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SAHEL: PRIORITISING RESILIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT

The Sahel has experienced a greater increase in hunger over the past decade than any other region in the world. The Sahelian states, regional organizations, and technical and financial partners face considerable difficulties in providing a sustainable, structural response to food and nutrition insecurity. Yet hunger is not inevitable in the Sahel. Beyond the rhetoric, these various actors must invest heavily in building the resilience capacities of populations to guarantee their food and nutritional security in the long term. This situation is even more urgent in a context of increased militarization, where the security challenges are intensifying. Oxfam, Save the Children and Action Against Hunger reiterate the urgency of increasing the attention given to humanitarian, development and civilian protection concerns, placing them at the heart of regional priorities.

SUMMARY

The Sahel is the world region that has seen the greatest rise in hunger, with the number of undernourished people increasing by 13.1 million in the space of 11 years according to the latest United Nations report on the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (2018). Although a variety of actors, including states, regional organizations, technical and financial partners, and international and national NGOs, are mobilized to provide food assistance to the most vulnerable, the situation is deteriorating.

The structural causes of hunger in the Sahel are well known: chronic poverty, lack of access to basic social services, poor governance, inequalities and an inappropriate agricultural model. These structural causes are exacerbated by the presence of external factors such as the consequences of climate change or the growing number of conflicts in the region, prompting the displacement of millions of people.

Over the years, states have set up a unique regional food crisis prevention and management system, supported by technical tools, to prevent hunger. However, there must be investment in a long-term response that tackles food insecurity from a holistic perspective, simultaneously addressing structural and conjunctural factors. While short-term responses do exist, investment in the resilience of the population remains insufficient.

The change in the regional context linked to the rise in insecurity and the proliferation of armed groups has further complicated the situation. The Sahel is now primarily viewed from the perspective of security or migration, yet people in the region are, more than ever, faced with the problem of hunger. The approach that links security and development, and is intended to address the challenges in the Sahel, is fraught with risks and underestimates the importance of governance in building people's resilience capacities.

Oxfam, Save the Children and Action Against Hunger call on all actors in the Sahel to mobilize around the fight against food and nutrition insecurity, in particular:

- By improving existing food crisis prevention and management systems through effective planning for the pastoral lean season, greater participation of civil society organizations, and ensuring the long-term viability of the regional reserve by taking into account the three lines of defence, particularly local stocks;

- By establishing a sustainable, multi-sectoral approach to build the resilience capacities of men and women, through the standardization of social safety nets for the most vulnerable groups, the honouring of state commitments in relation to agriculture and a rethinking of the current agricultural model;

- By ensuring that development aid is not used for security purposes, but rather meets the needs of the most vulnerable communities.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ten years after the 2008 food crisis and six years after the 2012 crisis that affected more than 18 million people in the Sahel region, according to the March 2018 Cadre Harmonisé, 10.8 million people were again food insecure in Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Niger and Chad.[1] Each new food crisis undermines the resilience of already impoverished communities and their ability to recover from successive shocks and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

The nutrition situation is also very worrying, with approximately 2 million children suffering from acute malnutrition and its consequences in the countries of the Sahel. According to the figures from the November 2018 technical consultation meeting of the Regional System for the Prevention and Management of Food Crises (PREGEC), the results of nutrition surveys show the persistence of a high prevalence of acute malnutrition in 2018 – significantly higher than in 2017, particularly in Niger, Mauritania and Mali. Although the situation seems stable in some countries, it conceals large local disparities, and the actual state of affairs remains alarming with a global acute malnutrition rate of over 10% in all countries of the Sahel, while the emergency threshold of 15% is reached in several regions of Mauritania, Niger and Chad.

Although the high food insecurity figures for 2018 have partly resulted from a rainfall shortage and conflicts, the structural causes of food insecurity in the Sahel cannot be ignored. Chronic poverty (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and Niger rank at the bottom of the Human Development Index[2]), lack of access to basic social services for much of the population, inequality between men and women, between rich and poor and between geographical areas, and poor governance contribute to perpetuating the vicious cycle of hunger and constitute obstacles to achieving the Zero Hunger goal of ECOWAS and the United Nations by 2030.

Although the 2018 lean season is by no means as severe as the 2012 crisis, it does unfortunately highlight several elements, that no one – neither states, regional institutions, nor donors – can ignore. Firstly, it highlights the fact that despite efforts to prevent and manage food crises, progress is too slow and people are still extremely vulnerable to shocks. The succession of difficult lean seasons over the last decade shows how the situation has deteriorated for the populations of the Sahel, whose living conditions have steadily worsened. Even though the situation was not totally catastrophic this year, it is not certain whether the states would be able to cope with a more serious crisis in the coming years, especially in a context where they face growing challenges (population pressure, climate change, political instability).

Following the crises of 2008 and 2012, the states in the region, regional organizations such as the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), and the technical and financial partners committed to eradicating hunger in the Sahel[3]. However, the evolution of the security context in recent years raises fears of a change of priority to the detriment of the most vulnerable segments

of the population. Indeed, the rise of insecurity and the proliferation of armed groups are now taking up the attention of both governments in the sub-region and the technical and financial partners. Numerous strategies for the Sahel are being developed (19 in total,[4] including by G5 Sahel, the UN, the European Union, the African Union and bilateral donors and banks) and the lens of security and migration dominates discussions about the approach to regional problems, leading to a potential diversion from the real objectives of the aid provided to the Sahel.

This paper aims to remind the states of the Sahel, the technical and financial partners, and regional and international organizations, including NGOs, of the urgent need to prioritize the fight against food and nutrition insecurity in a multidimensional way (livelihoods, health, education, water and sanitation). Although the need to strengthen the resilience of populations through an integrated, multi-sectoral humanitarian-development approach is widely accepted,[5] despite national initiatives, implementation of this approach is still falling short.

2. A CHRONIC STATE OF FOOD INSECURITY

Food and nutrition insecurity in the Sahel is often perceived as an isolated crisis linked to exogenous factors (poor rainy seasons, poor harvests or conflicts). While it is true that these factors do exacerbate the food and nutrition insecurity of millions of people, the majority of the population of the Sahel is suffering from chronic food and nutrition insecurity, a 'pervasive, on-going structural food crisis'.[6]

2.1 STRUCTURAL CAUSES

The structural causes of food insecurity have already been documented in numerous reports[7] which show that the permanent state of food and nutrition insecurity can be explained by numerous interconnected factors. These include: the chronic poverty of a large part of the population; low rates of human development; lack of access to basic social services (including health, education and water), especially in rural areas; inequality in terms of rights and power between men and women and between geographical areas and population groups; poor governance; the great difficulty faced by family farmers to establish resilient, sustainable livelihoods adapted to the new agricultural paradigm in the Sahel. An additional challenge to achieving food security in the Sahel is population growth. According to the Sahel and West Africa Club,[8] by 2040, the population is expected to increase from 80 million to 160 million.

> **Box 1: Achieving gender equality is essential in the fight against food insecurity**
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> The systematic marginalization of women in agriculture and their low participation in decision-making constitute real obstacles to achieving food security for the countries of the Sahel. Women account for the majority of workers in the agricultural sector (according to the International Fund for Agricultural Development, 89% of agricultural workers in the Sahel are women); yet, paradoxically, they face different and greater obstacles to men. Their limited access to land (due to often discriminatory laws and social norms), credit, agricultural inputs, markets, information and training hampers their efforts to increase productivity. According to FAO, **if women had access to the same resources as men, agricultural yields could increase by 20% to 30% making it possible to lift 100 to 150 million people out of hunger worldwide[9].** Women also play an important role in the household, including in food stock management and food processing, which strengthen household resilience.
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> Oxfam's research into food crises, resilience and gender in Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali[10] indicates that 'households in which women have greater participation in decision-making regarding food are more resilient', particularly because women contribute to dietary diversification, increasing the length of the availability of food stocks and improving the organization of supply planning.

Economic inequality (the wealth gap between different social classes) is also an important factor in explaining food and nutrition insecurity. In fact, an analysis of the household economy (HEA survey) shows that between 55% and 60% of the income of poor and very poor households comes from non-agricultural activities.[11] Contrary to widespread belief, improving agricultural production does not directly lead to a reduction in vulnerability and food and nutrition insecurity. Problems associated with access to markets and food are largely determined by issues of economic inequality. This observation calls for a rethinking of policies that only aim to increase agricultural yields as the path to improving food and nutrition security, to also include tackling the structural causes of food insecurity, such as inequality.

In addition to these socio-economic factors, **the suitability of the agricultural development models promoted in the Sahel should be questioned with regard to current results and challenges**. Food insecurity primarily affects the most vulnerable, particularly small-scale, agropastoral and pastoral farmers, as livestock farming and agricultural activities are the main livelihoods in the Sahel.

2.2 THE SITUATION IS EXACERBATED BY CONJUNCTURAL FACTORS

All these structural factors create an unfavourable environment for achieving food security and keep the population in a state of chronic poverty. In addition, the situation is further exacerbated by conjunctural factors.

The consequences of climate change
The increasing occurrence of erratic and poorly distributed rainfall causes episodes of drought followed by episodes of flooding (destroying crops during flooding of the Niger River, for example), making agriculture and livestock

farming increasingly risky. According to Action Against Hunger's paper *Promoting Agroecology*,[12] agricultural systems must become more resilient to extreme weather events, while small-scale producers' capacity to adapt needs to be improved and strengthened to cope with changes in the local climatic conditions.

The consequences of climate change are also giving rise to a questioning of and increased tensions around 'traditional' natural resource management practices, in a context where resources are become increasingly rare and demographic pressure is growing. Difficulties establishing consensual frameworks for managing and sharing natural resources in areas where political power is often questioned are contributing to the rise in violent conflicts between livestock and crop farmers, who often occupy the same spaces but for different uses. Tensions around natural resources then lead to intercommunal clashes, fuelled by the proliferation and wide availability of weapons following the various conflicts in the region, and ultimately affect the mobility of agricultural and pastoral communities.

Insecurity and food insecurity
The deterioration of the security situation in Mali, along the border with Burkina Faso and Niger, and in the Lake Chad Basin (northeastern Nigeria and around the Chad, Niger and Cameroon borders) and the rise in the number of armed groups with diverse and varied demands, are making the food and nutrition insecurity of thousands of people even worse. Insecurity (including attacks and explosive devices on transport routes) limits people's mobility and has a negative impact on agricultural and pastoral activities (access to fields and pasture) as well as trade activities.

Livestock transhumance routes have also been heavily impacted by the conflicts and insecurity. Population displacements (1.14 million refugees across the region and 2.96 million internally displaced persons in September 2018[13]), which are increasing with the conflicts in the Lake Chad Basin and around the Malian, Burkinabè and Nigerien borders, deprive people of their livelihoods (livestock farming, agriculture or fishing) and impoverish them further in a context of chronic poverty.

3. A ROUTINE RESPONSE

In the face of these challenges, the current response to food insecurity reflects a short-term vision that fails to address the structural factors. While progress has been made in national response systems, significant difficulties persist in crisis management and the implementation of appropriate responses.

3.1 PROGRESS ACHIEVED

West Africa has a unique, functional food crisis prevention and management system thanks to the establishment of the Regional System for the Prevention and Management of Food Crises (PREGEC) and the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA) by CILSS, ECOWAS and UEMOA.

The Charter for Food Crisis Prevention and Management in the Sahel and West Africa (PREGEC Charter), adopted in 2011, lists the key principles with which states must comply in order to improve the effectiveness of food crisis prevention and management systems.

The methods for preventing food crises are considered relatively effective by the state authorities and the technical and financial partners. Although warning systems are still the subject of debate, they have been improved over the years to provide data that are considered reliable and are then used by different government actors and donors to assess the severity of the situation. Thus, in anticipation of the 2018 lean season there was advance mobilization of donors[14] following considerable advocacy efforts by international organizations and civil society in October and November 2017. While the Cadre Harmonisé data are not always used by states to declare a state of crisis, they do exist.

The establishment of the Regional Food Security Reserve (RFSR) by ECOWAS, a project begun 2012, has progressed in recent years and is finally operational, although the sustainability of the model must still be ensured through a financial commitment from ECOWAS (and including countries such as Mauritania that are not members of ECOWAS). In 2018, two Sahelian countries affected by the lean season crisis, Niger and Burkina Faso, drew on the regional reserve and received 6,528 tonnes and 4,303 tonnes of cereals, respectively. However, use of the regional reserve has been limited and has lacked forward planning (the request was made in August). The RFSR should be mobilized in coordination with national stocks and the local stocks created in the villages, which are largely overlooked, despite their effectiveness in reducing the impact on the population of shocks.[15]

3.2 ONGOING CHALLENGES

Although the warning systems have undeniably improved in recent years, considerable effort is required to ensure the sustainability of the mechanisms, which are still overly dependent on short-term international funding. In addition, states need to take stronger ownership of these systems to make better use of the analyses and results in their national food crisis response and management policies.

There are weaknesses in crisis management and responses to food insecurity at the national level that could gradually undermine all the achievements of the system. The role of the states and the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA) is not merely to prevent food crises, but also, as underlined in the PREGEC Charter,[16] to manage them. While some countries, such as Niger, are good examples in the Sahel, many shortcomings persist in others, whether in the financing of response plans (like Mali, which by September 2018 had not even started financing the FCFA 5,799,000,000 planned for its National Response Plan[17]) or in the quality of the response. For instance, there are questions over the legitimacy of selling cereals at moderate prices as, instead of reaching the most vulnerable households, this is sometimes actually no more than an electoral tool for the mayors in charge of their management and a way for traders to make money.

The targeting of beneficiaries remains one of the major problems of the

response, and the aim of reaching the most vulnerable is not always effectively achieved. Targeting tools cannot always distinguish between structural and conjunctural food insecurity, though they require different responses (i.e. a short-term humanitarian response as opposed to social protection linked to structural vulnerability).

In addition, the specific vulnerabilities of different population segments, particularly women, adolescents and children, are not really taken into account. A food crisis shakes up roles and responsibilities within households. Indeed, women's social responsibility of 'overcoming shortages' becomes more important. The longer the lean season, the more women's responsibilities grow, as is the case in the Sahel. However, as shown by Oxfam's research on gender and resilience in the Sahel, 'this increased responsibility within the household is not always reflected in increased power within the community'[18], and responses to food crises largely ignore this dynamic. Yet, ignoring this reality risks reinforcing social norms that are detrimental to achieving food security, such as the sidelining of women.

Box 2: The pastoral lean season, the forgotten dimension of responses

As in previous years, the pastoral lean season (March-June), which occurs before the agricultural lean season (June-September) was only rarely, if at all, considered in the response plans of the different governments in 2018. Several factors explain this situation:

- The needs of pastoral communities remain poorly known (despite the existence of tools and analyses undertaken by regional livestock farmers' organizations). This has the effect of limiting the response, when it exists, to the distribution of livestock fodder while ignoring the full range of needs (for example, animal health);

- Current distribution arrangements based in towns struggle to reach nomadic pastoral communities;

- The specific needs of women, widows and child mothers in pastoral communities are not known or taken into account;

- In some cases (such as Mali and Senegal), publication of the response plan in March/April, based on the March Cadre Harmonisé figures, is too late to respond to the pastoral lean season in time.

The participation of civil society in the response process at the national level remains weak despite its presence at the regional level. This weakness raises questions about the accountability to the population of national food crisis response mechanisms. Indeed, as pointed out in a report by a civil society organisation in Niger, 'the authorities attach more importance to dialogue with donors, who have the money to fund programmes, than to consultation with national actors, who have almost 'nothing' to contribute'[19].

The affected countries remain reluctant to declare food crises, as was seen this year when no country declared a state of crisis, and responses at the national level are mainly driven by the donors.[20] Finally, ownership by the states of the PREGEC Charter adopted in 2011, which includes the general principles and the commitments of the various stakeholders in relation to the prevention and management of food crises, is still too limited and should be the target of renewed mobilization at all levels.

Real problems persist with regard to:

- the sequencing of responses (response plans published too late to address the actual needs of the population);

- the funding of national response plans;

- failure to take into account the specific needs of certain groups according to gender or social class;

- monitoring and evaluation of responses, which are still largely neglected in national response plans;[21]

- more generally, the lack of a long-term vision that would tackle the factors of exclusion and marginalization that exacerbate food insecurity.

4. THE DANGEROUS ALLIANCE OF SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT

The rise of insecurity in the Sahel has reshaped the fight against food and nutrition insecurity, monopolizing in recent years the attention (and in some cases the resources) of states in the region and donors, and giving rise to the link between security and development, an approach whose effectiveness remains to be proven and entails certain risks.

4.1 THE MILITARIZATION OF THE SAHEL

Given the deterioration of the security situation in the Sahel (with the conflict in Mali, which is dragging on and has echoes in Burkina Faso and Niger, and with the conflict in the Lake Chad Basin), the urgency of responding to the 'terrorist threat' has pushed states in the sub-region to adopt strong approaches to security. The militarization of the region refers to the proliferation of armed actors in the Sahel, with various objectives and mandates:

- The G5 Sahel Joint Force is made up of the armies of Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Niger and Chad, deployed in the border areas between these five countries to fight armed groups with a right of hot pursuit;

- MINUSMA (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali), in which Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad and Senegal are among the top ten contributors of troops, deployed in northern Mali to support implementation of the peace agreement signed in Algiers in 2015 between the northern armed groups and the Malian Government;

- France, through Operation Barkhane, has deployed 5,000 soldiers in the

region with a counter-terrorism mandate;

- The European Union, with its mission of training the Malian army, the European Union Training Mission in Mali (EUTM), which was extended for two years in May 2018;

- The United States, whose presence in the Sahel is less official but is widely known (especially in Niger).

This proliferation of armed actors illustrates the military approach to conflict resolution adopted by states and the international community. This approach is also visible through the increase in military spending in Sahelian countries, which are already struggling to invest in food security. With the exception of Chad, where security investments have fallen but remain at very high levels, the military expenditure of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso rose significantly between 2016 and 2017 (+26%, +19% and +24%, respectively).

Figure 1: Military Spending in West Africa
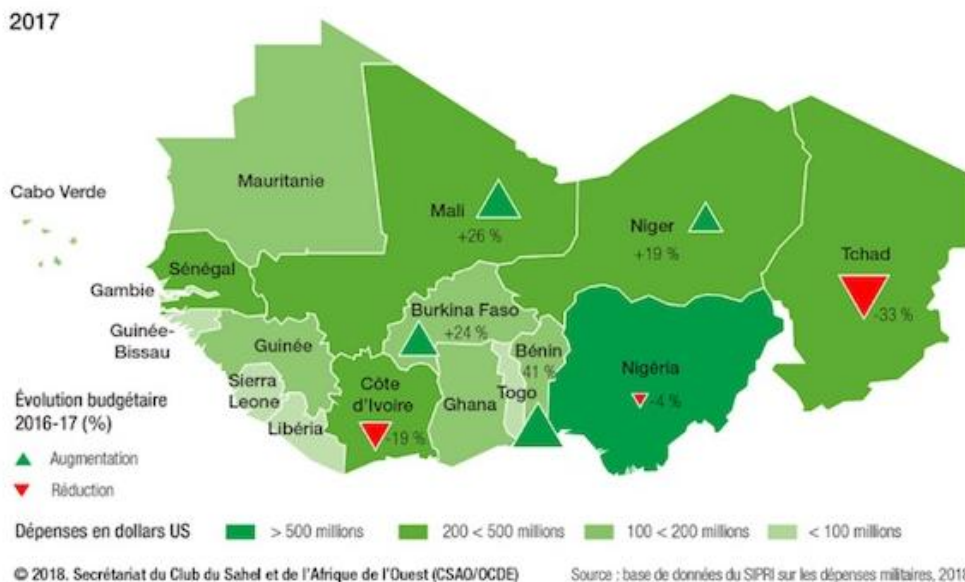
Yet, this increase in military spending does not appear to be reducing insecurity in the region. On the contrary, the insecurity simply seems to be shifting to new areas, as illustrated by the recent rise in incidents in eastern Burkina Faso. The violence, which until now had been confined to the northern part of the country, is slowly moving into the eastern region, with a proliferation of unclaimed security incidents targeting state authorities.[22]The states in the sub-region and the international community alike have had difficulty dealing with this insecurity, as demonstrated by the upsurge in security incidents in Mali and Burkina Faso.[23] This calls into question the effectiveness of a predominantly security-driven approach and has led the states and the international community to develop a narrative that links security and development to respond to the challenges in the Sahel.

4.2 THE RISKS OF AN APPROACH LINKING SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT

The link between security and development is at the heart of the new approach advocated in the Sahel by states and donors, particularly the European Union and France. This approach is based on the idea that the existing conflicts in the Sahel are partly the result of the economic marginalization and under-development of rural and remote areas, and that it is therefore essential to develop these areas in order to guarantee sustainable security. The basic idea is that development contributes to security and is only possible in an environment that has first been made secure. Because this approach advocates an economic vision of development (employment, infrastructure construction), it risks obscuring the important dimension of governance.

Therefore, this approach raises several questions:

1. Further empirical research is needed into the causal link between security and development as economic marginalization is not the only reason for the occurrence of conflicts in the Sahel. For example, a UNDP study[24] shows that violent extremism in Africa is directly linked to high levels of mistrust and public grievances against governments perceived as authoritarian. It is worrying to see that the response focuses on economic development[25] without taking into account the legitimate grievances of the population in relation to problems of governance, inequality, wealth distribution and gender justice.

2. As previously mentioned, economic growth alone cannot solve the problem of hunger. Population growth is often too high and absorbs economic progress, while agricultural production does not benefit all due to inequalities. The fight against food insecurity also involves improving governance and reducing inequalities, but unfortunately these aspects are largely overlooked in the approach that links security and development.

3. The impact of this approach on humanitarian principles and populations' access to aid should also be considered. By blurring the distinction between humanitarian, development and military actors, the principle of humanitarian neutrality is compromised to the detriment of people in need of assistance. Moreover, as the intervention approaches of development actors are poorly adapted to the insecurity that prevails in the areas where the most vulnerable people live, the temptation to use the armed forces present on the ground to secure the area before development activities can be carried out could involve major risks.

4. Finally, this approach must necessarily take into account the gender dimension. Security threats are different for women and men, since they are not exposed to the same types of risks, for example in Nigeria, where men have been systematically targeted by armed groups and the military.[26] The security-development approach seems to ignore these dynamics, at the risk of providing an inappropriate response.

In addition to these questions, the discourse around security and development has also given rise to the development of new (or the resurrection of old) strategies for the Sahel by regional and international actors.

Box 3: Main regional and international initiatives for the development of the Sahel

- **Global Alliance for Resilience (AGIR)**: launched in 2012 under the impetus of the European Union, CILSS, ECOWAS and UEMOA, AGIR is a framework that helps foster synergy, coherence and effectiveness in support of resilience initiatives in 17 West African and Sahelian countries. It aims to channel the efforts of regional and international stakeholders towards a common results framework.

- **G5 Sahel**: In 2016, G5 Sahel developed its Strategy for the Development and Security of the G5 Sahel Countries, which defines four strategic areas of intervention, namely (i) defence and security, (ii) governance, (iii) infrastructure and (iv) resilience and human development.[27] This strategy was followed by the development of a Priority Investment Program (PIP) for the 2018-2020 period, which is expected to be financed at a donor conference on 6 December 2018 in Nouakchott.

- **Sahel Alliance**: launched in 2017 by France, Germany and the European Union with the support of the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme, it is a tool for coordinating multilateral and bilateral donors to 'support the efforts of the G5 Sahel countries'.[28] It now has a budget of more than €9 billion (which is not additional money but had already been committed by donors) over the 2018-2022 period for 600 projects in six key areas, namely: youth employability; agriculture, rural development and food security; energy and climate; governance; decentralization and basic services; internal security.

- **UN Support Plan for the Sahel**: published in May 2018, this plan sees the region as a land of opportunity its priorities include 'building resilience to climate change, improving management of natural resource, and decreasing malnutrition and food insecurity'[29].

However, the effectiveness of the coordination and interaction of these various initiatives with regional bodies such as ECOWAS or CILSS and existing policies at the regional level (such as ECOWAP) remains questionable. Instead of simplifying the architecture of aid in the Sahel, this proliferation of initiatives is complicating the environment by blurring the various responsibilities,[30] illustrating the lack of a shared vision, not to mention the impact of such a cumbersome multitude of partners and stakeholders on public administrations.

4.3 IS SECURITY OVERSHADOWING DEVELOPMENT?

A security focus (which is particularly visible in the political, media and financial spheres) raises fears of growing disinterest in humanitarian and development issues (especially governance), even though they remain crucially important and require urgent, coordinated action by all stakeholders, as the 2018 lean season has just shown. The Humanitarian Response Plans in the three Sahelian countries affected by insecurity are underfunded (in November 2018,

the response plans were funded at 52% in Mali, 48% in Niger and 60% in Burkina Faso[31]), yet the humanitarian needs are increasing. In Mali, which is at the centre of the international community's attention, the number of people in need rose from 4.9 million in January 2018 to 5.2 million in July 2018.[32]

The impact of a security approach on livelihoods and people's rights and needs

In the name of fighting insecurity, states sometimes adopt security measures at the expense of development goals. An Oxfam market and protection analysis in Niger's Diffa region carried out in 2016[33] highlighted the negative impact on communities of the declaration of the state of emergency and the bans on fishing and growing red peppers. Although the ban on pepper growing was later lifted in the region, the two-year prohibition had a significant impact on the household economy. In the area around the town of Bosso, fishing, one of the primary sources of income for local households, is still prohibited. For security reasons, only ground-cover crops are allowed (cowpea, groundnut) to the detriment of stem crops (millet, maize, sorghum), which limits the variety in people's food consumption.

More recently, the decision to ban motorbikes and pick-up trucks in certain regions of Mali has raised concerns about how communities will access their fields or basic social services such as health centres. While the purpose of this paper is not to comment on the states' security policies, over which they are sovereign, we can nonetheless question whether the counter-productive and negative effects of such measures on the long-term development of these areas has been taken into account.

The security approach also has significant impacts on the safety of civilians. Reports from Human Rights Watch[34] and Amnesty International[35] have documented serious abuses and violations against civilians by the various parties to the conflicts in the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin.

Impact of a security approach on budgets dedicated to social services and development

While the reality of the security threat is indisputable and requires a response from governments, it should not result in a reduction of their involvement in tackling the multidimensional aspects of food and nutrition insecurity. In a regional context where state budgets are limited, the fight against insecurity should not justify a reduction of the budgets allocated to social spending. In Niger, the budget for agriculture fell by 23% between 2012 and 2017, education by 7% and health by 4%,[36] even though the country is bottom in the Human Development Index 2018[37] ranking, behind South Sudan and Yemen.

While social spending is not necessarily affected by the fight against insecurity in all Sahelian countries, the increase in military expenditure, which has been quite substantial for all states as seen above, does nevertheless raise questions about its financing in the long term. Without an increase in tax revenue, states will have only two options to cope with the increase in security spending: either reduce social and development spending or increase the budget deficit. Decreasing the budgets for social services and development would have negative consequences for the most vulnerable segments of the population, who are already marginalized, making it impossible for them to break the cycle of hunger.

There is also a risk that states would increasingly shirk responsibility for social needs, as they might consider that, faced with a growing budget deficit, the security threat is more urgent and social and development spending should be covered by the technical and financial partners. This shirking of responsibility could exacerbate the existing crisis of confidence between people living in economically marginalized areas and the Sahelian states, which have been rightly criticised for failing to fulfil their duty to provide basic social services.

Given the weakness of the current response in a precarious security context that has monopolized the attention of policy-makers, strengthening the population's resilience, that is, women and men's ability to exercise their rights and improve their wellbeing despite shocks, stresses and uncertainty, must be the priority of regional and international decision-makers.

5. A PRIORITY: STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

'*Currently, the aid system in the Sahel remains narrowly designed to only focus on immediate needs, not long-term risk reduction. Key instruments such as early warning systems, national grain reserves and the Food Aid Charter are all geared primarily toward emergency responses. The aid structure continues to support governments with post-crisis interventions that help people to cope after disaster, rather than prevention and mitigation measures to help people build resilience to a future crisis.*"[38]

In the context of chronic food and nutrition 'crises', governments, technical and financial partners, and field operators need to consider how it might be possible to scale up sustainable, multi-sectoral responses in the region that address the causes of the problem. The appropriateness of providing emergency assistance to millions of people in need seems to be widely acknowledged, yet the lack of resources and longer-term policies needed to build the resilience of the population remains problematic. While there is unquestionably consensus among the various actors that this is necessary, it is not effectively followed up by action.

Various initiatives, such as the Zero Hunger initiative (launched in 2012 by ECOWAS and the United Nations) and AGIR-Sahel (launched the same year), gave hope that there would be a change of approach. But six years later, they seem to have lost momentum. In general, projects aimed at building resilience capacities reach too few people and are underfunded, probably because their real impact (in the long term) is often not fully known as it is difficult to assess due to a lack of appropriate Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) capabilities and tools.

> **Box 4: BRACED, an innovative example of monitoring, evaluation and learning in resilience projects**
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> The BRACED programme, which was implemented in 13 countries between 2015 and 2018, is an innovative programme that adapts and learns in a complex political, social and environmental context. Although further improvements are needed, the programme has contributing to our shared understanding of building resilience. One of its distinctive features is its innovative management of monitoring, evaluation and learning activities.
>
> Under the leadership of a consortium of six international and national organizations, the 15 BRACED projects have continuously generated and shared learning about resilience through harmonized monitoring and evaluation tools. This independent structure dedicated to knowledge management has enabled countries to better learn from their experiences of building the three resilience capacities of absorption, adaptation and transformation, and to integrate them into the implementation of their programmes.
>
> BRACED is also one of the few programmes to incorporate indicators into its monitoring and evaluation system to measure the transformative capacity of communities in the face of different types of shocks (rather than simply strengthening and measuring the programme's impact on communities' absorption and adaptation capacities).

Faced with the difficulty of dissociating structural and conjunctural food and nutrition insecurity, the idea of a social protection approach, which proposes a shift from emergency food aid schemes to national allocation systems for the most vulnerable, more commonly referred to as *social safety nets*, is taking root among different states and partners. Although the rolling out of food security social safety nets is underway in several Sahelian countries, a number of major challenges are hindering its implementation. These include the targeting methodology, the financing capacity and therefore the scale, the difficulty of obtaining reliable data disaggregated by gender and age in volatile security contexts, and the effective leadership of a response involving several ministries.[39]

In Burkina Faso, for example, the lack of consensus on the targeting method is slowing down the implementation of social safety nets.

Intended as a reform of the aid architecture aimed at strengthening resilience, the humanitarian-development nexus approach is gradually taking shape. Emergency measures taken in the context of the lean season crisis have all too rarely been included in longer-term development programmes (targeting the same beneficiaries, for example), with the exception of Burkina Faso (see below). However, efforts are underway to streamline different country-level strategies (humanitarian response plans with the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF)) and several countries in the Sahel have developed common results in relation to food insecurity and livelihoods, although the funding mechanisms are still rather inflexible.

Nonetheless, there have been some noteworthy coordination efforts:

- in Burkina Faso, where the emergency fund of the European Union's Emergency Trust Fund (EUTF) has been mobilized to deliver ad hoc emergency assistance to the most vulnerable households already

included in long-term resilience activities;

- in Niger, where the commitment to developing a three-year humanitarian response plan including resilience activities is an interesting initiative that should be supported.

6. CONCLUSION

While the situation in the Sahel is increasingly analysed through the prism of security and migratory issues by Sahelian governments and the international community, hunger is increasing for the most vulnerable segments of the population who are exposed to shocks from the consequences of climate change and conflicts. Rather than responding to people's needs in a sustainable manner, the security response to the Sahel's challenges risks reinforcing the divide between rulers and the ruled and increasing tensions.

While undeniable progress has been made in the prevention and management of food and nutrition crises in the Sahel over the years, the structural causes of the problem are still too often neglected in favour of short-term responses. A long-term political vision aimed at strengthening the resilience capacities of vulnerable population groups and their adaptation to climate change, particularly by working to better understand the specific needs of women and pastoral communities, is struggling to translate into real action, despite some incipient initiatives in this area.

Breaking the cycle of hunger requires tackling structural factors, such as reducing poverty and inequalities. This can only be achieved through improved governance and the adoption of a holistic vision. While these measures will not be able to reverse the consequences of climate change, they will certainly be able to reduce its impacts.

Oxfam, Save the Children and Action Against Hunger are calling on regional policy-makers and donors to drive a change of approach to the management of food and nutrition crises and to redouble their efforts to ensure that humanitarian and development issues are not relegated to second place behind security challenges.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve the mechanisms for the prevention and management of food and nutrition crises, Oxfam, Save the Children and Action Against Hunger invite the Sahelian states, regional institutions (CILSS, UEMOA, ECOWAS) and technical and financial partners to:

- Ensure the participation of civil society organisations, particularly at the national level (inclusion of civil society organizations, including women's and producer organizations, in food crisis response systems). This improved participation entails building the capacity of local organizations;

- Ensure the financial sustainability of national warning systems and promote better political ownership of the PREGEC Charter by state actors;

- Enhance the sequencing of responses by harmonizing the development of national response plans and improve their monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for better accountability and improved coordination among stakeholders;

- Further integrate pastoral lean season planning into food crisis prevention and management mechanisms, in particular by strengthening and accelerating the process of integrating and monitoring pastoral indicators in the analyses of the Cadre Harmonisé, namely through technical validation of the analysis tools available by all partners, to make them compatible with the tools of the Cadre Harmonisé;

- Ensure the long-term viability of the regional food reserve, particularly through a financial commitment from ECOWAS to guarantee its functioning and its articulation with national and local stocks.

To put in place a sustainable, multi-sectoral approach that builds the resilience of men and women to fight food and nutrition insecurity, Oxfam, Save the Children and Action Against Hunger invite the states in the sub-region and the technical and financial partners to:

- Streamline the various resilience initiatives related to food security under the leadership of ECOWAS and UEMOA within the framework of their ECOWAP policy to avoid duplication and allow regional institutions and national actors to play their roles by aligning with each other to achieve greater efficiency and better results;

- Honour their commitments, namely:

    o Invest at least 10% of national budgets in agricultural development, in accordance with the Maputo Declaration (2003)

    o Allocate 15% of their budgets to health in accordance with the Abuja Declaration (2001)

    o Eradicate chronic hunger by 2025 (Malabo, 2014);

- Better document and evaluate existing resilience projects to gain better knowledge of practices and their impact, and to inform policies and programmes for scaling up;

- Continue and step up efforts to develop food security nets and social protection policies that respond to shocks. ECOWAS should begin a reflection process on the financing of social protection, learning from the experiences of countries implementing social protection systems;

- Invest in capacity-building of state agents and civil society organizations, including women's organizations, to enable crisis management that addresses the structural causes of food insecurity, in particular, conducting and regularly using multidimensional vulnerability and gender analyses;

- Rethink the agricultural development model currently implemented, as an agroecological transition is the best way to achieve food and nutrition security in the face of climate change.

Finally, Oxfam, Save the Children and Action Against Hunger call on the states of the Sahel, and donors (particularly the European Union and the Sahel Alliance) to review the suitability of their security-development

approach to ensure that:

- Sahelian development initiatives are not designed to only achieve security objectives, at the risk of failing to address the real concerns of the people and therefore adversely affecting their livelihoods and civic rights;

- The increase in defence and security budgets does not ultimately translate into lower budgets for social services, but rather that states implement policies to gradually increase tax revenue in a transparent manner;

- Development aid addresses the needs of the people, complies with the principles of aid effectiveness (ownership, harmonization, inclusion of civil society organizations, transparency and poverty eradication) and is delivered as a priority, in the form of donations to be directed to the sectors that are essential to reducing inequalities.

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