

AGORA

 acted
IMPACT

Shaping practices
Influencing policies
Impacting lives

Think Local, Act Global

An approach anchored in local territories and knowledge to
better support people in fragile contexts



A joint initiative by Acted and IMPACT Initiatives

January 2024

What is AGORA?

AGORA is a joint venture between Acted and IMPACT Initiatives (IMPACT) created in 2016 to operationalise our motto "Think local, Act global". It is an innovative **area-based approach** that aims to better address the relief, environmental and development needs of people in fragile contexts through a NEXUS approach.

The key value added of AGORA is:

- Working at the **right geographical scale**, enabling both meaningful engagement with local actors and the ability to scale-up the action
- Contextualising action through a strong **evidence base** and reliance on **local knowledge** to inform programme approaches
- **Putting local actors at the center** by strengthening their capacity, enabling them to identify their own needs and response priorities through participative

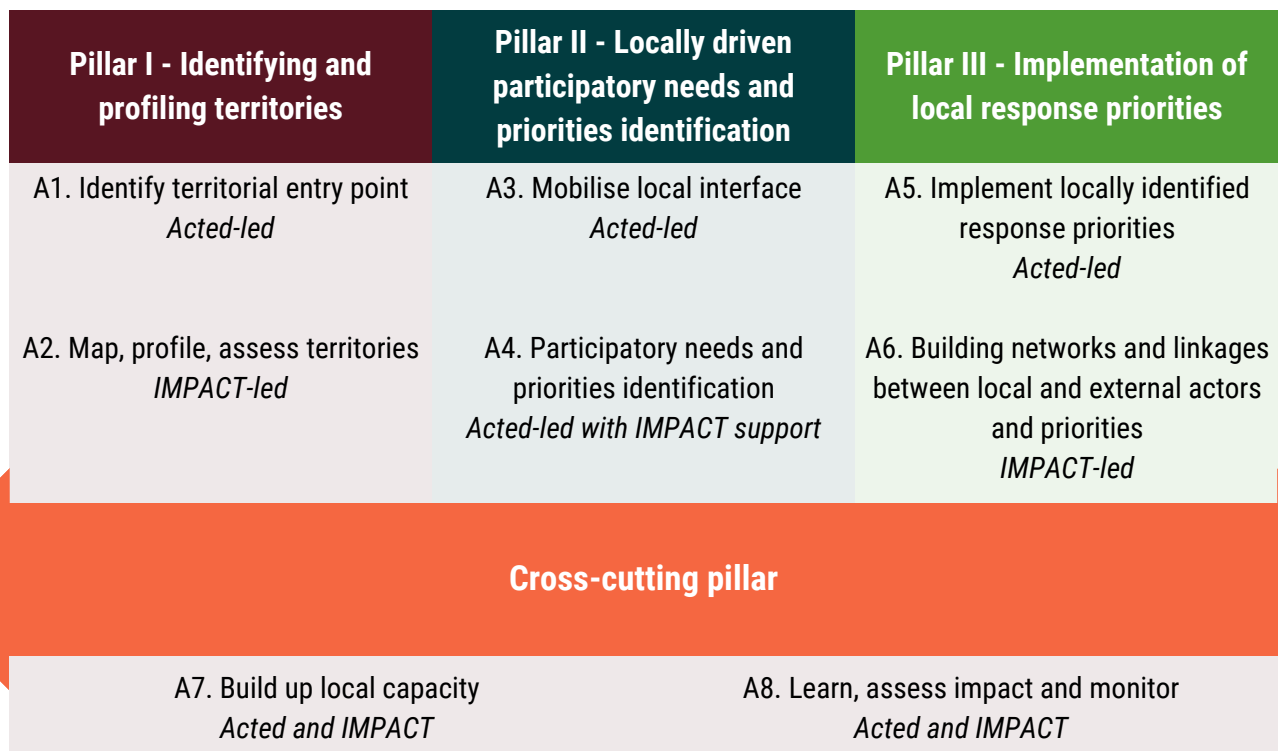
research and planning approaches, and to participate in and monitor implementation

- **Linking local and external actors** so that the latter can contribute resources and capacity to implement local solutions and response priorities.

AGORA strengthens **territorial resilience** by enabling a wide range of programmes, including supporting Durable Solutions to displacement, strengthening local governance, improving basic services and livelihoods, climate change adaptation and mitigation, improving natural resources management, disaster risk reduction and management, anticipatory action.

AGORA has already been piloted in 17 countries through 23 projects, reaching approximately 2,5 million beneficiaries and supporting around 1,800 organisations.

The AGORA methodology



Who? Where?



Experience in **aid delivery**

Experience in **local governance support and capacity building for civil society**

Field presence and **operational capacity**

AGORA

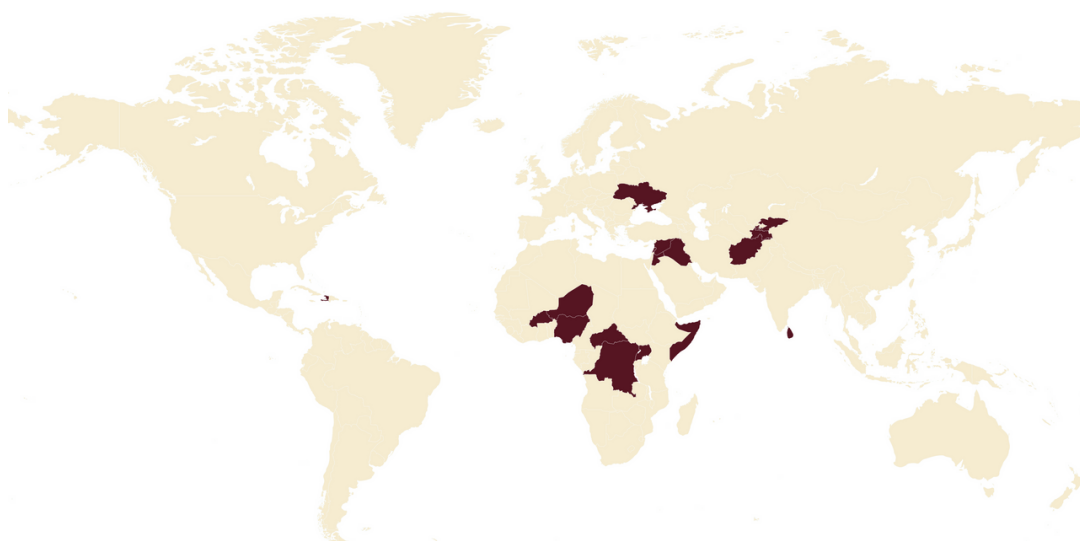
IMPACT

Shaping practices
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Assessments, analysis, and evaluation

Support to coordination

Global advocacy capacity



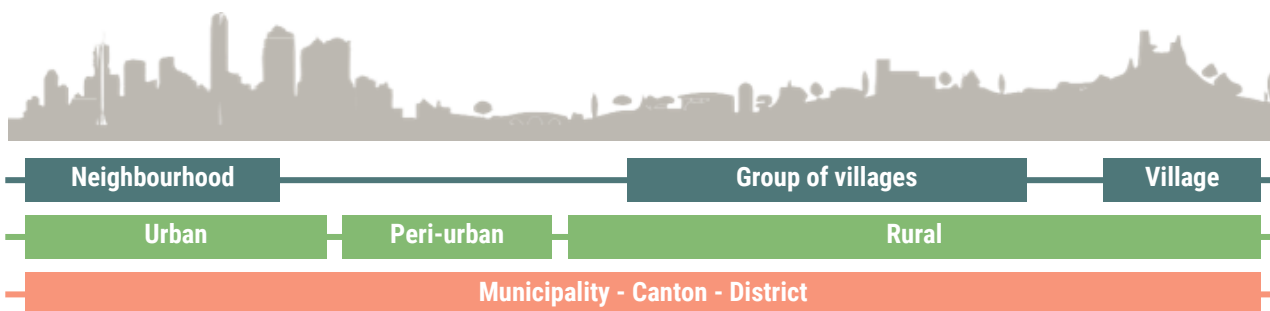
- Afghanistan
- Burkina Faso
- Central African Rep.
- Dem. Rep. of Congo
- Haïti
- Iraq
- Jordan
- Kyrgyzstan
- Lebanon
- Niger
- Nigeria
- Somalia
- Sri Lanka
- Syria
- Tajikistan
- Uganda
- Ukraine

The boundaries of this map are provided by a third party and do not represent the views of Acted or IMPACT Initiatives.

AGORA builds on the growing recognition within the international aid system that humanitarian responses and development solutions must be better tailored to local contexts and interlinked in order to be effective.

Therefore AGORA has been designed as an **alternative to the traditional top-down**

siloes, or 'traveling,' aid models to enable **more pertinent, effective, and locally owned programmes** in line with the Sustainable Development Goals' (SDG) commitment to "leave no one behind" and the Grand Bargain commitments that call for a new way of working with and through local actors, as well as the recognition of the need to localise the SDGs.



The AGORA methodology can apply to a wide array of geographic and administrative scales



AGORA's added value

By helping local actors formulate their own priorities outside of the traditional humanitarian-development divide, in ways that are anchored in the realities of territories, and shifting from sectoral to multi-sectoral responses, AGORA is a practical vehicle to help identify and implement relief, environmental, and development solutions through a localised NEXUS approach.



Planning at the right geographical scale

AGORA plans and implements through **local territories that espouse existing socio-spatial realities and are adapted to the programme objectives pursued**. They can be formal administrative territories or functional territories related to a livelihood zone, or a natural resource (e.g., a sub-river basin).

The territories that AGORA works through are small enough to ensure meaningful local engagement and large enough to capture the complex interrelations between communities and within ecosystems, and to enable scaling-up across a crisis. Generally, the right geographical scale means territories with populations ranging from 5,000 to 70,000.



Localising the action by putting local actors at the center

AGORA is an approach to concretely **localise action and improve accountability to affected people** by strengthening local capacities, empowering local actors to identify their own needs and response priorities through **participative research and planning approaches**, and ensuring that **local actors participate in and monitor implementation** of locally identified response priorities.



Linking local and external actors

AGORA aims to help meet immediate relief needs and facilitate investment into the development and ecological transition of territories. To this end, **AGORA provides a platform to give visibility to locally identified needs and response**

priorities with external actors, public or private, that have the technical and financial ability to support their implementation. As such, AGORA can act as a vector to help 'ground' national or global policies at the local level and reduce the risks associated with investing in fragile territories.



Contextualising the action

AGORA identifies area-specific needs and vulnerabilities by generating **a robust evidence base** informing territorial assessments that help tailor responses appropriate to each context. Data collection and analysis are tailored to programme objectives: it can focus on identifying humanitarian, environmental, and development needs in target territories, or be more focused on particular issues or resources that are strategic for the ecological transition and development of territories.

To contextualise effectively, AGORA also identifies relevant elements of **local knowledge** to ensure that solutions are locally adapted. This is particularly important in many fragile contexts, where state capacity can remain limited at sub-national level, with customary or community governance systems often playing key roles in natural resource management or conflict resolution.

Through this local knowledge, AGORA can help identify **local drivers of conflict and practical ways to address them**, particularly when the focus is on supporting local actors with the management of natural resources such as water and pastures which can contribute to conflict dynamics between users.

Examples of AGORA in practice

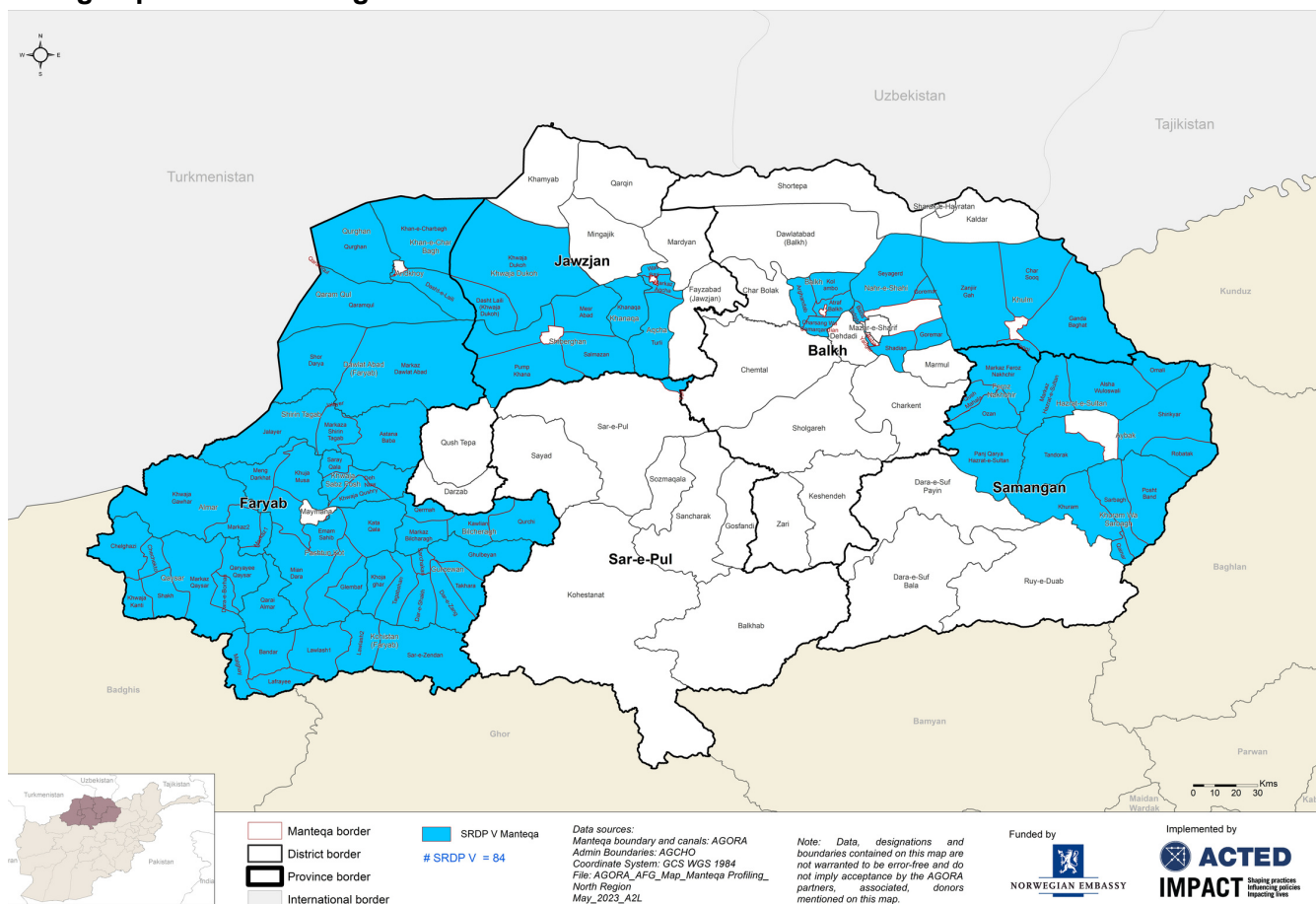
Afghanistan

Since 2018, Acted and IMPACT have been implementing a large AGORA programme in Afghanistan with the support of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs covering the four northern provinces of Faryab, Jawzjan, Balkh, and Samangan. This project works through 84 rural traditional neighbourhood zones called *manteqas*. Acted has implemented community priority projects identified in each manteqa worth US\$ 3 million in the last years, covering education, access to basic services, agriculture, and water management. The latest addition to this programme is an agroecology pilot aimed at tackling land degradation. The programme's reliance on informal community governance mechanisms that underpin much of rural livelihoods in Afghanistan has facilitated community ownership, women participation, and project sustainability.



Participatory mapping in Faryab province

Map of the 84 *manteqas* through which the Sustained Rural Development Programme is being implemented in Afghanistan



Examples of AGORA in practice

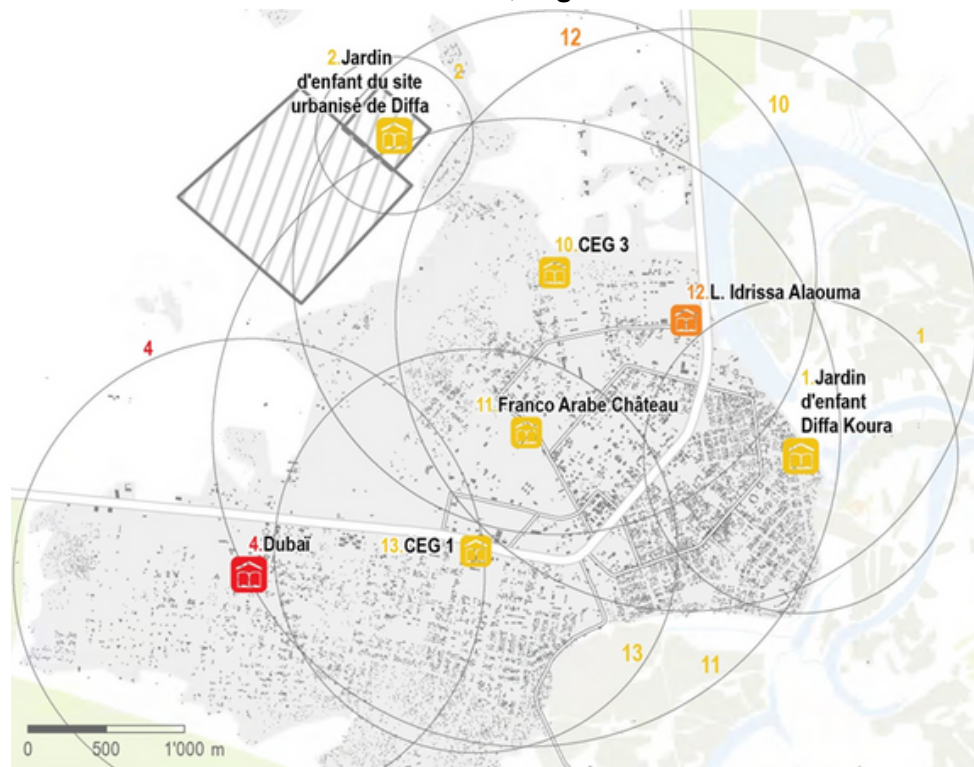
Niger

Between 2019 and 2022, Acted and IMPACT, together with consortium members Concern Worldwide and Welt Hunger Hilfe, supported local communities in six communes of the Diffa region through funding from the European Union. The project focused on vulnerable refugees, internally displaced, returnees, and host populations. Building upon territorial evaluations of needs and services, six local plans were co-developed by institutional actors, communities, consortium members and external partners. 53 percent of the priorities identified in the plans were implemented by the consortium or other external actors, bolstering the resilience of households to shocks, improving food security, access to basic services and infrastructure, and creating livelihood opportunities. In addition, the project strengthened the planning capacities of local authorities.



Participatory planning working group in N'guigmi, Diffa region, Niger

Educational facilities functionality score and socio-spatial analysis of the functionality and catchment areas of education facilities in Diffa, Niger



- Catchment area of the infrastructure
- Educational facility
- Displaced people resettlement area