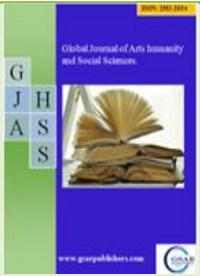
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Empowerment and resilience of the most vulnerable displaced and host populations and UNHCR's interventions in the Diffa region

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Abstract

The Diffa region, located in southeastern Niger, is facing a complex humanitarian crisis resulting from the interplay between persistent armed conflicts and growing climate challenges. This has led to massive displacement of populations, putting considerable pressure on local resources and existing infrastructure. Host communities and displaced populations are in a situation of increased vulnerability, facing major socio-economic challenges such as limited access to basic services, food insecurity and lack of economic opportunities. This study aims to make a significant contribution to understanding and solving these challenges. However, there are no displaced people at the sites of Djori Kolo and Gidan Kaji. The sites of Sayam (62.5%) and Awardi (25%) stand out for a higher proportion of returnees. The majority of the population surveyed is made up of people over 35 years of age (Awardi 33.3%, Djori Kolo 33.3%, Gidan Kaji 36.7%, Ngagam 33.3%, Sayam 33.3%), with a low representation of people under 17 years of age, particularly absent in some sites (Gidan Kaji, Ngagam and Sayam). Agriculture is the main activity in all localities, with a particularly high rate in Ngagam (60.0%) and Awaridi (43.3%). In relation to access to employment (Awardi 46%, Djori Kolo 50%, Gidan Kaji 23.3%, Ngagam 66.7% and Sayam 60%).

Keywords: vulnerable, resilience of populations, empowerment, UNHCR Diffa..

I. Introduction

The Diffa region, located in southeastern Niger, is facing a complex humanitarian crisis resulting from the interplay between persistent armed conflicts and growing climate challenges. This has led to massive displacement of populations, putting considerable pressure on local resources and existing infrastructure. Host communities and displaced populations are in a situation of increased vulnerability, facing major socio-economic challenges such as limited access to basic services, food insecurity and lack of economic opportunities.

In this context, social cohesion between displaced populations and host communities is being strained, mainly due to competition for already limited resources. This complex dynamic requires an approach that addresses both immediate humanitarian needs and long-term development solutions term.

This study aims to make a significant contribution to understanding and addressing these challenges. It focuses on three main

objectives: to assess the needs and challenges of host, displaced and refugee populations in terms of resilience and social cohesion, to identify opportunities for economic empowerment, and to propose concrete initiatives to strengthen resilience and social cohesion by building on existing local resources and organizations.

By assessing these aspects, this study aims to produce results to inform future policies and interventions, thus contributing to the sustainable improvement of living conditions in the Diffa region.

II. Methodology

2.1. Sampling and data collection

The sites of Sayam, Awaridi, Djori Kolo, Ngagam and Gidan Kaji were selected as sample sites in the Diffa region. At each site, surveys were carried out among refugees, displaced persons and host populations. In addition to the sites selected, interviews were organized with humanitarian organizations, local authorities, technical services and resource persons in the Diffa region.

With regard to the sample of households surveyed, a sample of 30 households per site was selected, identified through random sampling in each site (Table 1). The same number of people were surveyed among the indigenous populations.

Data collection was based on two questionnaires:

- A household questionnaire, administered to households.
- A focus group questionnaire, administered to groups of men and women to gather information from the population through village assemblies. Information was also collected from regional technical services, humanitarian organizations, local authorities and resource persons in the Diffa region (Table 2).

Table 1: Surveys of sites and households surveyed

Région	Communes	Sites	Number of households surveyed			Number of focus groups conducted
			Total households	Female (50%)	Male (50%)	
Diffa	Chetimari	Sayam	30	15	15	2
	Diffa	Awardi	30	15	15	1
		Djori Kolo	30	15	15	1
	Gueskero	Ngagam	30	15	15	2
	Mainé-soroa	Gidan Kaji	30	15	15	2
Total			150	75	75	8

The questions focused on the level of empowerment of the displaced and host populations through an assessment of their level of livelihood resilience and their level of socio-economic inclusion in the Diffa region.

Table 2: Survey tools and actors involved

Survey tools	Number of people involved
Focus groups with the population (host, displaced and refugees) one male and one female focus group in each commune	8
Interview guide with 2 key people (UNCHR, IOM, SEARCH....)	6
Interview guide for technical departments (DRAT-DC, DRPS, DREN, DREC, UDA, DRE, DRA, DRE, DRH)	9
Interview guide for authorities (AD, CT, GVT)	4
Total	27

2.2. Data processing and analysis

Once the collected data had been entered, the reliability of the responses was checked by identifying and deleting outliers, and the quality of the answers to the questions and their consistency with

the questions were analyzed. Following this first stage, descriptive analyses were carried out to assess general trends in responses. Finally, to highlight the degree of correlation and dependence or independence between variables, multivariate analyses were carried out using the R software packages FactoMineR and factoextra.

2.3. Work plan

The work was carried out in several stages.

Stage 1: Development and validation of survey tools

For the surveys and the search for additional information, several sheets were drawn up. These include the household survey form and the focus group form, which will be used for interviews with technical services, humanitarian organizations, local authorities and resource persons.

Stage 2: Recruitment and training of interviewers

This stage consists of recruiting and training interviewers. Recruitment. There was a pre-selection followed by a final selection of field agents after an aptitude test for mastery of the questionnaire and local languages. The training took place in Diffa and was both theoretical and practical, to test the questionnaire. At the end of the training, the questionnaire was validated on the basis of the test results. A total of one day was needed to train nine (9) interviewers, followed by the evaluation of the questionnaire. In the end, nine (9) agents and two (2) supervisors were retained for the study.

Stage 3: Data collection

Interviewers were deployed in the field to administer the household questionnaires and focus groups. The supervisors facilitated the work of the interviewers and intervened when necessary to explain the context of the study to the population. Supervisors are also responsible for gathering information from technical services, humanitarian organizations, local authorities and resource persons. They facilitate contacts with the authorities, administrative and technical managers, and check daily that each questionnaire has been filled in correctly. Data is entered as soon as the teams return from the field, to enable rapid transmission to the supervisors.

Stage 4: Tabulation, data entry and drafting of the interim report

Supervisors and data entry agents carried out a final data reconciliation. This was followed by data entry, processing and analysis.

III. Results

3.1 Demographic characteristics of households

Analysis of demographic and social data for households in the Awardi, Ngagam, Sayam, Djori Kolo and Gidan Kaji sites reveals significant trends (Table 4). Indigenous, displaced, refugee and returnee households present varied proportions, with a predominance of refugees and displaced persons. However, there are no displaced persons at the Djori Kolo and Gidan Kaji sites. The Sayam (62.5%) and Awardi (25%) sites stand out for their higher proportion of returnees.

The survey population is predominantly made up of people aged over 35 (Awaridi 33.3%, Djori Kolo 33.3%, Gidan Kaji 36.7%, Ngagam 33.3%, Sayam 33.3%), with a low representation of under-17s, particularly absent from certain sites (Gidan Kaji, Ngagam and Sayam). The 18 - 35 age group is also significant. The gender breakdown shows a slight numerical superiority of women over men.

In terms of ethnic diversity, the Kanuri are the most represented (Awaridi 66.7%, Djori Kolo 70%, Gidan Kaji 100%, Ngagam 63.3%, Sayam 43.3%), followed by the Peulh, Tubu, Haoussa and Touareg, with notable variations from site to site. Tuareg (3.3%)

and Tubu (3.3%) are relatively well represented in Awaridi and Sayam respectively.

The marital status of respondents indicates a prevalence of monogamous and polygamous unions, with a higher frequency of polygamy among indigenous households. On the other hand, a small proportion declare that they are single, while others are divorced or widowed.

Finally, household education levels show a predominance of Koranic education (over 60%), although primary and secondary education levels are also present.

Table 4: Characteristics of surveyed households by site

Line labels	Awaridi (%)	Djori Kolo (%)	Gidan Kaji (%)	Ngagam (%)	Sayam (%)
Household status					
Indigenous	33,3	33,3	36,7	33,3	33,3
Displaced	20,0	33,3	33,3	26,7	0,0
Refugee	33,3	33,3	30,0	33,3	33,3
Returned	13,3	0,0	0,0	6,7	33,3
Age group					
>35	46,7	60,0	60,0	46,7	83,3
0_17	20,0	3,3	0,0	0,0	0,0
18_35	33,3	36,7	40,0	53,3	16,7
Gender					
Masculin	50,0	50,0	50,0	50,0	46,7
Féminin	50,0	50,0	50,0	50,0	53,3
Ethnicity					
Kanouri	66,7	70,0	63,3	100,0	43,3
Peulh	10,0	6,7	33,3	0,0	40,0
Tubu	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	3,3
Haoussa	20,0	23,3	3,3	0,0	13,3
Touareg	3,3	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
Marital status					
Married monogamous	53,3	60,0	50,0	36,7	56,7
Married polygamous	10,0	26,7	13,3	43,3	33,3
Widowed	3,3	13,3	23,3	6,7	6,7
Divorced	6,7	0,0	3,3	13,3	0,0
Single	26,7	0,0	10,0	0,0	3,3
Education level					
Primary	6,7	0,0	13,3	6,7	13,3
Secondary	23,3	0,0	13,3	3,3	13,3
Koranic	70,0	73,3	70,0	66,7	56,7
No level	0,0	26,7	3,3	23,3	16,7

3.2. Main household activities

Agriculture is the main activity in all localities, with a particularly high rate in Ngagam (60.0%) and Awaridi (43.3%) (Figure 1).

Nevertheless, a significant percentage of the population is unemployed, particularly in Djori Kolo (23.3%) and Gidan Kaji (20.0%).



Sayam shows notable diversity, with significant percentages in several categories such as farmers (36.7%), traders (30.0%) and herders (13.3%). As for Djori Kolo, it has a high proportion of shopkeepers (33.4%) and unemployed people (23.3%).

An analysis of local specificities reveals that N'Gagam is heavily dependent on agriculture (60.0%), which might suggest a high dependence on this activity for subsistence. In Awaridi, however, there is a balance between farmers (43.3%) and traders (20.0%), with a significant proportion of unemployed (16.7%).



Figure 1: Main household activities by site and commune

This highlights the importance of agriculture for household subsistence in these localities. Unemployment rates are of concern in some localities, such as Djori Kolo and Gidan Kaji, which may require interventions to create employment opportunities. Some localities, such as Sayam, show an economic diversity that may be an indicator of economic resilience.

3.3 Socio-economic inclusion of populations

3.3.1. Access to employment

According to figure 2, there are some who have declared they have a job (Awaridi 46%, Djori Kolo 50.0%, Gidan Kaji 23.3%, Ngagam 66.7% and Sayam 60.0%). This variation in employment rates between different localities could indicate differences in the economic opportunities and resources available in these areas.

The three main difficulties encountered by households in their work are insecurity, late payment for community work and age (elderly people). These problems affect not only the economic stability of households, but also their general well-being.

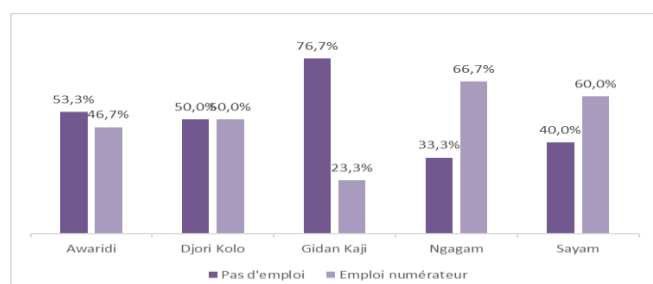


Figure 2: Percentage of people in gainful employment

3.3.2 Access to education

The majority of school-age children attend school (87%) (figure 3). The main challenges cited in relation to access to education in schools are lack of financial resources, insecurity, lack of premises

for revision at night, and the distance to travel to school. However, the establishment of schools and classrooms in the vicinity would enable all children to return to school.

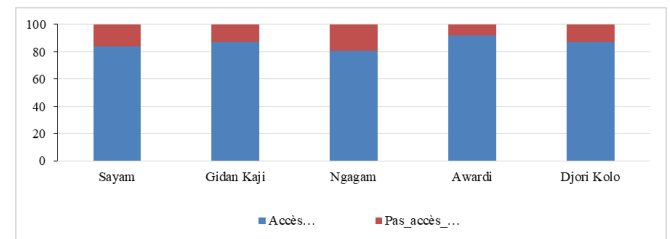


Figure 3: Children's access to formal education

3.3.3 Housing accessibility

In terms of housing accessibility, over 78% of those surveyed claim to have a home (Figure 4). However, challenges remain for the houseless minority. Households without housing cite the lack of building materials as the main obstacle, and the absence of fences around homes exposing residents to insecurity.

Initiatives to make homes more secure, such as building fences or improving security infrastructures and building material support, could be beneficial.

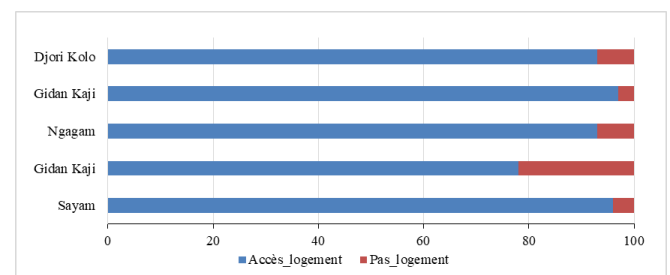


Figure 4: Housing access by site

3.3.4 Food availability

With regard to food availability, only 20% of respondents claimed to have enough nutritious food, indicating a worrying situation in all the sites studied. The majority of people in Sayam (80%), Awaridi (91%), Ngagam (71%), Gidan Kaji (77%) and Djori Kolo (73%) do not consume sufficient nutritious food. Lack of work and financial means are cited as the main reasons for food insufficiency. This underlines the need to create employment opportunities and strengthen livelihoods to improve food security.

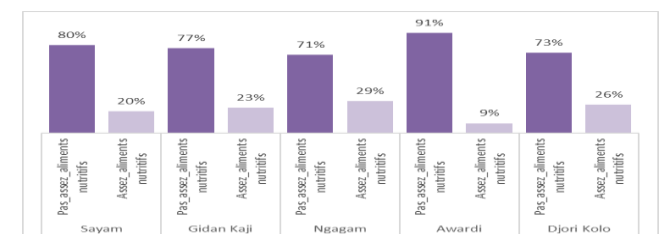


Figure 5: Access to nutritious food

3.3.5. Social inclusion

In general, over 80% of social relations between displaced persons, refugees and local people are good. They are involved in community activities such as dune fixation, the relay committee

and other committees (disabled, reception, etc.). This indicates strong social cohesion and successful integration of the different communities.

Marriages between the different communities are further proof of this social cohesion and mutual acceptance.

3.4 Livelihoods

3.4.1 Agriculture

The results in table 5 show significant disparities between localities in terms of access to land and coverage of food needs.

a. Access to land

The majority of respondents have access to cropland (80%), while some respondents (20%) have no access, due to insufficient arable land. Ngagam and Sayam have the highest rates of access at 96.67% and 90% respectively, while Gidan Kaji has the lowest rate at just 56.67%, and the highest rate of non-access at 43.33%.

With regard to the difficulties faced by farmers in these regions. Respondents frequently mention the lack of financial means to buy or rent land in relation to access to land. In addition, the materials needed to work the land are often insufficient. Some respondents also mentioned conflicts between breeders and farmers.

b. Food requirements and suggestions for improvement

Analysis of Table 5 shows that 48% of respondents claim that their crops can cover their annual food requirements. However, the majority of respondents (52%) state that their harvests are not sufficient to meet their annual food requirements. Gidan Kaji has the highest rate of uncovered food needs at 96.67%, indicating a critical situation. Djori Kolo and Awaridi have relatively better rates, with 73.33% and 60% of their food needs covered respectively.

The reasons cited for insufficient harvests include financial and material resources for cultivation, field areas that are often too small to produce enough, available seeds that are often of poor quality or in insufficient quantity, and debt problems.

Table 5: Access to land and degree of food coverage

	Awaridi (%)	Djori Kolo (%)	Gidan Kaji (%)	Ngagam (%)	Sayam (%)	Total

Access to land						
No access	26,67	16,67	43,33	3,33	10	20
Access	73,33	83,33	56,67	96,67	90	80
Year-round food requirements						
Does not cover	40	26,67	96,67	50	46,67	52
Covers	60	73,33	3,33	50	53,33	48

3.4.2. Livestock

The results in figure 6 show that livestock farming is in the majority (over 60%) in all localities: Gidan Kaji, Awaridi, Sayam and Ngagam, with the highest percentage in Gidan Kaji. In Djori Kolo, the distribution is almost balanced, with 53% practicing livestock farming and 47% not. This could indicate a diversification of economic activities, and that other sources of income may be available in this locality.

Among the constraints mentioned by the local population are animal theft, insecurity, the remoteness of grazing areas and climate change.

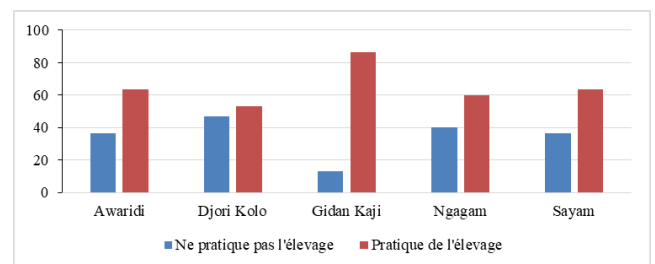


Figure 6: Breeding practice

3.4.3 Environment-Energy

The results in Table 6 show that fuelwood is the predominant energy source in all localities, followed by a combination of fuelwood and charcoal. The highest value is recorded in Gidan Kaji, with a percentage of 80% for the use of firewood. Djori Kolo has the highest percentage (50%) for this combination of energy sources. However, Awaridi and Ngagam also have high percentages (23.3% and 46.7% respectively). The combination of firewood and charcoal is also common in Djori Kolo (50%), Awaridi (23.3%) and Ngagam (46.7%). This practice may be a response to the limited availability of firewood, or to higher energy requirements.

Table 6: Diversity of energy sources used by households by site

Energy source	Awaridi (%)	Djori Kolo (%)	Gidan Kaji (%)	Ngagam (%)	Sayam (%)
Fuelwood	60,0	46,7	80,0	50,0	53,3
Fuelwood and charcoal	23,3	50,0	16,7	46,7	40,0
Firewood, charcoal, solar	3,3	-	-	3,3	-
Charcoal	13,3	3,3	3,3	-	6,7

3.4.4 Income-generating activities

The main sources of income for the households of the people interviewed come from trade, the sale of agricultural and animal

products, and day labor. Income-generating activities are shown in the figure below: agriculture, livestock breeding, fishing, petty trade, handicrafts, wood and charcoal cutting and sales. One of the

traditional chiefs declares that these activities are sustainable because they are carried out every year.

Table 7 reveals that petty trade is a predominant activity in several localities, particularly Sayam (50%), Awaridi (30%) and Majori Kolo (26.66%). In Sayam, half the population is engaged in petty trade, which could indicate a dynamic local economy, but also a possible vulnerability to market fluctuations. The localities of Awaridi and Majori Kolo also have a high involvement in petty trade, which may require initiatives to diversify sources of income.

Livestock farming plays a significant role in the lives of the populations of Gidan Kaji (10%) and Djori Kolo (6.67%). The implementation of sustainable animal resource management programs may be necessary. However, Djori Kolo (16.67%) and Sayam (6.67%) are respondents who practice fattening, hence the need for training and support programs to improve it.

A relative proportion of the population of Awaridi (10%) and Ngagam (16.67%) are involved in the sale of wood and charcoal, which could have environmental implications, such as desertification. Initiatives to ensure sustainable resource management, such as ANR and environmental education activities.

Table 7: Main sources of household income

Income-generating activities	Awaridi	Djori Kolo	Gidan Kaji	Ngagam	Sayam
Agriculture	16,67	10	20	20	10
Agriculture and Livestock	-	-	20	-	3,33
Agriculture and small trade	3,33	3,33	6,67	16,67	10
Butchery	-	3,33	-	-	-
Trade	13,33	13,33	6,67	-	-
Trade and Agriculture	-	-	3,33	-	-
Livestock	-	6,67	10	6,67	-
Livestock and Crafts	-	-	3,33	-	-
Livestock and labor	-	-	3,33	-	-
Livestock and petty trade	3,33	-	6,66	3,33	-
Livestock, IGA	-	-	-	3,33	-
Livestock, Agriculture and Trade	3,33	10	-	3,33	-
Livestock, Agriculture, Trade and Fishing	-	3,33	-	-	-
Livestock, Agriculture, Fishing	3,33	-	-	-	-
Fattening	-	16,67	-	-	6,67
Teacher	-	-	-	-	3,33
Labor	-	-	20	-	3,33
Labor and petty trade	-	-	-	-	6,66
Fishing 6.67	6,67	-	-	3,33	-
Fishing and coal sales	-	-	-	3,33	-
Small-scale trade	30	26,66	-	10	50
Sale of wood and coal	10	6,67	-	16,67	-
Sale of charcoal and fattening	3,33	-	-	-	-
Sale of coal, agriculture, fattening	-	-	-	3,33	-
Condiments and braids	-	-	-	-	3,33
Sale of Fish	3,33	-	-	3,33	-
Sale of condiments	-	-	-	-	3,33
Sale of galettes	3,33	-	-	3,33	-
Sale of agricultural products	-	-	-	3,33	-

4. Discussion

Lack of education is a major obstacle to employment, according to information gathered in village assemblies: "For those who don't work, it's difficult for them to get a job for reasons such as lack of



education, age, security and lack of qualifications". The vulnerability of older people to unemployment calls for specific support programs. The activities carried out by those surveyed included trading, bricklaying, butchery and fishing. Half of the people surveyed said they worked in the agricultural sector, doing skilled manual labor. This prevalence of manual jobs may indicate an economic dependence on these sectors. The people who said they had jobs in the agricultural sector were in Sayam and Ngagam.

As far as farming is concerned, available land is often insufficient to meet needs. Improved seeds and fertilizers are often lacking or insufficient. Land infertility or low fertility is a recurring problem. Financial means and equipment for cultivation are often insufficient. In addition, some respondents mention problems linked to the rainy season or desertification.

Indeed, some respondents say they have to use part of their harvest to pay off debts, which reduces the amount available for their own consumption.

Several proposals were made to improve agricultural production, the main ones being as follows:

- Make it easier for farmers to obtain financial assistance to buy materials and seeds.
- Ensure sufficient and secure access to farmland, and fence it off to protect it and improve its use.
- Ensure the availability of better quality seeds in adequate quantities.
- Implement measures to combat crop-damaging diseases and insects.
- Provide training for farmers to improve their farming practices and raise awareness of the most effective cultivation methods.

These results show that, although most people have access to land, a large proportion of the population (52%) is unable to meet its annual food requirements. This highlights the importance of finding ways to improve agricultural productivity and food security.

The use of alternative energy sources for public lighting and battery recharging, such as solar power, is extremely limited. Only Awaridi and Ngagam use this source, with very low percentages (3.3%). This practice should be encouraged, as it could significantly reduce dependence on firewood and charcoal.

Farming (Ngagam and Djidan Kadji) and livestock raising are common activities, often combined with other activities such as trade. The population of Awaridi is heavily involved in agriculture, reflecting their dependence on this activity for their livelihood. Interviewees in Gidan Kaji and Ngagam also reported strong involvement in agriculture, suggesting that agricultural support programs could be beneficial.

5. Conclusion

This survey of indigenous, displaced, refugee and returnee households in the Sayam, Awaridi, N'gagam, Djori Kolo and Gidan Kaji sites shows their degree of socio-economic inclusion and the diversity of their livelihoods. Social relations between these communities are good, and access to employment, housing and children's education is high. However, the majority of households do not have enough nutritious food.

Households' sources of income come mainly from trade, the sale of agricultural and animal products, and day labor. However, these communities face a number of challenges, including lack of work and financial resources, poor soils, insufficient improved seeds and fertilizers, and lack of clean energy sources. This knowledge and data will help define future activities.

To meet these challenges, a number of recommendations have been formulated.

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