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**Pathfinder**  
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# University Leadership for Change: Adapting and Scaling to the Community Level

TECHNICAL REPORT | E2A PROJECT



## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AMU	Abdou Moumouni University
AYRH	Adolescent and youth reproductive health
BWEIM	Beginning with the end in mind
CBO	Community-based organization
CLC	Community Leadership for Change
COIA	Context of implementation and adaptation
CYL	Community youth leader
E2A	Evidence to Action
FGD	Focus group discussion
FP	Family planning
FrAME	Frontline aggregated monitoring and evaluation
KII	Key informant interview
LTI	Landscape, temporal, and interpretive
RH	Reproductive health
RISE	Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced
ULC	University Leadership for Change
UZ	University of Zinder

# INTRODUCTION

From 2014 to 2016, the U.S. Agency for International Development-funded (USAID) Evidence to Action (E2A) Project implemented the University Leadership for Change (ULC) project in Niger to promote youth leadership and strengthen health systems to meet their family planning and reproductive health (FP/RH) needs. E2A and partner Syntegral adapted this project to the community setting and implemented as Community Leadership for Change (CLC) from 2017 to 2019 as part of the Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced-Family Planning (RISE-FP) program. E2A and Syntegral developed a set of tools for adapting programs to different contexts, to systematically identify needs for adaptation and then monitor implementation of these changes in the RISE-CLC project.

After providing a brief overview of the ULC project, this paper describes the implementation of the tools to facilitate its adaptation to the RISE-CLC project and analyzes their effectiveness to this end.

## Original Innovation: ULC Project (2014–2016)

Implemented from March 2014 to June 2016, the ULC project aimed to (1) promote leadership among men and women both as students at Abdou Moumouni University (AMU) and in their home communities, and (2) strengthen the university health system to address FP/RH needs of the student body.

University students form the vanguard of the country's future leadership. Their high mobility—as they come from all over the country—and educational level can be strategically leveraged to reach and create demand among their peers for FP/RH services throughout Niger and to articulate the needs of youth to government and other stakeholders. Furthermore, like other young people, university students have unmet FP/RH needs and thus constitute a target group themselves.

## Overview of Project Approach

ULC was structured around three main objectives: (1) develop students' capacity to become agents of change by conducting youth education sessions under the supervision of peer supervisors to increase the demand for FP/RH services, both at the university and in their home communities; (2) develop service providers' capacity to ensure access to, and improve quality of, RH services for young people; and (3) establish a co-management committee composed of all project stakeholders to review progress and ensure sustainability of the project.

### Key Results: ULC in Niamey

- Integrated AMU's health center with the local health district's supervisory system and the regional RH/FP supplies procurement system
- University ensured the availability of condoms, oral contraceptives, injectables, intrauterine devices and twice-weekly visits of a skilled health provider trained in AYRH
- Created student-led organization to address turnover in peer leaders

## Developing a Scale-Up Approach

In early 2015, E2A, the Nigerien government, and nongovernmental organization partners agreed to build on the original ULC project, described above, and scale the intervention and concept of youth leadership for behavior change.<sup>1</sup> E2A's scale-up activities began with an orientation and workshop focused on the ExpandNet methodology. ExpandNet tools were used to guide scale-up of ULC from the Niamey campus of AMU to three other campuses in Niger: Zinder, Maradi, and Tahoua. E2A conducted feasibility testing at the three new campuses and held a workshop to: (1) disseminate the results from ULC Niamey and the feasibility tests in Maradi, Tajoua, and Zinder; (2) agree on the package of activities to scale-up; and (3) develop a scale-up strategy using ExpandNet's *Nine Steps for Developing a Scale-Up Strategy*,<sup>2</sup> a tool that proposes 12 recommendations or steps that project implementers and designers should follow to achieve this objective.

This final workshop resulted in a clear consensus on the essential components of the ULC scale-up package. Participants included members of the ULC project committee, representatives from the AMU in Niamey, representatives from the regional public health directorate in all four settings and from the four university health centers, other representatives from the universities, implementing partners, and USAID Niger. Two main recommendations emerged: (1) adapt the ULC approach to reach young people outside of university settings, and (2) simplify the package of interventions to make it more easily scalable. To meet these recommendations, the ULC package was modified to include training in behavior change using the Pathways to Change (PTC) game<sup>3</sup> and training in adolescent and youth reproductive health (AYRH) for youth leaders and local service providers. Additionally, a co-management committee was created to oversee problem-solving and activity coordination for the project as a whole. Participants decided to remove the reflection and action for change (REACH) methodology<sup>4</sup> from the modified package after feasibility testing in the three expansion universities indicated that the process was too labor-intensive and technology-dependent.

The workshop also resulted in draft plans to scale the ULC approach to additional sites throughout Niger and institutionalize the approach through Niger's national AYRH programs. This report discusses the scale-up effort and tools used in 80 communities in the Matamèye, Mirriah, and Magaria districts of Zinder region, where E2A was implementing a larger FP program (RISE, described below).

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<sup>1</sup> Katie Chau, Regina Benevides, and Ousseini Abdoulaye, *University Leadership for Change in Sexual and Reproductive Health in Niger: Project Report* (Washington, DC: Evidence to Action Project/Pathfinder International, March 2017).

<sup>2</sup> ExpandNet, WHO. *Nine steps for Developing a Scale-up Strategy*. Geneva: WHO, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> PTC is a simple board game with two objectives: (1) to introduce small groups of community members and target populations to simple ideas about behavior change that can help them discuss change among themselves and with family and friends, and (2) to help projects learn what communities and target populations associate with specific kinds of behavior change—what they think can be a barrier to change and what they think might facilitate change.

<sup>4</sup> REACH is a group exercise which takes the PtC reflection process a step further through action. Working with the REACH tool, a small group is guided in prioritizing behavioral issues found in trigger videos that are relevant to their situation, at individual or at community level. Subsequently, the small group members select one of the high priority issues identified and transform it into a concrete action and a work plan that they can undertake as a group.

# ADAPTATION TO THE RESILIENCE IN THE SAHEL ENHANCED (RISE) INITIATIVE (2018–2019)

## Justification/Problem Statement

Unlike the urban environment in which ULC was originally undertaken, the Zinder region faces a range of environmental challenges, including deforestation and desertification, which pose significant health risks. Furthermore, the population is young; 54.1% of the population of Zinder is under 15 years of age, and one out of three girls marry by age 15. The median age of marriage among women is 15.5 years, and the median age at first birth is 18.5 years. A high population growth rate and declining child mortality rates means that greater demands for resources are placed on the environment, exerting greater pressure on both natural resources and people's livelihoods. The majority of household heads (94%) are men and 88% of household heads have no formal education. Low levels of education—leading to limited employment opportunities—mean men increasingly migrate within Niger to look for work and send remittances home to care for their families. Women left at home receive even less education, making them dependent on remittances from their husbands, and are often chronically short of food and money for basic necessities. By ensuring access to voluntary family planning and promoting the healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies, couples are empowered with the element of choice regarding their fertility, thus helping to ease some pressure on natural and financial resources. To increase demand for FP/RH services among youth, the RISE-FP project proposed to adapt the ULC approach to the community setting, creating and training a cadre of youth leaders in rural communities.

## Scale-Up of ULC in Zinder: Integration into the RISE Project

The Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced (RISE) Initiative is a USAID-funded comprehensive program to strengthen resilience in the Sahel, particularly in Niger and Burkina Faso. In Niger, E2A implements the RISE-Family Planning (RISE-FP) component in the Zinder region. This project aims to increase the demand for and access to voluntary FP/RH services within the communities of the three targeted districts in Zinder. By increasing the demand for and access to these services, as well as health and family planning information available to people, they will be able to space their children if desired and make advantageous decisions for their families, allowing for healthier mothers and children, ultimately increasing community and individual resiliency.

## Adaptation Rationale

To complement its interventions to increase demand for and access to FP/RH services among youth, the RISE-FP project proposed adapting the ULC approach to the community setting, creating and training a cadre of youth leaders in rural communities for a reconceived approach called Community Leadership for Change (RISE-CLC). In the adaptation, E2A selected and trained young people in rural communities to serve as youth leaders. Two young people (one man and one woman) between the ages of 15 and 24 were selected in each of the 80 intervention villages, for a total of 160 young people. They were trained in FP/RH, including contraceptive methods, healthy timing and spacing of pregnancy, and referrals; behavior change, through the Pathways to Change game; and peer leadership, including how young people can be agents of change and

help engage and collaborate with other community leaders. The youth leaders, with their communities, assessed the health challenges facing their community. From these discussions, they then chose one significant barrier for their community to address through the development and implementation of a youth-led community action plan to facilitate behavior change. ULC students at the University of Zinder were trained to supervise the community youth leaders.

Because Zinder lacks the structure and services typically found in an academic environment, several adaptations were needed to adapt the ULC to a community setting. To do so, E2A, Pathfinder, and Syntegral proposed an approach based on the belief that sustained implementation depends on the expert use of *adaptive management*. An adaptive management approach seeks to inject flexibility into activities and plans to accommodate complex and changing environments. Such an approach often requires real-time monitoring techniques to (1) better anticipate and manage uncertainty in complex systems and (2) adjust activities in response to new information about both the context of implementation and the progress intervention activities make toward program goals. This structured approach also recognizes that adaptive management rests on the *adaptive capacity*, or the ability of implementers at every level of a project to translate knowledge and critical thinking about complexity and adaptation into effective implementation behavior.

Accordingly, E2A, Pathfinder, and Syntegral adapted ULC to the community level by applying and documenting a structured approach based on its commitment to strengthening adaptive capacity in service of adaptive program management. This approach to the adaptation of ULC to the community level sought to engage frontline implementers, administrators, and supervisors. The tools used for this adaptation will be described as well as and then their implementation to the ULC scale-up experience in RISE.

# TOOLS THAT E2A, PATHFINDER, AND SYNTEGRAL USED FOR ADAPTATION

## Context of Implementation and Adaptation (COIA) Analysis

Context of Implementation and Adaptation (COIA) is a structured approach developed by Syntegral to gathering data and analyzing the context of an activity or practice in preparation for adaptation. Essentially, COIA problematizes adaptation—a COIA exercise should identify the elements of the original context that influenced the effectiveness of a practice or activity. When thinking of adaptation for scale-up, COIA analysis helps compare the original context and the target context.

COIA analyses are generally performed in three stages. The first stage is conducting focus group discussions (FGDs) with key stakeholders based on a guide with questions about the landscape, temporal, and interpretive (LTI) dimensions of

complexity (see box). Questions in the landscape dimension are related to the gap to be filled, the available stakeholders and resources, constraints, and organization and staff capacity. Questions in the temporal dimension ask about the length of the project, the workplanning process, and how the implementation has changed over time. The interpretive dimension asks about different stakeholders' understanding of the project, the openness of implementors to differing viewpoints and changes in the project, and unanticipated consequences and challenges of the project. Key observations from the FGDs may merit further investigation, which is conducted through key informant interviews (KIIs) using a subset of critical points. The team implementing the COIA then codes the responses based on themes that emerge over the course of discussions and compiles an adaptation summary.

The second stage involves sharing the report with available members of the implementation team (or future implementation team) for internal validation. This is generally done through a day-long workshop with implementers to consider the adaptations and discuss how they could guide future adaptation.

## The LTI Lens for Analysis of Complexity

The unique, unpredictable, and dynamic nature of program implementation drives adaptation. The LTI (landscape, temporal, and interpretive) lens helps identify areas of complexity by highlighting three dimensions:

### LANDSCAPE Dimension

Interventions are made up of many variables: budget, local epidemiology, staffing, community preparedness, indicators, infrastructure, donor requirements, procedures, etc.

### TEMPORAL Dimension

All variables in an implementation landscape mature (or otherwise evolve) over time.

### INTERPRETIVE (or CONSTRUCTIVIST) Dimension

Each observer and implementer understands the intervention differently; prior experience, stakes, and motives shape individual interpretation.

Finally, the third step involves sharing the internal validation results with other stakeholders, such as members of the target population, government officials, facility administrators, and local stakeholders to gain external validation.

### **Frontline Aggregated Monitoring and Evaluation (FrAME) Adaptive Management System**

Understanding how and why a programmatic activity performs and adapts to shifts in context over time requires going beyond the traditional data collection process. The Frontline Aggregated Monitoring and Evaluation (FrAME) approach, also developed by Syntegral, promotes adaptive management through real-time pulse-taking of the intervention being considered for adaptation. FrAME collects, aggregates, and graphically expresses the results of rapid, frequent implementer assessments of how a program or activity performs in terms of ten contextual elements. Expressed longitudinally and graphically, the aggregated data highlights trends in implementer perceptions of performance and provides a basis for adaptive managers to review target data/indicators, discuss trends with implementers, and strengthen the adaptive capacity of managers and implementers. In the dialogue among managers and implementers, contextual shifts will surface to enable collective interpretation of results, strengthen the adaptive capacity of youth leaders and their supervisors, and facilitate timely adaptation.

Because FrAME questions are geared toward rapid assessment of implementer perceptions, they allow managers to better understand how frontline workers view the project's implementation and its relative strengths and weaknesses. In doing so, FrAME simultaneously taps any project's most sensitive source of adaptation data—its frontline implementers—and pulls those workers into decisions that will permit more effective programming. In the dialogue among managers and implementers, contextual shifts that surface with FrAME enable collective interpretation of results, thereby strengthening the adaptive capacity of frontline workers and their supervisors and facilitating timely adaptation.

## **IMPLEMENTATION: ADAPTING ULC TO CLC**

### **Pre-COIA/Baseline**

When transforming the ULC approach into a CLC approach, it was important to first consider how ULC responded to a wide range of variables; this helped to guide CLC implementers through anticipated challenges and highlight opportunities for scale-up in a community setting. For this reason, Syntegral, with the assistance of Pathfinder Niger staff, conducted a COIA analysis on the ULC project to assist in its adaptation to the CLC project. This “pre-COIA” (pre-implementation analysis) was conducted with University of Zinder (UZ) students based on their experience as ULC student leaders. These UZ students also served as supervisors of the youth community leaders in the CLC project, one of the first adaptations to the new setting.



## Data Collection

Syntegral, with the assistance of the Pathfinder Niger country office staff, conducted three FGDs in January 2018, one in Niamey to pilot the guide with AMU leaders and two in Zinder. The Zinder FGDs were mixed-gender groups of university leaders. Each FGD took approximately two hours. During both FGDs, Syntegral, a Pathfinder Niger youth advisor, and Pathfinder's community youth leader (CYL) coordinator took notes and recorded the FGDs. Upon completion of the FGDs, the project team independently identified key observations that they believed merited further clarification. Together, they identified a subset of critical points and developed questions on these points to create two separate KII guides: one for student leaders and one for clinical staff. Syntegral and PI staff conducted interviews at the RISE office with two student leaders and two clinical staff.

## Adaptation Summary

Drawing from the coding of documentation and key insights gathered from FGDs and KIIs, Syntegral and Pathfinder Niger developed an adaptation summary—addressing each of the three dimensions of complexity that shaped the adaptation of the ULC/UZ (see “Pre-COIA insights” below). An internal validation meeting was conducted, during which members of the committee reviewed the adaptation summary and flagged points they felt required more elaboration. After the internal validation meeting was completed and corrections were made to the adaptation summary, Pathfinder presented the summary for external validation in Niamey to a group of peer organizations doing work in AYRH. The goal of the external validation was to present Pathfinder's approach to adaptation to peer organizations and government partners, receive feedback, and ultimately gain buy-in for future adoption through partners.

## Pre-COIA Insights

The pre-COIA suggested that as UZ supervisors looked back on their experience with ULC, they noted their increasing comfort discussing family planning. Many remarked on just how comfortably they could now talk about FP in mixed company in a way they would not have imagined, though they also noted the Pathways to Change games worked better in single-sex groups. While they mostly thought the intervention would be focused on FP, over time they realized the project was about health generally, and they thought that including non-FP activities (such as blood drives and introducing maternal health topics) increased their credibility.

The UZ supervisors also said they originally thought they would be working mostly with university students but found that both married university workers and communities off-campus were accepting of the intervention useful. The supervisors validated the utility and ease of use of the Pathways to Change game and dashboard to collect and manage data. The UZ supervisors also noted that the female peer leaders, previously not used to public speaking, became more comfortable and competent. Finally, the students reported they had not received the level of supervision or guidance from the E2A/Pathfinder team they were expecting.

This adaptation summary was presented to the community youth leaders during their training in July 2018 and in meetings with the UZ supervisors and RISE staff, and these discussions were recorded in Hausa. However, the CYLs themselves did not participate in a pre-COIA. The CYLs' reception of the pre-COIA summary showed that they were clearly attuned to the problems they may face in discussing family planning

with their peers. They noted the importance of youth leadership when discussing FP/RH, particularly because the majority of young people in their communities were married and had families, and therefore had immediate and obvious FP/RH needs. The CYLs agreed the Pathways to Change game was well-suited to the village context, as it is based on small-group participation. CYLs also agreed with UZ supervisors that activities such as blood drives and providing transportation logistics for facilitating attendance at health centers would be important and would add value to the idea of youth leadership in the eyes of the community.

## Adaptations Identified Through the COIA Process

The pre-COIA validated several programmatic choices the RISE team made, such as recruiting equal number of young men and women to lead Pathways to Change games in sex-segregated groups. Several needs for adaptation were also identified through the process.

### Supervision

As noted, one of the first adaptations was training ULC peer leaders to supervise the CYLs. E2A added this adaptation for two reasons: (1) students noted a lack of supervision and guidance in the ULC project, and (2) students reported that working with youth in communities in addition to university students was a rewarding experience.

Additionally, the ULC project had 16 peer leaders compared to 160 community youth

leaders for CLC. While the E2A staff was able to provide adequate hands-on support to the 16 peer leaders, the 10-fold increase in community youth leaders necessitated additional supervisors. Using UZ students as supervisors would further strengthen their capacity in youth leadership, as well as the capacity of the community youth leaders. These insights all led to the adaptation of the supervision structure and the creation of the FrAME tool to monitor the new supervision structure, described below.

**UZ Supervisor:** A university student who participated in the initial ULC project (2014–2016) and was selected to supervise community youth leaders through the RISE project

**CYL:** A community youth leader, or a young person aged 15–24 who was selected in a RISE intervention village to provide FP/RH and BC education and leadership to their peers

### Resolving Literacy Issues

A significant area of adaptation for RISE-CLC was the shift from the initial well-educated university target population to a rural population with relatively little education. University leaders conducted activities that relied on literacy and numeracy, such as collecting data and the developing scenarios for the Pathways to Change game. At the May 2018 training, challenges with literacy emerged as a major topic. In response, both UZ supervisors and CYLs proposed ways they could use a “buddy system” to ensure that literate peers would be nearby as low-literacy youth facilitated activities. These literate peers were also responsible for taking notes and turning them over to UZ supervisors for data entry.

### CYL Scope

Both UZ supervisors and CYLs agreed that expanding the scope of the CYLs to introduce non-FP health activities would increase their credibility and respond to community needs. The CYLs' scope did not expand to include activities such as blood drives, but the understanding of FP/RH was expanded to include Pathways

to Change scenarios about nutrition and maternal and child health, reinforcing the link between health and resiliency.

## CLC Implementation

The RISE-FP project selected youth leaders (two per village in 80 villages) according to the following criteria:

- Willing to remain in the village for the duration of the project;
- Between 16 and 22 years old, either married or unmarried;
- Willing to participate in five days of training in AYRH and behavior change communication;
- Willing to participate in supervisory meetings; and
- Willing to work two hours per day on project activities.

The UZ supervisors and RISE staff trained CYLs in AYRH, behavior change, and the Pathways to Change game. CYLs led three Pathways to Change games with the young people in their rural communities each month and collected data on the number of young people reached and the barriers and facilitators to behavior change. CYLs were also expected to coordinate with other RISE community agents in their communities. This included: (1) referring young people to community-based distributors for FP counseling and methods, and (2) helping to mobilize communities for both mobile outreach and religious leaders' sermons using religious arguments for and birth spacing.

UZ supervisors were expected to provide in-person supervision on a quarterly basis. The FrAME tool was adopted and CYLs answered calls regarding their perceptions of implementation each week. The UZ supervisors and CYLs were then expected to come together on a monthly basis for a meeting to discuss the responses and implementation challenges.

## FrAME Implementation

### Rapid Data Collection and Expression

Given restrictions like poor communication infrastructure in Zinder region, the geographic dispersal of CYLs, and budgetary constraints that did not permit frequent direct supervision, an automated surveying system was necessary for monitoring the implementation process and enabling adaptive management. The project purchased inexpensive (\$40 USD) cellphones for each of the CYLs (160 in total) and signed an agreement with Orange, the local telecommunications company. The project developed a system to deliver automated calls to the youth leaders each week, asking CYLs to respond to ten simple prompts in the local language. The questions comprised statements such as "I think young people are responding enthusiastically to project activities", "I think other youth leaders are doing their job correctly", and "I think I and other youth leaders

are receiving the supervision they need” (see box), to which youth leaders were asked to respond by pressing 1 to *agree strongly*, 2 to *agree*, 3 to *disagree*, or 4 to *disagree strongly*.

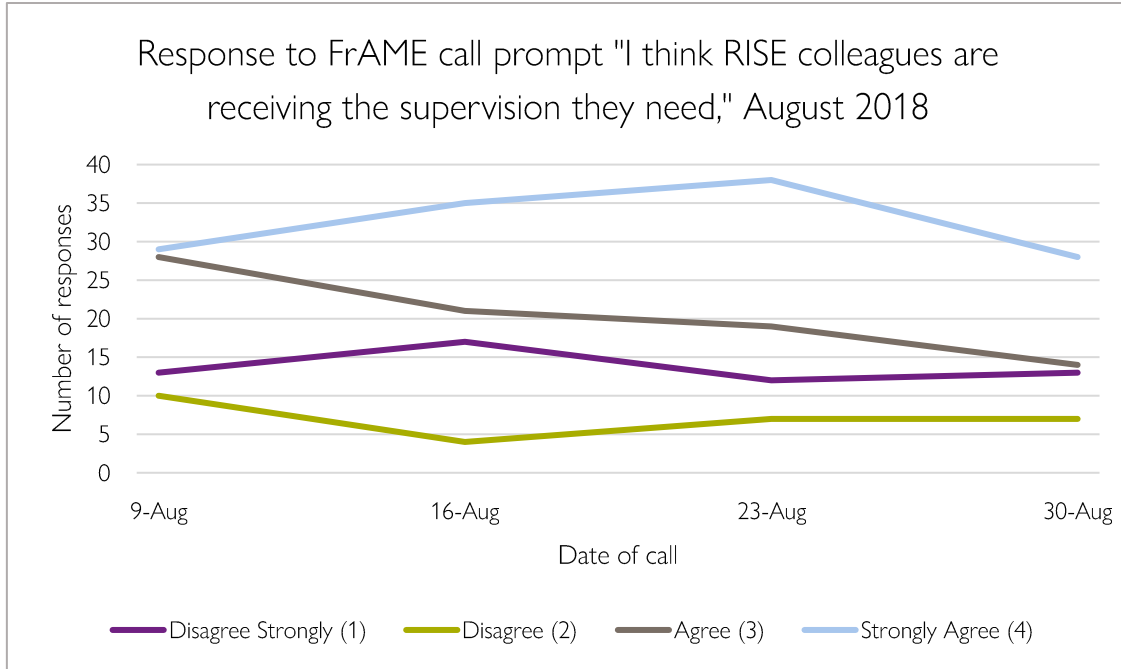
### Supervisory Meetings

After three weeks, 82 percent to 96 percent of the CYLs were regularly responding to the weekly calls. As youth leaders responded, the FrAME system, managed by Pathfinder Niamey, aggregated responses and generated simple line graphs, documenting responses over time. The UZ supervisors used these simple graphics in quarterly management meetings with their supervisees to lead a data-informed dialogue between supervisors and CYLs to explain the trends and discuss results. These meetings highlighted several interesting and unexpected problems through discussion of trends in CYL responses. For instance, in the Genoua meeting on January 31, 2019, CYLs noted that an exodus of young people to urban areas made it difficult to recruit youth participants. This exodus also caused CYLs to wonder if they were wasting their time in the village while others were out finding work. These findings contextualized the responses and project data helping project staff to understand why activities were not reaching as many people as before. The supervisory meetings also serve as an opportunity to introduce and discuss any other wider, contextual issues that can influence the project’s performance and implementation (e.g., security concerns or climactic events).

#### Prompts used in the RISE FrAME tool

1. I think young people are responding enthusiastically to project activities.
2. I think my RISE colleagues are doing their job correctly.
3. I think RISE colleagues are receiving the supervision they need.
4. I think sexual and reproductive health information is understood by the people I speak with.
5. I think nutrition information is understood by the people I speak with.
6. I think I have been given enough resources to do my RISE activities well.
7. I have enough available time to do my RISE activities.
8. I think my colleagues and I are doing a good job of giving equal time to both sexual and reproductive health and nutrition; we do not spend more time on one topic over the other.
9. I think the specific activities my colleagues and I are doing are needed in my village.
10. I feel I have the support of my community when I do RISE activities.

FIGURE 1: Responses CYLs Recorded to Prompt in August 2018

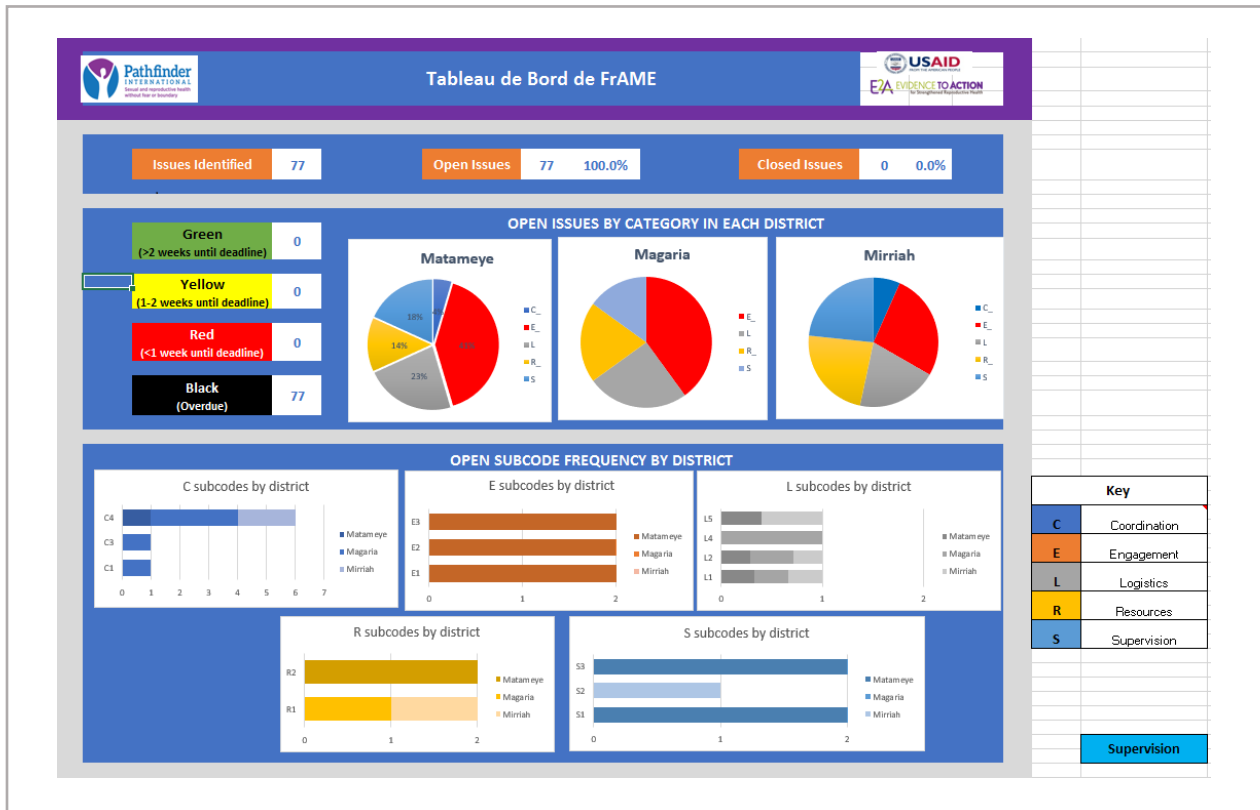


The decrease in responses “agree” and “strongly agree” and increase in “disagree” and “strongly disagree” suggest a decrease in supervision over the month or rising dissatisfaction with their supervisor; this trend would be discussed in the FrAME meeting and underlying reasons and solutions would be identified.

### FrAME Dashboard

E2A contracted with Syntegral to develop a dashboard to make the outcomes of the weekly surveys more actionable for RISE managers. The dashboard aggregated issues flagged during management meetings with CYLs and coded the different problems and challenges that arise in discussion with the UZ supervisors. This coding allowed RISE managers to quickly see the types of issues raised in each of the three districts and detect any patterns that may be district-specific. Elsewhere in the dashboard, implementing staff could determine whether the issues raised were “global” (i.e., they seemed common to several CSI catchment areas) or “local” (they were only raised by a single CYL). If implementing staff identified an issue as global, a RISE team member was assigned to solve this issue within a specific timeframe. If staff identified the issue as local, the UZ supervisor in charge of the relevant CYL worked with that CYL to resolve the problem—again, within a certain timeframe. Finally, once implementers entered the deadlines into the system, the dashboard indicated how close approaching deadlines were or whether the original deadline had passed.

FIGURE 2: FrAME Dashboard



### Post-COIA

In January 2019, a post-COIA was conducted with UZ supervisors and representatives of the CYLs to reflect on how the RISE-CLC activity responded to expectations and how they perceived activity implementation from inception to date.

CYLs participated in post-COIA activities to review their own experiences of the implementation of RISE-CLC. Eight CYLs from the commune of Bande participated in these post-COIA activities, and E2A and Syntegral conducted in-depth interviews with three additional CYLs from Bande. The focus group of CYLs felt that the approach to the community was difficult at first, and they did not know how to raise the issue of FP without alarming some elders and leaders within the community. This situation changed fairly quickly with the introduction of broader behavior change activities, when community leaders saw that CYLs were not promoting FP but rather stimulating conversation on FP/RH. Interestingly, the CYLs themselves did not see themselves as promoters of FP, but rather as sources of information and facilitators of discussion.

Additionally, CYLs felt they suffered from a lack of visibility from the start because they did not have identifying clothing (which they equated with status) like other RISE-supported community workers. They also felt that they could have benefited from working more with influential local leaders, such as the religious leaders who also led community-based activities under RISE. Finally, the CYLs reported the need for more variety in their activities, as most of them just continued to play Pathways to Change and indicated that they would be especially interested in any films or videos that would keep people's attention. They suggested that

moving into adjacent content areas (for example, borehole construction) would increase community involvement as community members did not immediately identify FP as their highest priority. CYLs believed that, if these non-FP priorities were addressed, the community would be more willing to also think about FP-related issues.

UZ supervisors emphasized during the post-COIA that they cultivated a profound connection with CYLs throughout the project, originally through the first COIA, but subsequently through FrAME supervisory meetings, and then more frequently through phone calls. Many UZ supervisors shared anecdotes about how CYLs asked them to assist with community problems (e.g., instances of forced marriage), how CYLs paid social visits to them when they went to the market in Zinder (and sometimes even provided them food), and how they routinely offered advice to CYLs over their cellphones. CYLs confirmed they felt very positive about having a university student as a mentor, but it seemed this mentorship was less technical and more social.

A key finding from both UZ supervisors and CYLs was confusion over the roles and responsibilities of supervisors. The UZ supervisors recognized the project did not meet their expectations for close supervision and guidance of CYLs. However, agents of a community-based organization (CBO) contracted by the larger RISE project also supported the CYLs and provided most of the in-person supervision. UZ supervisors reported they played less of a decision-making role than they expected at the beginning of the project.

## LESSONS LEARNED

### **Relationships Between University Students and Community Youth**

The COIA analyses suggest that RISE-CLC created a unique opportunity for university students and rural youth to create and strengthen bonds that, as suggested by several respondents, may extend beyond RISE. It is noteworthy that this kind of social linkage between in-school and out-of-school youth was both multidimensional and easily created. This could merely be a result of establishing the expectation of a supervisory relationship, which created occasions for interaction that were then further developed through the provision of cellphones to CYLs. In COIA interviews, both UZ supervisors and CYLs spoke of this bond as an unanticipated benefit of RISE-CLC and it raises the question of whether a broader in-school/out-of-school interface could be part of a strategy for resilience. Resilience is fundamentally about flexibility, the ability to meet challenges in creative, context-sensitive ways, and the mechanisms necessary to act on new ideas. Increasing the capacity of local youth to lead FP/RH projects and the capacity of university students to supervise improves the ability of both cadres to respond to unanticipated challenges, while also contributing to community demand for, access to, and use of FP/RH services, thereby increasing resilience.

## Perceptions of Leadership

The social connection between university and village youth is noteworthy. However, in two KIs, UZ supervisors expressed that CYLs would find it difficult to exert leadership without better training in monitoring and the ability to record and monitor data. These informants felt the expectation of youth leadership in these communities was “unrealistic,” with high illiteracy rates presenting a significant obstacle.

However, CYLs were unified in their view that they had the potential to be good leaders despite some disagreement over what youth leadership meant in the context of community. Most noted that characteristics of a good leader combined technical knowledge with a personality and reputation that made their peers comfortable. In the COIA FGD, most CYLs expressed that there was not significant community resistance to their leadership, but they would require a good deal more training and supervision to be as effective as possible. They understood that leadership development is a process, not just a title.

## Structural Barriers

Numerous structural barriers arose throughout implementation. A lean staff, lack of time and financing, and difficulty implementing activities in rural areas are logistical challenges that frequently arise in similar projects. The nature of adaptive management meant these approaches changed over the course of the project. For instance, CBO agents who supervised other community health workers in the larger RISE project also helped supervise CYLs and provide data to UZ supervisors was an unexpected adaptation. While effective, it caused confusion among the front-line implementers.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTERS

## COIA

COIA, by requiring implementers to think through next steps clearly and deliberately, proves to be a useful framework for adapting a project. However, the approach is difficult to implement without proper staff availability, resources, and training. The tool also requires a sophisticated understanding of the LTI dimensions of programmatic adaptation and implementation. In this case of trying to adapt the university setting-based ULC program to a community-based context, implementation required more local commitment and resources than anticipated, including an experienced focus group and interview facilitator to lead COIA. Consequently, the tool should be carefully matched to its audience. COIA and similar tools may be better suited for high-level programmatic thinkers to systematically approach adaptation and guide program design. Even so, COIA activities did: (1) generate a good deal of general information about how perceptions of RISE-CLC shifted as implementers encountered problems, (2) raise information about implementation that was previously unknown to the project, and (3) ensure the language of “adaptation” took root both among UZ supervisors and CYLs.

Although the COIA was likely not the most appropriate tool for this population, its contribution was to provide a systematic approach for thinking through the adaptation process as an innovation was scaled up



from one setting to another. Although the adaptation is considered as part of the scale-up process, it is not problematized and systematized to the extent it had been here. A re-designed COIA with more accessible and tangible “dimensions” would indeed be valuable.

One suggestion for its revision is to use a different set of ‘dimensions’ or questions to guide the adaptation process. Here are some proposed questions:

1. How do the FP/RH profiles of pilot-site population differ from the scale-up-site population? How do the particular challenges of each population differ? What adjustments to the innovation might you have to make as a result?
2. How do the socio-economic and cultural profiles of the two sites differ? For example, are educational levels/literacy similar? How do levels of economic and gender inequity vary? Is there significant ethnic variation between the two sites? What adjustments might you have to make as a result?
3. What behavioral or service outcome results were you hoping to attain through your pilot intervention? Are these the same results you intend to solve in the scale-up site, or have these shifted? If so, what adaptations will be required to your innovation?
4. How do the level of available resources for implementing and monitoring your innovation differ from the pilot and scale-up sites? Will you have more or fewer resources? What kinds of resources will you have access to? How will this affect the nature of your innovation in terms of the particular set of services you are able to offer?
5. Finally, how does coverage vary from the pilot site to the proposed scale-up site? Will the scale-up site cover more people or places within the same general geographic area (e.g., city or district), or are you proposing a significant increase in geographic coverage? What implications will this have for your ability to implement effectively given your resources including staffing, transportation, technology, etc.? What might you have to change as a result of the proposal scale of your expansion site?

## FrAME

FrAME is a promising tool to monitor and supervise front-line implementers’ approaches and uncovers important contextual information from front-line implementers that otherwise would not have surfaced during the process. However, the facilitation of review sessions required frequent, in-person meetings that carried a large financial and logistical burden and were therefore implemented inconsistently. CYLs received weekly phone calls, but only participated in review sessions every few months—this means that they often evaluated their experience with supervisors without having received supervision, and that they reported challenges more often than they discussed or resolved them. Aligning FrAME calls and feedback sessions would help youth leaders and supervisors promptly track and address challenges to monitor adaptive management approaches in real time. Restructuring the approach to rely less heavily on frequent phone calls and integrating review sessions into other supervisory visits or events could make the process more efficient.

The overall FrAME methodology and approach has a lot of potential, particularly in settings where distance and other logistical challenges make frequent in-person supervisory visits impractical. The platform can also be modified—in terms of the questions posed to front-line implementers—to be responsive to the implementation and management needs of a specific project. Additionally, FrAME calls could also be adapted to collect qualitative information. One such method may be to allow frontline workers to leave messages and enter information about contextual factors that could affect the project's performance, such as issues of security, climactic events, or questions that are being raised by community members that may signal issues with the intervention and/or the need to adaptively manage the project.

## **Community Youth Leadership**

In adapting from a university to community setting, the CYLs were not completely confident in their abilities to serve as youth leaders, but they were confident that they had the ability to become good leaders and were open to the possibility of developing their skills and receiving further leadership training. Over time, the relationship among CYLs, community leaders, and members evolved to become more open and accepting, and CYLs demonstrated an ability to reach their peers. Routine monitoring data show us that this intervention—in conjunction with broader RISE efforts—resulted in an increase in uptake in contraceptive use among young people. From July 2017 to March 2018, prior to the training of CYLs, 3,877 young people (under 24 years) accepted FP methods for the first time through RISE-FP-supported community-based and facility-based activities. Following the ULC training in April 2018, over the same nine-month time period (April to December 2018), 5,048 young people accepted FP methods for the first time, representing a 30% increase. An additional 657 young people accepted methods for the first time from January to June 2019. Furthermore, the tools and methodologies developed for RISE-FP are accessible to low literacy populations, and therefore show promise for further scale-up in other rural parts of Niger.

An unexpected achievement of RISE-CLC was the camaraderie between of out-of-school youth with low levels of education and their UZ supervisors, which helped CYLs make sense of project performance and facilitate peer engagement in behavior change thinking. Though not adequate for demonstrating leadership, it was nonetheless a critical component of behavior change. RISE-CLC has clearly pioneered—under difficult circumstances—an approach that stimulated thought and action, effectively monitored the activity, and made tools available for continued adaptation. This ability to modify activities to meet the realities of change is the essence of resilience, and with further thoughtful adaptations, this suite of tools, when modified, can meet the needs of program designers and implementers.

## EVIDENCE TO ACTION PROJECT

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