.

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1 For more information on the ARC-D, please visit: http://resiliencenexus.org/arc_d_toolkit/what-it-is/

Part A - 30th December 2019

Following a detailed briefing by the Programme Director and MEAL Coordinatoron the ARC-D toolkit and safety guidelines, a team of 6 people (who had been trained in ARC-D a few months beforehand) made their way to the communities to complete the data collection process.

The team spent half a day in each community, meeting and interviewing between 8 and 10 pre-selected key liaisons (representatives of the different sectors of economic activity, a women's association, religious leaders, young people, people with disabilities, etc.) in each community. During these interviews, the team noticed a crowd had formed around them (of more than twenty people) who also helped to answer and give their opinion about the questions that were put to the key liaisons. The interviews/discussions were conducted through the translators.

Unfortunately, the team was unable to collect secondary data from the communities to triangulate the information collected, as it was either "unavailable" or did not exist.

Once the interviews were concluded, the team was able to identify the risk scenarios that would be used to assess the community's disaster resilience level (Part B):

- Community of Samtigué: drought leading to widespread crop losses (millet, beans, sorghum) and food insecurity.
- Community of Bardouga: flooding followed by water-borne outbreaks of epidemics/diseases.

Part B - 31st December 2019

Using the information obtained in part A, as well as identifying and validating the risk scenario to be studied, the same teams that had conducted Part A (each composed of 3 GOAL staff and a translator) returned the following day to lead the group discussions and assign scores to the 30 components.

In each community, a mixed group (men, women, young people, the elderly, people with disabilities, etc.) was called on for the discussions.

In Samtigue, the group was composed of 12 people, including 6 females (2 adult women, 2 women with disabilities; 1 young girl and 1 community representative) and 6 men (1 village chief, 2 young men, 1 man with disabilities and 2 village elders).

In Bardouga, the group was composed of 6 men (2 community leaders, 2 members of the School Management Committee, 1 young man and 1 community representative) and 6 females (3 adult women, 1 community representative, 1 member of the association of mother educators and 1 midwife). In both cases, clear instructions and a lengthy explanation from the GOAL teams ensured that the community leaders were able to bring together well-balanced groups in terms of gender and age.

Again, discussions were conducted through translators, with the group discussions on the 30 components lasting over 4 hours.

Consolidation of results and reporting

Once back in the office, the teams reviewed and digitised all the data. Before being entered into CommCare, the scores and justifications were also reviewed and discussed with the GOAL Global Resilience Advisor to ensure that the scores assigned accurately matched the communities' discussions and explanations. Once the final corrections had been made, the data was entered into CommCare and uploaded to the ResilienceNexus website. The latter was carried out by the MEAL Coordinator.

Financial resources

In financial terms, these two ARC-D studies cost 2,883,440 Central African CFA francs or €4,396 in total for both assessments. This budget included the per diems and accommodation costs for the ARC-D teams, as well as the rental of two (2) vehicles with drivers (1 per team), petrol costs, and translation costs.

WHAT WERE THE MAIN ISSUES YOU ENCOUNTERED WHILE CONDUCTING ARC-D? AND WHAT WERE THE SUCCESS FACTORS?

Both teams encountered several difficulties during these studies.

Firstly, no GOAL staff member spoke the local language, Zarma, and the vast majority of people in Samtigue and Bardouga spoke neither French nor Hausa. GOAL, therefore, had to use translators who spoke both French and Zarma. Translation impacted the process in two ways. Firstly, conducting the interviews and discussions was a less efficient process, becoming more time consuming. Secondly, there was a risk of bias, misunderstandings and errors due to translations by non-specialists in the subject matter.

Secondly, collecting and analysing the information suffered from the lack of secondary documentation to triangulate the primary data collected. The team were unable to obtainmany 'key' documents such as the local development plan and other institutional records relating to the communities, neither in-situ nor online. The documents in question were not found in the communities being studied.

Apart from these two significant difficulties, the team also observed positive aspects while conducting the study, notably:

- The hospitality, willingness and frankness showed by the community representatives in answering the questions, which made planning easier based on real context and facts.
- The interaction itself with the communities gave the team the chance to discover and learn about new realities and lessons from a socio-cultural perspective.

HOW DID YOU USE THE FINDINGS FROM ARC-D?

The ARC-D results from the Ouallam communities provided necessary information for the development of the programme design. The results of the ARC-D studies that were conducted in two peri-urban villages in Ouallam were consistent with other assessments that GOAL had conducted in parallel. In Dan Balou in the Zinder region, an assessment highlighted the need to address both immediate basic needs (independent of shocks and stresses) and to develop long-term resilience strategies (for the main shocks and stresses in the area: droughts and floods and associated epidemics, epizootics, and pest infestation). In Bardouga, where resilience was assessed against a flood scenario (including associated epidemics), the total score was 2.1 (on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very low) or 42%. In Samtigue, where resilience was assessed against a drought scenario, the total score was 1.7 or 34% (see table 1 below). In both villages, resilience to their main risks was deemed to be very low to low, with the lowest scores (1 and 2) in the following areas: livelihoods (agriculture and livestock with particularly low adoption of climate-smart practices) and food security (components 15-20), risk analysis (components 1 and 2), water security and emergency health services (components 13 and 27) and disaster preparedness (components 24-27). Nevertheless, some relatively good scores (3 and 4) should be capitalised on by the actions to strengthen resilience. These were related to community governance, social cohesion and volunteerism (components 7, 8, 21 and 30). The ARC-D studies also showed that there was a good level of knowledge and adoption of good hygiene practices in both villages, whereas health outcomes were quite low due to lack of access to safe drinking water, poor hygiene infrastructure and limited health services.

Level description table			
0-30% (30-45 points)	1	Very low resilience	Little awareness of issues and no action
31%-50% (46-75 points)	2	Low resilience	Some awareness and motivation, some action, but action is piecemeal and short-term.
51%-70% (76 -105 ´points)	3	Medium resilience	Awareness and long-term actions, but these are not linked to a long-term strategy and/or not all aspects of the problem are addressed.
71%-90% (106-135 points)	4	Close to resilience	Actions are long-term, linked to strategy and address main aspects of the issue, but there are still deficiencies (especially systemic) in implementation.
91%-100% (136-150 points)	5	Resilience	Actions long-term, linked to strategy, addressing all aspects of the issue, embedded in society and sustainable.

Table 1. *ARC-D Levels of resilience*
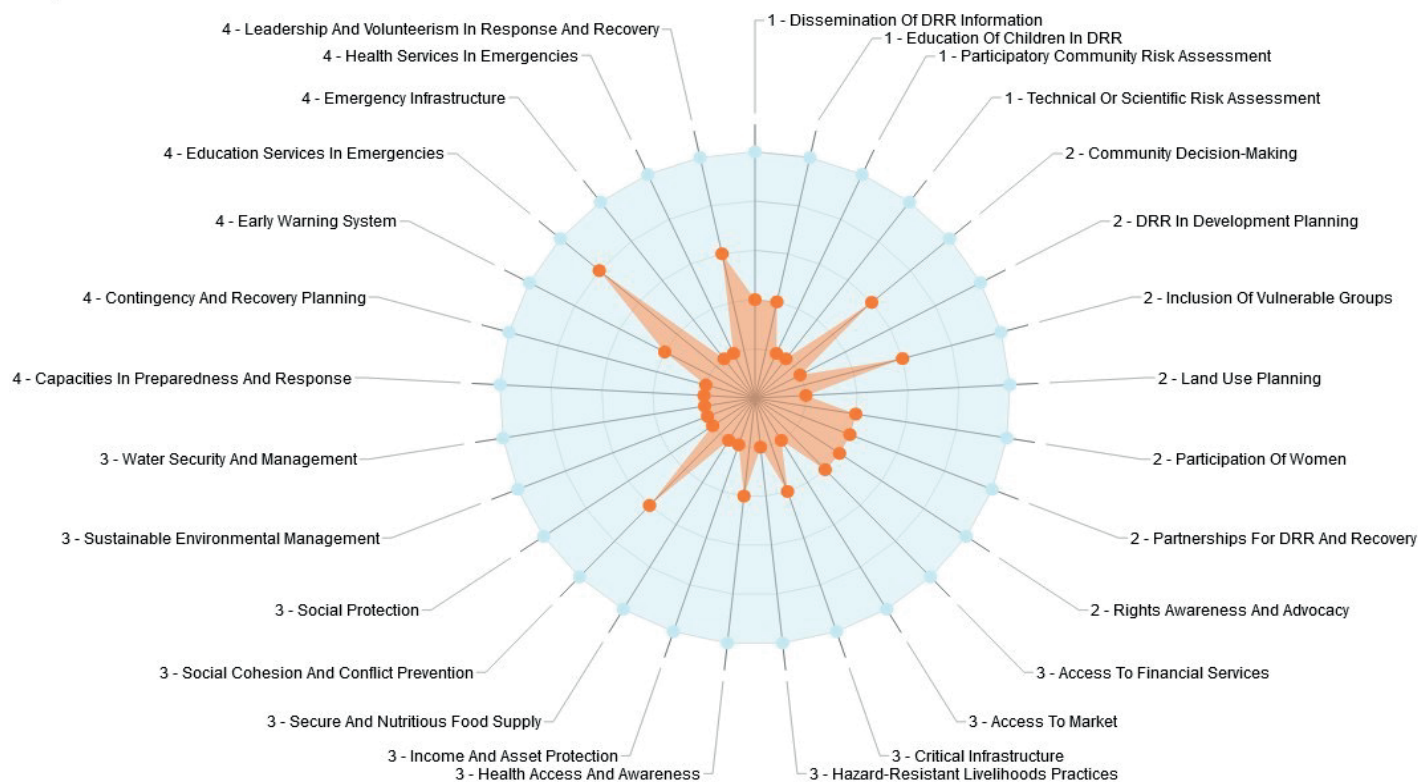
FIGURE 1. *Resilience Radar. Community of Samtigue, risk scenario: Drought.*
Source: GOAL, ResilienceNexus.org

These findings allowed for the development of a multi-sectoral strategy that was included in the programme design that addressed the main challenges in the communities, in particular agriculture and livelihood systems, as well as food security and the availability of basic services.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THE PROCESS? FROM THE RESULTS/FINDINGS? FROM THE USE OF THE FINDINGS?

Through the ARC-D toolkit, the resilience analysis methodology was considered by the GOAL Niger programme to be a logical approach due to its well-correlated steps. The components of Part B are comprehensive, considering all aspects of people's socio-economic and cultural lives.

One of the main lessons learned regarding the implementation of the studies relates to the mastery of the local language by the team conducting the study. If there is a need for translations, translators should be fully trained in applying the ARC-D tool.

Another lesson from the data collection process relates to secondary data. The team did assign sufficient time to research secondary documentation before travelling to the target communities, believing that they would be able to find or request this information, which was not the case. Therefore, it is important to spend time at the beginning of the study researching this information as opposed to waiting until the field team is deployed to the communities. It is also important to try to collect secondary information at departmental and municipal levelsfrom different institutions, as well as NGOs etc.

WHAT ARE THE GOOD PRACTICES ARISING FROM CONDUCTING ARC-D?

One good practice that the team identified was the quality of contact between the programme team and the people in new communities. The amount of time spent listening to the community through the group discussion and the wide range of topics discussed helped the assessment team gain trust and credibility within the community; the communities see the assessment team, and through them GOAL and the local government technicians, as being open and ready to listen to their issues and concerns.

WHAT ARE THE THINGS YOU WILL DO DIFFERENTLY NEXT TIME?

Considering the lessons learned from this experience, the assessment team should give an increased amount of time to the development of ARC-D study. In particular, specific time should be devoted to researching documents such as the strategic frameworks and orientation of the development plans of the targeted communes and communities. The assessment team should also contact local authorities and institutions to query what documentation exists and can be accessed locally or elsewhere, as well as contact NGOs working in the same area to enquire whether they have any information or know where to come across information about the area.

The team also believes that more time should be given to the field observation stage, including observing the impacts of past disasters, where possible (when they are still evident). This may include visits to fields and crops, infrastructure (roads, houses, water installations, etc.), livelihood assets and natural areas.

Finally, local languages will also need to be considered in the future. If no member of an assessment team speaks the local language of the communities that are the focus of an ARC-D study, there will be a need to spend time identifying individuals from local organizations working on resilience or disaster management issues who could be 'recruited' for the duration of the study and trained on ARC-D. These individuals will need to be particularly well versed in using the question guide for Part B, ensuring they are part of the team and facilitate group discussions with as little risk of translation error as possible.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO OTHERS WHO MAY BE CONSIDERING TO APPLY ARC-D?

The ARC-D toolkit is simple, cost efficient and quick to implement. ARC-D is also a toolkit that addresses as many of the components of resilience as possible while encompassing all aspects of the key sectors (education, economy, health, infrastructure, etc.) that contribute to the development and well-being of a given community.

For all these reasons, survey team strongly encourages other organizations (NGOs, the state, consultants, etc.) to use the ARC-D toolkit for their resilience analyses.

Box 2: Advantages and opportunities of the ARC-D Toolkit

For organizations, decision makers, as well as communities and institutions involved in applying the tool:

» It is a rapid evaluation of the main risk scenarios that particularly affect the community.

» The resilience components of the community can be captured in a holistic picture.

» The tool presents a learning opportunity to understand the community's existing coping mechanisms.

» Well applied, the toolkit increases knowledge and awareness by the community about the risks they are exposed to, their level of resilience to them, and what measures can be taken to increase their resilience to the risk scenario.

» It is versatile as it can also be used as a diagnostic, evaluation or planning tool, and ultimately contribute to strategic frameworks for building community resilience to disasters.

» It helps to highlight the fundamental problems related to poverty and vulnerability.

» The method is geared towards sparking conversation and fostering integration and understanding between the facilitating team and the focal group participants.

» Its design is completely aligned with the global politic on DRR, as described in the Sendai Action Framework.

» ARC-D's solid resilience framework can serve to analyse capacities in diverse contexts while being flexible enough to adapt the tool to changing or specific circumstances that are found in every community.