Suzanne Ouedraogo, 60, lives in Fanka village, Burkina Faso, and receives cash-for-work as part of the 2012 Sahel food crisis response. Photo: Pablo Tosco/Intermon Oxfam.

LEARNING THE LESSONS?

Assessing the response to the 2012 food crisis in the Sahel to build resilience for the future

In 2012, the Sahel was once again hit by a severe food crisis affecting more than 18 million people. The region's governments, donors and aid agencies were determined to avoid mistakes made in the response to previous crises. But while their response was better in many respects, there were still some critical shortcomings. The poorest families and communities suffered most, as deep-seated inequalities made some people far more vulnerable than others. While continuing to address the enormous humanitarian and recovery needs in the region, we also must all learn the lessons from the 2012 response and develop a new model that will allow better prevention and management of future crises. The growing momentum around the concept of resilience offers considerable potential to achieve this, but only if all actors work together to turn rhetoric into action that brings lasting improvements for the poorest communities across the Sahel.

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SUMMARY

In 2012, the Sahel region of West and Central Africa was once again hit by a severe food crisis as drought reduced food production, drove up food prices and exposed millions of already chronically vulnerable people to another year of hardship and hunger.

At its peak, over 18 million people across nine countries were affected, and more than 1 million children's lives were at risk because households could not obtain enough food. In Chad, women were forced to dig in anthills to find grains, while across the region, hundreds of thousands of families were forced to cut down their meals to just one a day.

The crisis was certainly on a large scale, but it should not have been unexpected. Recurrent drought has become a feature of the Sahel's changing climate, and the 2012 crisis came shortly after similar drought-related crises in 2010 and 2005, as well as a food price crisis in 2008. Many communities are now chronically vulnerable—230,000 children die of causes related to undernutrition[1] even in a 'good' harvest year[2]—so even relatively small shocks can have huge impacts.

The humanitarian response to previous crises in the Sahel and, more recently, in the Horn of Africa had been widely criticised as 'too little, too late'. At the start of 2012, when the crisis began to unfold, many governments, donors and aid agencies were determined not to make the same mistakes again. They were resolved not only to making a more effective response to this crisis, but also to doing more to help communities build their resilience in the face of inevitable future shocks and crises.

'We've only harvested four sacks of millet this year, compared with the 20 we can get in a normal year. But it's a long time since we had a normal year. We go from one catastrophe to another, because of either too much water or too little.'

Ramata Zore, Taffogo, Centre-Nord region, Burkina Faso, April 2012)

This report considers how governments, donors and agencies performed in their response to the 2012 crisis, and the lessons that must be learned to improve future responses. It draws on extensive interviews with Oxfam staff, other agencies, donors and government officials; focus groups with communities in three countries; the views of civil society organisations in six countries; and the latest research on food security and resilience in the region.

The analysis reveals that, although the 2012 response was better in many respects than the response to previous crises, there were still some significant shortcomings that need to be addressed.

Mixed performance

Looking back at the 2012 response gives no grounds for complacency. While the early warning systems provided the information needed for an early response, there was still disagreement about the likely severity of the crisis. Some donors, such as the European Community's Humanitarian Office (ECHO), acted earlier than in previous years, but overall, donor funding was no more timely than before. By the beginning of July 2012 and the peak of the crisis, the UN appeal remained just under 50 per cent funded.[3]

Unlike in earlier crises, most governments in the region did react to the early warning signs: Niger, for example, appealed for support six months earlier than it did during the 2010 crisis. Yet significant technical, financial and political barriers remained, and support provided by donors and international NGOs failed to strengthen national capacity and leadership of the response. In Senegal, for instance, the domestic focus on the presidential elections prevented an early response; elsewhere, national governments were often marginal players, with donor funding largely bypassing state systems.

So, despite some improvements, millions of people still did not get the help they needed. On the one hand, more children received treatment for acute undernutrition in the region than ever before, and the World Food Programme (WFP) alone reaching between 5 and 6 million people with food and nutritional assistance. On the other hand, 5.6 million people did not receive the seeds, tools and fertiliser they needed to plant for the next harvest, making it even harder for them to recover from the crisis and build up some reserves to mitigate the impacts of the next crisis.

Getting it right next time round

In 2013, the first priority is to recognise that the crisis is not over. Across the Sahel region, 10 million people still urgently need help to feed their families and rebuild their livelihoods. However, as of 5 April, the UN appeal for 2013 was just 24 per cent funded. The international community is still failing these people unless it takes urgent action to deliver aid that is swift, sufficient and sustained.

That is the most immediate priority. But governments, donors and aid agencies must also get better at preventing and managing future crises. The concept of resilience offers potential to do this, but only if it looks beyond the immediate causes of recurrent crises.

'What we learnt from repeated, massive humanitarian interventions in the region is: it is imperative to change the way we respond to the crises in the Sahel.'

David Gressly, UN Regional Humanitarian Coordinator[4]

All of those involved in dealing with food insecurity in the region—including Oxfam—must use existing know-how to help communities build resilience as effectively and sustainably as possible. It is vital to increase investment in small-scale agriculture, local and national food reserves, and social protection programmes, as well as scaling up efforts to prevent and treat undernutrition. It is also necessary to tackle key structural challenges that weakened the 2012 response, just as they did previous responses. This report recommends that action is taken to address three such challenges:

• Develop a shared understanding of vulnerability to food insecurity so that support is targeted to the poorest and responses can be launched rapidly;

• Break down barriers between humanitarian and development actors so that long-term and emergency programmes effectively support each other;

• Invest in strengthening the capacity of national and local actors so that governments can deliver large-scale, sustained support to their citizens.

Yet that cannot be all. Ultimately, governments, donors and aid agencies must also tackle the inequalities that lie at the heart of crises present and past, which make some people much more vulnerable than others. These entrenched inequalities also prevent the benefits of economic growth reaching millions of people, particularly women, who are often socially and economically marginalised and politically excluded.

Helping the Sahel's poorest communities escape the vicious cycle of hunger and poverty will be no easy task in the face of enormous challenges such as climate change, resource scarcity, population growth, urbanisation, and growing insecurity, with the crisis in Mali underlining the potential consequences of exclusion and under-development. But it can and must be achieved, and 2013 provides a critical opportunity for a breakthrough. National governments, regional bodies, donors, UN agencies, and national and international NGOs all have a responsibility to help communities in the Sahel to seize this opportunity.

'The leadership of our regional organisations must be recognised. These organisations must in return commit to mobilising their own resources to implement their policies and harmonise their interventions at all levels…. Nowhere in the world has resilience been achieved exclusively through development co-operation. That is why we are asking the co-operation agencies to develop an approach that supports our action, standing behind us and with us.'

Mamadou Cissokho, Roppa Honorary President and Civil Society Representative to AGIR Sahel[5]

1 INTRODUCTION

In 2012, the Sahel region faced an extreme food crisis, affecting more than 18 million people in nine countries at its peak.[6] Some 8 million people faced severe food insecurity. Households across the region struggled to obtain enough food to survive. One million children under the age of five were at risk of dying from undernutrition.[7]

Food crises are not a new phenomenon in the Sahel. The region has a history of drought, food insecurity and undernutrition. It has long had one of the highest poverty rates in the world.[8]

Despite recent economic growth in some of the countries affected by the crisis, the benefits are not reaching the most vulnerable and marginalised communities. Notwithstanding a move towards urbanisation, populations in the Sahel remain largely rural—depending on traditional crop-based agricultural and/or pastoral livelihoods. Even within rural areas, inequalities are increasing.[9] The outcomes from baseline surveys for the Household Economy Approach[10] (HEA) indicate a growing gap between rich and poor. For example, in the Dosso district of Niger the survey revealed that wealthy household income was almost 10 times greater than a 'typical' very poor household.[11] For the poorest households, the situation is getting worse: population growth is making it harder to produce enough food to meet their needs each year; the weather-related impacts of climate change threaten to exacerbate the problem; high and rising food prices are putting even basic foodstuffs out of reach of many families; and governments have not invested sufficiently in policies to support the poorest and most vulnerable citizens. As a result, even slight reductions in rainfall or production are enough to reduce poor households' access to sufficient food, prompting a crisis. Coping mechanisms on which communities have relied for generations, such as migrating herds to seek better pasture elsewhere, no longer provide an adequate answer as herds are depleted and pastureland reduced. Any reserves poor households had have run desperately short as they had already faced three major drought-related food crises in the past seven years—in 2005, 2010 and 2012—as well as the food price crisis in 2008.

The response by national governments and aid agencies to food crises, in the Sahel and elsewhere, has been generally poor. The responses to the 2005 and 2010 crises in the Sahel were heavily criticised as being 'too little, too late'.[12] There was also widespread criticism of the 'dangerous delay' in the response to the 2011 East Africa food crisis, which resulted in the unnecessary loss of lives and irreparable damage to livelihoods.[13]

The persistently high levels of need in the Sahel, coupled with an increasingly fragile context, mean that a business-as-usual approach to responding to food crises is no longer an option. National governments, donors, UN agencies and NGOs are calling for a new collective approach to tackling vulnerability and managing risk in the region. The shared goal must be to deliver effective

responses to crises, while at the same time addressing the underlying social, economic and political factors that make some communities, households and individuals more vulnerable than others during a crisis.

Structure of the report

The rest of this report is divided into four sections. Section 2 examines the impact of the 2012 crisis and its causes. Section 3 assesses the extent to which collectively we were able to overcame past shortcomings and deliver a better response in 2012. Section 4 looks at how key structural challenges that emerged from the 2012 response can be overcome as part of a broader agenda to help communities build their resilience. While the concept of resilience covers the broad range of shocks and stresses populations may face, this section focuses on the potential of resilience building measure to tackle chronic food insecurity in the region. Section 5 sets out recommendations for action by governments, donors and aid agencies.

Methodology

The analysis presented here is drawn from a wide range of sources, including interviews with Oxfam staff and more than 30 external bodies—UN agencies, donors and government departments—held between September and December 2012. It also reflects the views of communities expressed during focus group discussions and via questionnaires in Burkina Faso (June 2012), Chad (October 2012) and Niger (December 2012). It draws on the perspectives of civil society groups in six countries and, in particular, their analysis of the Charter for Food Crisis Prevention and Management produced by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), as well as numerous official documents and specific research on the response.[14] Finally, the report reflects the latest thinking around food security and resilience in the region.

2 THE IMPACT OF THE CRISIS AND ITS CAUSES

Compared with other recent crises in the Sahel, the food and nutritional crisis in 2012 was exceptional because of the number of people and countries affected. The regional dimension of the crisis meant that there were few options for support from neighbouring countries to help deal with its worst impacts. Limited food supplies were available on local markets, and the possibility of migration to seek pasture or alternative sources of income was reduced.

The triggers: reduced food production and soaring food prices

The first warnings of a potential crisis in the region came in November 2011 when it was confirmed that there would be below-average production for the 2011–12 harvest. In the end, production was 26 per cent lower than the previous year's bumper harvest and 3 per cent lower than the five-year average, albeit with variation from country to country.[15]

Reduced production meant many food stocks were already depleted by the beginning of 2012. For some communities in the Guéra region of Chad, for example, this harvest only provided enough food for two months. This left them with no food stocks for as much as 10 months until the next main harvest towards the end of 2012.[16]

The hardships initially triggered by the poor harvests were exacerbated by soaring food prices. The impact of production deficits across the region, as well as rising fuel prices and the impact of insecurity on market functioning, was further compounded by a lack of transparency around stock availability and speculation.[17] Many of the poorest households in the region rely heavily on local markets for food. Even druing a normal year, families can spend more than 60 per cent of household income on purchasing food to survive.[18]

'We've only harvested four sacks of millet this year, compared with the 20 we can get in a normal year. But it's a long time since we had a normal year. We go from one catastrophe to another, because of either too much water or too little.'

Ramata Zore, Taffogo, Centre-Nord region, Burkina Faso, April 2012

By the second half of 2011, food prices across the region were already well above the five-year average, and continued to rise throughout 2012. As Figure 1 shows, the price of a 100kg bag of millet in the Nigerien capital, Niamey, rose from 16,000 CFA francs in September 2011 to 28,000 CFA francs in September 2012. In Bamako, Mali, food prices more than doubled—the regional situation compounded by domestic political instability and insecurity in the north of the country. These staggering price increases meant that many of the poorest households could no longer afford to buy enough food.

Figure 1: The fluctuating price of 100kg of millet (December 2006 to November 2012)
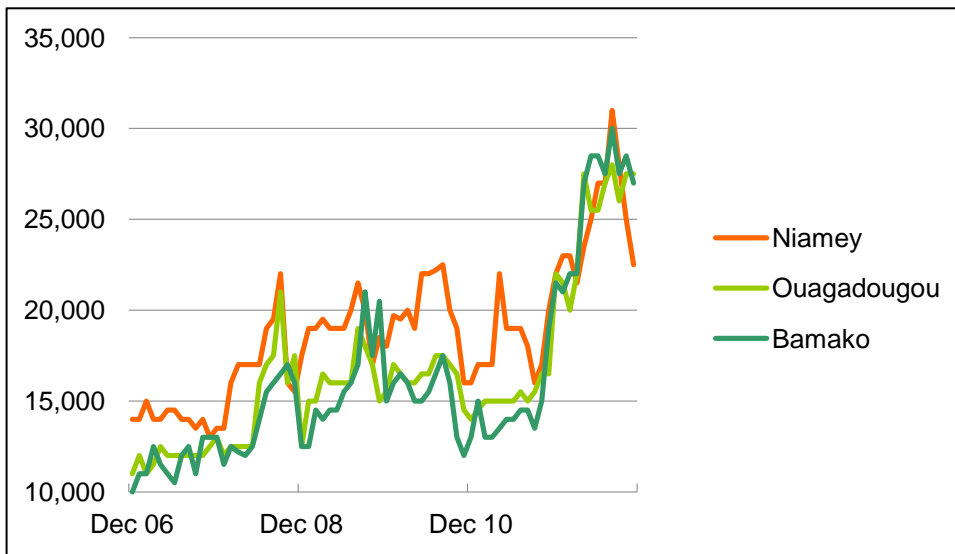
The underlying cause: rising vulnerability

It is the widespread chronic poverty in the region that makes the poorest communities and families highly susceptible to shocks such as reduced harvests or higher food prices. According to the Human Development Index, three Sahelian countries—Niger, Chad and Mali—are among the world's 10 poorest. But rising inequality between the richest and poorest households within countries is also a key factor hampering human development.[19] While there is some prospect of an improved economic outlook in some countries, the dividends of economic growth are not being distributed evenly across all social groups. For example, the discovery of oil stocks on Chadian territory is yet to make a significant difference for the majority of the population. While 80 per cent of electricity is consumed in the capital (Ndjamena), on average across the country just 3–4 per cent have access to electricity.[20] In such contexts of marginalisation and inequality, the poorest and most vulnerable families often have difficulty sufficiently claiming their rights and triggering real change. The ability of the poorest families to cope with shocks is being further undermined by the frequency and intensity of crises in the region. With each crisis, people lose more of their assets and are forced to resort to extreme coping mechanisms—such as taking on debt at high interest rates or reducing food consumption to just one meal a day. Many communities do not have time to recover from one crisis before a new one hits. A survey conducted by the Emergency Capacity Building (ECB) Project in Niger in 2012 showed that one third of the population affected by the current food crisis were still paying off debts incurred during the 2010 crisis.[21] When even relatively moderate shocks such as the fall in agricultural production in 2011 hit families that are already vulnerable, many have no alternative sources of support.

This situation is made all the more precarious because of climate change and population growth. In East Africa, the link between climate change and the latest food crisis has already been confirmed by a group of scientists, with climate models indicating that climate change is responsible for between 24

'We have reduced the number of meals daily, and women are digging in anthills to recover cereals grains—a practice which our community has not had to resort for a very long time.'

Woman from Azoza village, Chad, November 2011

per cent and 99 per cent of the risk of failure of the long rains.[22] In the Sahel, the combination of rising temperatures and greater variability in rainfall as a result of climate change is likely to continue to shorten growing seasons and reduce crop yields. According to the Agrhymet Regional Centre,[23] a 3ºC rise in temperate could result in a 15–25 per cent drop in millet and sorghum yields, and a 5 per cent drop in maize yields, in Burkina Faso and Niger by 2080, compared with the average for the second half of the 20th century.[24] Every year, the population in the Sahel region increases by another 3 per cent, which makes it harder to fill the gap between supply and demand at each harvest.[25]

Complicating factors: political instability and global economic crisis

The food security situation in the Sahel has been further compromised by political instability. The crises in Libya and Côte d'Ivoire considerably reduced opportunities for migrant workers, cutting off a vital source of additional income for 3 million people, many of whom were heavily reliant on support from family members working in neighbouring countries.[26] The conflict in Mali forced nearly 375,000 people to flee, seeking refuge elsewhere in the country or in neighbouring Burkina Faso, Mauritania or Niger.[27] Far from their homes, many of these people have had to rely on the generosity of communities already struggling to get enough to eat because of the food crisis.

The impact: critical food security needs and undernutrition

The 2012 food crisis in the Sahel led to a significant deterioration in food security and an increase in mortality for undernourished children across the region. According to the Cadre Harmonisé (CH), the framework for analysing and classifying food security in the region, at the peak of the crisis in mid-2012, certain areas—including parts of Mauritania, northern Mali and the Sahel band in Chad—faced 'extreme' food insecurity, just one category away from 'famine', while vast swathes of the region were in a 'critical' situation (see Figure 2).

'The 2012 food crisis has affected us all. In the 1992 crisis, communities opened up their grain stores to refugees. This time, those hosting refugees simply can't help them.'

Mayor of Deou, Sahel region, Burkina Faso, June 2012[28]

Figure 2: June 2012 Food Security Outlook according to the Cadre Harmonisé—the West African system for classifying food insecurity.
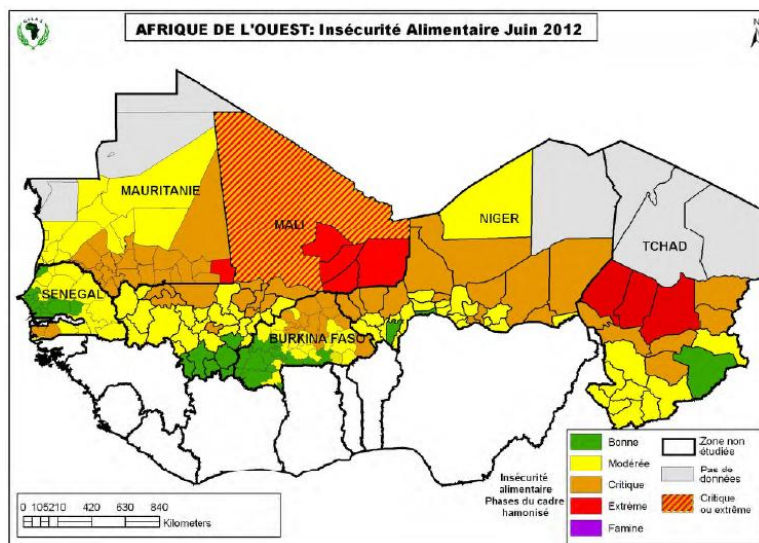
Source: Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET)

Levels of undernutrition in the region are generally high all year round. In an average year, 10–15 per cent of children suffer from Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM)—the sum of those suffering from severe and moderate acute malnutrition.[29] The 2012 food crisis considerably worsened the situation, surpassing emergency thresholds in many areas, as shown in Figure 3.[30] The number of those needing treatment for undernutrition—consistently high in the region—was 20 per cent higher in 2012 than in 2011, equalling the numbers needing treatment during the 2010 crisis.[31]

Figure 3: Global acute malnutrition rates as a percentage of children sampled in different areas of the Sahel, 2011 and 2012
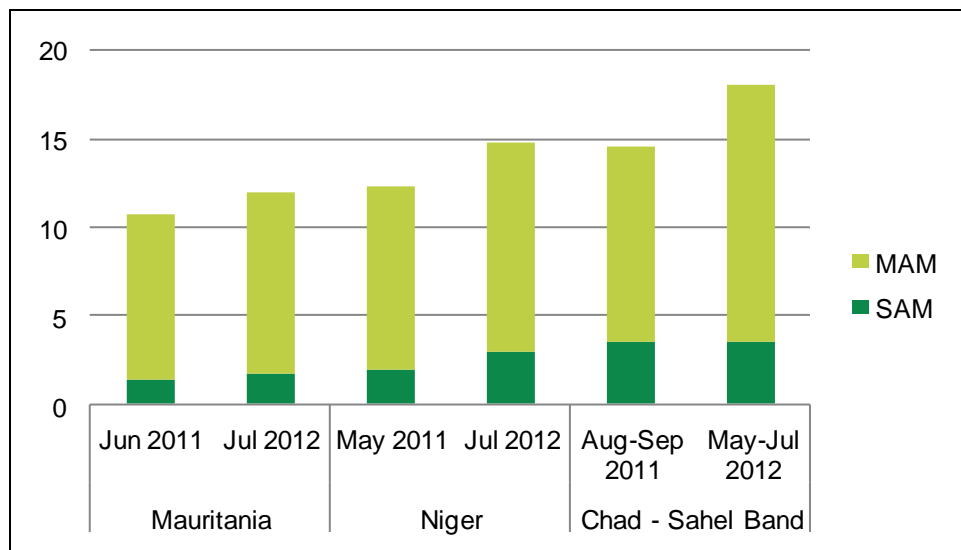
Source: UNICEF presentation to Regional Food Security and Nutrition Working Group, October 2012

The hardest hit: the poorest women and children

Women and children are the hardest hit during food crises. The systematic marginalisation of women—economically, socially and politically—and discriminatory norms and practices mean that they have less access to land, credit, agricultural inputs and other means of generating income.[32] Within the household, women tend to eat last and least, and their limited access to quality nutrition is exacerbated during a food crisis. In addition, a survey conducted by the government of Chad in the Barh el Gazel region in 2011 showed that female-headed households were almost twice as likely to suffer from food insecurity as male-headed households.[33]

'A lot of men leave the village for the Salamat, where they can find jobs. But a poor woman like me does not have these opportunities. My children and I are at the mercy of the crisis—we will have to try and survive whatever happens to us.'

Khadidja Khazali, widow with seven children, Chad, November 2011

3 ASSESSING THE 2012 RESPONSE

As initial warnings of the potential human impact of the 2012 crisis emerged, considerable national, regional and international resources were mobilised in a large-scale response. Governments in the region acknowledged the crisis earlier than ever and developed ambitious response plans. The UN launched appeals at the beginning of 2012, and updated requirements in June to call for $1.6bn. Over the course of the year, 70 per cent of these appeals were funded, and almost $500m was donated for response interventions outside the scope of the appeals.[34] Thanks to the efforts of the UN World Food Programme (WFP), between 5 and 6 million people received food and nutritional assistance. Collective efforts meant that more than 920,000 children were treated for undernutrition—a record in the Sahel.[35] By the end of 2012, Oxfam had provided assistance to more than 1 million people in the region.[36]

Drawing directly on analyses carried out by NGOs of the responses to the 2005 and 2010 Sahel crises and the 2011 East Africa crisis, and the recommendations from related reports,[37] this paper focuses on assessing four areas of the response: leadership and co-ordination; food security analysis and early warning; mobilising funding and the donor response; and, most importantly, reaching those in need with appropriate assistance.

These are by no means the only criteria by which to judge the effectiveness of a response; as such, this assessment does not seek to cover every possible element of the 2012 crisis. These criteria do, however, represent critical components that usually determine the timeliness and effectiveness of a response and have been found lacking in the response to previous crises. For instance, evidence clearly indicates that more lives can be saved and livelihoods protected if:

• national governments are willing and able to respond, with support from the international community;

• strong food security analysis tools and early warning systems are in place;

• decisive action is taken by donors on the basis of early warnings to provide early and flexible funding for integrated responses;

• programmes are started and scaled up at the earliest sign of a crisis.

The analysis aims to address this key question: to what extent did lessons learned from past responses inform and improve the quality of the humanitarian response to the 2012 Sahel crisis?

3.1 LEADERSHIP AND CO-ORDINATION

Poor leadership and weak co-ordination were among the biggest impediments to effective response in past crises.[38] Thanks to the Charter for Food Crisis Prevention and Management in the Sahel and West Africa, a strong regional framework was in place to help cement leadership and co-ordination for the 2012 crisis response. The Charter was formally adopted as the crisis was unfolding, in February 2012, by countries within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), as well as Chad and Mauritania. It sets out the responsibilities of national and international actors alike,[39] and states that national governments are responsible for leading and planning responses, developing systems for food security and nutrition analysis and early warning, and providing an overarching co-ordination structure for the response. In accordance with best practice, the international aid community should provide support when national capacities are overwhelmed, ensure that their work is aligned with national strategies and, where possible, provide long-term assistance via national budgets.

National government leadership

In general, national governments across the Sahel demonstrated an unprecedented willingness to deal with food insecurity in 2012. This is partly attributable to a change in the domestic political context, with some countries undergoing a change in leadership that contributed to a greater commitment to tackle food security issues. In a number of countries, official acknowledgement of the crisis came significantly earlier, compared with previous crises. Niger first called for international support in September 2011[40]—a full six months earlier than during the 2010 crisis.[41] However, factors ranging from elections to security threats affected the trajectory of decision-making in a number of countries. Senegal's appeal for international assistance came only in April 2012 after presidential elections had been concluded and a new leader inaugurated,[42] while the political and security crisis in Mali prevented the government from delivering a more proactive response.

Early appeals gave governments a window of opportunity to develop response plans, many of which were wider-ranging than before and sought to provide more assistance than in the past. Mauritania launched 'Plan EMEL (Hope)' at the end of 2011;[43] in Niger, a contingency plan had been put in place following the 2005 crisis, which provided the basis for the response in 2011-12.[44] While the very existence of such plans signalled progress, the limited technical and financial capacity of national institutions frequently undermined leadership of the response and limited the opportunities for co-ordination.[45] National plans often lacked the detailed guidance required to direct the response. In Burkina Faso, for example, civil society groups criticised their government's national plan for lacking details on the relative importance of each type of support (food security, nutrition and non-food assistance).[46] Insufficient detail within plans meant that they did not necessarily inform the priorities adopted by some international organisations. In Chad, civil society groups found that inadequate co-ordination prevented technical recommendations from being taken up by decision-makers at a ministerial level.[47]

Regional and African Union leadership

At a technical level, food security was prioritised at the regional level by ECOWAS and the Permanent Inter-State Committee for the Fight Against Drought in the Sahel (CILSS). In contrast to previous responses, and with the exception of Burkina Faso and Mali, ECOWAS was successful in encouraging its member governments to respect regional trade commitments and not place restrictions on trade flows.[49] However, engagement with the crisis at the highest political level in ECOWAS could have been stronger; it remained a marginal issue on the African Union's agenda.[50]

The damage caused by a lack of effective leadership, and confusion about the roles and responsibilities of different humanitarian actors at the regional and international levels, was especially apparent during the protracted negotiations around a donor conference. The conference was initially proposed in March 2012 by the African Union Peace and Security Council, supported by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and ECHO. Many agencies believed that the conference could build momentum in the donor community and lead to firm financial commitments. Yet month after month, those involved gave new reasons for postponing the conference, which ultimately never took place.

International support to national governments

Within international organisations, some positive steps were taken to improve the quality of international co-ordination and leadership. The appointment of the first OCHA Regional Humanitarian Coordinator in April 2012 injected new dynamism and provided a much-needed framework for co-ordination between humanitarian leadership teams in affected countries. On the whole, however, international co-ordination structures were established too slowly and could have done more to build on existing national capacity.

Despite strong preparedness planning and surge capacity, OCHA's internal processes slowed efforts to quickly establish a presence in new countries of operation (establishing new teams and co-ordination structures in Burkina Faso, Mali and Mauritania took months rather than weeks). These delays meant that funding appeals for these countries were only launched in June 2012, just before the crisis peaked, narrowing the window of opportunity for resource mobilisation and, critically, an effective response.[51] Finally, in some countries, co-ordination structures could have been developed with greater sensitivity to existing national capacity. For example, in Burkina Faso, OCHA decided to create parallel cluster systems, despite government-led structures already being in place. Time and resources would have been better spent reinforcing an existing and more sustainable system.[52]

While it is clear that UN procedures can be streamlined and simplified to improve the speed and effectiveness of responses to future crises, there is a fundamental lesson here: establishing international structures from the ground up will necessarily be slow; an alternative, national-led model for leadership and response needs to be put in place and supported wherever possible.

'We underline the inadequacy, or even the insignificance, of the support provided in view of the severity of the crisis and the extent of the vulnerability faced by rural and peri-urban populations. Equally, there was an unacceptable delay before interventions began, particularly targeted food distributions, which are still to begin.'

Declaration by civil society group 'Consortium for the Right to Food' on theperformance of their governent, 24 August 2012[48]

Figure 4: Response timeline

	Early warning and analysis	Government appeals begin	International mobilisation
Aug 2011			
Sep 2011	According to Food Crisis Prevention Network (FCPN), initial projections suggest lower than average 2011-2012 harvest	Niger	
Oct 2011			
Nov 2011	The FCPN confirms low production and declares a risk of food and nutritional insecurity if nothing done	Mauritania	EU is first donor to issue a press release warning of looming hunger crisis in Sahel and commits additional money
Dec 2011		Chad Mali	UN preparedness plan finalised
Jan 2012	Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) analysis released suggests that community coping mechanisms will suffice to overcome the crisis		
Feb 2012			UN Regional Response Strategy finalised
Mar 2012		Burkina	
Apr 2012	At FCPN meeting, commonly agreed maps projecting food insecurity for June not officially endorsed	Senegal The Gambia	Regional Humanitarian Co-ordinator appointed
May 2012			
Jun 2012	FEWSNET underlines that there is a high risk of escalation of food security levels at start of growing season		Clusters established. Final UN appeals released

Most donors, UN agencies and international NGOs faced similar challenges in their approach to the funding and delivery of programmes. In interviews, officials from national governments expressed frustration about the failure of UN agencies and international NGOs to either consult them on or inform them about key decisions.[53] Similar frustrations were expressed about donor policies—government officials complained about the perceived lack of transparency around the criteria donors used to determine whether they would deliver assistance via states. Even in countries that had considerable

institutional capacity and political will to conduct an effective response, only limited international funding was provided directly to the government. In Niger, for example, where the government is widely considered to have a strong commitment to tackling food insecurity, less than a quarter of funding for the response went via the state.[54]

International NGOs also sometimes struggled to live up to the principle of working with local partners. Oxfam's team in Mauritania made deliberate efforts to integrate their two key local partners—the Association pour la Cooperation, la Recherche et le Developpement (ACORD) and the Association Mauritanienne pour l'Auto-Developpement (AMAD) into all major strategic decision-making processes and launched a specific coaching programme. However, a sustained commitment to strengthening the capacity of local partners was not systematically applied across Oxfam's programmes, or the humanitarian sector as a whole.

Investing in national institutions and supporting the development of national civil society organisations to mitigate the impacts of a crisis and respond to humanitarian needs must be a core priority for all humanitarian actors in the region. The massive shift in disaster response models in parts of Asia—moving away from internationally-led responses and towards strong and effective national preparedness, co-ordination and response—demonstrates that change is possible. While this may prove challenging in contexts where institutions are still weak, government financial resources are scarce or humanitarian needs potentially politically contested, it should nonetheless still be a major objective in the longer term.

3.2 FOOD SECURITY ANALYSIS AND EARLY WARNING

Decisive, collective action based on information gathered through early warning systems is critical to the quality and effectiveness of a response. In practice, though, early warning information does not always trigger an early response; decision makers often struggle when faced with numerous and, at times, conflicting sources of early warning information, delaying vital decisions until there is greater certainty.

Early warning systems strengthened

In the Sahel, several early warning systems have been developed at community, national and regional levels. For example, Action Contre la Faim (ACF) has been providing technical support to partners in the region to develop an innovative early warning system based on the analysis of geographic information. The system monitors the relative abundance or scarcity of biomass in an area as a proxy for the availability of pasture, and generates maps to identify the most vulnerable areas at the end of the rainy season. It is now widely used by humanitarian actors and in the national early warning systems of Mali and Niger. In October 2011, just before confirmation that harvests would be below average, a map was developed through this system (see Figure 5) that clearly indicated the scale of the unfolding crisis.

Figure 5: ACF's geographic information based system for early warning
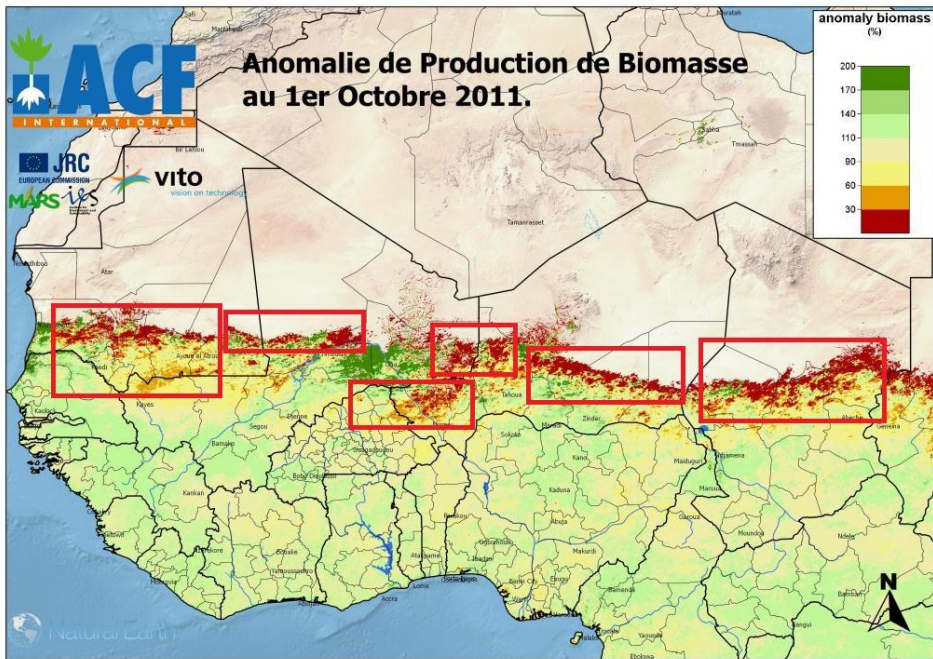
Source: ACF

At a community level, early warning systems can directly inform local programme responses. PASISAT, an early warning system established by Oxfam in the Guéra region of Chad, produced its first warnings about the impending crisis in September 2011. Its analysis was subsequently used by other NGOs and local authorities to inform their plans. National governments across the region have set up systems that rely strongly on input by UN agencies, NGOs and communities. Given the regional dimensions of food insecurity, a CILSS-led initiative strengthened linkages between national early warning systems and the regional food security and early warning framework. In the course of the crisis, further efforts were made to harmonise and consolidate food security analysis according to the common 'Cadre Harmonisé' methodology.

Thanks to the strong systems in place, warnings of the 2012 Sahel crisis were issued early, enabling indicators of potential shocks to be analysed according to the vulnerability of specific populations. This allowed different food security scenarios to be effectively predicted and appropriate interventions identified. The first warnings issued by UN agencies came as early as November 2011. By the beginning of 2012, a regional response strategy had been finalised. On 15 February 2012, heads of UN agencies and donors made a collective appeal for the Sahel, stressing that humanitarian action could wait no longer.[55] These strong calls for action were made possible by good co-operation between key food security and nutrition actors in the region.

Conflicting information on the severity of the crisis

However, despite strong early warnings of the impending crisis, and good collaboration among food security actors in the region, there were significant challenges in interpreting early warning information and using it to guide swift action. From the first warnings, differing analyses of vulnerabilities emerged,

and there were difficulties in achieving consensus between the various organisations involved. The well-respected Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), suggested that communities could rely on markets and standard coping mechanisms to overcome shortfalls in production, but this did not turn out to be the case.[56] FEWS NET published its own food security assessments that presented a more positive picture of the regional context, while also participating in joint exercises to map food security needs led by CILSS. For some donors, particularly those without a strong presence in the region, these different assessments created confusion about the likely severity of the crisis.

In contrast, there was common consensus over the nutritional situation in the region. As early as February 2012, a regional working group comprising the major UN agencies, key donors and international NGOs estimated that more than 1 million children under five were at risk of severe acute malnutrition (SAM). The working group developed a plan to scale up capacity and respond urgently to these needs. A similar diagnosis was also presented by CILSS at a meeting in April 2012.

# 3.3 MOBILISING FUNDING AND THE DONOR RESPONSE

The scale and timing of funding, and the mechanisms for its delivery, have huge implications for the quality of any response. Funding mechanisms need to be sufficiently flexible to allow programmes to tackle the underlying causes of vulnerability, as well as promote linkages between emergency responses and long-term development programmes. Humanitarian funding should cover the full duration of a crisis across all key sectors. The response to previous food crises in the Sahel and East Africa fell far short of best practice in this area.

Early funding commitments

Following the delayed response to the East Africa food crisis in 2011, there was great interest in whether the response to the Sahel crisis in 2012 would be timelier. As already noted, some donors initially reacted quickly to early warnings of the crisis. The first contribution came in November 2011, when ECHO provided $13m in addition to existing financial commitments to the region.[57] By mid-February 2012, donors had committed approximately $250m.[58] In comparison, less than a quarter of this amount had been raised by the equivalent stage in response to the 2010 Sahel crisis.[59]

However, a more detailed comparison of funding mobilisation across the three most recent major food crises—Sahel 2012, East Africa 2011 and Sahel 2010—shows that the improvement in donor response may not have been as great as it first seemed, as Figure 6 shows.

Figure 6: Comparison of the cumulative percentage of funding committed month by month to UN appeals[60]
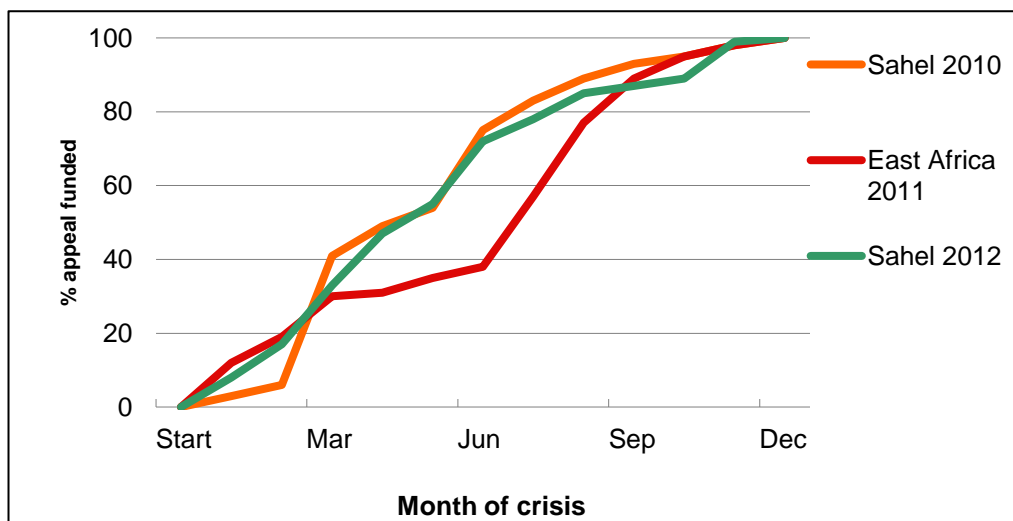
Source: UN Financial Tracking Service

Figure 6 shows that funding commitments for the Sahel crisis in 2012 came earlier than those for the 2011 East Africa crisis, which saw a huge mobilisation of funds only once a famine was declared. However, it also shows that apart from the early months, the 2012 crisis did not see a significantly earlier response than the 2010 Sahel food crisis overall.[61] By the peak of the crisis at the beginning of July, approximately half of the total resources requested—$800m—was still to be committed to the UN appeals.[62]

Limitations of current funding mechanisms

Despite the outcry provoked by the slow funding response to the 2011 East Africa crisis, in 2012, most donors still appeared reluctant to make funding decisions on the basis of probability or risk.[63] In interviews, donors pointed to uncertainty about the severity of the crisis as a key inhibiting factor. Rather than taking a 'no regrets' option—low-cost interventions that could have had a beneficial impact regardless of the final scenario—they preferred to wait for certainty. Others blamed delays in the publication of the finalised funding appeals, which doubled the total funding requested just weeks before the crisis reached its peak.[64]

As is frequently the case in response to slow-onset crises, it proved difficult to secure adequate funding for all sectors in the 2012 response, which constrained the ability to comprehensively address people's needs. While UN appeals do not reflect the totality of aid, or where national governments are directing their resources, their performance is a good indicator of where there were shortfalls. There was relatively generous support for food security and nutrition programmes in the appeals, receiving 77 per cent and 71 per cent of requested funds respectively. However, critical but frequently neglected sectors received significantly less funding, including water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) (51 per cent), early recovery (34 per cent) and education (16 per cent).[65] Underfunding of the agricultural component of the food security sector meant that, by June 2012, 5.6 million people had not received the

seeds, tools and fertiliser needed for the planting season. This meant that people affected by the crisis were not able to adequately prepare for the next harvest, further limiting their chances of recovery.[66]

Many donors now recognise the limitations of current practice, and are taking measures to adapt funding mechanisms to better suit the operational context. Some donors, such as the Swedish and Spanish governments, had already established more flexible long-term funding mechanisms that allowed a more timely response to those in need across the Sahel in 2012.[67] During the crisis, some donors tried to introduce additional flexibility in their funding to allow partners to better meet evolving needs. While more ambitious donor approaches—such as seeking to blend humanitarian and development funding or design flexible programmes—were occasionally piloted, they were not fully integrated into the response.[68]

3.4 REACHING THOSE IN NEED AND DELIVERING APPROPRIATE ASSISTANCE

Effective leadership and co-ordination, timely decision-making informed by early warning and food security analysis, and appropriate donor funding should provide a firm foundation from which assistance can be delivered in good time to those most in need. That assistance should save lives and livelihoods, and, wherever possible, make a sustainable difference to the lives of those receiving it. This sustained impact of programmes should be the ultimate measure of the effectiveness of humanitarian responses. However, there is a need for greater investment in systems that can provide meaningful measures of impact and effectiveness.[69] Improving the quality of information management and impact assessment should be a priority.

In the absence of robust evidence demonstrating the impact of the response across the region, this analysis considers a range of factors broadly recognised as characterising a 'good response'. Factors typically referred to when assessing response performance include:

• reaching the most vulnerable in all geographical areas;

• providing assistance on the scale required in a timely and sustained manner;

• ensuring that programmes are designed and delivered in a way that responds to needs.

Evaluations of previous responses show some critical shortcomings on each of these factors. The bulk of interventions did not begin until the peak of the crisis. There were difficulties in targeting, an over-reliance on food assistance, and weak co-ordination between emergency efforts and development programming.[70]

Coverage: did the response reach enough people?

Thanks to OCHA's concerted efforts to improve the quality of monitoring in 2012, more complete data are available. The data reveal that the response was more extensive than in previous crises, but was still not sufficient to meet the needs of all those affected. For nutrition, deliberate efforts to scale up the treatment of severe acute undernutrition led to the number of children treated almost doubling compared with 2010.[71] On food assistance, 75 per cent of those targeted received the assistance they required—a respectable figure, but one which nonetheless indicates that further progress can be made. In contrast, coverage in the WASH sector was clearly inadequate, with just 35 per cent of those requiring support receiving it.[72]

Many agencies acknowledge that the geographic reach of the response could have been improved. Over recent years, agencies in Chad, for example, had deliberately sought to shift their operational presence towards the poor and highly vulnerable populations in the Sahelian band. As a result, the needs of populations in these areas were largely well covered. However, border regions, where security was challenging, were less well covered.[73] Some NGO staff interviewed for this report observed that need is not the only factor that determines decisions about the timing and location of programmes: access, security and logistics are also major considerations.[74]

Targeting: did the response reach the most vulnerable groups?

While the need to focus on vulnerable families and marginalised groups is increasingly acknowledged, government officials from the region conceded that this was one of the greatest challenges they faced in the response.[75] Very few social protection programmes were already in place to provide a basis for scale-up, and governments often lacked the capacity or detailed household information to do more than identify vulnerable regions in the targeting of interventions. International agencies did make efforts to specifically target marginalised groups, including numerous examples of programmes for women, children and pastoralists.

However, the introduction of new programmes did not in itself lead to improved targeting of assistance to the most vulnerable. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), for example, introduced a deliberate focus on women in view of their potential to boost overall agricultural production.[76] However, an analysis of the implementation of the FAO's programme in Senegal revealed that the predominant role of men within agricultural production in the country also resulted in them receiving a disproportionate amount of assistance. A failure to take steps to compensate for this in the design of the programme meant that only 10 per cent of support provided went to women farmers.[77] Oxfam too encountered challenges in working with pastoralist groups. On initial assessment, Oxfam's work with pastoralist communities in North Dakoro, Niger, on effective coping mechanisms during drought appeared successful in encouraging the timely destocking of herds. However, an aid effectiveness study showed that the programme did not lead to any difference in behaviour when compared to other pastoralist communities. The study recommended a review of approaches.[78]

Programming: did the different approaches adopted meet people's needs?

There are some good examples of early interventions by UN agencies and NGOs. Quick impact interventions—such as the provision of seeds, cash transfers, and destocking—helped populations meet their food security needs and protect their assets at an early phase of the crisis, before having to resort to negative coping strategies like selling assets or taking on debt.[79] An Oxfam study of a series of cash transfers in Niger in November 2011 showed that families who received cash increased their food consumption and relied less on credit to buy food, thereby reducing their vulnerability.[80] In June 2012— usually the phase in Sahel food crises during which needs are greatest, as families coping mechanisms are exhausted—the numbers facing food insecurity in Niger and Burkina Faso appear to have decreased. While it is possible that this was due to a correction in statistical methodology, UN reports published at the time suggest that it could also reflect the impact of successful early action.[81]

There were also some notable advances in ensuring that humanitarian responses did not undermine longer-term work to improve food security. The dominance of in-kind food aid in the response was significantly reduced compared with previous responses.[82] The WFP, for example, launched its largest cash response ever.[83] Oxfam used market analysis tools and mechanisms to ensure that markets could support cash transfers, and there was an increase in the use of local food purchasing.

In areas where there had been strong investment in local food reserves (see Box 1), these often played a critical role in mitigating the worst impacts of the crisis—demonstrating the potential of reserves as a first line of defence. However, some civil society organisations criticised the lack of information on the availability of national stocks, and the inappropriate rules guiding their use.[84] There is clearly progress to be made in integrating such reserves into national response plans, and further developing a regional approach through ECOWAS.

Box 1: Investing in food reserves to mitigate the crisis

An Oxfam questionnaire filled out by communities on the role of local food reserves conducted in Burkina Faso in June 2012 underlined the contribution that food reserves can make to reducing the impact of shocks. All of the 59 respondents stated that local reserves improved the food and nutrition situation of their households, citing greater proximity, availability and affordability of food among the benefits. Furthermore, 95 per cent of respondents said that emigration from their communities had decreased as a result, and almost half stated that their living conditions and sense of stability had improved.

While there were some clear examples of UN agencies and international NGOs taking flexible approaches to ensure that their programmes met communities' needs, further improvements are needed in a number of areas. Despite evidence underlining the potential benefits, early interventions did not take place at scale. Further improvements could also be made with regard to

the timeliness of the response. In many cases, for international NGOs, there was a considerable time lag between a funding commitment being made and the actual delivery of assistance.[85] For example, difficulties in scaling up a humanitarian programme with a strong development focus led to delays in Oxfam's programme in the Kayes region of southern Mali. The programme only began in April/May, months later than initially planned. Restrictions on the duration of funding available for crisis response had obvious implications for the duration and ambition of programmes. Oxfam, for example, integrated recovery phase activities within its response strategies from the outset, but a lack of funding for this final phase limited what it was able to achieve.

Further efforts need to be made to evaluate the quality of interventions and their broader impacts. For example, the impact of cash-based interventions, particularly on price inflation, still needs to be more thoroughly assessed. ACF will seek to work with others in the region involved in nutrition interventions to assess whether the significant increase in the number of beneficiaries reached was matched by an improvement in the quality of support.

In spite of the clear relationship between food and nutrition crises and underlying causes of vulnerability, programmes that genuinely combined humanitarian and development activities were still rare. In interviews, staff from UN agencies highlighted some programmes that had been developed in light of previous crises that could promote more sustainable resource use and tackle the root causes of food insecurity, but noted that these were not necessarily driven by an underlying objective of strengthening resilience or linked to possible emergency interventions.

In internal assessments, staff from Oxfam acknowledged that, while their organisation provided life-saving assistance to hundreds of thousands of people and delivered a better response than previously, some aspects of the response could still be improved on. Despite efforts to integrate emergency and long-term programme teams, and build the humanitarian capacity of permanent staff, divisions remained. In some cases, emergency programmes had to be launched in new areas, with logistics, partnerships and relationships with communities all having to be built from scratch, because longer-term development programming had not targeted areas with the most vulnerable communities.

3.5 THE VERDICT?

The humanitarian response to the 2012 food crisis in the Sahel region was bigger and, in some key respects, better than the response to previous crises in the Sahel and elsewhere. National governments were more willing to take the lead on food security issues; there was an exceptionally early and vocal warning of the forthcoming crisis; the foundations for an effective national and regional food security analysis framework were already in place; funding for the response was significant (all the more welcome in the context of increasing cuts in aid from traditional donors); and the response saved hundreds of thousands of lives and livelihoods.

Nevertheless, these improvements still did not produce a response on the scale required to meet the enormous needs. Achieving a truly effective response demands a different approach to addressing vulnerability and managing crises—making piecemeal improvements to existing systems will not be enough for a region facing an ever growing threat from climate change and population growth. This paper has identified three persistent weaknesses on the part of humanitarian actors across all four areas of the response that substantially reduced their collective impact. These weaknesses must be addressed, not only to improve the quality of future responses but also to help build the resilience of the people whose livelihoods and lives may be at risk every year:

1. There is still **insufficient understanding of the nature and scale of vulnerability and a reluctance to respond on the basis of risk**. In the 2012 crisis, this contributed to different messages being given about the likely severity of the crisis. Some donors waited for more certainty before making firm commitments, and programming could have further integrated risk analysis and management.

2. There is still **a divide between humanitarian and development approaches**, perpetuated by funding mechanisms, co-ordination systems and organisational structures within individual agencies. In 2012, this meant that flexible funding was not available in sufficient quantities at an early enough stage, and that humanitarian interventions and longer-term programmes did not sufficiently support each other. Most importantly, this represented a significant barrier for international assistance to address the root causes of vulnerability alongside meeting people's immediate needs.

3. **Limitations in national capacity and leadership** were underlined by the way in which governments in the region were marginalised; they received inadequate support from the international community, highlighting the need for renewed emphasis on institutional support. In 2012, shortcomings in national government responses weakened co-ordination, meant some responses were not driven by an overall plan, and ultimately undermined the quality and reach of assistance provided.

4 ADDRESSING STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES TO BUILD RESILIENCE

Some 10 million people across the Sahel remain in a highly precarious situation and will require assistance throughout 2013 and beyond to help them recover from the 2012 crisis.[86] Although the 2012/13 harvests were generally favourable, food prices have not yet returned to their pre-crisis levels. As of the beginning of March 2013, a 100kg bag of millet in Niamey cost 25,000 CFA francs—only 3,000 less than the price in September 2012 and 3,500 more than in March the previous year.[87] Undernutrition also remains at critical levels: across the region, 1.4 million children are expected to suffer from SAM and another 3.6 million from moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) (see Figure 7).[88]

The severity of the situation is further compounded by the recent crisis in Mali; almost 450,000 people are still displaced. As a result, opportunities for livelihoods have been reduced, and overall humanitarian needs in the region increased. While the conflict risks diverting domestic and international political attention from pressing regional food security concerns, it should in fact be shining a spotlight on the need to address the longer-term drivers of fragility and political exclusion faced by all countries in the Sahel.

Action must be taken now to commit funds early, and to support the steady recovery of households and communities across the region affected by the 2012 food crisis. At the time of this paper's publication (April 2013), the window for assistance is closing, if agriculture support is to reach people in time to support preparations for the main harvest.[89] Programmes tackling undernutrition require adequate preparation and planning with government partners.

At the same time, many organisations working in the region have long acknowledged that simply making an emergency response to frequent crises is not enough, and interventions must increasingly focus on addressing the root causes of food insecurity and undernutrition. The desire to deliver progress on resilience-building in the Sahel is palpable at national, regional and global levels. The UN Strategy for the Sahel includes resilience-building as one of three shared objectives for all humanitarian partners.

However, in spite of this momentum, and the recognition of the importance of recovery, Oxfam is concerned that the positive rhetoric is masking limited change on the ground. At the beginning of 2013, the UN estimated that $1.66bn was needed to meet the Sahel's ongoing humanitarian and recovery needs and start building the foundations for resilience. As of 5 April 2013, just 24 per cent of this requirement has been provided.[90]

Figure 7: Expected severe acute malnutrition burden in 2013
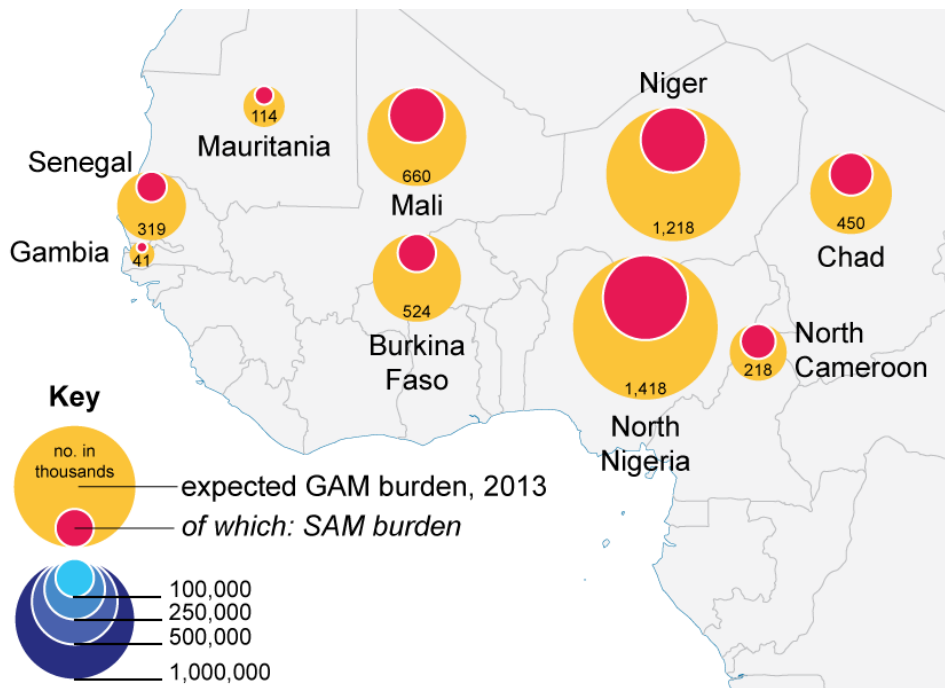
Source: UN Sahel Regional Strategy 2013

Building resilience in the Sahel

When key governments, donors and other food security actors met at the end of 2012 as part of the EU's Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative (AGIR Sahel), they agreed on a definition of resilience: 'the capacity of vulnerable households, families and systems to face uncertainty and the risk of shocks, to withstand and respond effectively to shocks, as well as to recover and adapt in a sustainable manner'.[91]

The current emphasis on building resilience in the Sahel offers an window of opportunity to strengthen support to communities so that they are better equipped to face the shocks and stresses they encounter on a regular basis. While resilience as a concept seeks to address the broad range of vulnerabilities populations could face, in this paper, we focus specifically on how resilience could contribute to tackling food inscurity in the region. Resilience—if it translates into increased access to basic services and new programming that targets the most vulnerable—signals a potential way out of the state of permanent emergency in the region, where even in a 'non-crisis' year, up to 230,000 children die of causes related to undernutrition.[93]

'We know that every time a crisis hits, 80 per cent of the most affected come from the 20 per cent poorest, most vulnerable people. These are people with the least access to the corridors of power.'

Kristalina Georgieva, EU Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response.[92]

Over the past year, progress has been made in developing policies and frameworks supporting efforts to build resilience. Nationally, governments are evaluating their responses and reflecting on future food security policies. Regionally, ECOWAS has launched its Zero Hunger initiative.[94] Globally, the AGIR Sahel Framework, launched in May 2012, aims to bring key actors together to develop a holistic vision for resilience in the region.[95] In 2013, these frameworks must be translated into concrete action, building on existing policies and initiatives that can strengthen resilience if implemented more widely. Examples of these include:

- Implementing existing **national and regional food and agricultural policies**, such as the ECOWAS Agricultural Policy and National Agricultural Investment Plans, and meeting the 2003 Maputo Declaration commitment to invest at least 10 per cent of national budgets on agricultural development.[96] This must include the use of a comprehensive targeting system to allocate resources to the poorest producers across geographic regions,[97] and move away from a traditional focus on a limited range of export crops towards supporting small-scale producers, particularly women farmers. According to the FAO, providing women with the same access to resources as men could increase agricultural yields by 20-30 per cent, allowing a further 100–150 million people to escape from hunger.[98]

- Supporting the rollout of the **regional food reserve strategy**, agreed by ECOWAS agriculture ministers in September 2010 in Abidjan. Regionally and nationally, reserves can boost availability of stocks and support government responses to meet citizens' immediate food needs during deficit periods. At a local level, food reserves can play a critical role as a first line of defence—helping producers get a better price for their products in times of surplus and sustaining regular access to food in times of deficit.

- Expanding **safety nets and social protection schemes** can ensure that the most vulnerable households have a minimum level of income to meet essential needs in the event of price increases or any other shock. If combined with appropriate training or support for saving, transfers can also help communities develop additional sources of income or reserve funds, reducing their susceptibility to shocks in the future. Insurance schemes that pay communities dividends in the case of shocks can offer similar benefits.

- Developing **nutrition-sensitive programmes** through a multi-sectoral programming approach that integrates efforts to reduce and prevent undernutrition within interventions focused on food security, support to livelihoods and agriculture, education, water and sanitation, health, gender and care practices.

- Enhancing the quality and coverage of, and access to, integrated programmes to manage **undernutrition**—particularly through strengthening national health systems and strengthening preparedness and response plans to seasonal peaks.

Investing in these programmes and policies is essential, but must also form part of a broader transformative approach to building resilience and tackling the pervasive inequality and marginalisation faced by the poorest and most vulnerable communities and households in the Sahel. It also means addressing new realities: the pressures of population growth and climate change, which pose questions about the sustainability of certain rural livelihoods, and the challenges posed by an increasingly urbanised population. Finally, it means learning from the experiences of the 2012 response, and tackling the three structural challenges that underpinned weaknesses in that response: developing a deeper understanding of vulnerability; breaking down the humanitarian/development divide; and strengthening national and local capacity to build resilience. These three challenges are discussed in more detail in the following subsections.

4.1 DEVELOPING AN UNDERSTANDING OF VULNERABILITY

Despite agreement on the definition of resilience within the EU's AGIR Sahel Framework, there is still no shared understanding of what resilience and vulnerability really mean, or of how the concepts should be applied.

A first priority in the region must be a political commitment at the highest level within national governments and regional institutions to identify, support and transfer resources to the poorest and most vulnerable communities, households and individuals, including through the provision of basic public services. This requires a deeper and commonly shared understanding of the role of 'vulnerability' within resilience to better inform humanitarian and development activities by governments and aid agencies alike.

At present, there is no shared view among the region's political leaders about the extent of vulnerability and its implications for policy-making. Such disagreement came most noticeably to the fore during a regional meeting of organisations working on food security in Ouagadougou in December 2012.[100] During the meeting, ECOWAS and others sought to soften the language describing the severity of the 2012 crisis. This reawakened fears that the increased willingness to deal with food security shown by some leaders during the crisis may have been short-lived. Reaching a shared understanding of vulnerability will not be easy; however, the AGIR Sahel Secretariat can provide much-needed support to facilitate dialogue and broker an agreement.

'The ambition is very challenging as it means that we engage, within the next 20 years, to reduce by at least two-thirds the number of people who suffer from food and nutritional insecurity due to structural constraints. However, I am convinced that with everyone's determination we will go even beyond this target objective.'

Beyon Luc Adolphe Tiao, Prime Minister of Burkina Faso[99]

Progress at a political level can be reinforced by progress at the technical level, where work has already begun around mapping vulnerability. A CILSS/FEWS NET initiative was launched in 2012 to develop a food security toolkit for national early warning systems in the region. It will continue to play a critical role in strengthening analytical capacity at the national level, and improving joint vulnerability mapping. Further investments in research tools for food security analysis, such as the Household Economy Approach (HEA), can provide both greater insights into how families are likely to respond to shocks and a more robust understanding of the factors contributing to increased resilience (see Box 2 for information on Oxfam's research on resilience in Niger).

The ultimate goal will be to develop more appropriate programming responses and state policies that focus on supporting and equipping the most vulnerable communities, households and individuals to manage and mitigate the impact of shocks and stresses. Such responses will also provide much-needed evidence on which to develop new long-range development approaches that specifically address the factors directly contributing to vulnerability.

4.2 BREAKING DOWN THE HUMANITARIAN/DEVELOPMENT DIVIDE

Reforming the architecture of aid, and breaking down the barriers between humanitarian and development institutions and practices, is vital if the international aid community is to make good on its commitment to build resilience in the Sahel. UN agencies and international NGOs need to adapt their internal systems and adopt new ways of working to develop and implement programming that can meet emergency as well as longer-term needs, with joint risk analysis and common resilience objectives.

NGO efforts

Oxfam has been reflecting on how and where they should operate in the region to be best positioned to tackle chronic food insecurity and vulnerability. Plans are being developed for new 'resilience' programmes that integrate development and humanitarian perspectives and expertise. It will seek to ensure that future operational presence is increasingly determined by vulnerability mappings, enabling a stronger focus on the needs of the most vulnerable communities and households. Joint meetings are taking place across teams from different regions that face similar challenges in resilience programming. Proposals are being developed for the internal changes that will be needed at every level to make a new programming model possible.

Box 2: Putting resilience into practice

Oxfam's programme in Niger commissioned research to improve understanding of resilience in agropastoral communities. Through focus group discussions with community members, the research team identified key benchmarks for resilience—as defined by the community—and the areas of intervention they believe would best increase their capacity to withstand shocks. This methodology will be used to inform future resilience programming approaches.

The first such programme has just been launched in Ouallam region, and hopes to include an ambitious set of interventions aiming to increase the capacity of households and communities to better cope with future shocks and stresses. This could include support for local-level early warning systems and food reserves, and promoting more sustainable use of resources. Humanitarian capacity will be embedded in the programme to allow for scale-up if required. Advocacy work is a central component of the approach, ensuring that if the project delivers on its objectives, government actors and other interested parties can help bring the project to scale.

Donors' contributions

NGO efforts to adapt programming approaches are just part of the solution: donors need to take similar steps and commit to making much-needed changes to financing mechanisms, as well as providing funding for resilience-building. This does not necessarily mean giving more money—indeed, in the

long term, it could save money. For example, one study in Kenya showed that resilience-building activities cost $1bn less on average each year than a delayed humanitarian response.[101] Given that humanitarian funding accounts for less than 10 per cent of global international aid, and lacks the required long-term timeframe, the majority of this money will have to come from development budgets.[102] So far, only a handful of donors have provided clear commitments on how they intend to increase the focus of their funding on resilience in the region (see Box 3).[103] Within the AGIR Sahel initiative, further details on the priorities and additional funding required for resilience are only likely to be agreed by the end of 2013.[104]

While longer-term resilience plans are being developed, donors should investigate interim solutions to ensure that proposed resilience-building measures are funded this year. Donors should also integrate innovative financing mechanisms more consistently within their responses to boost synergies between humanitarian and development interventions, and facilitate early interventions as well as timely responses. Mechanisms such as contingency funds (that allow for a margin of flexibility within programme response to adapt to changing circumstances) or crisis modifiers (that allow for emergency funds to be used within an ongoing development programme) have proven useful in ensuring that assistance can be adapted to beneficiaries' changing needs.

Box 3: USAID becomes first donor to issue programming guidance on resilience

In December 2012, USAID became the first donor to release policy and programme guidance on building resilience.[105] The guidance outlines a promising commitment to link short-term humanitarian response with longer-term development programming by creating joint planning cells, as well as making new investments based on an in-depth analysis of chronic vulnerability. In its first phase, the programme will focus on resilience needs in Burkina Faso and Niger— countries where USAID is already engaged in both development and emergency work, and where greater collaboration across these arms of work, with a focus on resilience, could deliver real dividends

4.3 STRENGTHENING NATIONAL AND LOCAL CAPACITY TO BUILD RESILIENCE

Successfully building resilience in the region will be dependent on the extent to which governments can develop national policies and, critically, equip institutions with the resources and technical expertise needed for implementation. Nationally and locally owned policies are required to bring about change at a sufficient scale and for the timescales needed to effectively build resilience (see Box 4 for one example).[106]

Box 4: The 3Ns initiative

The government of Niger's '3Ns' initiative ('*Les Nigériens Nourrissent les Nigériens*', which translates as 'Nigeriens feed Nigeriens') demonstrates how governments can develop plans that support resilience.[107] It integrates interventions across several key sectors, including food security, nutrition and water, into a single vision that forms part of the government's overall national development strategy. A commission has been set up to oversee the initiative, working closely with relevant ministries.

It is important that the political will demonstrated by the government is converted into results. The challenge is to ensure that the plan is rolled out at the local level, and that capacity at all levels is sufficient to enable timely implementation. The government should also ensure a greater focus on, and funding for, the specific resilience elements within the plan (including social protection, local food reserves, and early warning system).

Strong national leadership on resilience and strengthening capacity to deliver programmes and core public services at scale should be integral to efforts to promote good governance and develop greater accountability to citizens. In spite of persistent food insecurity, governments in the Sahel (with a few exceptions) have so far been reluctant to invest their limited but growing resources into key sectors such as agriculture and social protection. Even where there is relatively strong investment in agriculture, policies often support export crops managed by large businesses rather than small-scale food producers.

Efforts to raise the voice of poor and marginalised communities and civil society organisations working for greater social justice can play a pivotal role in delivering reform (see Box 5). They will be critical in determining whether governments succeed in effectively building resilience and responding to crises while prioritising the needs of the most vulnerable groups. Such approaches will form a central pillar of strategies for building resilience in the region, as well as working more closely with local authorities and NGOs to boost local ownership and capacity to deliver.

Box 5: Civil society monitoring for better food security policies

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During 2012, Oxfam helped to bring together civil society groups in six countries across the Sahel to monitor the extent to which West African governments had implemented their commitments in the Charter for Food Crisis Prevention and Management. National reports based on the information gathered highlighted strengths and weaknesses in food security analysis, co-ordination mechanisms, and government response plans, and were used to try and strengthen national performance.

In Niger, for example, civil society groups were requested to brief parliamentarians in the National Assembly, which led to a specific parliamentary group being established to monitor the implementation of the Charter's obligations in Niger. A regional synthesis report was presented to the FCPN, alongside calls to establish more regular and systemic monitoring, with civil society organisations continuing to play a key role.

'The leadership of our regional organisations must be recognised. These organisations must in return commit to mobilising their own resources to implement their policies and harmonise their interventions at all levels…. Nowhere in the world has resilience been achieved exclusively through development co-operation. That is why we are asking the co-operation agencies to develop an approach that supports our action, standing behind us and with us.'

Mamadou Cissokho, Roppa Honorary President and Civil Society Representative to AGIR Sahel[108]

Supporting national governments

International and regional organisations also have a key role to play in strengthening state institutional capacity at both national and local levels, and encouraging governments to actively seek civil society engagement.

Donors can do more to support and incentivise change through their long-term investments and their ways of working during crises. Recent experience in the region suggests that the international aid community has not yet established effective ways of working with fragile states.[109] If efforts to build resilience are to be successful, this must be addressed. Currently, the potential for progress is undermined by a vicious circle of inaction: where states lack capacity and donors decide not to invest in state structures, governance-related problems remain entrenched.

The donor community can take a first step towards escaping this negative cycle by changing the way they provide funding to national governments. In accordance with aid effectiveness principles,[110] providing resources via the state should be the preferred mechanism for disbursement of development funds, promoting greater national capacity and ownership. Any conditionalities imposed should be limited to criteria of accountability and the desired food security outcomes that assistance should be used to achieve. If such conditions are not yet in place, donors should be clear about the changes governments would need to make in order to qualify for this assistance— directly incentivising better governance.

Beyond providing an increasing proportion of aid via state budgets and structures, donors can also provide more consistent and generous support focused on building the capacity of local and national actors for effective food crisis management and prevention. They can also demonstrate their support for progressive policies and national leadership by providing generous financial backing when required (as in the case of the Niger National Development Plan, which received donor pledges of $4.8bn in November 2012).[111]

During a crisis response, the humanitarian principles of independence, impartiality and neutrality, and the need to provide assistance quickly to those who need it most, may prevent international organisations from working exclusively within state structures. However, with the right commitment, ways of working can nonetheless be adapted to support state capacity. Some innovative practices are already being explored. In Niger, a committee established under the National Food Crisis Management and Prevention Agency has successfully encouraged donors to provide more funding directly to the government. In interviews conducted for this report, the Nigerien government expressed satisfaction about the increased autonomy that the system has allowed, while donors felt confident in the degree of oversight they could exercise via the committee.[112] Such systems can provide a critical stepping stone as part of efforts to increase national government leadership.

UN agencies can also do more to ensure that ways of working support existing national capacity and systems. Since the 2012 response, teams from OCHA across the Sahel region have begun to shift their approach—for instance, adapting the annual calendar for UN appeals to accommodate new information from government harvest predictions, and examining ways in which the UN

cluster system[113] can be more supportive of national capacity.[114] Preparedness measures should also be designed to build on national systems, while enabling quicker and more efficient programme scale-up when a crisis response is required.

5 CONCLUSION

With 10 million people still threatened by hunger in the aftermath of the 2012 food crisis in the Sahel, and a growing consensus that humanitarian response alone will not break the cycle of crisis eroding any development gains, 2013 is a critical year for establishing and strengthening the foundations for resilience-building in the region. Lessons learned from the 2012 response highlight three areas in which the international community must work closely with national and regional partners to improve their collective performance:

1. Developing a deeper understanding of vulnerability as the basis for new programming approaches and working together to proactively respond to and mitigate risk;

2. reforming the aid architecture by breaking down the humanitarian development divide;

3. strengthening national capacity—including civil society—and promoting greater accountability for efforts to build resilience.

Governments, regional institutions, UN agencies and NGOs must work together to better support *recovery* now and begin making the additional investments necessary to strengthen the future *resilience* of communities across the Sahel. Donors must make immediate commitments to provide funding for both recovery and resilience, and all humanitarian actors must work together to overcome the structural challenges to finally deliver the change that is needed.

'What we learnt from repeated, massive humanitarian interventions in the region is: it is imperative to change the way we respond to the crises in the Sahel.'
UN Regional Humanitarian Coordinator, David Gressly[115]

RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop a deeper and shared understanding of resilience

• **National governments and ECOWAS** should demonstrate stronger political will to deliver pro-poor development strategies, committing to targeting and transferring resources to support the poorest and most vulnerable people, with the support of the international aid community.

• **All actors** must seek to develop a deeper understanding of what makes poor people more vulnerable to shocks and stresses and what builds their resilience, conducting gender- and child-sensitive analyses as a basis for developing appropriate pro-poor policy solutions and resilience measures. They should develop new programming approaches and public service provisions that are better targeted to the specific needs of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, such as children under five, women and pastoralists. The AGIR Sahel Framework should be used to establish greater political consensus and ensure that future national and regional policies are driven by those considerations.

- **Governments across the region** should work together with key regional actors to develop more effective food security analyses based on early warning systems that fully integrate understanding of risk and vulnerability. Specifically, they should:
  - continue to develop the Cadre Harmonisé as a standard region-wide basis for projections of food insecurity;
  - advocate and fundraise for the development of HEA baselines and outcome analysis across the region to assist better understanding of vulnerabilities, of needs in times of shock, and better response targeting.

Break down the humanitarian-development divide

- **Donors** should fast-track the development of resilience strategies and plans for more integrated approaches across the humanitarian-development continuum. These strategies and plans should:
  - support national resilience plans and actively seek to strengthen national and local capacities, including civil society;
  - integrate concepts of risk and vulnerability into funding decisions and programming, and include innovative funding mechanisms and support for key pro-resilience policies such as safety nets and food reserves;
  - set out plans to deliver internal change to fulfil these ambitions.

- **Agencies** seeking to address immediate needs and root causes of food and nutrition crises must review their current programming approaches in order to:
  - develop a single flexible programme that bridges the humanitarian-development divide and place concepts of risk and vulnerability at the heart of programmes, undertaking the organisational changes required to make this happen;
  - provide focused support to communities that fosters innovation, experimentation, adaptation to climate change and diversification of livelihoods;
  - mobilise civil society and affected communities to influence government decision-making, and hold duty-bearers to account.

- **The UN Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sahel** should seek to play an important role in efforts to mobilise the wider UN system to be proactive in supporting resilience. At a national level, the Humanitarian/Resident Coordinators should commit to working with national governments to convene all key actors—at all levels and across the humanitarian-development continuum—to create an effective platform from which to help build resilience.

Build national and local capacity to deliver resilience

- **Governments across the region** should work with others to develop resilience plans and frameworks that include a specific focus on:
  - developing programmes to support small-scale farmers and pastoralists—with goals of sustainability and long-term resilience;

- o seeking to overcome barriers that prevent women farmers benefiting from agricultural programmes;

- o establishing or scaling up social protection;

- o providing additional support to set up or reinforce local food reserves;

- o prioritising effective undernutrition prevention programmes and put in place integrated programmes that tackle its underlying causes.

- **Donors** should respect commitments made under the Paris and Accra Declarations on Aid Effectiveness, and actively seek appropriate ways of increasing aid that is disbursed through state budgets to reinforce national and local ownership and capacity.

- **UN agencies and international NGOs** should take stock of approaches used so far during emergency and development programmes to establish more effective measures for reinforcing capacity through long-term partnerships. They should also work together with national governments, local bodies and civil society groups to develop country preparedness plans for responding to future food crises, including steps to accelerate scale-up of the response.

- **OCHA** should seek to align its funding mechanisms with national response plans as far as possible and introduce multi-annual UN appeals as a standard tool to improve forward planning and predictability of humanitarian assistance. Additional national-level funding mechanisms, such as emergency response funds, should also be considered as a potential additional source of funding for local NGOs.

NOTES

Links last accessed March 2013 unless otherwise specified

[1] Malnutrition is used in more common terminology to refer to under nutrition. In this report, we chosen to use the term under nutrition, since manutrition can also refer to over nutrition or obesity. There are a number of different types of under nutrition: acute (severe or moderate), chronic, weight deficiency relative to age (underweight) and vitamin and mineral deficient.

2   IASC (2012) 'Plan de reponse face a la crise alimentaire et nutritionnelle au Sahel', http://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/CAP/2012_FSN_Sahel_Strategy_Paper_FR.pdf

3   OCHA (2012) Sahel Crisis: Funding Status as of 2 July 2012, as according to UN FTS http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/FundingUpdates%2004JUILLET2012.pdf

4   UNOCHA (2012) 'Humanitarian Actors request 1.6 billion dollars for harmonized response to the needs of Sahelian populations in 2013' http://reliefweb.int/report/mali/humanitarian-actors-request-16-billion-dollars-harmonized-response-needs-sahelian

5   OECD (2012) op. cit.

6   Countries affected included: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal.

7   UN (2012) 'Sahel Regional Strategy 2013', p.16 http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/SahelStrategy2013_Dec2012.pdf

8   UN (2011) 'The Millennium Development Goals Report 2011', New York: United Nations http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/11_MDG%20Report_EN.pdf (last accessed 3 December 2012)

9   Save the Children (2009), 'Understanding Household Economy in Rural Niger', p.96 http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/resources/online-library/understanding-household-economy-in-rural-niger

10 FEWS NET (n.d.) Household Economy Analysis (HEA) Framework http://www.fews.net/pages/livelihoods-HEA.aspx

11 Save the Children (2009), op. cit., p.20

12 Oxfam International (2010) 'Hunger in the Sahel: A permanent emergency?' Oxford: Oxfam International http://www.oxfam.org/en/policy/hunger-sahel-permanent-emergency

13 D. Hillier and B. Dempsey (2012) 'A Dangerous Delay: The cost of late response to early warnings in the 2011 drought in the Horn of Africa', Oxford: Oxfam International http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/a-dangerous-delay-the-cost-of-late-response-to-early-warnings-in-the-2011-droug-203389

14 APESS et al (2012) 'Food for Thought: A Civil Society Assessment on the State of Play of the Implementation of the Charter for Food Crisis Prevention and Management in the Sahel and West Africa', Oxford: Oxfam International, APESS (Association pour la Promotion de l'Elevage au Sahel et en Savane), CNCPRT (National Dialogue Council for the Rural Producers of Chad), CONGAD, Consortium Droit à l'Alimentation et Souveraineté Alimentaire, CSSA (Food Security Monitoring Committee in Mauritania), FOSC (CSO Forum of Mali), SPONG (Permanent Secretariat of Non-Governmental Organisations in Burkina Faso), ROPPA (Network of Peasant Organizations and Producers in West Africa) and Réseau Bilital Maroobé.

15 Food Crisis Prevention Network (2012) Compte rendu des travaux, 12–13 April 2012, http://www.oecd.org/fr/csao/evenements/50488663.pdf

16 PASISAT (Projet d'Appui a l'Amélioration du Système d'Information sur la Sécurité Alimentaire au Tchad) (2011), Bulletin Trimestriel Numéro 1, October

17 J-D. Crola (2012) 'Sahel markets under pressure', Oxford: Oxfam International http://www.oxfam.org/en/grow/policy/sahel-markets-under-pressure

18 P. Gubbels (2011) 'Escaping the Hunger Cycle: Pathways to Resilience in the Sahel', Sahel Working Group http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/escaping-the-hunger-cycle-pathways-to-resilience-in-the-sahel-146171. Assessing the 2010 Sahel response, Gubbels identifies seven areas for an improved future response. These include: (i) preventing, preparing and planning for better responses; (ii) adapting donor policies and practices; (iii) speeding up and improving humanitarian response; (iv) strengthening resilience and incomes; (v) scaling up nutrition programmes; (vi) strengthening capacity of regional and national institutions; and (vii) strengthening the capacity of civil society, local NGOs, local government and communities. Oxfam's 2012 report, 'A Dangerous Delay' (Hillier and Dempsey, 2012, op. cit.) has two areas of recommendation: (i) manage the risks, not the crisis; and (ii) earlier drought response, including national political leadership, more agile and flexible funding and better programming by the international aid community (including long-term development interventions adapted to the context, preventative humanitarian action and the internal systems to support these).

19 UNDP (2013) 'The Human Development Report 2013—The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World', p. 31 http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2013/download/

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21 Emergency Capacity Building (ECB) Project (2012) 'Niger communities say they will run out of food before next harvest, joint ECB / ACAPs study shows', 21 March http://www.ecbproject.org/news/latest-news-library/post/162-niger-communities-say-they-will-run-out-of-food-before-next-harvest-joint-ecb---acaps-study-shows

22 M. Marshall (2013) 'Humanitarian disaster blamed on climate change', New Scientist, 1 March www.newscientist.com/article/dn23229-humanitarian-disaster-blamed-on-climate-change.html

23   Agrhymet Regional Centre website http://www.agrhymet.ne/eng/index.html

24   Oxfam (2012) 'An internal note on climate change, drought and food insecurity in the Sahel', unpublished

25   European Commission (2012a) ECHO Factsheet: Sahel Food & Nutrition Crisis,
http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/sahel_en.pdf

26   IASC (2012) op. cit.

27   C. Baudot (2013) 'Mali's Conflict Refugees: Responding to a growing crisis', Oxfam Briefing Paper 167, Oxford: Oxfam
International http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/malis-conflict-refugees-responding-to-a-growing-crisis-266392

28   Interview conducted in framework of an Oxfam Assessment Mission to Ferrario and Damba camps and surrounding areas,
6-9 June 2012.

29   Global acute malnutrition (GAM) combines the percentage of children suffering from moderate acute malnutrition and those
suffering from severe acute malnutrition (SAM). See ACF, 'Types of acute malnutrition'
http://www.actionagainsthunger.org.uk/what-we-do/about-acute-malnutrition/types-of-acute-malnutrition/

30   According to the World Health Organization, more than 15 per cent of a population suffering from moderate acute
malnutrition, or more than 3 per cent from severe acute malnutrition, is considered as a critical or emergency threshold.

31   UN (2012) op. cit, p. 15

32   Oxfam GB (2012) 'Construire des Approches Sensibles au Genre pour Combattre la Crise Alimentaire et Soutenir la
Résilience dans le Sahel', unpublished working document

33   78.4% of female headed households in Bahr El Ghazal were in a situation of food insecurity, compared to just 44.8% for
male-headed households. Government of Chad (2011) 'Evaluation de la Securite Alimentaire des Ménages dans la Bande
Sahelienne Ouest du Tchad, Republique du Tchad, Ministere de l'Agriculture, VAM, PAM', p.12.

34   UN (2012) op. cit., p.10

35   UNICEF (2012), 'Situation Nutritionnelle dans la région', 28 February 2013,
http://wca.humanitarianresponse.info/fr/document/pr%C3%A9sentations-fsn-du-28-fevrier-2013

36   Oxfam reached just over 1 million people, Action Contre la Faim 300,000 people.

37   Gubbels (2011) op. cit.; Hillier and Dempsey (2012) op. cit.

38   Gubbels (2011) p. 39

39   Charter for Food Crisis Prevention and Management in the Sahel and West Africa
(http://www.oecd.org/swac/publications/41276585.pdf). The Charter was adopted by national governments, regional
organisations, financial and technical partners and civil society groups. It provides an important set of commitments to
measure performance.

40   'Le Niger sonne l'alarme sur la menace terroriste et l'insécurité alimentaire', Speech by President of Niger, 23 September
2011 http://www.un.org/apps/newsFr/storyF.asp?NewsID=26422&Cr=Niger&Cr1

41   Gubbels (2011) op. cit., p. 51. In response to the crisis in 2010, an international appeal for assistance in Niger was only
made in March 2010.

42   AllAfrica (2012) 'Sénégal: Macky Sall appelle à l'aide pour le monde rural', 3 April,
http://fr.allafrica.com/stories/201204040015.html

43   Comité de Suivi de la Securité Alimentaire Mauritanie (2012) Diagnostic rapide sur l'application de la Charte de prévention
et de gestion des crises alimentaires en Mauritanie, p. 8

44   Consortium sur le Droit à l'Alimentation (2012) 'Diagnostic rapide sur l'application de la Charte de prévention et de gestion
des crises alimentaires au Niger', p. 5

45   APESS et al (2012) op. cit.

46   ibid., p. 8

47   *ibid.*, p. 7

48   I. Diori (2012) 'Le consortium Droit à l'alimentation fait des recommandations au gouvernement', Alternative Niger, 24
August, http://www.alternativeniger.org/spip.php?article584

49   APESS et al (2012) op. cit., p. 10

50   For example, the 41st Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State & Government, which took place on
28-29 June in Côte d'Ivoire, did not prioritise discussion of the food crisis, even as it was reaching its peak. The final
communiqué from the meeting included just two paragraphs referencing food security, one on the crisis itself and the
second on the EU's AGIR Sahel initiative (http://www.emansion.gov.lr/doc/Final-Communique%20-%2041st-Ordinary-
Session-ECOWAS-Heads-of-State%20and-Government.pdf).

51   A regional response plan had been developed at the beginning of the year, prior to national appeals being developed and
finalised. While this provided an initial indication of funding required, in some cases it captured just 50 per cent of the final
needs. For example, for Burkina Faso, the regional response plan requested $47m, a figure that was subsequently revised
in the appeal to $85m. For Mali, the figures rose from $72m to $149m.

52   Interviews with NGO staff, September–November 2012

53   Interviews with national government officials, September–November 2012

54   Dispositif National de Prévention et de Gestion des Crises et Catastrophes (2012) 'Etat de mise en oeuvre des actions du
volet alimentaire du plan de soutien 2011-2012', 21 September

55   WFP (2012) 'Urgent call for united action in the Sahel region of West Africa', 15 February http://www.wfp.org/news/news-

release/urgent-call-united-action-inthe-sahel-region-west-africa

56 FEWS NET (2012), 'West Africa Food Security Outlook: January-September 2012', http://www.fews.net/docs/Publications/west_OL_2012_01_EN_final2.pdf

57 European Commission (2011) 'Looming hunger crisis in Sahel: European Commission acts now to save lives', press release, 18 November, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-11-1374_en.htm?locale=en

58 For a breakdown of early commitments, see USAID (2012) 'FactSheet No.1, Fiscal Year (FY) 2013: Sahel—Food Insecurity and Complex Emergency',

59 UN Financial Tracking Service, http://fts.unocha.org/

60 It is important to note that concerns have been raised about the degree to which the UN Financial Tracking Service accurately captures all funding flows. In the future, improvements should be made to ensure that better quality information is available. For the time being, it provides an adequate indicator for overall trends in funding for each crisis.

61 It is important to recognise that, in 2012, a much greater quantity of financial assistance (approximately double) was provided compared with 2010. This is in line with overall estimates of need, which in 2012 were approximately double those estimated for 2010.

62 OCHA (2012) Sahel Crisis: Funding Status as of 2nd July 2012, as according to UN FTS, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/FundingUpdates%2004JUILLET2012.pdf. According to the UN Financial Tracking Service, approximately $800m had already been contributed to the appeal, leaving a gap of $800m. However, additional commitments of $200m had already been made outside the UN appeal.

63 Hiller and Dempsey (2012) op. cit., p. 16

64 Author's interviews with donors and agencies, Dakar, October–November 2012

65 UN Financial Tracking Service, Sahel Crisis Funding Summary https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/pub?key=0AiHzO7bP7kUtdFFPQnc4TDdBcnRmVHU4Z1JRT3paQkE&single=true&gid=5&output=html (last accessed 3 December 2012)

66 UN (2012) 'Sahel Sector Performance Indicators—January to June 2012'

67 Agreement between SIDA and Oxfam International on support of a humanitarian rapid response mechanism for Africa, 1 April 2011 to 30 June 2012. See also Intermon Oxfam (2012) 'Crisis Alimentaria en el Sahel: Prevenir o curar', p. 13, http://www.intermonoxfam.org/sites/default/files/documentos/files/Informe_respuesta_cooperacion_espa%C3%B1ola_Sahel.pdf

68 For example, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) used an informal 'crisis modifier', using the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) to provide a new humanitarian dimension to a pre-existing USAID development programme in Senegal.

69 Additional information may also be made available over the course of the year, with some national governments and UN agencies intending to publish reports on the response.

70 Gubbels (2011) op. cit., p. 51

71 According the UN Preparedness Strategy prepared at the end of 2011, just over 512,000 children were treated for severe acute undernutrition during the 2010 response, compared to the 926,880 treated in 2012.These figures cover the same set of countries, with the exception of Gambia, which is only included in 2012 figures.

72 UN (2012) 'Sahel Regional Strategy 2013', p. 15

73 Author's interviews with UN officials, Chad and Niger, September–November 2012

74 Author's interviews with NGOs, September–November 2012

75 URD Resilience Workshop, 'La resilience: du concept global aux specificites saheliennes', Dakar, 26-27 February 2013.

76 FAO (2012) 'La crise alimentaire et nutritionnelle du Sahel : l'urgence d'appuyer la résilience des populations vulnérables. Cadre stratégique de réponse régionale. Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Gambie, Mali, Mauritanie, Niger, Sénégal et Tchad', p. 21, http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/sahel/docs/DocProg%20FAO%20SAHEL%20FR.pdf

77 Oxfam (2012) 'Construire des Approches Sensibles au Genre pour Combattre la Crise Alimentaire et Soutenir la Résilience dans le Sahel', p. 24, unpublished document.

78 R. Fuller (2012) 'Effectiveness Review: Livestock Commercialisation for Pastoralist Communities in North Dakoro, Niger', Oxford: Oxfam http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/effectiveness-review-livestock-commercialisation-for-pastoralist-communities-in-262466

79 F. Grünewald and J. Paul (2012) 'From Early Warning to Reinforcing Resilience: Lessons Learned from the 2011-2012 Sahel Response: A report for the IASC Principles', http://ochanet.unocha.org/p/Documents/Lesson%20Learning%20Review.%20Early%20Action%20and%20Resilience%20in%20the%20Sahel.pdf

80 Oxfam America (2012) 'Do Early Cash-Based Interventions in a Food Crisis Enhance Resilience? Experience from Niger', draft discussion paper

81 FAO-WFP (2012) 'Food Security and Humanitarian Implications in West Africa and the Sahel', Joint Note, June 2012 http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Joint%2520WFP_FAO_Note_June_2012-EN%2520%282%29.pdf. While it is difficult to be certain about the reasons for this,, and the reliability of the figures has been questioned, UN reports suggest that the reduction in the number of people affected resulted from prompt and effective early interventions by governments and partners.

82 The fact that nine countries in the region were affected by the crisis meant that some food had to be purchased beyond the region to prevent too much pressure on the local market.

83 IRIN (2012) 'Sahel : what went right in the crisis response?' 24 October http://www.irinnews.org/report/96632/SAHEL-What-went-right-in-the-crisis-response

84 APESS et al (2012) op. cit., p. 10

85 Interviews with NGO staff (September–November) provided a number of examples of lags between the signing of a funding contract and the delivery of assistance to beneficiaries. One example was given where an organisation took months to plan the response, including conducting market assessments and targeting—which could have all been done before the final green light on funding was given. In other cases, confusion about donor requirements and the possibility of backdating agreements meant that programmes were only launched once funding had been fully secured.

86 UN (2012) 'Sahel Regional Strategy 2013', p. 6

87 Afrique Verte (2013) 'Point sur la situation alimentaire au Sahel: Suivi de Campagne' no. 143, March

88 European Commission (2012a) op cit.

89 Food Security and Nutrition Working Group, Donor Alert—Sahel Summit, 20 February 2013

90 $403 million provided of the $1,698m requested. OCHA (2013) 'Sahel Crisis 2013: Funding status as of 05 April 2013', http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sahel%20Funding%20Status%205%20April%202013.pdf

91 Definition agreed at the December 2012 meeting of the AGIR Sahel initiative in Ouagadougou, http://www.oecd.org/swac/topics/agir.htm

92 OECD (2012) 'Launching Ceremony of AGIR Sahel-West Africa', Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, 4-8 December, http://www.oecd.org/site/sahelandwestafricaweek2012/agirlaunchingceremony.htm

93 IASC (2012) 'Response Plan for a Food Security and Nutrition Crisis in the Sahel', Inter-Agency Standing Committee http://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/CAP/2012_FSN_Sahel_Strategy_Paper_FR.pdf

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97 Oxfam et al (2012) 'Food Crisis in the Sahel: Five steps to break the hunger cycle in 2012', Joint Agency Issue Briefing, p. 7, Oxfam International http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/ib-food-crisis-sahel-31052012-en.pdf

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99 OECD (2012) 'Launching Ceremony of AGIR Sahel-West Africa', op. cit.

100 Interviews with NGOs and donors, December 2012

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102 Global Humanitarian Assistance (n.d.) Datastore, http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/data-guides/datastore

103 At the December meeting of AGIR Sahel, The European Union announced it would be contributing 500m euros for resilience in the Sahel over three years (2012-2014). USAID was expected to announce precise funding commitments for resilience in Burkina Faso and Niger in April 2013.

104 Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative—Sahel and West Africa (AGIR) Joint Statement, Ouagadougou 6 December 2013, http://www.oecd.org/swac/topics/EN_Declaration_Ouagadougou_CD.pdf, p.4

    USAID, 'Resilience Week', http://transition.usaid.gov/resilience/

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107 Le Hub Rural (n.d.) 'L'initiative 3 N (« les Nigériens nourrissent les Nigériens »): un engagement politique pour mettre les Nigériens à l'abri de la famine et de la soif', http://www.hubrural.org/L-initiative-3-N-les-Nigeriens.html

108 OECD (2012) op. cit.

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110 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005), http://www.unrol.org/files/34428351.pdf; Accra Agenda for Action (2008), http://siteresources.worldbank.org/ACCRAEXT/Resources/4700790-1217425866038/AAA-4-SEPTEMBER-FINAL-16h00.pdf

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113 UNOCHA (n.d.) 'Cluster Coordination', United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, http://www.unocha.org/what-we-do/coordination-tools/cluster-coordination

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