

# Hunger in the Sahel: a permanent emergency?

Ensuring the next drought will not cause another humanitarian crisis.



Children sharing a meal in the village of Timbouloulag in Niger (region of Tillabery).

The food crisis forced Timbouloulag inhabitants to rely on bush harvested leaves for food. The leaves have to be soaked and cooked for three hours in order to break the main fibres and then crushed before consumption.

Crédit: Aubrey Wade / Oxfam

**The 2010 food crisis in the Sahel has affected millions of men, women and children. The humanitarian response, although too slow and insufficient, did at least allow the worst to be avoided. However, the root causes of food insecurity in the Sahel are structural. Breaking this vicious cycle requires a new approach. Collectively, we need to be better prepared in order to react more effectively to these recurring crises by tackling the root causes of this vulnerability and strengthening the resilience and increasing the revenues of affected communities. Development policies and programmes, starting with agricultural and food policies, must take the risks of failed harvests into account, while responding to the specific needs of the most vulnerable communities, in particular women and children. The fight against hunger and malnutrition in the Sahel needs to be fought before, during and after crises.**

# Introduction

In 2010, more than 10 million people, mainly women and children, were victims of the food crisis in the Sahel.<sup>1</sup> Nearly 500,000 severely malnourished children were taken into care between January and November 2010 in Niger, Chad, Mali and Burkina Faso.<sup>2</sup> Most livestock in the Sahel was decimated.<sup>3</sup> The images and the stories of hunger harked back to the food crisis of 2005 and the famines in 1973-1974 and 1984-1985.

This crisis has had a devastating impact on the lives and livelihoods of millions of people. To survive, the poorest families have been forced to reduce their number of daily meals, sometimes eating the leaves from trees or berries<sup>4</sup> or searching through ants' nests to find a few grains of cereal. Families, sometimes whole villages, moved away in search of food and work. Others have sold their possessions and taken on debt, often at very high interest rates, in order to feed themselves.<sup>5</sup> In pastoral areas, even those families who anticipated the crisis by selling off their animals in time only benefited from a few additional weeks worth of food.

However while the crisis was exceptional in scale, 2010 was not an isolated case: each year around 20% of the inhabitants of Sahel countries suffer from hunger,<sup>6</sup> and hundreds of thousands of families suffer from the failure of crops, pasture land and income for food. Each year for the most vulnerable people,<sup>7</sup> the lean period<sup>8</sup> means chronic hunger, illness and suffering. This hunger threatens the survival and development of the youngest children, as well as the health, livelihoods and incomes of the adults. It threatens the future of whole families.

This situation is unfortunately not new in the Sahel. Chronic malnutrition rates are among the highest in the world. The various crises which have struck this region in the last few decades have led to lower living standards in communities and have made them economically and ecologically vulnerable. This vulnerability is complex and inextricably linked to poverty.<sup>9</sup>

Today we cannot predict the next rains with any accuracy, but we can be certain that another drought will arrive sooner or later. What should be done to prevent the next drought from once again leading to a humanitarian disaster? All the actors involved, including international NGOs, need to reflect on their roles and how they can improve their responses in future. This briefing note aims to examine, in the light of the most recent crisis, what lessons can be drawn for improving the international community's response before, during and after food crisis in the Sahel.

## 2

# Too little, too late

Despite various warning signs, in 2010, the response from governments, donors, agencies and NGOs was too late and at a level which was inadequate to deal with the scale of the crisis. By not acting earlier and with greater resources, we failed to prevent deaths and suffering. This must not happen again.

### A repetition of 2005?

In 2009, rains across the Sahel were insufficient and their spatial distribution was poor.<sup>10</sup> This led to a major reduction in agricultural production (which is 95% rain-fed) and fodder. Several humanitarian actors voiced concerns as early as the beginning of September. In November of 2009, the early warning systems (EWS) were activated, and important information about the scale of the impending crisis was made available.

Even if the scale of the deficit is not comparable, in 2005 as in 2010 the immediate causes (insufficient and poorly distributed rains) and their effects (a reduction in agricultural and fodder production) were similar.<sup>11</sup> In both cases the local markets remained, on the whole, supplied with cereals.<sup>12</sup> However, cereal prices were extremely high.<sup>13</sup> The crisis shifted from one of “availability” to one of “accessibility”<sup>14</sup>: food may remain generally available, but at prices that make it inaccessible to many families. One could call it a poverty crisis.

The crises of 2005 and 2010 also share a dramatic nutritional component. The global acute malnutrition rate in 2010 is above 16%<sup>15</sup> in Chad and Niger, with rates as high as 20% in some regions of those countries.<sup>16</sup> A large number of children whose nutritional state was already weak due to a poor diet needed to receive treatment. Children continue to be the first victims of hunger.

Finally, as in the crises in the 1970's and 1980's pastoral areas where animal husbandry is the main source of both food and income have been badly affected. When animals do not have adequate pastures and water they weaken and lose their value. Their owners cannot afford to purchase food from the markets because the livestock prices fall at the same time cereal prices rise. Each new crisis further threatens the pastoral way of life in the Sahel.

### A late and insufficient response

The international community encountered numerous difficulties during this response. Resource mobilization, certainly not simple for the recurring food crises in the Sahel, has been a major problem. The absence of available, timely funding, a dearth of qualified personnel and repeated logistical problems were constraints that reduced the quality of response. In addition, the 2010 crisis illustrated, as if that

were still needed, the supreme importance of the crisis being recognised by national authorities.

### *Noticeable improvements compared with 2005*

But some improvements were seen. In Niger, it is certain that the co-ordination of the different actors around and with the government was improved. The availability of an agreed national contingency plan made decision-making easier.<sup>17</sup> Statistics were made available sooner. More international and national NGOs were present on the ground and were prepared to intervene.<sup>18</sup> But above all, despite the ongoing difficulties, the food aid (nearly 80% of which came from the sub-region<sup>19</sup>) arrived more quickly than in 2005.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the important points of progress, some of the main lessons from 2005 were neither learned nor taken into account, especially in Mali and Chad. These relate particularly to the way the early warning systems were used, the delays in food aid, the gaps in pastoral and urban responses and coordination.

### *Warning without mobilization?*

In 2010 as in 2005, national EWS played a role in highlighting the crisis as early as November 2009. Although the information from the community and NGO EWS worked well on the whole, it was not always interpreted in a satisfactory way, nor did it result in rapid reaction from humanitarian actors, governments and donors.<sup>21</sup> To some extent this can be explained by the focus within national EWS on indicators of food resource availability, rather than on access to the food resources by local populations.

Mid-July, the UN revised Emergency Humanitarian Action Plan for Niger, amounting to USD 371 million, was only 38% funded.<sup>22</sup> At the same period, Mali had only received 23% of the funds requested.<sup>23</sup>

In Chad also, despite several warning signals in November 2009, it was not until February 2010 that resources were mobilised for an intervention which finally got underway in June – July 2010, more than 3 months after hundreds of families had exhausted their coping strategies<sup>24</sup> and abandoned their villages.

### *Food aid: still the core of the response despite many issues...*

Once again, the humanitarian response mostly relied on in-kind food aid. Despite some progress, in kind food aid deliveries, whether shipped from abroad or purchased within the region, still resulted in considerable delays for the people in need, including as a result of poor infrastructure and logistical problems.<sup>25</sup> These delays were aggravated by late decisions and a lack of ambition on the part of some actors. In June 2010 in Niger, the World Food Programme (WFP) only planned to cover the food requirements of 2.3 million people out of the more than 7.1 million people suffering from severe or moderate food insecurity.<sup>26</sup> It was only after mid-July that WFP announced a scale-up to provide aid to 7.9 million people<sup>27</sup>.

This must not happen again. The humanitarian system must better adjust to deal with this permanent, high risk. Decision-making, along with supporting administrative and financial processes, must be more rapid in order to meet humanitarian standards. The organizations in charge of food aid, starting with national governments and the WFP, must be better prepared. In particular, this means identifying in advance purchase options in countries within the region at harvest time, and actively working with international and national NGOs to ensure timely delivery.

Delays associated with the delivery of in-kind food aid and the availability of food on markets argue in favour of making greater use of cash transfers as a less costly, more efficient and more appropriate means of intervention. Cash transfers and vouchers give poor people access to food while also supporting local producers. Despite improvements made by some donors<sup>28</sup>, it remains under-utilised as compared to the firmly-rooted practice of food aid in-kind.<sup>29</sup>

### *Pastoralists and urban populations, less considered?*

As in 2005, not enough attention was paid to the pastoral dimension of the crisis.<sup>30</sup> The response in pastoral areas only involved a small proportion of donor assistance, and the response came too late. This can be explained by the difference in timing (the crisis in pastoral areas starts and finishes earlier), lack of available information, greater complexity of intervention in these areas and the lack of interest from governments and donors.

The same weaknesses (delays, insufficient resources, lack of information, of expertise and sometimes of interest) also explain the inadequacy of the response in towns and urban areas, places where many rural people and families are forced to migrate due to poor harvests and pastures.

### *Coordination, still a major challenge*

Good coordination of humanitarian assistance is essential for an effective response. However, despite the existence in some countries of recognised, agreed frameworks, coordination continues to be a major challenge for humanitarian responses in the Sahel. The United Nations (UN) system, especially, was not capable of fulfilling its responsibilities in this area. Whether in Mali, Niger or Chad, the role of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and humanitarian co-ordinators, the system of “clusters,”<sup>31</sup> the lack of inter-cluster groups and the difficulties of co-ordinating with governments all caused avoidable problems. These included a lack of information, delays in responding to the crisis, duplications of efforts, and concentration of resources in some areas when others were under-resourced. This was also the case at the regional level: north-Nigeria has been particularly forgotten by analyses and interventions.

Where a government actually takes the lead in co-ordinating the humanitarian response, the UN needs to rethink its role in order to effectively support national institutions and policies. In other contexts,

especially when the national government fails to recognise the crisis (as was the case this year in Mali and Chad), the UN approach needs to be far more pro-active in order to ensure access to humanitarian assistance for the people and communities affected. In this respect, strong diplomacy and advocacy by donors urging national authorities to recognize the crisis is equally decisive.

Emergency responses are unquestionably necessary. They save lives and have positive effects in the short- and medium-term. However, they do not tackle the underlying causes of vulnerability. In addition, if not well designed, they can damage the long-term livelihoods for vulnerable families and communities. For example, regular food aid can lead to dependency in communities and a shift in diets.<sup>32</sup> Food aid has too often been both over-used and misused by donors in the Sahel, instead of more challenging, but more effective, solutions to long-term problems.<sup>33</sup> The efficiency and appropriateness of emergency responses is improving but their impact in the face of structural vulnerability and chronic malnutrition remains limited.

# 3

## Time to act

At the end of a large-scale crisis, people and communities are extremely vulnerable: their assets are depleted, children are malnourished and highly vulnerable to illness, they are deeply indebted, etc. They need support. However, all too often once emergency humanitarian support stops, they do not receive the critical support needed to rebuild their lives and livelihoods in the wake of disasters.

It will obviously take more than one good year to re-establish the farmers and pastoralists' livelihoods which have been weakened by a series of crises. Right now, governments and the humanitarian and development agencies need to help them move on from the crisis, reducing the vulnerability and strengthening the resilience<sup>34</sup> of these communities.

### Immediate post-crisis recovery needs

Rehabilitation needs are immense. It is a question of recovering the productive assets, improving access to land and financial resources and managing stocks to make production less vulnerable to variations in climate and other threats to crops.<sup>35</sup>

Programmes such as “cash for work” can enable agricultural improvements and the prevention of seasonal migration. Rebuilding herds using traditional systems such as Habbanaye<sup>36</sup> will be essential for the many affected pastoral households. Regular, predictable cash transfers that are part of safety net programs can target women and match the seasonal timing of household needs in order to promote investment and protect the productive assets for the most at-risk families.

Elsewhere, support needs to focus on increasing storage capacity and promoting the processing of agricultural and animal husbandry outputs. To improve and strengthen agricultural and pastoral production systems, access to and efficient management of both water and land is crucial. These types of measures could help to increase the resilience of affected populations and also reduce their vulnerability and the risk that they will be weakened when the next lean season arrives or when faced with future crises. For this, donors need to guarantee the availability of transition funding to maintain programme and staff and support innovative recovery programming.

If the food crisis of 2010 generated immediate additional needs, it is extremely urgent that we review our long-term approach and change our perspective. We know that at least one of the next five seasons is likely to be bad: how do we prevent the next drought turning into a humanitarian disaster?

## Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction

Starting now, we need to systematically include contingency planning<sup>37</sup> in long-term policies and programmes. For that, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) is a very realistic approach which helps reduce both the risk of a disaster occurring and its effects if it does occur. For communities, this means identifying and analysing all potential threats to life and livelihoods, people's vulnerability to these threats and ways to strengthen their ability to effectively respond to threats. Women play a crucial role in communities' responses to such shocks and need to be fully involved in this process.

The DRR approach provides a way of bringing together emergency interventions and development policies by integrating risk prevention and the preparation of humanitarian responses within general and sectoral policies and programmes. Developing a "culture of prevention" remains a major challenge. Governments need to equip themselves with contingency plans including annual reviews that include all parties involved. It is a top priority to strengthen local and community capacities for analysis, prevention, preparation and response, especially to reduce the dependency of Sahel communities on outside aid which is often late and inadequate.

Specifically, the DRR approach includes tools proven to increase food security for producers and to diversify their sources of revenue including warrantage<sup>38</sup> and agroforestry; local or community early warning and emergency response systems; social protection programmes, particularly social safety nets; and emergency stocks held as cereals (or in cash). Insurance could also be a potential avenue for agricultural and pastoral producers faced with climatic shocks and price volatility. The results of pilot projects in this field should be scaled-up and expanded.

### ***Social safety nets for vulnerability and malnutrition***

In 2005 and 2010, all actors agreed there was a new aspect to the crisis: a crisis of accessibility closely linked to a poverty crisis. In the Sahel, 80% of families devote 80% of their budget to food, and 59 % of the population lives on less than 1.25 dollars/day.<sup>39</sup> This amount is not enough to feed a family given that prices of some basic cereals can triple at certain times during the year. There is an absence of any ambitious market intervention policies to reduce prices, and there are no social protection policies for the most vulnerable people. Monetary transfers to the poorest households and food vouchers would, however, provide solutions to vulnerability and malnutrition. Money invested to buy food locally would also support local producers. Various mechanisms have been successfully established in Latin America and East Africa. At a continental level, the Productive Safety Net programme (PSNP) in Ethiopia is a useful example; and, starting in 2006 the African Union began to support the "Livingstone Call for action on social protection". In West Africa, Ghana is a trailblazer with large-scale distribution of food vouchers. In the Sahel no State has yet created a "social safety net" on a national scale. Many pilot projects exist, but most are small-scale. The public finances of the Sahel countries do not permit them to create true national policies for social protection without substantial funding from donors.



# 4

## Investing in the long-term

The Sahel is facing two major challenges in guaranteeing food supplies and a decent revenue to its people in the coming decades:

- Existing extreme climatic variability and future climate change will increase the unpredictability of rainfall patterns.<sup>40</sup> Frequency and intensity of extreme climatic events will increase resulting in droughts and floods in the Sahel. This could make the current EWS obsolete as they are based mainly on agricultural indicators.
- Demographic growth which is among the highest in the world.<sup>41</sup> The population of the Sahel doubles on average every 25 years.

Given this context, with limited arable land and increasing soil degradation and reliance on rain-fed production, action is needed now to increase the resilience and incomes of the communities and to prevent the next drought from becoming a major food crisis. This means multi-sectoral investments<sup>42</sup> with an emphasis on agricultural and food policies<sup>43</sup> focussed on the production of local foodstuffs which benefit small family producers, particularly women.

### Quality information to improve interventions

In a sector as complex as food security and nutrition, information is critical for both emergency interventions and long-term assistance. Good quality information - gender specific and available on time - is necessary in order to respond in a targeted, suitable and co-ordinated fashion. At the national level where the whole question of food supplies remains very sensitive, there is an urgent need to improve the quality, clarity and regularity of the information provided by the EWS. Often, EWS continue to be influenced by local and national authorities.

It is equally important that information systems include new information. For example it is necessary to have better information which measures households' purchasing power and their access to food as well as multi-dimensional causes of vulnerability, including for pastoralists. It is also important to include more Community Early Warning Systems (CEWS) and "local" indicators collected by the communities (animal migrations, drying of water sources, etc.) which often prove just as reliable as more sophisticated systems.

This information, which varies for each community and region, allows emergency and long-term responses to be better targeted and tailored: how can you identify which vulnerable people are to receive food vouchers unless you know what households live off in a given community? How can you apply an agricultural policy to support family-based producers without reliable statistics on their smallholdings and their characteristics? This can be done using livelihoods profiles and evaluations such as the "household economy approach."<sup>44</sup>

Information and early warning systems need to be overhauled and upgraded. The Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) <sup>45</sup> framework provides a useful approach for this, including collection of a greater number and variety of indicators and a multi-actor methodology at the local level which builds consensus on the food security situation among different stakeholders. This approach contributes to agreement on definition of the levels of food security in each area. At the local level, this is also what the various vulnerability tracking systems and the CEWS aim to improve.

At the regional level, the Permanent Inter-States Committee to Fight Drought in Sahel (CILSS)<sup>46</sup> is mandated to supply quality information at the right time. CILSS relies on its Member States for the production of this information, an approach that raises concern. On this point, the skills of CILSS' leadership will be critical in enabling effective implementation and respect for the "Food Crisis Prevention and Management Charter" currently under development.<sup>47</sup> In addition, CILSS' role, as technical arm of regional bodies on food security, within policy process underway in the region such as ECOWAS regional agricultural policies is subject to many questions.<sup>48</sup> The goal is for the two institutions to mutually reinforce each other. Allowing CILSS to effectively become and serve as the technical arm of ECOWAS for managing food crises would allow that organization more freedom of action and reform.

### **Consistent, co-ordinated agricultural and food policies and sizeable investments**

In the light of recurring food crises, national and regional agricultural, pastoral and food policies need to be revisited to strengthen the resilience and incomes of rural households.<sup>49</sup> In the Sahel, the priority to address poverty is through agriculture and rural livelihoods that impact the poorest and most vulnerable. Since 2005, ECOWAS<sup>50</sup> has had an agricultural policy<sup>51</sup> based on two levels of intervention:

- regional level, mainly through three mobilisation programmes (one of which relates to food and nutritional security for vulnerable populations) ;
- national level, with national agricultural investment programmes (NAIPs)<sup>52</sup> that reflect national priorities and provide the reference framework for interventions.

Effective implementation of these plans should help to improve agriculture and pastoralism, and reduce food insecurity in the region. The problem is less one of implementing projects than it is of promoting policies. In this context, it is essential for NAIPs to include policy instruments such as land ownership, lending, commercial and fiscal policies, as well as including a disaster risk reduction approach. These plans must also focus on small scale producers, particularly women, who play an essential role in production and selling but lack access to and control over resources.

***Policy instruments: regulation of food markets to prevent crisis by reducing speculation and price volatility***

It is the role of governments to protect their citizens from unaffordable food prices and to intervene in markets when they are not working – such as in the case of oligopolies or anti-competitive behaviours. Today's food crises in the Sahel are in fact crises of accessibility and poverty where markets and prices play a critical role.<sup>53</sup> It is therefore critical to rethink intervention methods in Sahel markets, at both national and regional levels. Cereal markets are not always well-integrated and are often dominated by cartels. Local cereal prices show huge volatility, with prices able to triple within 9 months. However, cereal prices have too much influence on the access to food of millions of people in the region to be left solely to the vagaries of the markets. This is particularly so when they are controlled by oligopolies of traders, with strong political influence and interests that are not necessarily those of the vast majority of citizens or producers. Interventions should aim at making both producers and consumers less dependent on market price fluctuations and speculation by middle men. It can range from subsidies to farmers or direct purchases from producers, sales at reduced prices, and national or regional food stocks to ensure contra-cyclical interventions.

To be effective, these policies need to be consistent, co-ordinated and supported by an increase in the volume and quality of investment. On this point, the commitments made in 2003 in Maputo by Member States of the African Union to devote 10 % of their budget resources to investment in agriculture remains a matter of the utmost urgency.<sup>54</sup> The Sahel States need to make agriculture and food security a true budget priority by respecting their commitments and ensuring the quality of their aid deliveries.

In general, funding for the rural sector remains too dependent on unpredictable external contributions. In 2008, external contributions accounted for more than 75% of the national budget for the rural sector in Niger and Burkina Faso.<sup>55</sup> This funding is mainly implemented in the form of projects and is often badly co-ordinated and poorly aligned to national priorities. Although donors have signed the Paris Declaration<sup>56</sup> on aid effectiveness and are committed to supporting national processes,<sup>57</sup> by using a programme-based approach, field analysis highlights the difference between these principles and their practice.

Aid projects are, in reality, the main method of external funding in the rural sector, and this trend seems to be difficult to reverse in the short-term. Thus, in Burkina Faso in 2007, 27 donors were involved in the agro-sylvo-pastoral area in 131 projects.<sup>58</sup> One of every five years is likely to be a crisis year in the Sahel. Given that most projects have an average 2 to 3 year lifespan, much progress is swept away or set back by the next crisis. In order to truly make a difference predictable, long-term funding and investment horizons that span (and anticipate) drought cycles are needed.

Finally, it is vital to put an end to the separation of, and lack of co-ordination between, the structures responsible for agricultural and pastoral policies and those responsible for emergency interventions. Even if their ways of working and timing are different, these actors

should still work toward the same goal in a context of structural, recurring crisis. All actors have to find ways to better work together and to complement each other. Often, the same institutions participate in both long-term and emergency coordination bodies but not necessarily with the same representatives. The Sahel context particularly requires that development and humanitarian teams talk more and bridge their work. It is of a particular importance that UN agencies increase their joint work and coherence and have systematic and smoother coordination.

## Conclusions and recommendations

While 2010 is coming to an end, the crisis continues and will return. The media, public opinion and donors may forget about the Sahel until the next warning signs and distressing images of starving children arrive. But, the region needs them now more than ever. Far from being close to its end, the food crisis in the Sahel is permanent. Without reliable and predictable investment, other droughts will inevitably turn into human disasters over the coming years. Making sure humanitarian responses are quick and adequate, as well as working to reduce disaster risks, not only maximises the impact of that emergency aid but also helps protect development investments and therefore saves donors money in the long term.

It is important to learn the lessons of earlier crises and responses and to avoid repeating the same mistakes. Analysis of the 2010 response will be carried out over the weeks and months to come. These lessons must be learned and written into future commitments by all actors involved.

In this context, there are two questions to consider: what must we do collectively to prevent the next drought turning into a large-scale food crisis? And, if that crisis does occur how can we be best prepared to respond in the most effective and efficient manner? Our recommendations provide a way forward for addressing food crises in the Sahel.

### *Before and after a crisis, increase the resilience and incomes of communities*

- **Medium and long term policies and programmes need to include better Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR).** The risk of a crisis needs to be constantly monitored by anticipating bad years and improving humanitarian preparation for them. Strengthening local capacity for early warning and emergency response is crucial to improve timing and adequacy of food assistance.
- **The governments in the Sahel, with support from donors, need to implement national policies and programmes for social protection and social safety nets** that meet the needs of the most vulnerable people and communities, especially children, pregnant and breast-feeding women and the elderly. This will increase the resilience of households in the long-term, improve the nutrition of children, pregnant and breast -feeding women, and eventually lessen the negative impact of the next crisis.
- **The governments of the Sahel must invest in agriculture and food security policies, and allocate 10% of their budget towards investment in agriculture (Maputo Declaration).** This includes increasing the pace of implementation of ECOWAP and National

Agricultural Investment Programmes (NAIPs). They must also ensure that the policies increase the productivity and incomes of rural households, improve food security and focus on all agricultural sectors, particularly animal husbandry and pastoralism.

- **Donors must increase their long-term commitment outside of their response to crises** with substantial, flexible, predictable technical and financial support that reinforces existing government policies, especially in the rural sector, and increases the supply of essential social services.

#### *Prevent and plan for crises better*

- **Governments and donors need to invest more in systematic, multi-dimensional information and early warning systems** that cover the availability of and access to food, as well as household strategies. This will better reflect the reality for poor households (urban and rural) and, by triggering rapid and appropriate responses, ensure preventive action. Donors need to better support EWS at national, local and community levels.
- **The consistency and coordination of interventions needs to improve.** Given recurring droughts in the Sahel, governments, donors and UN agencies should adapt and improve, at the national level, the consistency and co-ordination between the structures responsible for emergency responses and those responsible for long-term policies. They should also increase the participation of international and national NGOs to these structures. It is of particular importance that UN agencies increase their joint work and coherence and have systematic and smoother coordination.

#### *Improve the quality and relevance of humanitarian responses*

- **Humanitarian actors must improve the quality and relevance of emergency response programmes** making greater use of direct cash transfers aligned with the medium- and long-term policies and programmes and other innovative instruments to protect against malnutrition, food insecurity and vulnerability in pastoral areas.
- **The Sahel countries should approve and adopt the new Charter for food security** from CILSS (Permanent Inter-States Committee to Fight Drought in Sahel)-Club du Sahel which provides a code of conduct for food crisis prevention, coordination and management. They should find concrete ways to effectively implement it.
- **More funding needs to be available to respond to crises.** To respond more quickly, donors need to look at innovative, flexible funding mechanisms which are predictable or pre-allocated such as disaster funds or insurance contracts which can be rapidly disbursed as soon as EWS are triggered (an example is the DFID Humanitarian response funds for West Africa (WAHRF)).<sup>59</sup>

# Notes

- 1 The Sahel covers Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad and Northern Nigeria. This informative report focuses on Niger, Mali, Chad and Burkina Faso.
- 2 Oxfam calculations from the monitoring systems of admissions to the assessment centres in Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso. For Mali alone, the provisional figure (Malnutrition among children in the Sahel, UNICEF, April 2010) was upheld. Many children suffering from severe acute malnutrition were also admitted in Northern Nigeria.
- 3 For example, in Niger it is estimated that farmers have lost between 80 and 100% of their animals (source: FEWSnet).
- 4 Notably "anza" (*boscia senegalensis*) in Niger and "savonnier" in Chad, which are only consumed in very bad years, being difficult to harvest and prepare and not very nutritious.
- 5 In Niger, 38.6% of households were in debt in April 2010. The average amount of debt was around one and a half sacks of cereal (127.8 kg, of which 90 kg maize and 15 kg sorghum) plus around 38,000 FCFA (around 58 Euros) per household. Those households suffering from severe food insecurity are more commonly in debt than the average, as well as those households in rural areas. Source: PAM, Shock and Vulnerability in Niger: Analysis of Secondary Data, October 2010, Global Report.
- 6 Prevalence of malnutrition: on average, 18.3% of the population in Niger, Mali, Chad and Burkina Faso are under-fed (Oxfam calculations from FAO Data 2005-2007, State of Food Insecurity of the World, 2010, [www.fao.org/hunger](http://www.fao.org/hunger)). This percentage increases to 37% in Chad.
- 7 Children between 0 and 5 years, the elderly, pregnant or breastfeeding women, or simply the poorest households.
- 8 The "soudure" is the period before the harvest, often called the "hunger gap", where family and village food stocks are at their lowest and prices on the market are at their highest. This is also the period for agricultural work in the fields, where the need for foodstuffs is significant to provide much needed work. In Sahel, this difficult period returns every year, and lasts from around May to September, according to the area and the year. For pastoral farmers, this is also the period where pastureland is reduced, water sources dry up, and herds are forced to travel further for pastures, etc.
- 9 Under the HDI classification (Human Development Index), out of 169 countries, Niger is 167th, Chad is 163rd, Burkina Faso 161st and Mali 160th. Source: UNDP, Human Development Report 2010 (<http://hdr.undp.org>)
- 10 A lack of rainfall has been forecast and publicised by regional institutions such as CILSS (Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel) and ACMAD (African Centre of Meteorological Application for Development) since May 2009.
- 11 In Niger, cereal production has fallen by 23% in 2004 compared to 2005 and by 30% in 2009 compared to 2008. Source: PAM, Shock and Vulnerability in Niger: Analysis of Secondary Data, October 2010, Global Report. In Burkina Faso: cereal production during the 2009-2010 agricultural campaign was estimated to have fallen by 17% compared to the previous year. It was therefore estimated that 47.5% of households would not manage to cover their requirements for cereals with the 2009-2010 Campaign. Source: Burkina Faso, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Definitive Result of the Agricultural Campaign 2009-2010, February 2010.
- 12 It is true that the question of accessibility is particularly relevant in rural areas in the North, which are located a long way from urban centres, and are difficult to reach.
- 13 In 2010, in Niger, the price of cereals were very high compared to the other years but has not reached the levels seen during the Crisis of 2005. In August 2010, for example, the nominal price per kilo of millet is 12% higher than the average for the period 2005 to 2009 (but 19% inferior compared to the same period in 2005). Source: WFP, Shock and Vulnerability in Niger: Analyse of secondary data, October 2010, Global Report.
- 14 The 2005 Crisis was classified as a "crisis of accessibility due to lack of demand": the main influencing factor was the severe drop in purchasing power of most Nigerians due to a drop in revenue from daily economic activities for these households (price of livestock, onions, reduction in commercial activity, etc.) which caused the price of everyday essential items to rise steeply. This crisis is above all a crisis of accessibility for those populations with a lack of purchasing power" from IRAM (Egg, Blein, Michels, Alby Flores), Evaluation of prevention methods and management in Niger during the crisis of 2004-2005, Main Report, June 2006.
- 15 Sources: Structural Vulnerability Survey in Chad, December 2009 ; Nutritional Survey for children aged between 6 and 59 months, May-June 2010, Government of Niger (National Institute of Statistics, INS and the Nutrition Office at the Ministry for Health). According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the "alert threshold" is 10% and the "emergency threshold" is 15% of the global acute malnutrition rate (GAM), which brings together three indices which allow the nutrition health of children to be assessed: weight/height, height/age and weight/age. Acute global malnutrition include severe and moderate acute malnutrition.
- 16 Notably the regions of Guéra, Kanem (Chad) and Diffa (Niger). Sources: Chad - ACF, Economic Study of Households and foods security in Kanem and Wadi Bissam (July-August 2010); Niger – Nutritional study and survey of children aged 6 to 59 months, May-June 2010, Government of Niger (National Institute of Statistics, INS and the Nutrition Office of the Ministry of Health).
- 17 This contingency plan was missing in 2005 and has been developed in 2007 within the DNP-GCA : Dispositif National de

- Prévention et de Gestion des Crises Alimentaires in Niger. See the website for the Information and Communication Centre : [www.cic.ne](http://www.cic.ne).
- 18 It is worth noting that many international agencies who arrived in 2005 have not yet left, since they were then aware of the structural causes which require long-term intervention. Prevention programmes and information have both increased between 2005 and 2010. This has been made possible partly because humanitarian donors, in particular ECHO and DFID, have changed their approach to Sahel, by providing a continuous support from 2005. This contrasts with the past, when fundings were only made available in case of major crisis. The fight against malnutrition has become more effective thanks to numerous innovations and experiments which have since taken place, and particularly the increased availability of Ready to Use therapeutic foodstuff . The integration policy for nutritional health by public health services has also proved effective, due, in part, to capacity strengthening and the experience of national sanitation units, despite a crucial lack of staff.
- 19 Interview with Manuel Aranda da Silva, co-ordinator for the Food Crisis Response in the Sahel for the World Food Programme (WFP), Niamey, August 2010.
- 20 Frederic Mousseau, Sahel : A Prisoner Of Starvation, a case study of the 2005 Food Crisis in Niger, October 2006, The Oakland Institute, page 12 onwards: "For several months, donors' response to both the Government and WFP's calls remained limited. Less than 10 percent of the requested funds had been received by July 2005. (...) Most donors' contributions started to reach Niger 8 months after the government's initial request."
- 21 Though some donors, as DFID (United-Kingdom) and ECHO (European Union), have reacted quite early with a significant level of contributions.
- 22 Source : Niger Emergency Humanitarian Action Plan (EHAP) revised, 16th July 2010
- 23 Source: Financial Tracking Service (FTS) : <http://www.reliefweb.int/fts>
- 24 "Adaptation" or "Coping" Strategies: behaviours adopted by victims of a crisis, shock or a particularly difficult situation, in order to meet their basic needs, and particularly requirements in terms of food. The most common strategies are related to eating habits (consume less expensive foodstuffs, borrow food from relatives, friends or neighbours, reduce the quantity consumed at a meal, reduce the number of meals per day, etc.) and economic behaviour (the sale of produce, exploitation of natural resources such as wood or straw, prolonged migration, etc.). In the most critical situations, certain coping strategies are particularly harmful.
- 25 Notably caused by the poor state of infrastructure in the region, untimely rainy seasons, which make many routes impassable, the fact that many countries in the region are landlocked, saturation of many access ports, and the lack of regional integration (border controls, opting out through certain sub-regional clauses, etc.)
- 26 That is 47.7% of the population of Niger. Source: SAP, INS, Study on Food Insecurity in Households in Niger (April 2010).
- 27 Announcement made by WFP on July 20, 2010  
<http://www.wfp.org/news/news-release/wfp-plans-massive-scale-hunger-relief-operation-needs-grow-dramatically-drought-hit-niger>
- 28 Notable, in Niger the United States provided \$US 24 million for local and regional purchase of food aid and cash vouchers distributed to vulnerable households, a substantial increase in cash assistance as compared with previous years. This amounted to approximately 26 percent of the humanitarian aid provided by the US in Niger. Source: USAID, Niger: Malnutrition and Food Security Fact Sheet #3, 14 July 2010.
- 29 In Niger, at the beginning of August, at the height of the crisis, and despite many difficulties in the supply chains, PAM targeted only 30,000 households via the "pilot" cash for work programmes. It was estimated that capacity was lacking in the area. Following the harvest, the scope of these cash programmes was widened (jointly with UNICEF).
- 30 "A permanent disconnect between diagnosis, formulating response and mobilising funds, (which) is shown by the lack of targeted responses for farmers ("floating" populations) as well as a lack of fodder is considered as the most significant risk factor in diagnosis. This is one of the major shortcomings of the response to the crisis (...)". Source : IRAM (Egg, Blein, Michels, Alby Flores), Evaluation of prevention methods and management of the food crises in Niger during the 2004-2005, Main Report, June 2006.
- 31 A "cluster" is essentially a "sectoral group" with the aim of filling gaps and ensuring predictable leadership preparedness and response. The cluster approach represents a raising of standards in humanitarian response. At the country level, it involves having clearly identified leads (within the international humanitarian community) for all the key sectors or areas of activity, with clearly defined responsibilities for these agencies in their capacities as sector leads. The UN Humanitarian Coordinator, in close consultation with the UN-Humanitarian Country Team, is responsible for securing agreement on the establishment of appropriate sectors and sectoral groups, and for the designation of sector leads. See OCHA (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid): <http://ochaonline.un.org>
- 32 See : CILSS, Twenty years of food crises prevention in the Sahel. Results & perspectives, 2004, p. 47 onwards.
- 33 See Oxfam's humanitarian policy note on food aid: <http://www.oxfam.org/en/policy/humanitarian-policy-notes> in English; <http://www.oxfam.org/fr/policy/humanitarian-policy-notes> en français: « Oxfam is particularly concerned about the over-reliance on in-kind food aid as the dominant form of humanitarian aid. It has become a default option that is often inappropriate because it is provided regardless of the context, livelihood group, or socio-economic status of the people



- at risk. Oxfam believes that food aid is an important and life-saving tool in some cases. However, it is also used in cases when other forms of aid could provide better solutions. For example, it is often provided when people have too little money to get sufficient food – even when there is no shortage of food in the market. In such cases, direct cash assistance, or productive inputs (of seeds, tools, livestock etc.) could enable people to buy the food they require.”
- 34 Resilience : capacity of an individual or a community to recover from a shock or a catastrophe. Resilience allows livelihoods to be rebuilt after a severe food crisis, for example.
- 35 Even in years with sufficient rainfall, attacks by predators and “crop enemies” (crickets, birds, seed and grain eating animals, caterpillars, etc.) decimated crops. In western Chad, for example, these attacks regularly decimate harvests, and heighten the vulnerability of the communities.
- 36 In this system, the animals are given to the selected families who keep the first young, and pass the original animal to the next families selected.
- 37 Contingence (lat. contingere : “to arrive by chance”): characteristic or event which may or may not present itself (eventuality).
- 38 The warrantage is a loan guaranteed by a stock of agriculture products(cereals, etc.) where the value increases over a fixed period. This technique, also called credit stock or agricultural warrants, allows producers to not sell their crops during the harvesting period, when the price is low, but enables them to store their products and sell them at higher prices several months later.
- 39 Average percentage of the population in Burkina Faso, Chad, Niger and Mali living below the poverty line with \$1.25 per day in terms of PPA (data 2000-2008). Oxfam calculations from the data provided in the Report on Human Development 2010 (UNDP).
- 40 Natural climate variability will continue to be a feature that makes interpretation of anthropogenically-forced climate change complex. No single rainfall event, past or future, can or could be attributed unequivocally to climate change. Natural climate variability will continue to complicate interpretation (wetter and drier periods, a feature of the past, will undoubtedly continue into the future). Source : Richard Washington, internal note on Niger for Oxfam, 2009.
- 41 Trends in terms of fertility rates (number of births per woman) for the period 2010-2015 is 6.9 in Niger, 5.8 in Chad, 5.6 in Burkina Faso and 5.2 in Mali. These figures are slightly lower compared to the period 2005-2010. Source: Report on Human Development 2009 and 2010 (UNDP).
- 42 In health, family planning and policy, gender equality, education, social protection, infrastructure, etc.
- 43 Including livestock farming, forestry, fishing, water, etc.
- 44 HEA: Household Economy Approach, see [www.feg-consulting.com](http://www.feg-consulting.com) and [www.foodeconomy.org](http://www.foodeconomy.org)
- 45 IPC (Integrated Phase Classification), is an initiative promoted by the FAO in East Africa to better analyse and predict food insecurity area by area and to provide a better response. IPC has been brought to West Africa, where it can “enrich” the current Food Insecurity Analysis Framework, which is the main framework and analysis tool currently in the Sahel (CILSS and national SAP systems). For more information on IPC, see [www.ipcinfo.org/about\\_fr.php](http://www.ipcinfo.org/about_fr.php) in French and [www.ipcinfo.org](http://www.ipcinfo.org) in English.
- 46 CILSS : Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel ([www.cilss.bf](http://www.cilss.bf)) was created following the droughts which hit the Sahel in the 1970s. CILSS now encompasses nine States (Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Chad, Cape Verde). It carries out work around five key areas: support in defining and implements sector policies in the areas of food security and the fight against desertification; basic training and continuous development ; information; research and capitalisation ; multi-country.
- 47 This document, previously Food Aid Charter (1990), is still under consultation and negotiation. For more information see the FCPN website : Food Crises Prevention Network in the Sahel and West Africa ([www.food-security.net](http://www.food-security.net))
- 48 CILSS is not an integrated example of the foundations of the common agricultural policy (ECOWAP) of ECOWAS towards food security.
- 49 Rural households include agriculture producers, pastoralists and all rural value chains actors (from production to proceeding, marketing, trading, etc.)
- 50 The issue is even more acute in Chad, which belongs to CEMAC (The Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa , which does not have an agricultural policy, like at the level of ECOWAS).
- 51 The Heads of State and ECOWAS adopted a regional agriculture policy, ECOWAP, in January 2005. This policy became the framework for the creation of other agricultural policies, in order to create “ a sustainable and modern agricultural industry, based on efficiency and productivity of family farming and the promotion of agricultural business thanks to the involvement of the private sector. Productivity and competitiveness on the international and regional markets will ensure food security and help obtain a reasonable revenue from production. This in turn will “contribute in a sustainable way to meeting the nutritional requirements of the population, to economic and social development and the reduction of poverty in member States, as well as inequalities between territories, zones and countries” Source: ECOWAP in brief or the regional agricultural policy for West Africa: ECOWAP/PDDAA. Making Agriculture a tool in regional integration. ECOWAS Commission (available at [http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/IMG/pdf/01\\_ComCEDEAO.pdf](http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/IMG/pdf/01_ComCEDEAO.pdf))
- 52 In December 2010, all countries in the CEDEAO adopted their PNIA (National Agricultural Investment Plan).
- 53 The 2005 Crisis was qualified as a “free market famine” in Frederic Mousseau, Sahel: A Prisoner of Starvation, a case

study of the 2005 Food Crisis in Niger, October 2006, The Oakland Institute.

- 54 The Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and food security has been adopted at the ordinary meeting of the Heads of State and governments of the African Union, held at Maputo on 10-12 July 2003. The States committed to increasing the investment in the agricultural sector, to the level of at least 10% of their national budget before 2008. In 2010, only eight countries have achieved their budgetary goals, including Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, which shows the importance of commitments linking volume and quality of investments.
- 55 See "Aid for Agriculture: Promises and the Reality on the Ground", Research report from Oxfam International, available : in French at [www.oxfam.org/fr/policy/aide-agriculture-des-promesses-aux-realites-de-terrain](http://www.oxfam.org/fr/policy/aide-agriculture-des-promesses-aux-realites-de-terrain); in English [www.oxfam.org/en/policy/aid-agriculture-promises-and-reality-ground](http://www.oxfam.org/en/policy/aid-agriculture-promises-and-reality-ground)
- 56 The Paris Declaration on the efficiency of public funding for development (2005), focuses particularly on the following five areas: the appropriation of aid by recipient States, alignment on national policies, the coordination and synchronisation of donor practices, management focussed on results and accountability.
- 57 Through the L'Aquila Initiative in 2009. L'Aquila declaration is available at [http://www.g8italia2009.it/static/G8\\_Allegato/LAquila\\_Joint\\_Statement\\_on\\_Global\\_Food\\_Security\[1\],0.pdf](http://www.g8italia2009.it/static/G8_Allegato/LAquila_Joint_Statement_on_Global_Food_Security[1],0.pdf)
- 58 Out of a total of 551 projects recorded across all sectors (2009). From "Aid for Agriculture: Promises and the Reality on the Ground", Research report from Oxfam International, available : in French at [www.oxfam.org/fr/policy/aide-agriculture-des-promesses-aux-realites-de-terrain](http://www.oxfam.org/fr/policy/aide-agriculture-des-promesses-aux-realites-de-terrain); in English [www.oxfam.org/en/policy/aid-agriculture-promises-and-reality-ground](http://www.oxfam.org/en/policy/aid-agriculture-promises-and-reality-ground)
- 59 The WAHRF (West Africa Humanitarian Response Fund) from DFID (UK Department for International Development) is made up of pre-allocated funding, granted to several international humanitarian agencies for rapid response to emergencies in West Africa.

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