© Oxfam/Sylvain Cherkaoui

SAHEL: PRIORITIES FOR RESILIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT

The Sahel has experienced a greater increase in hunger over the past decade than any other region. Sahelian states, regional organizations, and technical and financial partners have experienced considerable difficulties in providing a structural and sustainable response to food and nutrition insecurity. Yet hunger is not inevitable. These various actors must make major investments in building the resilience capacities of populations to guarantee their food and nutritional security in the long term. This imperative is even more urgent in a context of increased militarization. Oxfam, Save the Children and Action Against Hunger reiterate the urgency of strengthening humanitarian and development responses and the civilian protection and putting them at the heart of regional priorities.

SUMMARY

The Sahel is the region of the world that has experienced the greatest increase in hunger, with the number of undernourished people increasing by 13.1 million in 11 years according to the latest report on the State of food security and nutrition in the world (2018).[1] Although a variety of actors, namely states, regional organizations, technical and financial partners, international and national NGOs, are mobilized to provide food assistance to the most vulnerable, the situation is getting worse.

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

Over the years, states have managed to set up a unique system of food crises prevention and management at regional level, supported by technical tools to prevent hunger. However, investment in a long-term response is needed; one that takes a holistic view of tackling food insecurity, encompassing a simultaneous response to structural and conjunctural factors. While short-term answers exist, investment in the resilience of populations continues to be insufficient.

The change of context at the regional level with the rise of insecurity and the proliferation of armed groups has complicated the situation. The Sahel is now mainly seen in the context of security or migration, while the populations are increasingly face with the problem of hunger. The approach that links security and development, intended to be a response to Sahelian challenges, 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, including:

- By improving existing food crisis prevention and management systems through: the effective planning for the lean season in pastoral areas, better participation of civil society organizations, and improving the sustainability of the regional reserve by taking into account the three lines of defence, particularly buffer stocks;

- By putting in place a multi-sectoral and sustainable approach to build the resilience capacities of men and women, through the standardization of social safety nets for the most vulnerable groups, the respect of state commitments in agriculture and a review 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 outbreak that affected more than 18 million people in the Sahel region, 10.8 million people were again food insecure in Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Niger and Chad, according to March 2018 Cadre Harmonisé.[2] Each new food crisis affects 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 about 2 million children suffering from acute malnutrition and its consequences in the countries of the Sahel. According to the figures of 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 those of 2017, particularly in Niger, Mauritania and Mali. Although the state of affairs seems stable in some countries, it conceals large local disparities, and the situation 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.

While the significant food insecurity figures for 2018 have resulted from a rainfall shortage and conflict, the structural causes of food insecurity cannot be ignored. Chronic poverty (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and Niger are at the bottom of the Human Development Index[3]), lack of access to basic social services for a large part of the population, inequality between men and women, between the rich and the poor and between geographical areas, and poor governance, help to maintain the vicious circle of hunger and are obstacles to achieving the Zero Hunger goal of ECOWAS and United Nations in 2030.

While the 2018 lean season is hardly comparable to the 2012 crisis in its magnitude, it unfortunately highlights several elements, that no one – neither states, regional institutions, nor donors – can ignore. First, 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 demonstrates the deterioration of the situation for the Sahel populations, for whom living conditions have continued to worsen. While the situation was not totally catastrophic this year, it does not mean that states will be able to face a larger crisis in coming years, moreover, in a context where they face growing challenges (demographic pressure, climate change, political instability).

While the regional states, donors, and 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) were committed to eradicate hunger in the Sahel following the crises of 2008 and 2012,[4] the evolution of the security context in recent years raises fears of a change in priority, at the expense of the most vulnerable populations. Indeed, the rise of insecurity and the proliferation of armed groups are now drawing the attention of regional governments as well as technical and financial partners. Strategies for the Sahel are proliferating (19 in total,[5] including that of the G5 Sahel, the UN, the European Union, the African Union and bilateral donors and banks) and the security and migration lens dominates discussions in addressing regional problems, leading to a potential diversion from the real objectives of the aid provided to the Sahel.

This paper aims to remind Sahel states, donors and regional and international organizations, including NGOs, of the urgent need to prioritize the fight against food and nutrition insecurity in a multidimensional way (livelihood, health, education, water and sanitation). While the need to

strengthen the resilience of populations through a multi-sector and integrated humanitarian–development approach is widely accepted,[6] the implementation of this approach, despite national initiatives, is still lacking.

2. A SITUATION OF CHRONIC FOOD INSECURITY

Food and nutrition insecurity in the Sahel is often perceived as a crisis linked to exogenous factors (poor rainy season, poor harvests or conflicts). While these factors exacerbate the food and nutrition insecurity of millions of people, it is a chronic food and nutrition insecurity, an 'ever-present structural food crisis' [7] that affects most people in the Sahel.

2.1 STRUCTURAL CAUSES

The structural causes of food insecurity have already been the subject of numerous reports.[8] These show that the permanent situation of food and nutrition insecurity can be explained by a multitude of interconnected factors: including 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, water) especially in rural areas; inequality in terms of rights and power between men and women and between geographical areas and population segments; poor governance and the major difficulty for family farmers in accessing resilient, sustainable livelihoods adapted to the new agricultural challenges of the Sahel. An additional challenge in achieving food security is population growth. According to the Sahel and West Africa Club, the population is expected to increase in 20 years from 80 million to 160 million. [9]

Box 1: Gender equality, an essential lever in the fight against food insecurity

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 represent the majority of workers in the agricultural sector (according to the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the share of women working in agriculture is 89% in the Sahel) but, paradoxically, they face different and additional obstacles than men.[10] Their limited access to land (because of often discriminating laws and social standards), credit, agricultural inputs, markets, information and training prevents them from achieving greater productivity. Yet according to the FAO, **their access to the same resources as men could increase agricultural yields by 20 to 30% allowing 100 to 150 million people to escape hunger in the world.** [11] Women also play an important role in the household, including food stock management and food processing, which contribute to household resilience.

Oxfam's research on food crises, resilience and gender in Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali indicates that 'households in which women are more involved in food decision-making are the most resilient', because women contribute to the diversification of food, the increase in the length of food stock availability and a better organization of supply planning.[12]

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.[13] Contrary to popular belief, improving agricultural production does not necessarily mean reducing vulnerability and food and nutrition insecurity.

Problems related to market and food access are largely determined by economic inequality issues. This calls for a rethinking of policies that encourage only increased agricultural yields to improve food and nutrition security and, to instead include tackling the structural causes of food insecurity, such as inequality.

In addition to these socio-economic factors, **the relevance of the agricultural development models promoted in the Sahel with regards to current results and challenges has also been questioned**. Food insecurity primarily affects the most vulnerable people and particularly affects small farmers, pastoralists and agropastoralists, since pastoral and agricultural activities are the main livelihoods in the Sahel.

2.2 THE SITUATION IS EXACERBATED BY INTERSECTING ISSUES

All of these structural elements create an unfavourable environment for achieving food security and keep the population in a state of chronic poverty. In addition, various intersecting issues worsen the situation.

The consequences of climate change

The increase of erratic and poorly distributed rains causes episodes of drought followed by episodes of flooding (destroying crops during the floods of the Niger River, for example) which make agriculture and animal breeding increasingly risky. According to Action Against Hunger's paper 'Promoting Agro-Ecology',[14] it is imperative that agricultural systems become more resilient to extreme weather events, and the coping capacity of small-scale producers needs to be improved to face changes in local climate conditions.

The consequences of climate change also contribute to increased tensions concerning the 'traditional' management of natural resources, and the questioning of this in a context where these techniques become increasingly rare as the demographic pressure increases. Difficulties in developing consensual frameworks for managing and sharing natural resources in areas where political power is often questioned, contribute to the rise of violent conflicts between pastoralists and farmers, who often occupy the same spaces but with different purposes. Tensions around natural resources are then transformed into inter-community clashes, fuelled by the proliferation and 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, on the Burkina Faso–Niger border, and in the Lake Chad Basin (north eastern Nigeria and on the Chad, Niger and Cameroon borders) and the proliferation of armed groups with diverse and varied demands contribute to worsen the food and nutrition insecurity of thousands of people. 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 pastures) as well as commercial activities.

Livestock transhumance routes have also been heavily affected by conflict and insecurity. Population displacement (1.14 million refugees across the region and 2.96 million internally displaced persons in September 2018[15]), increasing with the conflicts in the Lake Chad Basin and on the Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger borders, deprive them of their livelihoods (livestock, agriculture or fisheries) and impoverish them further in a context of chronic poverty.

3. A ROUTINE REPONSE

Facing these challenges, the response to food insecurity reflects a short-term vision, but fails to address structural factors. While progress has been made in national response systems, significant challenges remain in crisis management and appropriate implementation of responses.

3.1 PROGRESS ACHIEVED

West Africa benefits from a unique and functional system of prevention and management of food crises, with the establishment of the regional system for the Prevention and Management of Food Crises (PREGEC) and the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA) by the CILSS, ECOWAS and UEMOA. The Charter for the Prevention and Management of Food Crises in the Sahel and West Africa (PREGEC Charter), adopted in 2011, lists the key principles that states must respect to improve the effectiveness of food crises prevention and management systems.

The methods for prevention of food crises are considered relatively effective by state authorities and donors. Although alert systems are still subject to controversy, they have been improved over the years to provide figures that are considered reliable and are then used by different government and donor actors to assess the situation. Thus, the 2018 lean season was the subject of mobilization in advance of donors[16] following advocacy efforts made in October–November 2017 by international organizations and civil society. While it is true that the Cadre Harmonisé figures are not always used by states to declare a state of crisis, they do exist.

The establishment of the Regional Reserve for Food Security (RRSA) by ECOWAS, a project which started in 2012, has also progressed in recent years to be finally operational, although the model must still be sustained through an ECOWAS financial commitment (and inclusive of countries such as Mauritania that are not members of ECOWAS). In 2018, two Sahelian countries affected by the lean crisis, Niger and Burkina Faso, made a call on the regional reserve and benefited from 6528 tonnes and 4303 tonnes of cereals respectively. However, use of the regional reserve was limited and not anticipated (the request was made in August). The RRSA should be mobilized in coordination with the national stocks and the buffer stocks placed in the villages, which are often not considered, despite their effectiveness in reducing the impact of shocks on populations.[17]

3.2 ONGOING CHALLENGES

Although warning systems have undeniably improved over the past few years, a major effort is still required to ensure the sustainability of the mechanisms, depending heavily on international and short-term funding. In addition, governments need to strengthen their ownership of these systems to enhance the value of analyses and results in national food crisis responses and management policies.

There are weaknesses in the management of crises and responses to food insecurity at the national level that may progressively undermine the overall achievements of the system. The role of states and the RPCA is not limited to the prevention of food crises, but, as underlined in the PREGEC Charter, it includes their management.[18] 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 did not start the financing of the

5,799,000,000 FCFA planned for its National Response Plan[19]) or in the quality of the response itself. For example, sales of cereals at moderate prices which, far from reaching the most vulnerable households, are on the contrary sometimes no more than electoral tools for the mayors in charge of their management, and a means of enrichment for traders.

The targeting of beneficiaries remains one of the major problems of the response, and the desire to reach the most vulnerable is not always effective. Targeting tools are not always able to distinguish between conjunctural and structural food insecurity, though they require different responses (i.e. a short-term humanitarian response versus social protection linked to structural vulnerability).

In addition, the specific vulnerabilities of different population segments, including the needs of women, teenagers and children, are not fully considered. A food crisis upsets roles and responsibilities within households. Indeed, the social responsibility of women, which is *'to solve shortages'*, becomes more important. The longer the lean season, as is the case in the Sahel, the greater their responsibilities. However, as shown by Oxfam's research on gender and resilience in the Sahel, *'this increase in responsibilities within their households is not always translated into increased power within the community'*,[20] and responses to food crises largely do not take account of this dynamic. Ignoring this reality could reinforce social norms that are detrimental to achieving food security, such as sidelining women.

Box 2: The lean season in pastoralist areas

As in previous years, the lean season in pastoralist areas (March–June), which takes place 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 pastoralist communities remain poorly known (despite the existence of tools and analyses by regional breeders' organizations). This has the effect of limiting the response, when it exists, to the distribution of food-livestock while ignoring the diversity of needs (in animal health for example);
- With current distribution arrangements located in villages, it difficult to reach nomadic pastoralist communities;
- The specific needs of women, widows and girl-mothers in pastoralist communities are not known or taken into account;
- In some cases, (such as Mali and Senegal), the publication of the response plan in March/April, which is based on the March Cadre Harmonisé figures, is too late to respond in a timely manner to the lean season in pastoralist areas.

The participation of civil society in the response process at the national level remains weak despite its presence at the regional level. This weakness threatens the accountability of national food crisis response systems to the population. Indeed, as illustrated by a report from a civil society organization in Niger, *'the authorities pay more attention to dialogue with donors, who have the money to fund programs, than to consultation with national actors, who have almost "nothing" to contribute'.*[21]

Affected countries remain reluctant to declare food crises, as seen this year when no country has declared a state of crisis, and responses at the national level are mainly driven by donors.[22] Finally, the ownership of the PREGEC Charter by the States, adopted in 2011 and which includes the general principles and commitments of the various stakeholders in the prevention and management of food crises, remains too limited and should be subject to a renewed mobilization at all levels.

Real problems remain:

- sequencing the response (late response plans vs the actual needs of the populations);

- 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 processes of the response, which remain largely neglected in the national response plans; [23]

- more generally, lack of long-term vision that would address 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 by capturing the attention (and in some cases the resources) of states in the region and donors in recent years, and by giving rise to the link between security and development; an approach whose effectiveness needs to be proven and which involves certain risks.

4.1 MILITARIZATION OF THE SAHEL

Given the deterioration of the security situation in the Sahel (with the conflict in Mali, which is getting entrenched and finds 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 region to adopt strong security approaches. The militarization of the region thus refers to the proliferation of armed stakeholders intervening in the Sahel, with various objectives and mandates:

- G5 Sahel Joint Force – armed forces of Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Niger and Chad deployed in the border areas between these five countries to fight against armed groups with a right to sue;

- MINUSMA (United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali): it includes Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad and Senegal, which are among the top ten troop contributors with deployment in northern Mali to support the 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 men in the region with a counter-terrorism mandate;

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

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

This proliferation of armed stakeholders demonstrates the military approach adopted by states and the international community in conflict resolution. This approach is also visible through the increase in military expenditure in Sahelian countries, which are already struggling to invest in food security. With the exception of Chad, whose security investments fell but remain at very high levels, Mali, Niger and Burkina all experienced a significant increase in their military expenditure between 2016 and 2017 (respectively + 26%, + 19% and 24%).

MILITARY SPENDING IN WEST AFRICA

2017

Évolution budgétaire 2016-17 (%)
▲ Augmentation
▼ Réduction

Dépenses en dollars US ■ > 500 millions ■ 200 < 500 millions ■ 100 < 200 millions ■ < 100 millions

© 2018. Secrétariat du Club du Sahel et de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (CSAO/OCDE)   Source : base de données du SIPRI sur les dépenses militaires, 2018

However, the increase in military expenditure has not succeeded in eradicating insecurity in the region. On the contrary, it seems to be moving into new areas, as illustrated by the recent increasing incidents in eastern Burkina Faso. The violence, hitherto confined to the northern part of the country, is slowly moving into the eastern region, with the proliferation of unclaimed security incidents targeting state authorities.[24] Both states in the region and the international community have experienced difficulties in attempting to overcome this insecurity, as demonstrated by the upsurge of security incidents in Mali or Burkina Faso.[25] This calls into question the viability of a predominantly security-driven approach, and has pushed these states and the international community to develop a narrative linking both security and development to respond to Sahelian challenges.

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 imperative to develop these areas to guarantee sustainable security. In essence, development contributes to security and it can only happen in a previously secure environment. Because this approach advocates an economic vision of development (employment, infrastructure construction), there is a risk that it obscures the important dimension of governance.

This approach raises several questions:

1. The causal link between security and development needs further empirical research as economic marginalization is not the only reason for the occurrence of conflicts in the Sahel. For example, a UNDP study shows that violent extremism in Africa is directly linked to high levels of mistrust and public grievance against governments perceived as authoritarian.[26] However, it is disturbing to see that the response focuses on economic development without taking into account the legitimate

grievances of the population around the problems of governance, inequality, distribution of wealth and gender justice.[27]

2. As previously mentioned, economic growth alone cannot solve the problem of hunger. Population growth is often too large and absorbs economic progress, and agricultural production does not benefit all as the result of unequal structures. The fight against food insecurity therefore involves improvement in governance to reduce inequalities, but unfortunately this aspect is not encompassed in the approach that links security and development.

3. The impact of this approach on the practice of humanitarian principles and the access of the populations to aid should also be considered. By blurring the distinction between humanitarian, development and military actors, the principle of humanitarian neutrality is compromised at the expense of the people. Moreover, as the intervention conditions of development actors are poorly adapted to insecurity in the areas where the most vulnerable people live, the temptation to use the armed forces on the ground to secure the area before it can be developed could involve major risks.

4. Finally, this approach must necessarily take into account the gendered dimensions of the specific situation of insecurity. Security threats are not the same for women and men, who are not exposed to the same type of risk, as for example in Nigeria, where men have been systematically targeted by armed groups and the military.[28] The security–development approach seems to ignore these dynamics, at the risk of providing an inadequate response.

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

Box 3: Major regional and international initiatives for Sahel development

As in previous years, the lean season in pastoralist areas (March–June), which takes place 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:

- Global Alliance for Resilience (AGIR): launched in 2012 under the impetus of the European Union, CILSS, ECOWAS and UEMOA, AGIR is a framework promoting synergy, coherence and effectiveness of resilience initiatives in 17 West African and Sahelian countries. It aims to combine the efforts of regional and international actors around a common and shared framework of results.

- G5 Sahel: In 2016 G5 Sahel developed its 'Strategy for the development and security of the G5 Sahel countries' which defines four strategic axes of intervention, namely (i) defence and security, (ii) governance, (iii) infrastructure and (iv) resilience and human development.[29] This strategy was followed by the development of a Priority Investment Program (PIP) for the period 2018–2020, which should be financed at a donor conference on 6 December 2018 in Nouakchott.

- Alliance Sahel: 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 Programs, it is a tool for coordination of multilateral and bilateral donors to 'support the efforts of the G5 Sahel countries'.[30] It now has a budget of more than €9bn (which is not additional money but was already committed by donors) over the period 2018–2022 for 600 projects on six key areas, namely youth employability; agriculture, rural development and food security; energy and climate; governance; decentralization and basic services; and internal security.

- UN Support Plan for the Sahel: released in May 2018, this plan sees the region as a land of opportunity and defines as one of its priorities 'building resilience to climate change, improving natural resource management and the reduction of malnutrition and food insecurity'.[31]

However, the effectiveness of the coordination and interaction of these different initiatives with regional bodies such as ECOWAS or CILSS and already existing policies at regional level (such as ECOWAP) remain questionable. Far from simplifying the architecture of aid in the Sahel, this proliferation of initiatives tends to complicate the environment by blurring the various

responsibilities,30 as the result of a lack of common vision, not to mention the impact of such a cumbersome multitude of partners and interlocutors on public administrations.

4.3 IS SECURITY A PRIORITY COMPARED WITH DEVELOPMENT?

A security 'focus' (visible namely in the political, media and financial spheres) gives rise to fears of a growing lack of concern over the long-term humanitarian and development issues (especially governance). These remain, as the 2018 lean season has just shown, crucially important and require urgent and coordinated action by all actors. Humanitarian Response Plans are underfunded in the three Sahelian countries affected by insecurity (in November 2018, response plans were funded at 52% in Mali, 48% in Niger and 60% in Burkina Faso[33]), while humanitarian needs increase. In Mali, which is at the heart of the international community's attention, the number of people in need increased from 4.9 million in January to 5.2 million in July 2018.[34]

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

In the name of the fight against insecurity, states sometimes adopt security measures at the expense of development goals. An Oxfam market and protection analysis in the Diffa region carried out in 2016 highlighted the negative impact on communities of the declaration of the state of emergency and the ban on fishing and growing red bell peppers.[35] Although bell pepper farming was later allowed back in the region, the two-year ban had a significant impact on the household economy. In the department of Bosso, fishing, one of the primary providers of income to households in the area, is still prohibited. For security reasons, only creeping crops are allowed (cowpea, groundnut) to the detriment of stem crops (millet, maize, sorghum), which results in a less rich diet.

The security approach also has significant impacts on the protection of civilians. Reports from Human Rights Watch[36] and Amnesty International[37] have documented serious abuses and violations against civilians by the various parties to the conflicts in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin.

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

While the reality of the security threat cannot be challenged, 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 the budgets of the states are limited, the fight against insecurity should not justify a fall in the budgets devoted to social spending. In Niger, the budget for agriculture dropped by 23% between 2012 and 2017, education by 7% and health by 4%[38] while the country is last in the ranking of the Development Index Human 2018,[39] behind South Sudan and Yemen.

While social expenditure is not necessarily affected by the fight against insecurity in all Sahelian countries, the increase of military expenditure, substantial enough for all states as seen above, nevertheless raises the question of their long-term financing. Without an increase in tax revenues, states will have only two alternatives to cope with the increase in security expenditure: either reduce social and development expenditure, or increase the budget deficit. However, a decrease in the budgets of social and development services would have negative consequences for the most vulnerable populations, making it impossible to break the cycle of hunger for those who are already marginalized.

There is also a risk that states would release responsibility for social and development expenditure, with the view that, in the face of a growing budget deficit, the security threat is more urgent and that

these areas should be left to donors. This could exacerbate the existing crisis of confidence between the citizens of economically marginalized areas and the Sahel states, which have been criticized for failing to fulfil their obligations to provide basic social services.

While the degraded security context has monopolized the attention of political decision makers and led to weak support in this area, building the resilience capacities of populations, i.e. the ability of women and men to exercise their rights and improve their well-being despite shocks, stresses and uncertainty, must be the priority of regional and international decision-makers.

5. STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE IS A PRIORITY

'Currently, the Sahel relief system remains designed to focus primarily on immediate needs, not on long-term risk reduction. Key instruments, such as early warning systems, national food reserves and the Food Aid Charter, are all geared primarily towards emergency response. The aid architecture continues to support governments with post-crisis interventions that help people cope after the disaster, rather than with prevention and mitigation measures to help people build resilience in anticipation of the next crisis'.[40]

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 the region's multisector and sustainable responses to emergency situations to address the causes of the problem. The relevance of providing emergency assistance to millions of people in need seems to be well documented; on the other hand, the weakness of the longer-term means and policies needed to build the resilience capacity of the population remains problematic. While there is consensus between the various actors that this is needed, it is not as effectively followed up by action.

The 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 for a change of approach. But six years later, they seem to have lost momentum. In general, projects aimed at building resilience capacity involve too few people and remain underfunded, probably because their real impact (over the long-term) is often poorly or little known, as it is difficult to assess for lack of appropriate Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) capabilities and tools.

Box 4: BRACED, an innovative example in the monitoring, evaluation and learning of resilience projects

The BRACED program, implemented in 13 countries between 2015 and 2018, is an innovative program that adapts and learns in a complex political, social and environmental context. While improvements remain to be made, the program contributes to our shared understanding of building resilience. One of its particularities lies in 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 thus enabled countries to better capitalize on their experiences in building the three resilience capacities, namely the absorption, adaptation and transformation capacities, and to integrate them in the implementation of their programs.

BRACED is also one of the few programs to incorporate indicators into its monitoring and evaluation system to measure the transformative capacity of communities to respond to different types of shocks (rather than simply reinforcing and measuring the impact of the program on community absorption and adaptation capacities).

Faced with the difficulty of dissociating food and nutrition insecurity from structural and conjunctural factors, the idea of a social protection approach, which proposes a shift from emergency food aid schemes to national allocation systems for the most vulnerable groups, more commonly known as 'social safety nets', is being considered by different states and partners. While the rolling out of social safety nets for food is underway in several Sahelian countries, a number of major challenges have

slowed their implementation. These include the targeting methodology, the financing capacity and therefore the scale, the difficulty of obtaining reliable and disaggregated data by gender and age in volatile security contexts, and the effective leadership of a multi-ministry response.[41] In Burkina Faso, for example, the lack of consensus on the targeting method has been shown to slow the implementation of social safety nets.

Designed as a reform of aid architecture aimed at strengthening resilience, the humanitarian–development nexus approach is gradually taking shape. The emergency measures put in place in the context of the lean crisis have all too rarely been included in longer-term development programs (targeting the same beneficiaries, for example), with the exception of Burkina Faso (see below). Efforts are underway to streamline different country-level strategies (humanitarian response plans with United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)) and several Sahel countries have developed common results on the issue of food insecurity and livelihoods, but funding mechanisms remain not very flexible.

However, some coordination efforts are noteworthy:

• in Burkina Faso, where the emergency fund of the European Union's Emergency Trust Fund (EUTF) has been mobilized to deliver timely emergency assistance to the most vulnerable households already benefiting from resilience activities in the long term;

• in Niger, where the willingness to develop a triannual humanitarian response plan including resilience activities, is also an interesting initiative that should be supported.

6. CONCLUSION

As the situation in the Sahel is increasingly analysed in the light of security and migratory issues by Sahelian governments and the international community, hunger is increasing for the most vulnerable populations, exposed to shocks from the consequences of climate change and conflicts. Far from responding in a sustainable manner to the needs of people, the security response to the Sahelian challenges risks reinforcing the division 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 remain too often neglected in favour of a short-term response. A long-term political vision aimed at strengthening the resilience capacities of vulnerable populations and their adaptation to climate change, particularly by working on a better understanding of the specific needs of women and pastoralist communities, is struggling to become a reality in action, despite the beginnings of initiatives in this area.

Breaking the cycle of hunger requires tackling structural factors, such as reducing poverty but also reducing inequalities. This can only be achieved through improved governance and the adoption of a holistic vision, which far from being able to deal with the consequences of climate change, can certainly reduce its impacts.

Oxfam, Save the Children and Action Against Hunger are calling on regional policy makers and donors to operationalize a shift in the approach to food and nutrition crisis management and to prioritize this to ensure that humanitarian and development issues do not come second against security challenges.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

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

• Ensure the participation of civil society organizations, particularly at the national level (inclusion of civil society organizations, including women and producer organizations in food crisis response systems). This better participation involves strengthening the capacities of local organizations;

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

• Strengthen 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 actors;

• Further integrate the lean season planning in pastoralist areas with food crisis prevention and management mechanisms, in particular by strengthening and accelerating the integration and monitoring process of pastoralist indicators in the Cadre Harmonisé analyses, namely through a technical validation of the analysis tools available, by all partners, to make them compatible with the tools of the Harmonized Framework;

• Sustain the regional food assistance reserve, in particular through a financial commitment from ECOWAS to ensure its functioning and its link with national and buffer stocks.

To put in place a multisector and sustainable approach that builds the resilience of men and women to fight food and nutrition insecurity, Oxfam, Save the Children and Action Against Hunger invite states in the sub-region and 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 role by aligning for more efficiency and results;

- Stick to their commitments, namely:
    - o Invest at least 10% of national budgets in agricultural development, according to the Maputo Declaration (2003)
    - o Devote 15% of their budget to health in accordance with the Abuja Declaration (2001)
    - o Eradicate chronic hunger by 2025 (Malabo, 2014);

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

- Intensify and continue efforts to develop food security nets and social protection policies that are responsive to shocks. ECOWAS should start a reflection on the financing of social protection by 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 to respond to the structural causes of food insecurity: in particular, conducting and regularly using multidimensional vulnerability and gender analyses;

- Rethink the agricultural development model as 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 Sahel states, the technical and financial partners (notably the European Union and the Sahel Alliance) to review the relevance of their security–development approach to ensure that:

- The development of the Sahel is not designed only to achieve security objectives, at the risk of not responding to the real concerns of the people and therefore adversely affecting their livelihoods and their civil rights;

- The increase in defence and security budgets is not ultimately translated into lower budgets for social services, but states are putting in place policies to increase tax revenues in a transparent and progressive manner;

- Development aid responds to the needs of the people, respects 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.

NOTES

1 FAO. (2018) The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World. Retrieved December 2018 from http://www.fao.org/3/I9553EN/i9553en.pdf

2 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (2018). Sahel, Overview of humanitarian needs and requirements Retrieved December 2018 from https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/sahel-2018-overview-humanitarian-needs-and-requirements

3 Population Data. Retrieved December 2018 from https://www.populationdata.net/palmares/idh/

4 In particular, through the ECOWAS and UN initiative AGIR and Zero Hunger Goal.

5 United Nations. (2018). UN Support Plan for the Sahel, Working together for a prosperous and peaceful Sahel. Retrieved December 2018 from https://www.un.org/africarenewal/sites/www.un.org.africarenewal/files/English%20Summary%20Report_0.pdf

6 Under different names and for 10 years already, LRRD, continuum, emergency rehabilitation development link, resilience, humanitarian-development nexus

7 Gubbels, P. (2011). Escaping the Hunger Cycle, Pathways to Resilience in the Sahel. Sahel Working Group. Retrieved December 2018 from https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/escaping-the-hunger-cycle-pathways-to-resilience-in-the-sahel-146171

8 (2007). Trench, P., Rowley, J., Diarra, M., Sano, F., Keita, B. Beyond any drought, structural causes of chronic vulnerability in the Sahel. Sahel Working Group; Accessed December 2018 from http://www.livestock-emergency.net/userfiles/file/assessment-review/Trench-et-al-2007.pdf Gubbels, P. (2011). Escaping the Hunger Cycle, Pathways to Resilience in the Sahel. Sahel Working Group. Retrieved December 2018 from https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/escaping-the-hunger-cycle-pathways-to-resilience-in-the-sahel-146171;

   Doka, M., Djibrilla, M., Alexandre, D. (2014). Food crisis, gender and resilience in the Sahel. Lessons from the 2012 Crisis in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, Oxfam Research Reports. Accessed December 2018 from https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/food-crisis-gender-and-resilience-in-the-sahel-lessons-from-the-2012-crisis-in-320809

9 The Conversation. Retrieved December 2018 from https://theconversation.com/le-sahel-au-defi-de-son-peuplement-99111

10 OECD Insights. (2016). Empowering women is key to improving food security and resilience in West Africa. Retreived December 2018 from http://www.fao.org/3/I9553EN/i9553en.pdf

11 FAO. (2011). The State of Food and Agriculture: Women in Agriculture-Closing the gender gap for development. Retrieved December 2018 from http://www.fao.org/3/a-i2050e.pdf

12 Doka, M., Djibrilla, M., Alexandre, D. (2014). Food crisis, gender and resilience in the Sahel. Lessons from the 2012 Crisis in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, Oxfam Research Reports. Accessed December 2018 from https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/food-crisis-gender-and-resilience-in-the-sahel-lessons-from-the-2012-crisis-in-320809

13 Save The Children, The Food Economy Group. (2017) An Atlas of household economy analysis information across Sahel. Accessed December 2018 from https://hea-sahel.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/HEA-Sahel-Atlas-2018-English-version-I-.pdf

14 Action against Hunger. (2017). Promoting Agroecology. Accessed December 2018 from file:///C:/Users/REG%20ADV/Downloads/acf_promotingagroecology_fr.pdf

15 OCHA. (2018). Sahel crisis, population movement. Accessed December 2018 from thttps://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/fil es/sah_a4_p_populatio n_movement_24sept_v4.pdf

16 WFP ranked the Sahel in P3, which is one of its largest crisis categorisations, in early 2018 and ECHO mobilized a funding of € 191 million in July 2018 to address the leans season crisis (https://ec.europa.eu/echo/news/l-ue-va-fournir-plus-de-191-millions-d-aide-humanitaire-aux-pays-du-sahel-en- afrique_fr)

17 Ford, E. Learning the Lessons? Assessing the response to the 2012 food crisis in the Sahel to build resilience for the future, Oxfam Briefing Paper 168 Accessed December 2018 from https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/learning-the-lessons-assessing-the-response-to-the-2012-food-crisis-in-the-sahe-281076

18 RPCA. Piliers 5 et 6, Charte pour la prévention et la gestion des crises alimentaires au Sahel et en Afrique de l'Ouest Accessed December 2018 from http://www.oecd.org/fr/sites/rpca/charte/

19 Mali's National Mechanism for Food Crisis Management. (2018). Technical note on the difficulties of implementing the National Response Plan 2018

20 Doka, M., Djibrilla, M., Alexandre, D. (2014). Food crisis, gender and resilience in the Sahel. Lessons from the 2012 Crisis in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, Oxfam Research Reports. Accessed December 2018 from https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/food-crisis-

gender-and-resilience-in-the-sahel-lessons-from-the-2012-crisis-in-320809

21 Moussa Tchangari, AT., Alternative Espaces Citoyens, en partnership with Oxfam International. Preventing and managing food crises in Niger, rapid diagnosis on the application of the charter for the prevention and management of food crises in the Sahel and West Africa

22 Like Mali this year when the WFP took charge of the response, or the fact that none of the States has declared a crisis, reluctant to intervene

23 PREGEC. (2018). Draft du rapport externe d'évaluation de la charte

24 ACLED. The Fledgling Insurgency in Burkina's East. (2018). Accessed December 2018 from https://www.acleddata.com/2018/09/20/the-fledgling-insurgency-in-burkinas-east/

25 OCHA. (2018). Burkina Faso, Overview of the Consequences of the Humanitarian Situation

26 UNDP. (2017). On the Road to Violent Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Dynamics and Triggers

27 ISS report (Preventing extremism in West and Central Africa, Lessons from Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger and Nigeria, Isel van Zyl and Cheryl Frank, West Africa report 23, Institute for Security Studies, September 2018) shows that the majority of projects on violent extremism do not attack governance despite its importance in explaining violent extremism (compared to economic causes).

28 Oxfam. Missing men and boys, Nigeria's unfolding tragedy. Retrieved December 2018 from https://www.oxfam.org/en/west-africa-crisis-nigeria/missing-men-and-boys-nigerias-unfolding-tragedy

29 G5 Sahel. (2016). Strategie Pour Le Developpement et la securite des pays du G5 Sahel Retrieved December 2018from http://www.g5sahel.org/images/Docs/SDS_G5S_VF.pdf

30 Alliance Sahel. (2018). Investir dans l'avenir du Sahel Retrieved December 2018 from https://www.afd.fr/sites/afd/files/2018-02-05-18-11/alliance-sahel-dossier-presse.pdf

31 United Nations. (2018). UN Support Plan for the Sahel, Working together for a prosperous and peaceful Sahel. Retrieved December 2018 from https://www.un.org/africarenewal/sites/www.un.org.africarenewal/files/English%20Summary%20Report_0.pdf

32 The OECD DAC Peer Review, published in September 2018, points to the fact that 'the Sahel is characterized by a very large number of donors and operators with different procedures and approaches, and limited national capacities to absorb and coordinate this massive influx. This results in great bureaucratic complexity and inefficiency in the allocation and use of aid. While the Sahel Alliance aims to strengthen the coordination of partners in order to deliver faster, more effective and better targeted aid (MEAE, 2017), France should clarify to its partners how the Alliance differs from existing initiatives and mechanisms.'

33 UNOCHA (2018). Humanitarian Aid Contributions. Retrieved December 2018 at https://fts.unocha.org/

34 UNOCHA (2018). Mali's 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan. Retrieved December 2018 from https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/mali_hrp_rev_2018_v2.1.pdf

35 Oxfam. (2017). Red Gold and Fishing in the Lake Chad Basin - Restoring Destroyed Livelihoods and Protecting People in the Diffa Region Retrieved December 2018 from https://d1tn3vj7xz9fdh.cloudfront.net/s3fs-public/file_attachments/bn-red-gold-fishing-lake-chad-010217-fr.pdf

36 Human Rights Watch (2018). Le jour, nous avons peur de l'armée, et la nuit des djihadistes: Abus commis par des islamistes armés et par des membres des forces de sécurité au Burkina Faso Retrieved December 2018 from https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/burkinafaso0518fr_reportcover_web.pdf ;

Human Rights Watch (2017). Mali : Les opérations militaires donnent lieu à des abus. Retrieved December 2018 from

https://www.hrw.org/fr/news/2017/09/08/mali-les-operations-militaires-donnent-lieu-des-abus

37 Amnesty International. (2018). 'They Betrayed Us'. Women who survived Boko Haram raped, starved, and detained in Nigeria. Retrieved December 2018 from https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR4484152018ENGLISH.PDF;

38 Data collected from civil society partners in Niger

39 Population Data. (2018). Awards: Human Development Index. Retrieved December 2018 from https://www.populationdata.net/palmares/idh/

40 Gubbels, P. (2011). Escaping the Hunger Cycle, Pathways to Resilience in the Sahel. Sahel Working Group. Retrieved December 2018 from https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/escaping-the-hunger-cycle-pathways-to-resilience-in-the-sahel-146171

41 Oxfam, Rural Development Inter-Networks (2018). Regional fact sheet, Crosscutting issues of social safety nets: how to better fight against hunger in the Sahel? Proposed Contribution to the Standardization of Social Safety Nets in West Africa (NFFSA)