



# DELIVERING CLIMATE RESILIENCE PROGRAMMES IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED CONTEXTS: A SYNOPSIS OF LEARNING ON THE GROUND

LESSONS FROM THE DELIVERY OF CLIMATE RESILIENCE PROGRAMMING IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED CONTEXTS

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Compendium of BRACED project case studies



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## Abbreviations

<b>ACTED</b>	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
<b>BRACED</b>	Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters programme
<b>CAF</b>	Climate adaptation fund
<b>CCA</b>	Climate change adaptation
<b>CfA</b>	Cash for assets
<b>CRS</b>	Catholic Relief Services
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organisation
<b>DCF</b>	Decentralising Climate Funds
<b>DFID</b>	UK Department for International Development
<b>DRR</b>	Disaster risk reduction
<b>EWG</b>	Early Warning Group
<b>FCAC</b>	Fragile and conflict-affected contexts
<b>INGO</b>	International non-governmental organisation
<b>IRISS</b>	Improving Resilience to Climate Change in South Sudan
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and evaluation
<b>NEF</b>	Near East Foundation
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation
<b>SILCs</b>	Savings and Internal Lending Communities
<b>SUR1M</b>	Scaling-Up Resilience for 1 Million People
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>VSLAs</b>	Village Savings and Loan Associations

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# About the Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters programme (BRACED) case studies

## Introduction to the case studies

This compendium should be read in combination with the report 'Delivering climate resilience programmes in fragile and conflict-affected areas' (Neaverson et al., 2019). The case studies in this compendium form part of a wider research project undertaken by the Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters (BRACED) Knowledge Manager to explore how climate resilience projects and programmes can be designed, set up and managed to be resilient themselves for more effective delivery in fragile and conflict-affected contexts (FCAC). The research project specifically focuses on operational considerations rather than more technical, programmatic ones.

The project case studies capture the experiences of four BRACED projects delivering climate resilience programming in fragile and/or conflict-affected contexts. Each case study seeks to answer two of the learning review sub-questions: 'How has programming in FCAC affected BRACED operations?' and 'How have BRACED projects responded and adapted to the changing context?' The four project-level case studies focus in depth on the specifics of BRACED project delivery within a particular context and look at the following BRACED projects:

- Improving Resilience to Climate Change in South Sudan (IRISS) – South Sudan
- The Myanmar Alliance project – Myanmar

- Scaling-Up Resilience for 1 Million People (SUR1M) – Niger and Mali
- Decentralising Climate Funds (DCF) – Mali (this project also operated in Senegal)

Along with the programme-level and external document reviews and stakeholder interviews, these case studies provide the evidence base for the main report. Case study findings are represented throughout the accompanying report, offering practical examples of BRACED project experiences. These have been used to help answer the overarching question: 'How can climate resilience projects and programmes be designed, set up and managed [by funders and implementers] to be resilient to the challenges of implementing in FCAC?'

## **Methodology**

Each case study is based on a comprehensive review of monthly and quarterly project reports, annual project evaluations and learning reports. The learning review team collated and organised all relevant information according to the review's coding framework. Codes for data collation included: 'project context', 'context affecting project delivery', 'project affecting context', 'project adapting to context', 'achievements within context', and 'learning and recommendations for resilience programming' (in general and in FCAC). The team used initial findings as the basis for stakeholder interviews, to explore and further understand the documented project experience. In total, the team did a comprehensive review of 166 project-specific documents and interviewed 27 stakeholders for this compendium of case studies.



## Format

Each of the case studies in this compendium presents the four projects' stories of delivering climate resilience programming within the context they have been operating in. The case studies are structured as follows:

1. introducing the project
2. the context in which the project was operating
3. how the context affected project delivery
4. how the project was designed and how it evolved to work within the context
5. what was learnt about delivering climate resilience projects within the context.

## Case Study 1

# Improving Resilience to Climate Change in South Sudan (IRISS)

*This case study is based on a comprehensive review of 42 IRISS project proposal, monitoring, evaluation, results reporting and learning documents, as well as five stakeholder interviews.*

*It has been reviewed and validated by the project team.*

## Introducing the IRISS project

The BRACED IRISS project ran from 2015 to 2018 in South Sudan, as part of the overall BRACED programme. IRISS was designed to tackle 'the combination of poverty, insecurity, disasters and climate extremes...' (BRACED IRISS, 2018a: 5); its goal was for nearly 400,000 farmers and agro-pastoralists, especially women and girls, to have improved resilience to drought and floods (BRACED IRISS, 2016b). The project also sought to influence climate change policy and increase climate financing. In addition, it aimed to produce learning and evidence on climate change adaptation (CCA) and resilience-building in fragile contexts characterised by conflict and weak institutions (Bell et al., 2017: 5). The project received a no-cost extension as part of the BRACED-X extension phase, to deliver remaining activities, closing in June 2018.

IRISS was implemented by a consortium made up of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), Concern Worldwide (consortium lead) and the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), with support from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the SNV Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV). Local research organisation The Sudd Institute was the primary research partner and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) provided policy-related inputs. Together, these actors had many years

of experience of programming in the project's operational areas, with longstanding established relationships with local communities, as well as in South Sudan more generally (BRACED IRISS, 2016a: 36). The make-up of the consortium changed over the project's lifetime, partly due to the insecure political context (which is explored later in this case study).

The project had two main areas of operation: Aweil (North and West), where Concern Worldwide in South Sudan implemented activities, and Tonj South, where ACTED was the main implementing partner. Similar (though not identical) packages of interventions were implemented in both operating areas (BRACED IRISS, 2017: 41). IRISS also operated at the national level, with its Consortium Coordination Unit based in Juba. The project was also originally due to operate in two other areas:

- Upper Nile State was removed from the project plans during the Project Development Grant (PDG) phase in February 2014, ahead of the BRACED proposal submission, 'principally for security and conflict reasons' (BRACED IRISS, 2014: 11).
- Oxfam GB were originally part of the consortium and were to be the implementing partner in Lakes State (BRACED IRISS, 2014: 10). However, they pulled out of the project shortly before it was launched.

**Map 1. IRISS project sites**

From the very start, the consortium anticipated the project would be challenging because it was set to be 'one of the first to [address] climate change and its impact at multiple levels' in South Sudan (BRACED IRISS, 2014: 20). IRISS was designed and began when the country was becoming a new member of the Global Environment Facility (GEF). 'In this respect, and given the ongoing and unpredictable civil conflict and humanitarian relief focused aid effort, BRACED was viewed as an ambitious and innovative programme for South Sudan' (Bell et al., 2017: 11).

## **The context in which IRISS was operating: South Sudan**

### **THE ANTICIPATED CONTEXT**

The IRISS consortium provided headline details of the insecurity and conflict context, as well as insight into South Sudan's weak market and governance situation in its funding proposal – for example, in the risk register and duty of care sections.

At the time of proposal submission, one million people remained displaced due to conflict. While disaster management was considered a national priority, the government, United Nations (UN) agencies and other stakeholders were overwhelmed by responding to immediate needs. The proposal acknowledged that the conflict context might continue throughout the project's lifetime and explained:

- doing business in South Sudan at that point was 'extremely difficult', as institutions were in the 'nascent stages of development' (BRACED IRISS, 2014: 37)
- the government's capacity was expected to be 'hampered by the humanitarian crisis' (BRACED IRISS, 2014: 36)
- the small private sector was reliant on importation, with changing customs regulations, fluctuating taxes and difficulty transporting goods overland leading to high prices (BRACED IRISS, 2014: 36).

However, the project targeted relatively stable areas. This meant the broader conflict context was not expected to significantly interrupt operational delivery. One of the main project assumptions was that 'conflict [would not] hamper interventions' (BRACED IRISS, 2014: 40). At the beginning of the programme, when the project showed a lot of promise, this was also the view of both the funder, the UK Department for International Development (DFID), and the Fund Manager. However, the IRISS team expected they would need to 'have a flexible and iterative approach to their work', given 'the political and social dynamics of South Sudan are extremely fluid' (BRACED IRISS, 2014: 23).

### THE ACTUAL CONTEXT

IRISS operated within the backdrop of a protracted crisis (BRACED IRISS, 2018a: 4). South Sudan became a new nation in 2011 and has been in a state of civil war since 2013. There was political turmoil and uncertainty around a peace agreement throughout the project's implementation. The IRISS team learnt that 'there was no last chance for peace – every single shock that the country experienced [was] met with the expectation that it's about adjusting and continuing' (Key Informant Interview (KII) 6). The latest peace agreement was reached in September 2018, after the IRISS project had closed.

The operating areas remained relatively stable, as expected. However, they were still affected by the deteriorating situation elsewhere in the country. It is clear from reviewing the project's 31 monitoring reports that the operating context was in flux throughout implementation and that it continued to evolve in unpredictable ways. Often the localised issues were linked to the bigger, underlying violent conflict, governance and economic issues. There were relatively stable points, as well as events that threatened and often adversely affected that relative stability.

Several interrelated contextual factors in South Sudan were directly relevant to the project during its lifetime. The most pertinent were:

- **Violent conflict at all levels**, including local resource-based and ethnic-based tensions: at an early stage, the project team identified insecurity in the project's operating areas as a major constraint, with political or inter-ethnic dynamics resulting in violence that erupted from time to time (BRACED IRISS 2016a: 36–37). There were 'local level conflicts' that had been 'simmering away' throughout the project's implementation in both operating areas (KII 6).

- **Humanitarian context and relief mindset of project participants:** South Sudan became an 'increasingly humanitarian context' during the project (BRACED IRISS, 2018b: 72). An extreme level of food insecurity was registered throughout the project's lifetime – brought about by a combination of climate- and conflict-related factors. Generally, INGOs in South Sudan deliver humanitarian aid and basic services, while 'efforts and approaches to resilience are fragmented' and 'medium- to long-term funding is limited in the South Sudan context' (The Resilience Exchange Network, 2018). There is a high rate of aid dependency in Aweil (North and West) due to sustained food insecurity and violent conflict in the region (BRACED IRISS, 2016b: 17).
- **Change in governance structure and ongoing weak governance/institutional structures and policy framework:** 'during the course of the project, the official States of South Sudan changed' (BRACED IRISS, 2018b: 5). These were not fully recognised across the country, providing another source of conflict (KII 10). In addition, 'the South Sudan governance structure seriously [affected] the quality of partnerships at any level within the Government of South Sudan' (BRACED IRISS, 2016a: 31) and 'the policy infrastructure [was] still under construction' (Bell et al., 2017: 26).
- **Worsening economic and market situation:** the project implementing period was characterised by hyperinflation and the unstable exchange rate of the South Sudanese Pound (SSP). 'Procurement and transportation of goods is a general challenge in South Sudan. There is an absence or lack of suppliers for many items both locally and nationally' (Bell et al., 2017: 41). Nationally, this lack of availability has meant that high import taxes and levies are an issue for cross-border trade here (BRACED IRISS, 2016a: 40). In addition, access via internal road

networks, for example between Juba and Tonj, is restricted during the rainy season, delaying transportation of project materials from the capital to the field.

Despite these contextual factors, the two operating areas of Aweil and Tonj South<sup>1</sup> have remained relatively stable. These regions are disconnected from the capital Juba, both politically and economically, with food and products often coming from neighbouring Sudan (KII 10). However, during the project, these areas were still 'negatively affected by the worsening security and economic situation in the wider country' (Bell et al., 2017: 11–12). Though Aweil and Tonj were selected for their stability, 'the complex social linkages regardless of area [potentially] meant that conflict in one area had downstream effects to the extent that one has to consider conflict as being a risk regardless of perceived stability' (KII 6). Aweil and Tonj have different political and governance contexts; they are not homogeneous and 'the conflicts were evolving [differently] in those two different contexts' (KII 6).

When asked how the reality differed from the original expectations, a project team member from the lead implementing agency, Concern Worldwide, reflected that 'maybe we didn't expect it to be as hard' (KII 6). The main implementing partners had previous programming experience in the selected operating areas. However, despite this, they could not foresee the uncertainty around a peace agreement and the related political turmoil that was to continue throughout the project's implementation (BRACED IRISS, 2014: 40–41).

<sup>1</sup> Aweil (North and West) in the former state of Northern Bahr el Ghazal (NBeG) and Tonj South in the former state of Warrup.



## How the context affected project delivery

Insecurity affected the IRISS project's operational delivery against its objectives and workplan throughout the project. This was the case to a greater or lesser extent at different times in the project's lifetime and in different ways in the two operating areas. Often, only one or other of the operating areas was affected. This meant that, while programming had to temporarily stop or be reduced in one location, it could continue in the other. Regional activities such as research were also usually able to continue.

The context affected project delivery in the following ways:

- **Insecurity impacted on access to project sites**, for direct project delivery, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and field-based research activities. This was both in terms of road access being cut off and the resulting longer time taken to travel to the field. There were also specific instances of it not being safe for staff to be field-based. This, together with other factors, led to activity delays and underspending.
- **This insecurity also affected retention of partners**, for example, after the security crisis in Juba in July 2016 and an organisational risk assessment, consortium member SNV made a decision to withdraw from the project and South Sudan, ultimately doing so in late 2016/early 2017.
- **The conflict and humanitarian situation (food insecurity) affected community members' priorities and therefore project participation**, including in groups such as the Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs):

*Sometimes you would learn that there [were] going to be attacks – places would empty out. So, if your population is mobile then there is not going to be*

*programming. However, [we monitored] people coming back and then [resumed or adjusted] activities as the context would dictate. (KII 6)*

There were cases where beneficiaries did not participate in the project activities because there was a food drop happening nearby; this was part of the reason for restructuring the project and having a cash for assets (CfA) component (explored later in this case study) (KII 10).

- **The combination of limited internal supply, border closure and import restrictions, high import taxes, an unstable exchange rate and hyperinflation affected project procurement (KII 8).** The project saw increased costs of tools and seeds and had difficulties and delays in getting hold of them. Internal approval processes had to be updated to adapt to this hyperinflation and the project paid in US dollars because, apart from the local CfA work, no one would take the South Sudanese Pound (SSP). The VSLA groups were also affected by hyperinflation. The overall economic situation affected the project's financial management, such as by delaying bank transfers.
- **Political and economic uncertainty affected the scope for private sector engagement and partnerships** (e.g. for farmers) and distracted government stakeholders from engaging with the project, such as in policy-related work.

Overall, the fragile and violent conflict context affected the time the project needed to deliver planned activities. It also led to inefficiencies related to staffing and timeliness of delivery. In line with more general BRACED programme-level conclusions about resilience-building being a process requiring a longer-term view, the IRISS project team found that 'more time [was needed] to see change at a systematic scale, for systems working' (KII 6).

It is evident from the IRISS monitoring reports that the project delivery in terms of outputs and spending were under ongoing scrutiny from the BRACED Fund Manager, and there were frequent follow-ups on issues highlighted in the project's monthly monitoring reports (KII 10). The Fund Manager was not able to travel in-country as frequently as to BRACED projects elsewhere, due to security restrictions. However, they did visit both Juba and the field, and visited the lead agency headquarters twice to mitigate travel restrictions to South Sudan.

The IRISS project was consistently shown to be underspending (for both FCAC-related and other reasons) in quarterly anticipated spending forecasts in accordance with its budget. Towards the end of the project, this led the Fund Manager to ask the project to restructure. After ongoing discussions and negotiations, the project cut some activities internally, reduced its budget and was also given a no-cost extension. An IRISS team member explained:

*We phased our activities... We weren't going to do [certain activities] until later... When the Fund Manager [told us] 'you are not spending fast enough'... we decided to cut the ones we had not started yet... [These activities] were related to logistics and procuring/delivering items. (KII 6)*

The restructuring had significant implications on beneficiary numbers, with the project reaching fewer people but more often.

### **How the project was designed and how it evolved to work within the context**

From the very beginning, project partners planned to emphasise 'doing things right and not being rushed, as [often] occurs during humanitarian/emergency interventions' (BRACED IRISS, 2014: 23). The project sought to support South Sudan to 'move away from

humanitarian crisis to early recovery and for development interventions to begin to be the principal focus'. It also aimed to 'align efforts across a wide range of actors and enhance synergies across humanitarian, development and climate assistance' (BRACED IRISS, 2014: 27).

The IRISS team took a reflective approach to their work throughout the project and demonstrated a strong understanding of their operating context. Working in South Sudan required an ongoing conflict-sensitive approach, driven by the need to protect both project staff and participants. It was also closely linked to security and duty of care for project staff:

*[The project was always] looking at the unintended consequences of what we [were doing] and having people discuss more around any implications... This has to be incorporated into programming along with [a consideration of] Do No Harm and protection issues. This might be seen as a detriment or obstacle to programming but in actual fact it was a very good buffer to ensure we weren't doing harm on the ground. (KII 6)*

IRISS was flexibly implemented and there are multiple examples, in the project's M&E reports, of the project changing and adapting throughout its lifetime, as it halted and adjusted activities that were no longer appropriate or feasible, while also introducing others that responded to participant needs. However, from the reporting alone, it has not always been clear which changes were due to operating in FCAC (either directly or indirectly).

Some of the project design change was community-led, such as dealing with the potential problem of cash savings in VSLAs losing value because of ongoing hyperinflation. As a result, the

VSLA cycle was shortened; individuals invested paid out savings in hard assets like livestock and/or loaned out the money to members with interest. An IRISS team member explained:

*If they kept cash then it was going to lose its value, which meant they needed to keep the loans out. So, everything that came in, you had to immediately loan out. (KII 6)*

Other project changes were more fundamental and required interaction between the BRACED project team, Fund Manager and DFID. One year from the end of BRACED, the IRISS project projected it would underspend. This was partly due to delays related to operating in a conflict context and being overly optimistic about what could be delivered within this context – and when – in the original design. The BRACED Fund Manager encouraged the implementing team to reflect on what was realistic and revise their planned activities within the remainder of the programme, accordingly. As a result, the project cut a number of planned activities and was given a six-month no-cost extension to complete the work. This had implications for both the numbers of beneficiaries reached and the overall BRACED logframe. Shortly after the restructure, the IRISS team put in a proposal to add a CfA component. The following combined factors made this a unique proposition requiring direct consideration by DFID:

- the scale of the funding request
- the humanitarian, non-traditional resilience-building nature of the work
- the violent conflict/war-zone context
- the recent project restructures.

The Fund Manager worked with DFID's South Sudan office to consider the feasibility of programme and operational delivery. Ultimately, DFID South Sudan liked the combined humanitarian and resilience focus – colloquially termed 'humanitarian plus' – of the proposed work and it was signed off.

Lessons can be learned from the protracted proposal development and sign-off processes for the CfA component, including the importance of fund managers being set up to facilitate the allocation of contingency budgets and respond within humanitarian timescales (KII 10). Overall, there was a mismatch between the level of compliance expected by the BRACED Fund Manager (and, in turn, DFID) and the level of flexibility required by the project team to adapt to the changing context, make the most of emerging opportunities and act nimbly. While, on paper, there may have been flexibility in BRACED (e.g. a +/- 10% variance in spend against budget lines), this was difficult to achieve within a consortium context in practice (KII 6 and 8).

*[There was also] misunderstanding among BRACED projects about the amount of flexibility allowed; projects assumed it was more restrictive than it actually was... [not realising] that they do not need to ask permission up to +/- 10% per budget category/output. (KII 10)*

This suggests the guidance could have been clearer.

The need for 'measured flexibility' when implementing resilience programmes in contexts like South Sudan is a clear theme; in other words, it is 'not just flexibility to do whatever you want. Flexibility needs to be carefully managed' (KII 6). The BRACED IRIS project responded to moments of heightened insecurity by moving at-risk staff and partners to working remotely:

*[The] level of engagement was affected – [with] more remote engagement when security [was] high and taking opportunities to engage when security permitted it. (KII 6)*

If field activities were temporarily halted, the IRISS team gave priority to these 'unsafe areas' once the security situation normalised and implementation resumed. This meant they focused more on catching up on – and even speeding up – activities 'so that if insecurity happens... activities are not affected in those areas even if people are displaced' (KII 8). Overall, the IRISS project's outputs and outcomes remained stable throughout implementation, even when inputs, activities and partners were adjusted.

### **What was learnt about delivering climate resilience programming in contexts such as South Sudan?**

A key reflection of the IRISS project team was that, more generally, building climate resilience in South Sudan is possible, particularly in (relative) pockets of stability, where it is more feasible to promote longer-term thinking and develop resilience capacity. Through its research and policy work, the IRISS project contributed to an enhanced policy environment for CCA. Two examples were: 1) through playing a key role in the development of the first State of the Environment report (SoER) and National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs); and 2) towards Global Environment Facility (GEF) funding. A BRACED Fund Manager representative reflected that this was quite an achievement (KII 10). Both Concern and ACTED plan to continue climate resilience interventions in the BRACED operating areas, subject to funding. One IRISS team member said they feel strongly that 'just because people are in a war-torn country does not mean they are less affected by climate extremes; in fact, they're more affected' (KII 8).

However, the starting point is different in contexts like South Sudan and will likely take longer. Though the project achieved a lot during its lifetime, more time (i.e. more years of programming) is needed to create greater sustainable change in contexts like South Sudan, where resilience is being depleted on an ongoing basis. The project team learnt that 'resilience-building in South Sudan is all about small victories' (Iqbal et al., 2017). The findings of the IRISS final evaluation can be seen as mixed; there were several instances of external and internal factors affecting the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the project's interventions (Bell et al., 2017). There may also have been instances of the project's encouraging achievements having both positive and negative consequences, though there was insufficient evidence to say this with certainty. For example, increased food theft and cattle raiding could have been linked to enhanced food production and improved livestock health. Conversely, a reduction in the incidences of ambushes in the community could have been linked to the construction of community access roads and increased movement of people (KII 8).

IRISS discovered that linking into the wider programming agenda was important; the project reported that 'BRACED [linked] into the wider recovery and resilience agenda' (KII 6). A synthesis of the project's research efforts found it to be 'an important climate resilience programme operating in the country' (BRACED IRISS, 2018a: 5). The project helped set up the local Resilience Exchange Network (REN), providing funding and leadership. This network now seems to have established its own momentum and is embedded in a sustainable institution: the South Sudan Non-governmental Organisation (NGO) Forum.



The project team found that the economic, political, social and cultural context and its implications needed to be well-understood and factored into programming – to understand both entry points and opportunities. The project team members interviewed suggested that context analysis should go beyond a description of the situation and enable a deep understanding of the dynamics of the system, so that the resilience project can address the underlying causes of fragility and vulnerability and not simply consider its symptoms (KIIs 6 and 8). The project team explored the potential use of humanitarian interventions to mitigate the effects of the fragile and conflict context, and to protect and sustain the resilience gains made through the CfA component. Two IRISS project team members independently suggested that resilience thinking is relevant within humanitarian programming more generally: 'short-term humanitarian decisions... if made differently [can have] positive long-term outcomes' (KIIs 6 and 8).

The team discovered the importance of focusing 'on the grassroots, on the people [at the local level] rather than the structures and systems in a place like South Sudan' (KII 6). They learnt to 'stay out of politics and... the conflict [and] focus on technical elements in the government – [getting] those government wins (that relationship) in that way' (KII 8). The project also showed the importance of engaging local leaders for creating security to work within and help grow their understanding of the longer-term benefits of resilience-building programming. This, in turn, facilitates buy-in from communities.

There is also anecdotal evidence that IRISS has contributed to improved community cohesion, enhancing a sense of unity and togetherness as a result of group-based decision-making and risk-taking (specifically the VSLAs). This was a finding in both the project's mid-term review and final evaluation (BRACED

IRISS, 2016; Bell et al., 2017). The IRISS project has reported that having a mix of different ethnicities within the same groups in Tonj South has been positive for community cohesion. The project has potentially had an indirect impact on peace-building/reducing violent conflict. However, this was not fully explored or confirmed in project reporting (KII 8). This shows the importance of the project's M&E efforts capturing the unintended effects on social change, such as community cohesion: 'so many of the successes of projects (including IRISS) are not captured within a rigid logframe' (KII 10).

The IRISS team also deepened their understanding of the need to adapt programming approaches to the context. For example, they found that VSLAs can work well but may need to operate differently to accommodate the effects of economic crisis.

The IRISS project team emphasised the need for strong systems for planning and procurement – to keep late and/or mis-delivery of goods to a minimum. The project team felt the Fund Manager and funder's (DFID) focus on compliance was important but difficult in both a consortium and fragile setting. In stakeholder interviews, the following points were strongly shown to be emerging characteristics and enabling factors that could help contribute to 'measured flexibility':

- **Trust and understanding of both the context and the project by the donor/fund manager, based on established relationships and open communications,** were highlighted as important:

*If you want to be quick, adaptive, flexible there needs to be fewer rather than more procedures in place... [It] is about a level of trust (KII 6).*

There was an emphasis on the importance of an ongoing dialogue with all project stakeholders (at all levels) and the need to view the context-related issues 'not just as obstacles to be overcome but actually [as] challenges that need to be addressed' (KII 6).

- Interviewees underlined **the vital role of setting up the project plan and budget to be adaptable and flexible from the beginning**. For example, including a contingency fund 'for opportunism or reacting to serious shocks', and enabling third-party actors to be brought in to make the most of emerging opportunities, without committing to contractual obligations over a longer than necessary period (KII 6).
- It was considered crucial for there to be a **certain level of experience and continuity when it came to project staff and leadership** – in the words of one team member: '...more senior staff can interpret rules a little bit more flexibly and remain compliant than newer staff' (KII 6). It is notable that some project members were involved in the project from start to finish, albeit with some in different roles and levels of involvement at different points in the project.

*[There is a] need for experienced staff [to] recognise that there [will be] a lot of staff turnover but, on key areas, continuity [is] needed. It is clear that generally people are not going to work in South Sudan for five years. However, there needs to be continuity assured at an appropriate level (KII 6).*

## Case Study 2

# Myanmar Alliance

*This case study is based on a comprehensive review of 40 project documents, including monthly, quarterly and annual reports, research papers and evaluation reports, as well as five stakeholder interviews. It has been reviewed and validated by the project team.*

**Map 2. Myanmar Alliance project sites**



## Introducing the Myanmar Alliance project

The BRACED Myanmar Alliance project ran from 2015 to 2018 in Myanmar, as part of the overall BRACED programme. Plan International led Myanmar Alliance, a multi-sectoral, interdisciplinary community-based resilience-building project that aimed to empower communities to take leadership in determining their local priorities for disaster risk reduction (DRR) and CCA. It also prioritised women and children as key drivers of change. The project was designed to address immediate hazard-related needs at community levels, and develop longer-term solutions that were driven and delivered by communities and subnational and national governments (Yaron et al., 2018: 8).

As well as Plan International, the consortium included ActionAid, World Vision and the Community Development Association (CDA) as implementers in project areas. The Myanmar Environment Institute (MEI), UN-Habitat and BBC Media Action provided cross-cutting support to key stakeholders. These included communities, townships, government bodies and the media, integrating the latter in an outreach model that also included policy and action.

Myanmar Alliance aimed to build the resilience of 350,000 people to climate extremes, working in seven states, eight townships and 155 communities in Myanmar (Yaron et al., 2018: 8). The project covered:

- Kyauk Phyu and Taungup Township, Rakhine State
- Dagon Seikkan Township, Yangon Region
- Hpa-An Township, Kayin State
- Meiktila Township, Mandalay Region

- Labutta Township, Ayeryawaddy Region
- Mawlamyine Township, Mon State
- Kengtung Township, Shan State.

Working with local and international partners, the project combined DRR, CCA, community development, policy, gender and livelihoods expertise to improve understanding of climate risk, increase responsiveness and promote wider adoption of resilient practices in the face of climate extremes. This was done by focusing activities at three levels (BRACED Myanmar Alliance, 2018: 5):

1. Communities were encouraged to build the skills, knowledge and capacities needed to adopt resilience activities and practices.
2. The work generated institutional support and responsiveness for resilience-building at the township level.
3. The project used evidence for knowledge development, governance and advocacy nationally.

### **The context in which the Myanmar Alliance project was operating: Myanmar**

Decades of conflict in Myanmar have constrained community development. This has important implications for resilience-building. Acknowledging ethnic and religious divisions and how these affect intercommunal tensions is vital. Low governmental capacity and institutional reach constitute further challenges. Armed conflict between ethnic groups and central government has been an issue since independence in 1948. The government has reached bilateral ceasefire agreements with most ethnic armed groups (EAGs) since 2011 and signed a National Ceasefire Agreement in

2015 to initiate a peace process (Jones et al., 2017: 11). Despite this, grievances around marginalisation and restricted socio-cultural and citizenship rights for certain groups have remained salient drivers of the conflict. The situation is volatile, with sporadic clashes between armed ethnic groups (EAGs) and the government. Conflict exacerbates the effects of climate-related shocks in Myanmar, particularly as there are higher levels of poverty and many internally displaced persons (IDPs) in conflict-affected areas (Jones et al., 2017: 11).

Shortly after the project's inception, a new government was elected in Myanmar. A transition from a closed economy under military rule to a market economy and plural democracy followed. However, following the democratic transition, there has been a deterioration in the country's political situation. A resurgence in ethno-nationalism has contributed to intercommunal violence (Proaction Alliance, 2016: 36–37).

## **How the context affected project delivery**

### **OPERATIONAL DELAYS**

Alongside community resilience work, BRACED aimed to establish linkages between communities and sub-national/national governments, so as to ensure long-term sustainability of activities (Yaron et al., 2018: 8). This was challenging in Myanmar, as the conflict had led to animosity and a lack of trust towards the government. Historical events such as forced displacements are strongly remembered today, even in areas that have been peaceful for a long time (KII 18). There are also negative perceptions about INGOs working in Myanmar, especially in Rakhine State, due to the historical context; as one interviewee reported, 'when the military was in power for thirty years, there was a lot of anti-foreigner sentiment', implying that it now, 'takes a long time to build trust with communities' (KII 18).

High staff turnover of project and government staff had a detrimental impact in terms of building relationships with communities. Myanmar Alliance experienced more staff turnover than any other BRACED project, partly because the country was in a period of transition, nurturing a competitive environment where new projects came online needing staff but there was relatively low staff capacity in-country. To mitigate in the future, comprehensive knowledge management systems and mechanisms for capturing and integrating lessons will be required to avoid loss of institutional memory.

The challenging context meant project set-up and relationship building took longer than anticipated, meaning the project had to be accelerated after the project's mid-term review (KIIs 18 and 19). This recommended identifying activities that could not be fulfilled within the next twelve months, and revising or cancelling others (Proaction Alliance, 2016: 67). A monthly project report submitted immediately after the mid-term review stated, 'following the MTR recommendations, the Myanmar Alliance [project] has decided to conduct an in-depth project revision, including budgets, work plans, activities and ways of working' (BRACED Myanmar Alliance, September 2017).

#### **ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES**

During implementation, the resurgence of ethno-nationalist conflict, particularly in Rakhine State, created access issues for project staff (BRACED Myanmar Alliance, April–June 2017: 1). After the September 2017 crisis, the government placed a temporary ban on INGO staff, increasing both the difficulty in accessing southern Rakhine and the project's reliance on local staff (KII 19). INGOs required the approval of state-level governments to operate, whereas local NGOs were allowed to work with approval from township-level governments. Therefore, the Community Development Association (CDA)



was allowed to operate on behalf of Plan International, which limited the impact of government bans (BRACED Myanmar Alliance, September 2017: 3).

Travel was restricted for international staff, impacting data collection for the project's final evaluation. This led the project to rely on local partners, who were trained to collect the data along evaluation guidelines (KIIs 16 and 17; Gee, 2018: 14). In the Hpa-An region, staff were not permitted to supervise the field survey team without gaining permission two months in advance, which meant teams had to be remotely managed (KII 20). Additionally, international staff had to always be accompanied by local government staff (KIIs 16 and 17). While this stipulation was externally imposed, it was also in line with the project's interests to have close relationships with the local government, though it increased coordination requirements. Additionally, an interviewee theorised that the imposed government presence would have had little impact on project work, given the developmental focus and commonplace nature of heavy government oversight (KII 18).

#### **COMMUNAL TENSIONS**

In Rakhine State, there have been longstanding tensions between the majority Buddhist communities and the minority Muslim communities (KII 19). Communal violence reached a point of crisis in September 2017, after government forces cracked down on Muslim populations living in Rakhine State, with nearly one million people fleeing across the border to Bangladesh. This was towards the end of the three-year BRACED implementation period, with the project already phasing out, so the effect on delivery was small (KIIs 16 and 17).

Within Rakhine State, the project was implemented in the southern area, whereas the violence was concentrated in the centre and north (KIIs 16 and 17). However, the conflict

did impact project delivery indirectly by increasing time and efforts to seek approvals to travel and hold workshops in certain locations. Moreover, visibly South Asian staff were at times unable to access some parts of Rakhine. This meant that some staff visits had to be rearranged, and on occasion it became difficult to conduct monitoring visits (KII 19). Similarly, in Shan State, intercommunal violence did not reach the townships and municipalities where Myanmar Alliance was working, although indirect effects were felt (KII 18).

Intercommunal tensions in Myanmar had the potential to flare up as a result of project actions where they were perceived to benefit one ethnic group more than another. In Myanmar, there were negative perceptions of INGOs, often due to rumours among the Rakhine ethnic group that INGOs were aiding Muslim communities (KII 18). One interviewee for this review stated, 'if we were supporting the Muslims, that [meant] that we were against the ethnic Rakhine' (KII 18). The interviewee said this happened periodically throughout implementation in Rakhine, even in the more ethnically homogeneous areas. Although this issue was not as severe in northern Rakhine State, the community focus of BRACED programming meant that project success was dependent on recognising these tensions and working to mitigate them, ensuring that programming upheld Do No Harm principles.

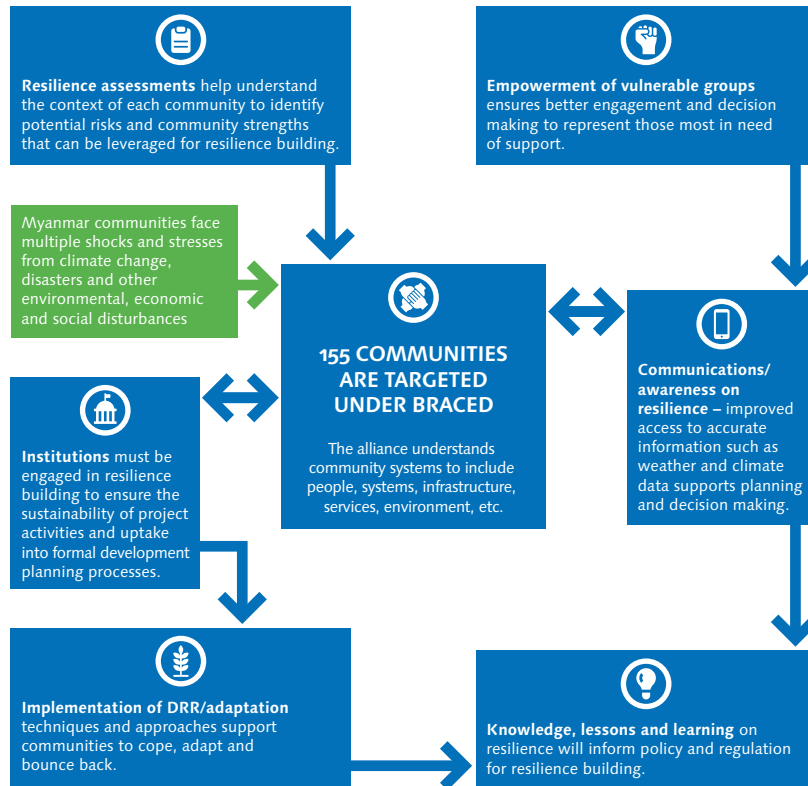
## **How the project was designed and how it evolved to work within the context**

### **MAINSTREAMING CONFLICT SENSITIVITY**

Conflict-sensitive programming is an approach to identifying and addressing contextual, programmatic and operational risks, as well as building in safeguards to avoid doing harm and, ideally, reduce contextual risks. Conflict sensitivity helps funders and implementers to mitigate operational risks, including those

that are reputational, financial and security related. For example, field staff may be less likely to be targeted for attack or have their work disrupted if their projects are conflict sensitive and ensure community acceptance (OECD, 2014: 46).

### BRACED Myanmar Resilience Framework



Regular engagement with the community was an essential ingredient for the Myanmar Alliance to ensure that ideas, approaches and activities were taken up and to encourage community ownership, and was actively engaged. Building community acceptance is a common mitigation strategy to address security risks and ensure conflict sensitivity (OECD, 2014: 46).

For Myanmar Alliance, the community entry point was through participatory Community Resilience Assessments, leading to the implementation of inclusive, prioritised action plans. The

Community Resilience Assessment process worked well for several reasons: it was based on the principle that the local context must be understood in detail and planning must be participatory. To support this, the consortium partners were present in the communities prior to the project and had therefore already built strong relationships (KII 17).

Moreover, the project linked village planning processes with township planning processes. This had not previously existed between some communities and local government (Gee, 2018: 8). Finally, the priority selection processes proved robust and inclusive, which resulted in activities that the communities were eager to implement collectively; this community sense of ownership was reflected in the fact that communities provided matched funding for activity implementation, in cash and/or labour and materials (Gee, 2018: 17). Community ownership demonstrated a commitment not only to a communal action plan but also to an evolving understanding that mechanisms could be put in place to adapt to climatic extremes (KIIs 16 and 17).

Understanding the potential (intended and unintended) consequences of an intervention through conflict and political economy analysis is vital for conflict sensitivity; BRACED projects are aware of the operational risks of exacerbating social tensions. It was noted across the project case studies that tensions could arise if certain groups were excluded from being project beneficiaries, and that this could increase the risk of project staff being attacked. In all projects, being impartial – and perceived as such – is particularly important, and this needs to be reflected in the relationships that are built and maintained (Christian Aid, 2018: 5). Implementers often have a substantial impact on the local economy and local power relations through the practical delivery of their work. This must be factored into key choices regarding suppliers and the relationships that surround

logistics; we should be aware of our impacts on the local political economy and therefore intentional in our actions during our work (Oxfam GB, 2011: 14).

An illustrative example of this comes from the Rapid Response Research (RRR) project in Myanmar, a BRACED Knowledge Manager action research project carried out in BRACED Myanmar Alliance project implementation sites, using mobile phone surveys to collect data. The RRR project was originally meant to be implemented in Rakhine State; however, the location was changed due to security concerns and the mobile phones for the panel survey were purchased from Ooredoo, a company headquartered in Qatar, a Muslim-majority country. Before implementation was due to start, international research staff were warned by the in-country implementing project staff that such phones would not be well received by the Buddhist target communities in Rakhine (KIIs 17 and 20). This was at a time of worsening social tensions, so the team decided to re-locate the research project to Hpa-An, Kayin State. This meant significant changes to the target communities and the type of climate risks that were assessed, but the experience shows the importance of developing community acceptance strategies and how critical local implementing partners are in supporting this, based on their strong understanding of the context. An interviewee for this review confirmed that local staff 'saved' the research project, by advising on the new location (KII 20). The involvement of local partners is therefore critical to project anticipatory capacity, through improving project awareness and responsiveness to the context.

#### **PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION**

With an emphasis on social inclusion of vulnerable groups, Plan International embedded gender transformative programming and a child-centred approach into Myanmar Alliance's strategy.

Myanmar Alliance was the only project to measure and disaggregate child resilience levels through project monitoring. Women and children participated in Community Resilience Assessments, became involved in prioritisation activities, and started taking a more active role in community decision-making and implementation of community activities (Gee, 2018: 21).

#### **ENGAGING WITH GOVERNMENT**

Experience from BRACED shows that management of those projects operating in FCAC was more intensive than those operating in more stable settings. The BRACED Fund Manager was more involved in projects with delivery issues and where plans were going off schedule, including those operating in FCAC. According to a key member of the team, 'by definition, the Fund Manager did treat FCAC projects differently because they faced delivery challenges more often' (KII 10). The BRACED Fund Manager was also more closely involved due to the increased fiduciary risk when working in FCAC, as well as the higher levels of reputational risk to the funder. The funder, DFID, made more requests for information (via the BRACED Fund Manager) for projects operating in FCAC. This included asking the Myanmar Alliance project team for more information on how they were engaging with the Government of Myanmar, following external reports being published about human rights concerns (KII 10).

Myanmar Alliance largely engaged with government at the local level and in a technical capacity. Cooperation between local government and communities needed to be addressed for a bottom-up development planning approach to be effective. The project tried to provide opportunities for communities and authorities to meet, discuss and build trust. Over the course of the project, there was a more open dialogue with local government and project-provided training on proposal writing for communities. This resulted in co-funding amounting

to 31% of total implementation costs (BRACED Myanmar Alliance, 2018: 13). Myanmar Alliance has acknowledged that 'most achievements in this realm were rather unintended consequences of informal collaboration and networking' rather than being part of project design (BRACED Myanmar Alliance, 2018: 32).

## **What was learnt about delivering climate resilience projects in contexts such as Myanmar?**

### **UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT**

As emphasised in the BRACED 3As report, 'resilience is highly contextual and pathways to enhancing it vary greatly from one location to the next' (Bahadur et al., 2015: 7). This is especially pertinent in FCAC. Project design must rigorously assess the challenges of the context(s) prior to implementation to ensure that projects understand and are prepared for the specificities of each location. Contextual assessments should involve local actors; local staff and partners are invaluable in providing knowledge and are often less affected by access issues, which is an advantage when international staff face restrictions. Despite the challenging context of Myanmar, this review has strongly suggested that not enough was known by the Myanmar Alliance team, at the design stage, about how such difficulties would impact project implementation (KII 18).

### **PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION AND MAINSTREAMING CONFLICT SENSITIVITY**

This review has found that social inclusion and conflict sensitivity are not only important for the programme itself (in building resilience), but also for operational reasons that are linked to community acceptance and risk management. It is important to ensure that climate resilience programmes in FCAC adopt conflict-sensitive approaches, even when not explicitly working on conflict-related interventions. All interventions have an impact

on the social-economic, political, environmental context, but this is even more the case in conflict-affected contexts. To ensure a conflict sensitive Do No Harm approach, project design must be reflective of the needs of the community, including the specific needs of vulnerable groups. Myanmar Alliance project design included the training of staff in the use of participatory tools for gender, conflict and environmental sensitivity. However, the project's mid-term review found that this was insufficiently executed (Proaction Alliance, 2016: 40). Despite participatory development being a new concept to some project staff in-country, only three days were allocated for this training. There was a lack of resources allocated to train staff to a high enough standard to use these new tools and staff reported that this meant they were not able to effectively utilise them, especially in early stages of implementation (Proaction Alliance, 2016: 40). This was largely due to budget restraints (KII 17).

#### **ENGAGING WITH GOVERNMENT**

In BRACED, partnerships with government have been of particular importance for increasing project credibility, generating buy-in and laying foundations for project sustainability, all of which support operational delivery (BRACED Fund Manager, 2018: 22).

Resilience is a relatively new concept within the development sphere in Myanmar and this hindered project set-up due to INGO projects traditionally being short-term and problem-specific, such as responding to Cyclone Nargis (2008). Many of the approaches and terminology adopted by BRACED – such as long-term or participatory development – were unfamiliar to both communities and staff (KII 18).

According to the independent Final Evaluation, the project put resilience as a concept firmly on the agenda at the national level in Myanmar (Gee, 2018: 16). Prior to the project, the focus at



the national level was very much on DRR and on livelihoods and food security; the efforts of Myanmar Alliance to engage with various levels of government has resulted in resilience programming being seen as a valid approach to more sustainably bring together efforts around livelihoods and food security, as well as DRR, under the existing planning process. A new Myanmar National Framework for Community Disaster Resilience was established in early 2016 and reference was made to the resilience definition developed by the BRACED Myanmar Alliance project (KII 18). At the local level, township authorities' support of the project was reflected in the amount of resources they contributed to delivering community-level priorities. Technical expertise was widely provided in the design (and in some cases construction) of infrastructure projects, with earth-moving equipment supplied in some instances and technical support given to agriculture initiatives (Gee, 2018: 16–17).

As a result, community confidence and trust in local government has grown in some townships, particularly those where government has selected community action plans and funded specific resilience-building activities (Gee, 2018: 65). The BRACED community resilience assessment process and the facilitation of coordination and collaboration with local government (including the Department of Rural Development, The Relief and Resettlement Department and the General Administrative Department) led to good examples of joint action between target communities and local government agencies (Gee, 2018: 65; BRACED Myanmar Alliance, 2018: 5). This trust-building between different groups was a significant outcome in itself, particularly in a context like Myanmar, where trust had been eroded through decades of conflict. Understanding this type of contribution to social cohesion seems particularly valuable for interventions in FCAC and is an area recommended for future focus.

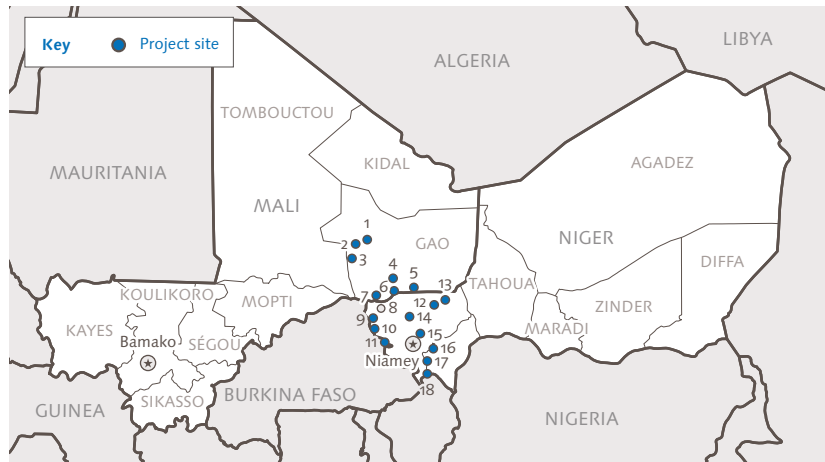
### Case Study 3

## Scaling-Up Resilience for 1 Million People (SUR1M)

*This case study is based on a comprehensive review of 43 project monitoring, evaluation, results reporting and learning documents, as well as five stakeholder interviews. In addition, a series of focus group questions were posed to seven participants (including project stakeholders) at a workshop in Niger in January 2019. The case study has been reviewed and validated by the project team.*

### Introducing the SUR1M project

**Map 3. SUR1M project sites**



Note: 1) Gao; 2) Sony Aliber; 3) Gounzaoureye; 4) Ansongo; 5) Bourra; 6) Outagouna; 7) Bara; 8) Sinder; 9) Diagourou; 10) Tera; 11) Sakora; 12) Simiri; 13) Ouallam; 14) Tillabéri; 15) Kokourou; 16) Kourteye; 17) Bankilare; 18) Bibivergou.

The BRACED SUR1M project ran from 2015 to 2019 in Mali and Niger, as part of the overall BRACED programme. SUR1M aimed to build resilience to climate extremes at scale through a gender-responsive, community-centred disaster risk management (DRM) and CCA approach. SUR1M operated

in seven communes in Mali and 12 in Niger. There were 1,716,595 beneficiaries of the project, with 78% of these from Niger. This case study focuses on project implementation until the end of 2018 (pre-extension).

The project had four components:

- **Component 1: CCA.** SUR1M increased women's access to finance by establishing Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILCs) and linking up with microfinance institutions. The project provided skills training and supported the creation of farmers' groups. SUR1M promoted value chain development, establishing connections between all different levels of the value chain, facilitated by project staff and radio broadcasts. SUR1M promoted:
  - climate-friendly agricultural practices (adapted to the local context)
  - soil and water conservation
  - farmer-managed soil and land rehabilitation
  - support for the production and marketing of improved seeds.

The project also helped the development of natural resource management (NRM) plans at commune and community level, as well as supporting government engagement in NRM. SUR1M provided climate and weather information to communities to inform their farming practices and improve disaster risk management (DRM). Finally, SUR1M trained health centre and community health worker staff in some selected communes in Niger on the latest nutrition protocols. With this training,

health workers conducted pre-screening for malnutrition in selected communities, identifying those at risk, prescribing effective care and advising at-risk households.

- **Component 2: DRR.** SUR1M promoted the participation of women and men in communal government-level activities. Communities received information through radio broadcasts, as well as Commune Resilience Days events, which brought together civil society organisations (CSOs), women's associations, the private sector, merchants, service providers and officials through fair booths, forums, demonstrations and radio coverage. SUR1M also provided opportunities, especially for CSOs and citizens, to learn about latest innovations and discuss policy or institutional changes needed to improve the adoption and integration of DRR and CCA.

Additionally, SUR1M worked through CSOs to educate people about citizen rights, including the right to participate in communal councils, using appropriate tools and strategies. SUR1M worked with commune authorities to revise and update existing community development plans, to ensure they included gender-sensitive DRR and CCA activities. The project also provided small grants for early warning groups (EWGs) in 10 communes so they could implement action plans and sustainability strategies. SUR1M trained commune-level EWGs so that commune authorities and concerned community leaders have more capacity and tools in local DRR governance. The project also provided small grants to the targeted communes and/or EWG to encourage/support them to seek private sector contributions to their budgets. Finally, SUR1M provided support to community-managed DRR committees in developing and disseminating contingency plans.

- **Component 3: Gender mainstreaming.** SUR1M increased women's financial independence, autonomy and decision-making role in the household and community. This was done through access to financial services (SILCs) and the creation of linkages between mature SILC groups and microfinance agencies and income-generating activities. The project promoted time-saving technologies for women to free up time for productive and care-giving activities. SUR1M also helped to increase knowledge of land tenure policy and processes to enable women to acquire land through the dissemination of information messages (for example, on the radio) about access to land titles and land ownership by women.
- **Component 4: Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL).** The project informed national stakeholders about data collected at the community level and analysed at the communal level through quarterly project review with partners. SUR1M provided financing to support annual learning events. Annual learning events leveraged learning from multiple communes and the two countries. National stakeholders were also on the project Steering Committee, receiving regular information and participating in Commune Resilience Days.

The SUR1M project was implemented by Catholic Relief Services (CRS), in collaboration with a number of local and international partners including:

- Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD)
- Caritas Development (CADEV)
- Caritas Mopti
- Farm Radio International (FRI)

- Research Programme on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS)
- Disaster Resilience Leadership Academy (DRLA), Tulane University
- Agriculture, Hydrology and Meteorology (AGRHYMET) Regional Centre (Niger).

## **The context in which SUR1M was operating: Mali and Niger**

### **MALI**

Mali has continued to experience recurrent political instability following a military coup that ousted the government of President Amadou Toumani Toure, coupled with a rebellion by Tuareg separatists and jihadist occupation in 2012 (Langston et al., 2015: 35). A fragile peace and constitutional rule were restored in 2013, with the assistance of the French military, and a peace agreement was signed in 2015, although a UN peacekeeping force remains in place today. The political environment remains tense and non-state armed groups – with grievances about a) government policies and (lack of) engagement with communities in the north, b) jihadist groups and c) inter-ethnic conflict – continue to pose significant challenges to stability and the central government. There are frequent episodes of conflict between armed rebel groups and government forces and increasingly violent intercommunal conflicts. By the beginning of 2018, rising insecurity saw an increase in the number of internally displaced people to 46,336, with the majority from northern Mali (BRACED Fund Manager, 2018: 17).

Regional security developments are also a concern, with the emergence of radical jihadist groups within the Sahel region posing a significant security threat (Langston et al., 2015: 35).

Groups linked to Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA) and Islamic State have used Mali as a 'launch pad' for attacks across the region (Malo, 2018). Although extremist conflict originated in northern Mali, these groups are increasingly posing a security threat to the government-controlled south, and this type of conflict has increased in severity in central and southern Mali since 2015 (Langston et al., 2015: 35). Military operations started in the Mopti region in 2013 – with the support of French and other international security forces, along with the G5 Sahel – and a military presence remains. Malian military authorities have also imposed a series of public order measures, including curfews and a ban on travelling by motorcycle and open pick-up vehicles.

Layered on top of this, localised conflicts 'along socio-professional lines [herders, farmers and fishers] often organised according to ethnicity' have been ongoing in Mali for decades (KII 5). This often centres on the management of natural resources and largely manifests in violent clashes between farmers and herders (Ursu, 2018: 3). Much of this competition is due to the 'seasonal incompatibility' of livelihoods and the resulting issues around access to land for both farmers (for crops) and herders (for livestock) (Kone and Gutierrez, 2017: 5–6). This localised conflict is taking place within a context of increasing climate extremes and food insecurity; around 2.5 million people are considered food insecure, according to the results of the November 2018 Cadre Harmonisé (UNOCHA, 2018a: 1). During the projected lean season in 2019 (June–August), about 416,000 people were predicted to be in a crisis or emergency situation (UNOCHA, 2018a: 1). Growing climate stresses and shocks are increasing the likelihood that pastoralists and farmers overlap in space/time – expanding competition for resources and potential for conflict (KII 5).

Since 2015, an increase in localised conflicts in central Mali has also created a 'fertile breeding ground' for radical armed groups (Ursu, 2018: 3). There is concern that jihadist groups are capitalising on resource scarcity, local grievances and localised tensions to recruit more supporters and that the appeal of joining militant groups is on the rise among young people; stories of young men abandoning rural livelihoods for jihadist or criminal groups are not uncommon (Malo, 2018). The broader geo-political dimensions of conflict in northern Mali are transforming and exacerbating local conflicts in the region, worsening existing tensions (KII 2).

#### **NIGER**

Since gaining independence in 1960, Niger's political dynamics have been characterised by a number of military coups and periods of military rule. The current government is an outcome of a transition from military rule to civilian government and, although the elections were seen as positive (KII: 12, 13 and 14), the military still exert a significant influence on political life. Regional security developments are also a concern, with the emergence of Islamic extremist groups within the Sahel region posing a significant threat and the stability of Niger's border region with Nigeria being particularly fragile.

Despite a relatively stable domestic political climate, the security situation in the Diffa region has been volatile since the emergence of Boko Haram in the region. There has also been an increase in jihadist attacks and drug trafficking in the Tillabéri and North Tahoua regions, leading to an extension in the state of emergency in these regions. Niger is hosting over 300,000 refugees and displaced persons in camps in the Diffa region and the regions of Tahoua and Tillabéri. Added to this political instability, the Government of Niger has implemented a \$40 million emergency plan and requested assistance from development partners to cope



with immediate humanitarian needs related to climate extremes, such as drought in Tahoua and Zinder regions and heavy rains causing flash floods in 2018.

## **How the context affected project delivery**

### **DELAYS FROM ACCESS RESTRICTIONS**

Insecurity limited the project team's access to several zones in Niger (Bankilaré, Kokoru, Sinder and Ouallam) and all the target zones in Mali. Mali saw an increase in security incidences and terrorist threats in the central and northern regions, including the SUR1M project zones in Gao Region. In June 2018, this situation was compounded by inter-community tension related to the Malian presidential elections (the first round of voting took place on 29 July 2018), which resulted in restricted access to project sites for field visits (KII 11). There was a slow start to Mail-based project activities due to security conditions not allowing CRS and Caritas to conduct visits to intervention areas (BRACED SUR1M, March 2015). This delayed, for example, the signing of the BRACED project protocol between CRS and Government of Mali partners. For the BRACED Knowledge Manager-led impact evaluation, work was only conducted in Niger, owing to security issues when undertaking the baseline survey in Mali (Béné et al., 2018: 42). For security reasons, local and regional governments in Gao Region in Mali could not be visited by the project Chief of Party, as initially envisaged (KII 11). However, CRS Mali was able to liaise with representatives from both these levels of government, as well as central-level ministries, prior to project protocol/Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signing deadlines (BRACED SUR1M, January–March 2015).

In Niger, there were ongoing security risks and terrorist threats in the project zones, particularly in the northern part of Tillabéri Region, including Ouallam and Bankilaré. The Government of

Niger extended the State of Emergency for three months, starting on 18 June 2018. Project staff were sometimes prevented from conducting field visits to monitor progress and the government barred motorcycle traffic, impeding the movement of local field agents as well. These conditions presented an obstacle to sound project management and adaptive learning, as well as affecting the delivery of some aspects of the project, such as the Collaboration and Coordination of Partnerships 'Area of Change' (BRACED SUR1M, 2017).

Expenses related to travel and logistics also increased with heightened security precautions. This is because air travel in lieu of overland travel between Niger and Mali was costlier. Moreover, security events in Gao led to flight cancellations and re-bookings, which incurred unplanned additional costs (BRACED SUR1M, 2016).

Delays in project implementation impacted on the delivery of some activities. One interviewee remarked, '...delays equal delays in monitoring of projects. If you can't monitor, then you can't respond to the needs of the project' (KII 15). Delays also led to the need to – in the words of one interviewee – 'downgrade' some project outputs, although interviewees in both Niger and Mali reported that they had no experience of conflict affecting the quality of the project; rather, the only impact was delaying certain project outputs (KIIs 11, 12 and 29). That being said, delays were also found to impact beneficiaries: one interviewee mentioned that restricted field access meant that BRACED staff were not able to provide farmers with as much face-to-face support as they would have preferred (KII 15).

### STAFF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Recruiting and retaining the right staff with the suitable set of skills and knowledge – and also those accepting the risk associated with working in areas such as Gao – was an ongoing challenge. For example, the project lead for Gao was replaced three times due to insecurity (BRACED SUR1M, 2016). For senior staff, high security risks in project sites in both Niger and Mali have meant that staff were often not allowed to stay in the field overnight, forcing them to make multiple round trips on a daily basis. This had implications for the efficiency, duration and costs of specific activities (KII 29). Further, the BRACED requirement for activities to carry UK Aid branding was suspended in some project areas where carrying logos could increase security risks for staff working there (BRACED Fund Manager, 2017: 13).

Following an ambush of US and Nigerian troops in northern Tillabéri, Niger, in 2017, SUR1M activities were halted to allow an analysis of the potential implications for civilians. While staff were cautiously optimistic that humanitarian actors were not being directly targeted, precautions were put in place so that only mission-critical activities moved forward, and only if they followed strict security protocols (BRACED SUR1M, October 2017). In July 2018, CRS Niger updated the Field Security Plan, which was applicable within CRS offices, as well as in project-specific intervention zones (BRACED SUR1M, July 2018).

The high-risk nature of working in this context was seen in 2018 when Ali Toure, a Caritas Mopti SUR1M member of staff, was killed by bandits near Ansongo, Gao, on 18 September while returning to Ansongo after a field monitoring visit. No one witnessed the incident, but it is understood that the attackers shot Mr Toure and stole the SUR1M project motorcycle, as well as his bag, which included project materials (a tablet and an Android phone). SUR1M sent immediate notification and provided a detailed account

of events to the BRACED Fund Manager the same day (BRACED SUR1M, October 2018). Following the incident, the CRS Mali country team assessed the security protocols and developed an action plan to help strengthen security measures both in CRS and within partner structures. A guide on how to handle security issues during field visits was developed and distributed to all CRS and partner staff, and refresher training was provided (BRACED SUR1M, September 2018).

### **How the project was designed and how it evolved to work within the context**

At the design stage, the project worked to identify risks and incorporate mitigation measures within project activities, such as:

- regularly updated security protocols
- community-led DRR approaches (for example, a community-built dyke)
- access to DFID contingency fund in order to mobilise and respond quickly.

Throughout the project, the CRS Security Officer and partners conducted a daily analysis of the security situation, which involved multiple stakeholders such as local leaders, municipal authorities and the INGO Safety Organisation (INSO) (BRACED SUR1M, July 2018). Local leaders often advised field agents not to visit certain areas, so as to minimise their exposure. Other precautions put in place included obtaining up-to-date information before travelling, avoiding doing so too early or too late, participating in NGO security networks and regular CRS security assessments in the project areas (BRACED SUR1M, August 2015). The possibility of car-jacking in some project communes (for example, Bourra and Ouatagouna) increased the difficulty of and level

of risk related to both staff and beneficiary movement within the project areas. As a result, the project team used public transportation, cars instead of motorbikes, and local radios and phones to communicate.

A number of interviewees emphasised the importance of hiring local, motivated staff and of investing in building their technical capacity, such as in project monitoring (KIIs 11, 12 and 13). Recruiting local people was seen as important to ensure staff had local knowledge and spoke the local language(s) (KII 11). CRS staff were sometimes unable to travel to the zones characterised by high levels of insecurity, but local partners had the experience and community acceptance in these zones, thus reducing risks to operational delivery. As a result, SUR1M focused more on building the capacity of the local partners to ensure they were able to take on responsibility for monitoring progress, analysing the on-the-ground situation and developing adaptive solutions (BRACED SUR1M, 2018). Due to the volatile security situation in Niger and Mali, CRS doubled the numbers of enumerators and increased logistics support during data collection for the Final Evaluation. This resulted in reduced time on the ground, which helped minimise security risks for staff. This strategy allowed the data collection to be completed in six days instead of the 15 originally planned in Mali and in 13 days instead of the 20 planned in Niger (BRACED SUR1M, December 2017).

Training staff in areas of security was also a vital mitigation measure for the project. Each year, training was offered in areas such as displacement and security management, aiming to reinforce the basic rules of movement and improve staff capacity to deal with any incidents. CRS and partner staff received security awareness training and capacity building through the following:

1. **Induction:** CRS organised a security briefing for all new local staff or expatriates during this process; this was one of the key components of staff inductions.
2. **Advance Personal Safety Training (APST):** The CRS Mali office organised an annual APST that all CRS and partner staff recruited within the year attended. Refresher APST training was provided every two years for all staff.
3. **Online training:** CRS provided online security training for all CRS staff, which included first aid training.
4. **Dedicated staff support:** Sub-office security officers routinely reminded CRS and partner field staff of key security instructions and were available to assist them, as needed.

Throughout the project lifetime, contextual analyses demonstrated the importance of conflict sensitivity and resulted in project activities that focused on building intercommunity relations and increasing collaboration between communities and authorities. In the commune of Bankilaré (Niger), the EWG supported by the project helped the traditional leaders and the national police in the prevention and management of community conflict. For example, members of the EWG alerted two clan leaders on the imminence of an intercommunal conflict. In turn, the clan leaders informed the police, who arrested those responsible and retained their guns, knives and weapons. The EWG also supported the traditional and administrative authorities to conduct an awareness campaign to mitigate community conflict (BRACED SUR1M, October 2018).

The SUR1M project was recognised by the USAID Sahel Resilience Learning (SAREL) programme and the Government of Niger 'les Nigériens Nourrissent les Nigériens' (3N) initiative as one of the projects in Niger that has effectively been working across

the Humanitarian–Development Nexus (BRACED SUR1M, October 2018). The BRACED Final Evaluation found that, despite the short duration of the project and the difficult contexts in which it was operating, SUR1M produced 'remarkable' results for the target beneficiaries (Bureau de Recherches, de Formation, d'Ingénierie et de Réalisations Agro-Sylvo-Pastorales, 2018: 54).

## **What was learnt about delivering climate resilience projects in contexts such as Mali and Niger?**

### **UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT**

As emphasised in the BRACED 3As report, 'resilience is highly contextual and pathways to enhancing it vary greatly from one location to the next', and this is especially pertinent in FCAC (Bahadur et al., 2015: 7). Project design must rigorously assess the challenges of the context(s) prior to implementation to ensure that projects understand and are prepared for the specificities of each location. Contextual assessments should involve local actors from all levels of society. Local staff and partners are invaluable in providing knowledge and are often less affected by access issues, which is a great advantage in the face of restrictions for international staff. By hiring local field staff, renting vehicles locally, buying types of motorcycles that are least attractive to bandits, and consulting local leaders and community members, the SUR1M project demonstrated a sound understanding of the context (Bureau de Recherches, de Formation, d'Ingénierie et de Réalisations Agro-Sylvo-Pastorales, 2018: 18). One interviewee from Niger emphasised the benefit of relying on local actors for project implementation:

*They will continue the actions even in a crisis, since these local actors will not stop living [in the area] because of these crises (KII 29).*

Moreover, lessons from the SUR1M experience show that building resilience in FCAC needs:

- more time (over four years of implementation)
- flexibility from the funder in terms of changes in strategy and/or timeframes
- availability of funds in case of a need to shift from development to emergency and/or at least develop synergies with humanitarian actors.

#### **PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION AND MAINSTREAMING CONFLICT SENSITIVITY**

The BRACED operational learning review has found that social inclusion and conflict sensitivity are not only important for the programme itself (in building resilience) but also for operational reasons, linked to community acceptance and risk management. It is important to ensure that climate resilience programmes in FCAC adopt conflict-sensitive approaches, even when not explicitly working on conflict-related interventions. All interventions have an impact on the social-economic, political and environmental context, but this is even more the case in conflict-affected contexts. To ensure a Do No Harm and conflict-sensitive approach, project design must be reflective of the needs of the community, including the specific needs of vulnerable groups. For SUR1M, conflict-sensitivity approaches were important for community acceptance of the project, which is important for operational risk management. The administrative and technical services at the regional, departmental, and communal levels in Niger were highly supportive to the project and the same level of support also existed in Mali, even though officials were not present in all communes, due to insecurity (BRACED SUR1M, January–March 2015).



**BUILDING STAFF CAPACITY ON SECURITY MANAGEMENT**

SURIM found that when staff received adequate training, they were better prepared to face the impact of conflict, banditry and insecurity – which in turn reduces human and asset losses.

Lessons learned here have been:

- The frequency of the training is crucial; it should be carried out at the beginning of the project and during new staff enrolment, alongside periodically refreshing staff throughout the project lifetime.
- Security management activities (such as mobile money transfer and phone satellites for partners) should be included in the budget and approved by the funder.
- Training should be extended to local partners as well as the lead organisation.

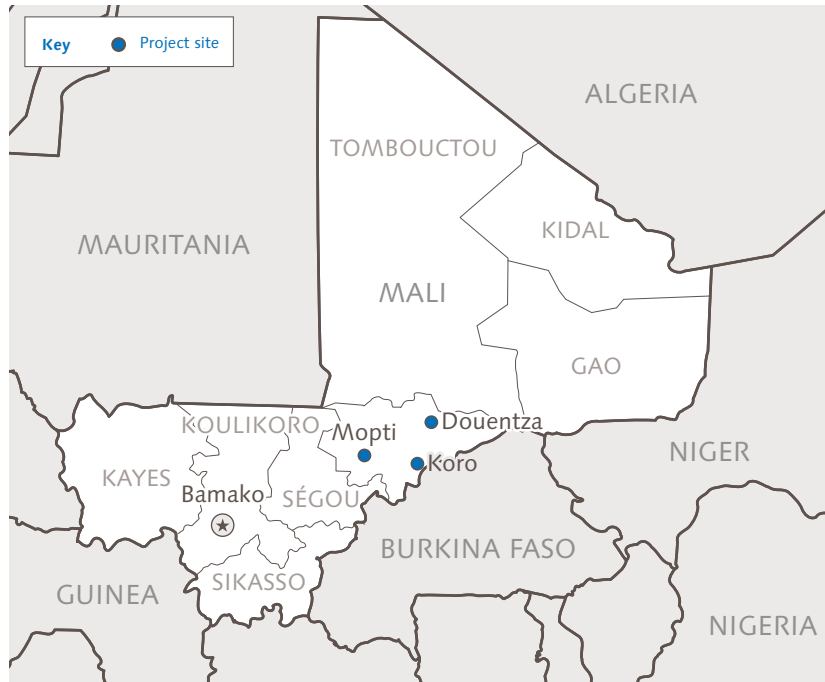
## Case Study 4

# Decentralising Climate Funds (DCF)

*This case study is based on a comprehensive review of 41 monthly, quarterly, and annual project evaluation and learning reports, as well as five interviews (some of which were translated from French and Bambara). It has been reviewed and validated by the project team.*

## Introducing the DCF project

**Map 4. DCF project sites**



The BRACED DCF project ran from 2015 to 2019 in Senegal and Mali, as part of the overall BRACED programme. DCF was an action-research and advocacy project supporting communities in Senegal and Mali to become more resilient to climate change through effective climate adaptation planning and locally controlled

adaptation funds. The project was led by the Near East Foundation (NEF) with partners, *Innovation, Environnement et Développement en Afrique* (IED Afrique) and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).

The DCF project supported the decentralisation of climate adaptation funds (CAFs) in Senegal and Mali and worked to enable communities to prioritise and implement CCA investments (NEF, 2015: 1). The objective of the project was to build vulnerable people's climate resilience by ensuring the readiness of Mali's and Senegal's devolved governments to manage climate finance in order to invest in climate adaptive projects that meet local priorities. The project had five intervention packages. These are related to:

1. the functioning of adaptation committees
2. the participation of vulnerable groups in decision-making
3. the role played by local authorities
4. the production, dissemination and use of climate information
5. the expansion of the DCF model.

DCF supported climate investments at the local level in Senegal and Mali through seven CAFs, totalling approximately £3.75 million. This included four *Départements* in Senegal and three *Cercles* in Mali. These investments were identified and prioritised by the community through inclusive and participatory processes.

This case study explores the operational challenges that the DCF project has faced in Mali due to the sensitive context in which the project operates. In Mali, the project works in 24 communes across the Mopti region, concentrated in three *Cercles* (local administrative regions): Mopti, Douentza and Koro. DCF also works with local and regional governments, along with the *Agence*

*Nationale d'Investissement des Collectivités Territoriales* (ANICT) within the Ministry of Decentralisation, to support the channelling of international and national climate finance to the local level.

### **The context in which DCF was operating: Mali (Mopti Region, Central Mali)**

Mali has continued to experience recurrent political instability following a military coup that ousted the government of President Amadou Toumani Toure, coupled with a rebellion by Tuareg separatists and jihadist occupation in 2012 (Langston et al., 2015: 35). A fragile peace and constitutional rule were restored in 2013, with the assistance of the French military, and a peace agreement was signed in 2015, although a UN peacekeeping force remains in place today. The political environment remains tense and non-state armed groups – with grievances about a) government policies and (lack of) engagement with communities in the north, b) jihadist groups and c) inter-ethnic conflict – continue to pose significant challenges to stability and the central government. There are frequent episodes of conflict between armed rebel groups and government forces and increasingly violent intercommunal conflicts. By the beginning of 2018, rising insecurity saw an increase in the number of internally displaced people to 46,336, with the majority from northern Mali (BRACED Fund Manager, 2018: 17).

Regional security developments are also a concern, with the emergence of radical jihadist groups within the Sahel region posing a significant security threat (Langston et al., 2015: 35). Groups linked to Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA) and Islamic State have used Mali as a 'launch pad' for attacks across the region (Malo, 2018). Although extremist conflict originated

in northern Mali, these groups are increasingly posing a security threat to the government-controlled south, and this type of conflict has increased in severity in central and southern Mali since 2015 (Langston et al., 2015: 35). Military operations started in the Mopti region in 2013 – with the support of French and other international security forces, along with the G5 Sahel – and a military presence remains. Malian military authorities have also imposed a series of public order measures, including curfews and a ban on travelling by motorcycle and open pick-up vehicles.

Layered on top of this, localised conflicts 'along socio-professional lines [herders, farmers and fishers] often organised according to ethnicity' have been ongoing in Mali for decades (KII 5).

This often centres on the management of natural resources and largely manifests in violent clashes between farmers and herders (Ursu, 2018: 3). Much of this competition is due to the 'seasonal incompatibility' of livelihoods and the resulting issues around access to land for both farmers (for crops) and herders (for livestock) (Kone and Gutierrez, 2017: 5–6). This localised conflict is taking place within a context of increasing climate extremes and food insecurity; around 2.5 million people are considered food insecure, according to the results of the November 2018 *Cadre Harmonisé* (UNOCHA, 2018a: 1). During the projected lean season in 2019 (June–August), about 416,000 people are predicted to be in a crisis or emergency situation (UNOCHA, 2018a: 1).

Growing climate stresses and shocks are increasing the likelihood that pastoralists and farmers overlap in space/time – expanding competition for resources and potential for conflict (KII 5).

Since 2015, an increase in localised conflicts in central Mali has also created a "fertile breeding ground" for radical armed groups (Ursu, 2018: 3). There is concern that jihadist groups are capitalising on resource scarcity, local grievances and localised tensions to recruit more supporters and that the

appeal of joining militant groups is on the rise among young people; stories of young men abandoning rural livelihoods for jihadist or criminal groups are not uncommon (Malo, 2018). The broader geo-political dimensions of conflict in northern Mali are transforming and exacerbating local conflicts in the region, worsening existing tensions (KII 2).

*The Mopti region of Mali is at the crossroads of the different intersecting categories of violent conflict within the country and, as such, experiences persistent instability and periodic violent conflict, as well as the knock-on effects of conflict such as banditry, criminality and retributions. (KII 5)*

In the areas where DCF was operating, most project sites were more at risk from violent extremists, although Koro is more affected by localised conflict (KIIs 1 and 2). Douentza was the *Cercle* within the project area most exposed to incursions by armed rebels (Bonis Charancle et al., 2018: 22). In both the Mopti and Douentza *Cercles*, bandits have taken advantage of broader insecurity to hijack vehicles and carry out raids. For example, the relatively recent public ban on motorcycles and pickups in the Mopti region was the result of an attack at a weekly market, where 30 civilian motorcycles were destroyed (KII 3). In recent years, there has been an increase in civilian fatalities in the Mopti region as a result of both jihadist and localised conflicts. This has also led to large-scale out-migration from villages to other areas.

### **How the context affected delivery of development and humanitarian assistance**

Conflict and insecurity pose a direct risk to staff safety. From 1 January to 30 October 2018, the UN announced that a total of 177 security incidents affecting aid workers had been reported

in Mali. This represents a monthly average of almost 18 incidents: a significant increase from 11.5 in 2017 and 3.5 in 2016 (UNOCHA, 2018a: 1). Aid workers are impacted by criminal acts of violence, predominantly linked to banditry. The Mopti region is particularly affected (UNOCHA, 2018a: 1). For example, jihadist groups are believed to have informants within communities, creating a risk that details of project-related staff travel could be communicated beforehand, making them vulnerable to attack when moving from one site to another. However, although this is reported to be a risk, the DCF project does not have evidence of it materialising (KII 5). Nevertheless, staff travelling to project sites for field visits 'learned to fear the rebels and bandits'; one team member recalled an incident – 'a close call' – while visiting a remote village in the *Cercle* of Mopti when 'suspicious men came looking for [him]' and he was encouraged by the village chief to leave the area quickly (Malo, 2018).

Conflict and insecurity also impacted on the DCF team's ability to access project sites to deliver and monitor activities (BRACED Fund Manager, 2018: 89–90). Due to persistent insecurity and conflict-related risks (including, for example, the threat of kidnapping), international staff were at times unable to carry out field visits to DCF project sites. Along with this, travel to the Mopti region was generally restricted because of the risk of attack. According to the independent Final Evaluation of the project, this 'obviously complicate[d] project implementation' (Bonis Charancle et al., 2018: 22). For example, the project Mid-Term Review found that the security situation in Mali, particularly in the *Cercle* of Douentza, led to delays in monitoring activities and investments (Vancutsem et al., 2016: 8). As the security situation worsened, the UK Government imposed a blanket travel ban to the Mopti region. This prevented DCF partner, IIED, from visiting project sites as planned. In 2015,

this delayed the resilience assessment process design and implementation (BRACED DCF, September 2015). In 2018, the US Government advised US citizens against all travel to Mali, whereas NEF staff had previously been free to travel to Bamako. One immediate impact was that DCF re-located its quarterly consortium meeting in September 2018 from Bamako (Mali) to Dakar (Senegal) to allow the team time to understand the dynamic situation (BRACED DCF, October 2018). It is worth noting that this was a temporary impact; US and other international project staff have since travelled to Bamako and conducted a visit to Mopti in 2019.

In addition to internationally imposed travel restrictions, the Government of Mali put a ban on certain travel modalities that affected DCF project sites, meaning that – for example – training locations sometimes had to be changed. As well as international DCF project staff being unable to access some project sites, local staff, community members and/or government officials periodically limited their travel due to the threat of attack. This had a direct impact on project activities; for example, meetings between project staff and community members taking place in Sévaré had to be postponed during project implementation, thereby delaying valuable information sharing (KII 2). Local mayors and government officials are often the targets of attacks, restricting their freedom of movement and contributing to high government staff turnover. The UN recently emphasised the reduced number of state representatives in-post across multiple regions, including Mopti, due to insecurity, and the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Mali referred to an 'absence of the state' in the centre and north of the country (UNOCHA, 2018b). There was a risk that this would limit political engagement and buy-in for project activities, although the DCF project reported



full participation of local government representatives and good engagement by the national government, including visits by national agency staff to projects in the field in Mali (KII 5).

Reduced visits from international staff, as well as periodic constraints on freedom of movement for local staff, project participants and government authorities, created challenges for DCF logistics and project planning. They also created the risk of project activities in each *Cercle* taking place in isolation more than anticipated. Insecurity restricted the ability of international members of the DCF project team to conduct ethnographic research as planned in certain project sites (including Mondoro in the *Cercle* of Douentza and Dialloube in the *Cercle* of Mopti) and limited the project's ability to provide training and workshops in those areas. As a result, some areas had less exposure to the project than planned, meaning they benefitted less from support in applying for and accessing funds for public good investments (Silva Villanueva et al., 2016: 87).

### **How the project was designed and how it evolved to work within the context**

NEF has a longstanding presence in Mali, having worked there for over 35 years, and was the only INGO in the Mopti region that continued to operate in the region throughout the 2012 coup and subsequent unrest. Through other programmes, NEF has directly worked with affected communities to improve natural resource governance and to reduce resource-based conflicts (KII 5).

In addition to these deep relationships, all Mali-based staff working on the DCF project were Malian and had a strong understanding of the security context and local conflict dynamics, enabling them to navigate the situation with their local knowledge

and networks. Within Mali, NEF has an office located in the Mopti region to oversee daily operations, while additional remote management/technical support is provided from NEF's US-based headquarters. Despite the risks to staff safety highlighted above, staff turnover was not an issue for the DCF project in Mali (KII 5).

During BRACED implementation, there were consortium security and contingency plan protocols to manage security and conflict-related risks (KII 1). The lead agency, NEF, took a proactive approach to risk management, which can be seen in project reports to the BRACED Fund Manager. There were also daily risk assessments conducted and management staff exercised reasonable duty of care in making decisions related to staff, assets and activities. Risk mitigation approaches clearly documented in project reports included:

- timely and continuous internal assessments
- timely preparation of reliable information for notification
- maintenance of reliable preparedness systems (including evacuation plans) aimed at safeguarding the wellbeing of DCF project staff and project interests.

While there were some impacts on coordination and communication, as mentioned above, the team was carefully structured to ensure that project staff working in each *Cercle* were supported by NEF-Mali and the other DCF technical specialists who worked across the project geography. This reduced the risk of working in silos. Regular meetings of the DCF consortium and support from international technical experts further mitigated the risk of isolation (KII 5).

When there were delays or challenges due to security issues and travel restrictions, different approaches were taken. DCF adapted to the security landscape by taking 'common-sense measures' to

reduce risk; for example, the most 'unstable' communes within the three *Cercles* were not included in the project intervention area, to mitigate risks to security and project delivery (BRACED DCF, July–September 2018). Despite challenges and access issues impacting on project M&E, evaluation activities were able to carry on with the support of local staff and local communities. One of the DCF core components was to build local (community) capacity for M&E, and the project team designed and developed a number of tools for this purpose – either to be used by the community or by NEF staff in Mali living and working in the project areas (KII 5). For the DCF Final Evaluation, the independent evaluators found security to be more of an issue than they originally envisaged in the Mopti region. However, the evaluation team adapted to this by splitting the field visit into two parts: the first took place in Bamako through a workshop and the second took place in the field, with a national consultant who was able to travel more freely (Bonis Charancle et al., 2018: 58).

Notably, the DCF project did not choose beneficiary communities or otherwise prioritise resilience investments; the project was designed to ensure that decisions were taken by the communities themselves, based on their priorities (Bonis Charancle et al., 2018: 24). This is an important part of any conflict-sensitive approach: project staff anticipated that if the project had placed an unequal emphasis on helping any one group more than another, communal tensions could have worsened. Moreover, DCF included activities to engage youth as part of the project, which community residents hoped would 'spurn the appeal of joining the militants' by 'keeping young people busy' and therefore 'keeping them away from 'jihadism' (Malo, 2018).

## What was learnt about delivering climate resilience projects in contexts such as Mali?

### UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

As emphasised in the BRACED 3As report, 'resilience is highly contextual and pathways to enhancing it vary greatly from one location to the next', and this is especially pertinent in FCAC (Bahadur et al., 2015: 7). Project design must rigorously assess the challenges of the context(s) prior to implementation to ensure that projects understand and are prepared for the specificities of each location. Contextual assessments should involve local actors from all levels of society. Local staff and partners are invaluable in providing knowledge and are often less affected by access issues, which is a great advantage in the face of restrictions for international staff. Being led by an NGO embedded within the local context enabled DCF to incorporate local needs and design activities relevant to the context. The project built on and developed the following local and regional structures to support the DCF mechanism:

- communal adaptation committees (CCAs)
- local committees responsible for monitoring adaptation actions (*Cercle* level)
- a regional committee to monitor CAFs
- management committees for each selected investment composed of the project's direct beneficiaries (Bonis Charancle et al., 2018: 3).

### PROMOTING SOCIAL INCLUSION AND MAINSTREAMING CONFLICT SENSITIVITY

The BRACED operational learning review has found that social inclusion and conflict sensitivity are not only important for the programme itself (in building resilience) but also for operational

reasons, linked to community acceptance and risk management. It is important to ensure that climate resilience programmes in FCAC adopt conflict-sensitive approaches, even when not explicitly working on conflict-related interventions. All interventions have an impact on the socio-economic, political, environmental context, but this is even more the case in conflict-affected contexts. To ensure a Do No Harm and conflict-sensitive approach, project design must be reflective of the needs of the community, including the specific needs of vulnerable groups. The DCF model placed a strong emphasis on 'ensuring that relationships with beneficiaries are as inclusive as possible, to enable them to articulate their expectations for enhanced resilience' (Bonis Charancle et al., 2018: 3). The project ensured that beneficiaries were involved from the design phase, which the DCF Final Evaluation observed was 'very different' from the approaches taken by other local development agencies (Bonis Charancle et al., 2018: 7). By taking this approach, the DCF project ensured that beneficiaries were 'proactive stakeholders' (Bonis Charancle et al., 2018: 23). Moreover, DCF was designed to strengthen the links between communities and their governments through more inclusive and responsive planning and community-prioritised resilience investments – an important factor, given the environment of mistrust and tension in the country.

#### **BUILDING SOCIAL COHESION**

In BRACED, partnerships with government have been of particular importance for increasing project credibility, generating buy-in and laying foundations for project sustainability, with both these benefits supporting operational delivery (BRACED Fund Manager, 2018: 22). In DCF, communities were actively working with local authorities to design, select and prioritise resilience investments. The DCF project was able to strengthen relationships and develop formal channels for communication between beneficiaries and

local authorities (including mayors and the communal council). Its work has been shown to improve confidence in local government, and this trust-building between different groups is a significant outcome in itself. The Final Evaluation points out that 'unlike other projects that are delivered as "external support", the DCF project developed a model that is both 'endogenous' (led by the beneficiaries) and 'institutional' (guided, supported and validated by the local authorities) (Bonis Charancle et al., 2018: 29). However, while this increased interaction between communities and local authorities is emphasised in the DCF Final Evaluation as being 'one area where the model adds value', this was not closely monitored (Bonis Charancle et al., 2018: 6). Understanding this type of contribution to social cohesion seems particularly valuable for interventions in FCAC and is an area recommended for future focus.

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### **Internal (unpublished) BRACED project documents**

31 BRACED IRISS quarterly reports and 3 annual reports

30 BRACED Myanmar Alliance quarterly reports and 3 annual reports

36 BRACED DCF quarterly reports and 3 annual reports

37 BRACED SUR1M quarterly reports and 3 annual reports

BRACED Fund Manager Annual Reports, 2015–2018

## ABOUT BRACED

BRACED aims to build the resilience of more than 5 million vulnerable people against climate extremes and disasters. It does so through a three-year, UK Government funded programme, which supports 108 organisations, working in 15 consortiums, across 13 countries in East Africa, the Sahel and Southeast Asia. Uniquely, BRACED also has a Knowledge Manager consortium.

The Knowledge Manager consortium is led by the Overseas Development Institute and includes the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, ENDA Energie, ITAD, and the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

The views presented in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of BRACED, its partners or donor.

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The BRACED Knowledge Manager generates evidence and learning on resilience and adaptation in partnership with the BRACED projects and the wider resilience community. It gathers robust evidence of what works to strengthen resilience to climate extremes and disasters, and initiates and supports processes to ensure that evidence is put into use in policy and programmes. The Knowledge Manager also fosters partnerships to amplify the impact of new evidence and learning, in order to significantly improve levels of resilience in poor and vulnerable countries and communities around the world.

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