

External Evaluation

ACF International West Africa Regional Office

Funded by ACF International

By Henri Leturque - iram

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## Accronyms used

ACHU	Africa Conflict and Humanitarian Unit
ACF	Action Contre la Faim   ACF International
AFDACF	Agence Française de Developement
BFU	Budget Follow Up
CALP	Cash Learning Partnership
CO	Country Office
CILSS	Comité Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Sècheresse au Sahel
CLTS	Community Led Total Sanitaion
DFID	UK Department for International Development
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Aid & Civil Protection Office
ECOWAS	Economic Community Of West African States
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organistion
FSNWG	Food Seurity and Nutrition Working Group
HEA	Household Economy Analysis
HQ	Head Quarter
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committe
IEC	ACF international Executive Committee
MOU	Memorandum Of Understanding
OFDA	Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance
OCHA	Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
RECA	<i>Regional Emergency Cluster Advisor</i>
SIDA	<i>Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency</i>
SQUEAC	Semi-Quantitative Evaluation of Access and Coverage
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition
TA	Technical Assistant
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WAHRF	West Africa Humanitarian Relief Fund
WARO	West Africa Regional Office
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Program

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# 1 Executive Summary

## Key findings

ACF has long been thinking about opening regional offices. First discussions started around relevance to open a regional logistics office in Nairobi in the mid 2000's, then about a regional liaison office in Bangkok. Rather than a matured strategic move, the WARO was initiated as a management unit for a DFID funded regional emergency program. Besides a regional emergency fund, WAHRF included a "program window" that ACF utilised to fund part of the WARO cost as well as some specific capacity building activities for its staff in the region.

A bit more than 3 years after the opening of the WARO, the balance is clearly positive. The WARO has been an effective tool to enhance strategic programming at regional level, is has also been a powerful vehicle to better represent ACF in regional humanitarian forums. In terms of fundraising, it has strengthened contacts with Dakar based donors, allowed to consolidate relationships with DFID in the region, and facilitated the work with new partners such as SIDA and AFD. Overall regional funding figures have much progressed since the WARO has open, but significantly less than funds availability in the region. This is likely to be related to limited absorption capacities by country offices rather than by lack of proactive fundraising.

More nuanced is WARO's role in supporting the implementation of multi-country grants. Tight schedules, sometimes too directive attitude by WARO staff and too limited consultation at program design stage, understaffing (esp. admin) in the WARO, unclear roles and responsibilities of the WARO, different ways of working in different HQ and for different donors, as well as junior staff or new to ACF, and finally a representative gap at a critical time have contributed to create confusion, fuel tensions, and at the end generate inefficiencies.

Finally, WARO's potential in enhancing quality, standardisation and capitalisation, has been underexploited, possibly because too much efforts and energy have been invested in managing or supervising operational project implementation, sometimes responding to country office support requests.

Clearly WARO's role in regional strategic development advocacy, and fundraising should be promoted. Most important points of tension are about the priority to be given to multi country grants, the type of multi – country grants to be prioritized, the role of the WARO in supporting project implementation, quality, standardisation and capitalisation, as well has the need to be involved in the project support and M&E to deliver on quality promotion.

## Recommendations

### 1 – Adopt a "strategic developments" office model

WARO's role has evolved relatively opportunistically, starting as a program coordination unit, developing advocacy and fund raising activities, and seizing opportunities to manage new multi-counties grants. In response to a donor request, the WARO is now even providing technical support to specific country projects, although this new role has not been formally validated by the WARO governance structure.

**Recommendation 1:** ACF needs to make a strategic choice about WARO's role, communicate it internally and externally, and manage opportunities accordingly.

Having a third party involved in the formulation and management of emergency projects is not desirable. Trying to formulate procedures that will improve the communications and relationships in emergencies will

marginally contribute to simplify the complexity of the problem. Multi-country projects in emergencies should be formulated as a last resort option rather than as a strategic choice.

**Recommendation 2:** Our first recommendation in terms of strategic choice is that the WARO should move away from today's grey zone, either trying to reduce its involvement in the management of regional programs as much as possible to avoid confusion, or delegating full operational responsibilities to the regional level.

A regional operations desk is not a model to be dismissed too quickly in the region. It could clearly be relevant for different reasons, first of which allowing country offices in the region to benefit from a wider spectrum of ACF strengths, which seems needed as ACF growth in the region has been relatively limited compared to fund availability

**Recommendation 3:** carefully consider delegating more operational responsibilities to a regional office to allow for unified support to be provided to country offices in the region.

In the short term, the only practical option is to go for the "Regional Strategic office". This is not a move to cut WARO responsibilities, but beyond strategic development, advocacy and donor liaison, to more effectively focus some of its efforts on quality, learning, and promotion of harmonisation through capacity building.

**Recommendation 4:** In the short term, go for the **strategic developments office** model, focused around below mandate and short term priorities:

- **Mandate:** Regional strategic development, advocacy, learning and capitalisation, and regional emergencies response facilitation.
- **Priority 1:** Seek funding for learning and operational research multi-country projects to be managed by the WARO, in line with ACF technical and advocacy priorities.
- **Priority 2:** Reinforce ACF own analysis of regional trends, and be able to propose and update ACF understanding of regional context.
- **Priority 3:** Formalise WARO role for emergencies in the region (Donor liaison, regional level advocacy, communication); representative to formally sit in ACF EMS executive team when an emergency strikes in the region;

## 2 - Adjustments required to make the most of the "strategic developments" office model

Focus and nurture strategic program development opportunities:

**Recommendation 5:** Limit numbers of multi-country grants for **emergency projects**, reduce WARO role to reporting consolidation and donor liaison, and concentrate on identifying and responding to thematic regional opportunities.

- Multi-country grants for emergency projects to be considered as last resort option to accommodate specific donors (DFID, SIDA).
- Together with COs and ACF technical line departments (including advocacy), develop a portfolio of regional thematic concepts to be turned into regional programs, and seek partners and financial partners.

Build an effective governance system:

**Recommendation 6:** Reform the WARO governance along the following lines:

- Line management of WARO representative = 1 Operations director (UK), in consultation with others.
- Larger steering committee (including senior technical advisors, senior advocacy) meeting twice a year, chaired by Ops Director, managed by WARO rep, and focused on strategic advising (e.g. regional strategy, yearly action plan, governance reforms...).
- Better **indicators** to review performance (see section 0 for specific recommendations).
- Performance review **process**: Line managing Ops director presenting performance to other Ops and Tech Directors on yearly basis.

Role, responsibilities and procedures:

**Recommendation 7:** Define and communicate roles, responsibilities and procedures adapted to ACF priorities.

- **Formulate** and **communicate** HQs/WARO/COs roles, responsibilities for identification, formulation, technical support and evaluation of **thematic projects**.
- **WARO rep to be systematically invited to ACF EMS** when an emergency strikes in the region.
- **Formulate** and **communicate** ways of working to accommodate partners that will want to keep funding multi-country operational projects, seeking a minimal involvement of the WARO (reporting consolidation, donor liaison).

Define and implement an HR strategy:

**Recommendation 8:** adapt HR strategy to WARO role.

- Seek funding for priority positions (see below),
- Senior staff, working under senior technical advisors backstopping,
- Secure funding for family posting for all positions,
- 2 years contracts, with fundraising objectives attached to each senior technical staff.
- National position for reporting coordinator.



## **2 WARO background**

### ***2.1 Dakar becoming a humanitarian hub***

Dakar recently became a humanitarian hub. For example, ECHO opened a regional office in 2005. Two main factors are behind this new function being centralised in Dakar: first, West Africa and the Sahel in particular is getting more and more heavily supported by humanitarian funding, due to political instability growing in the region, and seemingly growing fragility to recurrent climatic hazards; and secondly because most agencies decided to leave Abidjan, becoming a too risky place to setup a regional hub.

Until now, concentration of humanitarian decision makers in Dakar is important, primarily because donor agencies are not very well represented in capitals of the region. With more and more humanitarian funds being spent in the region, donors are progressively opening national delegations. Yet, smaller agencies (SIDA, DFID) are not even permanently represented in Dakar.

### ***2.2 Born as a program management unit***

ACF has long been thinking about opening regional offices. First discussions started around relevance to open a regional logistics office in Nairobi in the mid 2000's, then about a regional liaison office in Bangkok. At that time a WARO was definitely not on the radar, and Dakar was still not an important hub for humanitarian agencies.

Rather than a matured strategic move, the WARO was initiated by an opportunity: the ACHU unit in DFID wanted to pilot an emergency response fund mechanism to be provided to NGOs with large coverage in the West Africa region. ACF being one of the agencies with the largest coverage in the region, the UK office could negotiate ACF participation in this mechanism. Besides a regional emergency fund, WAHRF included a "program window" that ACF utilised to fund part of the WARO cost as well as some specific capacity building activities for its staff in the region.

The WAHRF ended in June 2011, but by that time the potential for WARO to contribute to ACF development in the region was clear. ACF-F and ACF-E in particular, the two most important operational offices in the region were ready to keep funding the WARO.

### ***2.3 Major Development since 2009***

WARO has largely evolved since its opening as the WARHF coordination unit. This section briefly presents major strategic, programmatic and human resources changes. A timeline of WARO key developments is represented in Figure 1.

#### ***2.3.1 Strategic orientations***

Although there was a clear expectation that Dakar was to open networking and fundraising opportunities, there were no precise strategic orientations given to the WARO representative when she started. The message was "tell us how a regional office could best had value to ACF work in the region"? The first representative clearly modelled the WARO at its image, yet, 2 formal strategic documents have been produced though extensive consultation since 2009:

- A regional strategy paper, which formulates ACF programmatic priorities in the region.

- A memorandum of understanding among ACF HQ involved in the WARO project (France, Spain, UK and US), specifying WARO principles, mandate and responsibilities and obligations of all parties.

In the summer 2012, all country directors and all key HQ staff involved met to reflect about WARO’s working procedures and future positioning. And finally, the new representative, soon after she came in produced an internal guidance document about working procedures and responsibilities.

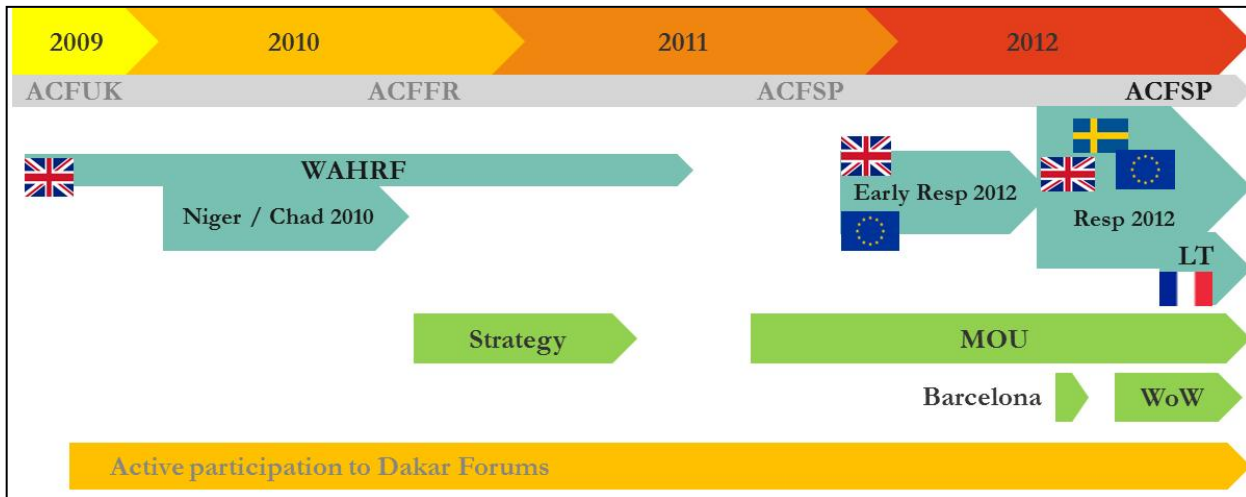
### 2.3.2 Programs

WAHRF implementation lasted for about 2 years, and a large share of DFID resources were spend for the Niger/Chad pastoral crisis in 2009/2010. Once the WAHRF was completed, the WARO focused on the implementation of a few small-scale capacity building or technical development projects. It is only with the 2012 Sahel crisis that the WARO has coordinated large operational projects again: a ECHO funded project, a DFID funded project (and extension) and a SIDA funded project. In 2012 again, the WARO secured a 3 years AFD funded project for ACF to strengthen its nutritional activities in 3 counties as well as to develop nutrition related advocacy activities in the region and in the same 3 countries.

### 2.3.3 Staff

The WARO started as a small team, a representative, a program coordinator in charge of the WAHRF execution and a logistician and administrator to support the office development process. By late 2011, when the WAHRF was over, the representative worked on her own for about 6 months. 2012 has seen major changes and upscale in the WARO HR structure: the representative, the program coordinator, and assistant program coordinator have changed; the admin coordinator position has been resumed (no dedicated admin coordinator from mid-2011 to mid-2012), an assistant admin position has been open, and finally nutrition and advocacy advisors positions have been created. Two personnel, working on cross agencies projects are hosted by the WARO (RECA WASH specialist and CALP regional coordinator).

Figure 1: WARO key developments





## 2.4 Memorandum of Understanding

After the year of strategic development in 2011, 2012 was a year of institutional development, with the formulation of a memorandum of understanding sealing commitments from involved HQs (France, Spain, UK, and US), and specifying WARO principles, mandate, and responsibilities. Below Box 1 presents the main policy elements of the MOU. Validation of the MOU took quite a bit of time (more than a year) as many people had to be involved in the four HQs. One of the burning questions has been to find an agreement on cost sharing.

### Box 1: WARO MOU principles and mandate

#### Principles

**ACF coordination and cooperation:** the ACF West Africa Regional Strategy represents a common frame for interventions. The Parties are committed to support the implementation of this strategy and the establishment of a common approach between ACF country offices.

**Scaling-Up:** WARO is a tool to increase the number of beneficiaries, programmes, country offices funding capacities and ACF positioning in the region. It makes it possible to balance our intervention, particularly for countries which are facing funding shortages or lack of donor interest. It helps ACF become an essential partner and leader in fighting against under-nutrition in West Africa.

**Cost Efficiency:** WARO is not a third administrative structure between Country Offices and HQs. The essential structure of WARO is maintained light and positions related to technical expertise are covered through project funding. The Parties are engaged to cover this essential structure on their own funds if external sources are not available.

**Accountability:** WARO focuses on what is needed for the regional vision and provides a framework for identifying and acting on opportunities as well as managing risk and compliance; WARO engages with the parties, fully identifies and understands the sustainability issues that will have an impact on its performance, and then uses this understanding to develop responsible business strategies and performance objectives<sup>1</sup>. The Parties commit to supporting the strategy, performance, and legitimacy of the partnership within the WARO governance and management frame.

#### Mandate

**Representation, Advocacy and Networking at regional level (donors & stakeholders):** WARO has developed a regional advocacy strategy (2011-2015) which positions ACF strongly in the region, in relation to each country in West Africa & the Sahel and globally. WARO's advocacy work is implemented in coordination with the ACF international advocacy work, and with the support of Advocacy Advisors. WARO's positioning is enabled through capitalization, and evidence building (monitoring and evaluation).

**Quality, Standardisation and Capitalisation:** the West Africa regional strategy, made on a participatory basis (both HQ and Country Offices) represents a common frame for interventions. This tool should make possible a common approach amongst ACF country offices and monitoring regional trends. Those standard interventions have proved its effectiveness and are impact driven.

**Fundraising:** the West Africa regional strategy represents a common frame for interventions and scaling-up for each country office, as well as a common frame to develop fundraising with traditional and non-traditional donors at national, regional and international level. A regional projects portfolio is developed to serve fundraising efforts at all levels

#### **Multi-country grant management:**

The WARO is fully responsible for the management of multi country grants (i.e. grants comprising activities in more than one country/mission). The WARO will take a proactive approach to identifying grant opportunities, developing proposals, reporting, monitoring progress of grant implementation, capitalising and ensuring the coordinated information flow amongst relevant missions and HQs.

The signature of multi country grants, for donors to which one of the ACF HQs is the prime lead is retained by the correspondent HQ (e.g. DFID, OFDA, CIDA, etc). In that case, the latter is responsible for ensuring the respect and compliance of all the contractual obligations with the donor, in coordination with WARO, which is in charge of providing global consolidation of all duly validated data.

...

The technical advice linked to projects remains under the functional lines defined by the relevant HQ. This applies to ACF's typical technical domains - nutrition, food security, WASH, care practices - and also to advocacy, evaluation, learning and accountability, disaster risk management.

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<sup>1</sup> Performance indicator frame in Annex 2

## 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Objectives of the Evaluation

The evaluation is not a typical programme appraisal but the review of an institutional setup. Hence classical DAC evaluation questions are not fully relevant, and terms of reference for this evaluation have been developed a list of 3 specific questions as well as 5 themes to be covered. Under these 5 themes, ToRs (see Annex 6.3) details a list of specific evaluative questions.

#### Objectives:

1. To assess the added value of having an ACF regional structure in West Africa.
2. To review the experiences (positive and negative) of WARO since it's founding.
3. To provide strategic and operational recommendations for the future of WARO.

#### Themes to be covered:

- ACF West Africa Strategy
- Fundraising
- Advocacy
- Program coordination and quality
- Management

### 3.2 Methodology

This evaluation has been conducted in about 21 days, including 11 days spent in Dakar, where most interviews have been conducted.

**Semi-structured interviews** with a set of key informants (see Annex 6.1 for complete list)

- WARO staff interviews (6 WARO staff +2 ex Representative and ex Programme-Coordinator)
- Interviews with staff at ACF missions in West Africa (8 Country Directors)
- HQ (Paris, London, Madrid and New York) (17 HQ staff)
- UN agencies (UNICEF, FAO, WFP, OCHA) (4 people)
- Donors (ECHO, USAID, DFID) (3 people)
- Other INGOs (Oxfam so far) (1 person)

**Review of internal and external documentation** (see Annex 6.2 for complete list)

- Secondary information: programme documentation, BFUs, MOU, strategic documentation, meetings minutes, Partner information (strategies, funding figures), and evaluation reports....

**Debriefing and feedback** from WARO team, IEC, OPs directors, Steering Committee members and ACF-E involved in WARO support.

**Limitations:** it would have been useful to meet more NGO partners represented in Dakar, but most of them were busy with the Mali emergency.

## 4 Findings and Discussion

### 4.1 ACF West Africa Strategy

#### 4.1.1 A relevant document

ACF 2011-2015 West Africa Regional Strategy: proposes a very relevant and coherent vision and set of programmatic priorities.

Indeed, the regional strategy clearly identifies one key issue to address (unacceptable levels of both chronic and acute undernutrition in the region), is well informed about the overall context (although undernutrition isn't yet satisfactorily addressed by development and humanitarian policies in the region, a policy movement has started), and identifies the value added of working at regional level. The strategy presents a coherent vision versus the humanitarian context in the region, but it also resonates with key partner's visions and strategies (see also Table 1 for a correspondence between ACF West Africa strategic orientations, key partners' strategic frameworks and ACF ISP):

- **ECHO** – In the Sahel region, ECHO has consistently given high priority to treatment and prevention of undernutrition for the last 5 years or more. ECHO has also consistently considered LRRD as a priority in the region, now turning into the *Resilience* agenda, and coherent with Aim2 of ACF strategy in the region. ECHO is also heavily involved in advocacy in the Sahel, especially on two issues: pushing the SUN agenda to be rolled out in the region, and for National and Regional (ECOWAS) food security policies to become more nutrition sensitive, as well as pushing for more evidence based targeting strategies of relief operations, pushing in particular for the HEA methodology to be more widely used. Finally, ECHO mandate is naturally focused on emergency response. All in all, ECHO and ACF strategic priorities in the region are extremely well aligned.
- **OFDA** – USAID Joint Planning Cell (OFDA and Food for Peace joint planning process) strongly focus on Resilience, with 3 key pillars: Enhancing growth and agriculture productivity, strengthening institutions and improving governance, and improving people's health and nutrition status. Although not formulated with the same words, USAID vision is close to that of ACF, putting risks at the heart of regional challenges. Beyond the Regional Strategy, ACF has worked on the formulation of an ACF resilience vision for the Sahel.
- **UN** – The joint UN humanitarian strategy for the Sahel in 2013 is heavy focused reducing mortality through nutrition, health and food security interventions, as well as strengthening livelihoods to prevent future crises. Again, this vision is quite closely aligned with that proposed by ACF in the region.

**Table 1: ACF West Africa strategic orientations versus those of key stakeholders**

<p><b>ACF</b> ACF WA strategy Priority 1: Tackle systematic peaks of nutritional vulnerability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “In 2013, DG ECHO will continue to focus on achieving a sustainable reduction of undernutrition-related mortality among children under five in the Sahel.”</li> <li>• ECHO: Operations to be funded under Pillar 1 will include the identification and treatment of the still massive caseload of severely malnourished children, measures to improve access to basic health care, measures to improve the stock pipelines for essential food, health and nutrition products.</li> <li>• Improve Health and Nutrition status is <b>USAID</b> third priority pillar in the region. Past emergency caseload, vulnerability and nutrition prevalence are the 3 top criteria for <b>USAID</b> geographic targeting.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>UN Strategic Goal #2:</b> To reduce mortality and permanent damage caused by acute undernutrition through integrated interventions in nutrition, health, water, hygiene, sanitation and behavioural changes.</li> <li>• ISP Aim1: increase our impact on acute undernutrition, curatively and preventively, especially in young children</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>ACFACF WA Strategy</b> Priority 2: Reduce Structural vulnerability to under nutrition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ...measures to strengthen family resilience mechanisms through livelihood support and food and cash assistance and the promotion of seasonal social safety nets (<b>ECHO</b>)</li> <li>• Building Resilience as <b>USAID</b> joint Planning Cell Priority for the Sahel.</li> <li>• <b>UN Strategic Goal #1:</b> Provide necessary support to households suffering from a deficit in means of survival and substance.</li> <li>• ISP Aim2: respond to, and prevent humanitarian crises, address vulnerability and reinforce longer term resilience to food, water and nutritional crises</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
<p><b>ACF WA Strategy:</b> Human Resources (As and approach under priority 1)- Capacity Building for National Structures and PartnersISP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DG <b>ECHO's</b> strategy in the Sahel over the past 5 years is specifically focused on LRRD and the mainstreaming of food and nutrition security into development planning and government action.</li> <li>•</li> <li>• Aim 3: develop partnerships with local, national and international stakeholders to increase the number of people we assist and promote sustainability</li> </ul>
<p><b>ACF WA Strategy</b> Priority 3: Improve capacity to respond to emergency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clearly in <b>ECHO</b> and <b>OFDA</b> mandates although not formally stated as an objective in their regional strategy documentation.</li> <li>• <b>ACFISP</b> Aim 4: build our capacity to ensure effective and efficient responses to humanitarian crises</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ACF WA strategy</b> Priority 4: Advocacy for Community and government ownership and commitment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ECHO:</b> Advocacy and measures to improve the knowledge base to strengthen early warning and to promote the take up of food and nutrition security including more support to the health sector in a permanent and sustainable way in Sahel government policy planning and the priority areas of action for development partners.</li> <li>• ISP Aim5: maximize our pre-eminence as an advocate and reference source on hunger and undernutrition</li> </ul>

Clearly, ACF strategic document has two major strengths. First, it is broad enough to encompass key stakeholders priorities. Yet, at the same time, it focuses quite strongly on prevention and treatment of acute undernutrition, playing on ACF strength, value added, and trademark.

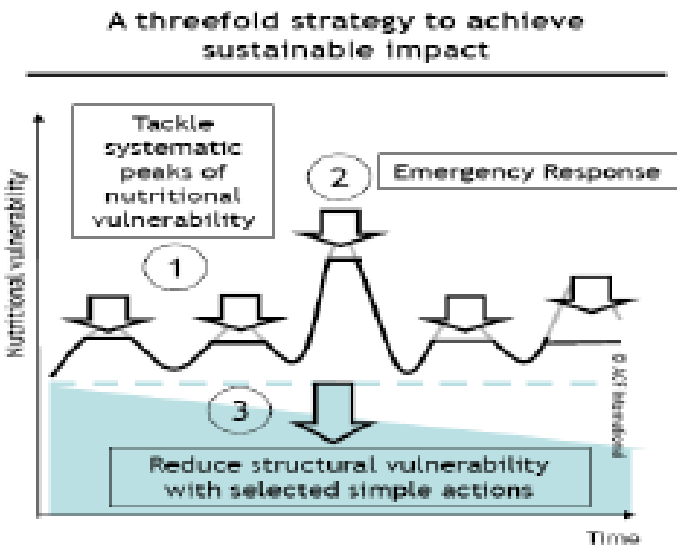
#### 4.1.2 Proving useful for ACF in the Region

Not surprisingly, most ACF country strategies have strong focus on (1) acute undernutrition treatment and prevention, and (2) disaster risk management and preparedness. These are two priorities of the regional strategy. It wasn't possible for the evaluation to conclude whether this alignment is was generated by design (because both country strategies and national strategies respond to naturally related issues, and are based on a common frame – ACF strategy), or if the regional strategic process had a specific influence on national strategic processes.

Yet, most country Directors found the regional strategy useful. As much as the regional strategic framework (left column Table 1), the graphic representation of ACF strategy and the differentiation between seasonal vulnerability and recurrent emergencies, works as an appealing picture of ACF vision in the region. This original frame (Figure 2), yet encompassing ACF overall strategic framework, is largely seen as a useful tool.

Some Sahel countries reported to have used it to inform their own strategic thinking process. The WARO has regularly used it for communication and representation purposes. ACF strategic document wasn't really identified by its regular partners, but ACF strong focus on undernutrition in the region was identified as strength to preserve.

**Figure 2: ACF West Africa strategic priorities**



Source: ACF West Africa regional strategy

Beyond 2012 emergency response projects, a series of concepts for regional projects in line with the regional strategy have been developed in 2011 around technical priorities (CLTS, SQUEAC, Nutrition curriculums...). Securing AFD funds to support the implementation of an advocacy strategy at regional level and in 3 countries of the region has been a significant achievement in terms of fundraising for thematic regional programming.

On another level, in terms of strategic development, the WARO has offered a useful platform for ACF-E to open a country Office in Senegal, negotiating funds for a first significant grant, and offering administrative support for the very first steps. In the future, if ACF was to aim at opening new country offices in the region, the WARO team would be well positioned to support preliminary analysis.

### 4.1.3 A useful process

The regional strategy formulation that took place early 2011 has also been really useful as a process.

- Sharing strategic vision across countries of the region,
- Getting country offices to better know each other, and building a “regional team spirit” across the region,
- Getting the WARO steering committee and other HQ representative to get a better understanding and overview of ACF operations and analysis throughout the region,
- Identifying joint priorities and possibilities for programmatic synergies.

Resources and time invested to turn the important quantity of information and analysis shared by ACF country offices from the region into a relatively focused and well-presented document have been well spent. The quality of the output was not only important to use it externally, but also to convince country offices that

the process had been worth the investment and therefore to demonstrate the value added of the WARO in terms of strategic development support.

The IEC reviewed the regional strategic plan and provided to constructive feedback. Having the IEC back up for such a process was not only important to guide strategic thinking in the region, but also to boost the WARO legitimacy within the ACF network.

#### ***4.1.4 Some limitations***

No doubt the regional strategic development has been a positive achievement by the WARO, yet, a number of ACF staff see room for improvement. Here are some of the most pressing issues to consider.

##### **How to measure progress and evaluate performance?**

The Regional strategy proposes a vision, details strategic orientations, list priority actions, and defines responsibilities between Country, Regional and HQ levels, yet it doesn't really propose an approach to measure progress against stated objectives. The WARO was specified as responsible for coordinating regional efforts on impact measurement. Most ACF staff interviewed on that topic considers that Regional targets and indicators would be relevant. But formulating a performance framework for ACF at regional level isn't an easy challenge! The ACF MOU proposes WARO performance review indicators, but this is likely to be different from what is required to evaluate progress towards the implementation of an operational regional strategy. It is always possible to formulate indicators, often more difficult to inform them, but in that case, the most sticky question would probably be about responsibility for results. Who should be accountable for the implementation of the West Africa Regional Strategy: the WARO, country offices or ACF HQs supporting operations in the region? Probably all, but for a performance framework to be operational, it will be important to clearly distinguish each level responsibilities.

##### **Mixed progress on emergency preparedness and response**

As specified in section 2.2 of the Regional Strategy, ACF ambition in terms of emergency is to "Leverage ACF's Rapid Response and Emergency Preparedness Operations and Mechanisms" to "to allow for additional capacity to be deployed at the offset of emergencies".

The 2012 Sahel crisis as well as the on-going Mali conflict crisis has highlighted some challenges for ACF to be able to meet this objective in the region. Emergency programs in response to the Sahel crisis have mostly been implemented late (mitigation response planned for the first three months of 2012 were effectively implemented around June/July, and most second phase projects are running behind schedule – see section 4.5.2). Several country offices are currently working on contingency planning for the Mali conflict, 3 weeks after the intervention of the French troops.

In emergencies, the role of the WARO has been largely focused on (1) communication from and towards Dakar forums through to ACF (country offices and HQs), (2) fund raising, (3) coordination and contribution to joint diagnostic and response plan (through IASC and Dakar working groups). Although the WARO is working at the interface between Dakar regional forums, country offices, and supporting HQs, its mandate is not to support country offices emergency preparedness and response capacities. The challenge for the WARO is how to best utilize its unique position to help addressing constraints to country offices emergency preparedness and response capacities without overstepping its mandate.



## **Strategy not fully relevant to coastal countries**

One of the repeated criticisms about the 2011-2015 Regional strategy is that it is almost solely focused on the Sahel context, which limits the value added of the document to coastal country offices in particular.

There are a number of reasons behind this Sahel focus: Dakar forums are largely focused on Sahel countries, policy debates in the region are traditionally disconnected between Francophone and Anglophone countries, the Sahel context is complex enough so it was already a great achievement to produce a strategy relevant to the whole Sahel band.

The fact that this issue needs to be addressed is well identified. However, the challenge is *how* to address it. A strategic vision relevant to the whole zone might become too generic to be operational? Having two strategic visions supported by the same office might be difficult to communicate? One of the issues is how to access and participate to some of the Accra based forums where “Coastal” and “Anglophone” policies issues tend to be debated.

Nigeria is a special case. Nigeria policy debates tend to be very disconnected from that of Sahel countries for several obvious reasons (e.g. it is Anglophone, has resources, and is largely seen as a threat by many Sahel countries). However, northern Nigeria and southern Niger contexts are very much interconnected and share important similarities. There is a lot of potential for cross border exchanges and collaborations.

## **Regional data gathering and analysis for further strategic planning efforts**

Although the WARO has been able to facilitate a rich and inspiring strategic exercise in 2011, there are no systems in place so this vision can be regularly challenged and renewed. Strategic planning workshop can be organized regularly to update ACF vision in the region, but what is missing is a capacity for ACF to perform its own regional level analyses.

## **4.2 Fundraising**

### **4.2.1 *A proactive management of fundraising***

#### **Despite limited dedicated resources, a large number of thematic proposals prepared and submitted since 2010**

While the program coordinator was in charge of supporting the WAHRF execution, raising funds to develop value-adding activities by the WARO was a priority for the representative. A number of thematic proposals have been initiated since 2010, some of which have been funded (Capitalization on Gardens of Health and Nutrition, Nutrition Champion Scheme, Joint workshop FS-NUT ACF/FAO/REACH, Media training UNICEF, CALP regional Coordinator, RECA ECHO CARE Consortium), others are still in draft form (Integration SA/Nutrition), but information about these proposals has not been well transmitted between the former and the new representative, and as a consequence, a few seem to have been abandoned (capacity building – curriculum development, CLTS regional) Current proposals in the pipeline are: (i) a resilience draft proposal developed by the ACF international DRR advisor (needs to be tailored to West Africa) (ii) Gardens for Health regional proposal (iii) GIS-based pastoral EWS.

Yet, these projects are all relatively small in financial terms, and cover a very limited share of the WARO structural costs. With the WAHRF ending in 2011, the IEC clearly indicated to the WARO representative that one of her key priorities should be to raise funds for new multicounty projects, with the dual objective to contribute to scale up ACF footprint in the region and generate overhead to partially cover WARO structural costs.

Beyond 2012 Sahel crisis related projects, two major multicounty concepts have been developed: (1) one nutrition program, to support on-going efforts to build national capacities to detect and treat acute undernutrition, as well as advocate for nutrition to be better integrated in national and regional health and food security policies. This program is now developing with AFD support. (2) The WARO facilitated discussions around the idea of a cross-border program to prevent cholera outbreaks around the Lake Chad basin, involving Chad, Nigeria, and Niger country offices. This concept is yet to be turned into an actual program.

### **Effective leadership for emergency response program development**

During the Ivory Coast crisis in 2011, The WARO has played an effective donor liaison role, managing initial relations with Dakar based counterparts. Ivory Coast grants have eventually been finalized directly by the country office.

The game-changer in terms of ability for the WARO to facilitate regional projects development has been the 2012 Sahel crisis. With direct access to donors in Dakar, some of which are not represented in the region (DFID and SIDA), and yet highly interested to contribute financing relief efforts at a regional scale, the idea of multicounty grants with a single point of contact in Dakar, with good English command, was very attractive. Proactive donor liaison for the WARO rep and ability to quickly facilitate a proposal development process greatly helped to accelerate regional proposals development processes.

Although the prime interest for donors like DFID and SIDA is clearly transactional (without permanent representation in the region, it would be difficult and expensive to manage different country grants), both financial partners and ACF envisaged potential additional benefits with multicounty grants such as cross country learning and synergies, approaches and practices harmonization.

For ECHO, potential transactional benefits of multicounty grants are not as obvious. Indeed, the ECHO team operational in the region has quickly developed from 2005 until now. About 6 ECHO staff work permanently in the Sahel now, including technical experts (Nut and FS), and representations are open in Niamey, Ouagadougou, Bamako, and Dakar (the Liberia office is still active too). Moreover, the 2012 ECHO up scaling strategy was largely to spend additional funds through UN agencies. Yet, with the first phase of emergency response in 2012 (Mitigation), ECHO considered that potential benefits associated with a multi-country grant would be greater than the potential managerial risks. For the second phase of the 2012 crisis response, ECHO has preferred working through single country contracts yet, for Mauritania and Mali, ECHO has requested the WARO to play a support role for M&E, technical backstopping and advocacy. This arrangement being out of WARO mandate, a note was shared with ACF operational HQs to receive guidance on how to respond to such ECHO request

OFDA is less inclined to work through multi-country grants, considering that potential benefits are often difficult to achieve and that such operational setup makes their project monitoring confusing. Yet, OFDA is open to work through multi country grants if their partners can demonstrate the value added of such a setup. Until now their experiences of multi-country grants in the region have not always clearly delivered any value added.

### ***4.2.2 Procedures for project formulation***

#### **Rushed process in emergency**

By September – October 2011, when first signs of a regional crisis emerged and discussions around early responses were initiated in Dakar, no procedures for formulation of regional proposals had been discussed and formalized by the WARO.

As exposed above, WARO efforts to facilitate and coordinate regional proposal development processes largely contributed to quickly secure emergency response funds. Yet, emergency proposals development process had to be finalised quickly, sometimes at the expense of HQ technical advisors consultation. Lack of initial HQ staff involvement created tensions with the WARO at amendment stage.

This new and weakly formalised role played by the WARO to coordinate multi country proposal development process also fuelled tensions with country offices. The acute emergency period of the first half of 2012 was particularly difficult; as project proposal had to be formulated quickly and as the WARO representative was working alone until the first emergency response projects could be funded, covering a program coordinator and assistant position. The emergency context, as well as the limited capacities in the WARO at that time, does explain some of the shortcuts perhaps as much as the lack of formalised procedures.

It was agreed that concepts for regional proposal development should be briefly presented to the steering committee for validation. This procedure hasn't proved very effective for various reasons. First, because Steering committee members weren't sufficiently informed to be able to make productive inputs into project development process, and second because proposal development didn't always match with steering committee meetings schedule.

### **Various expectations**

Country offices and HQs do not all have similar expectations about the required level of support and involvement and support to be expected from the WARO for fundraising and program formulation. Some countries are relatively underfunded (especially coastal countries), and are happy to receive proactive support from the WARO, while funding isn't an issue for Sahel countries at the moment, and many of them tend to face difficulties to execute their program portfolio.

ACF-E HQ tends to be much more hands-off than ACF-F HQ with regard to program development support. Hence, support for program development tends to be more welcomed by country offices working under ACF-E, and rarely overlaps with advice that country offices may receive from their HQ support team.

### **Recent changes**

Learning from 2012 difficulties, a multi-country project development communication flowchart has been developed by the incoming WARO rep in December 2012. Simultaneously, the Paris HQ has worked on processes for development and management of "complex" project, based on lessons learnt from the WARO experience, among others. These procedures are yet to be institutionalised.

With a new WARO team, perhaps careful about playing a facilitating than a leading role, but also less familiar with ACF people working in of for the region, project development process have become more participatory.

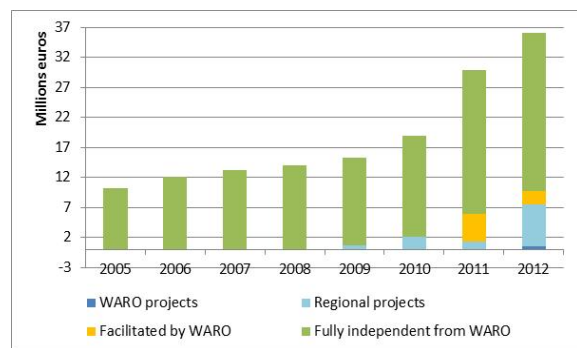
## ***4.2.3 Fundraising outcomes***

### **Growing influence of the WARO in fundraising**

Volumes of ACF operations in the region as significantly increased in the last few years, jumping from around 10 Million € in 2005, to over 35 Million € in 2005. This financial up scaling has largely been boosted by the WARO. Since 2009, the proposition of funds facilitated by the WARO (e.g. Ivory Coast crisis were the WARO played a key donor liaison role) or managed as multi country grants (e.g. DFID of SIDA grants) jumped to around 27% of overall ACF volumes of operation in the region (21% managed by WARO, and 8% facilitated to some degree). In 2012, relative volumes of regional projects naturally tend to be more significant for Sahel countries, with the exception of Sierra Leone and Guinea, which implemented a cross border

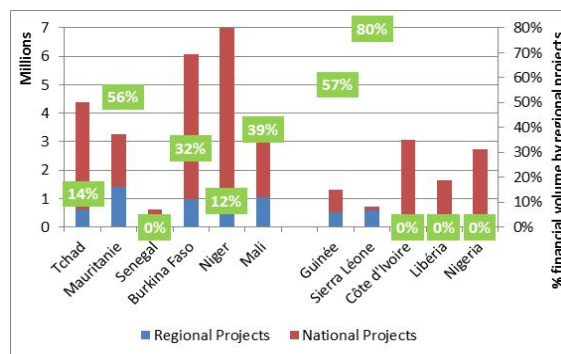
cholera response project (negotiation facilitated by the WARO, direct implementation). Beyond financial volumes, this specific project is perhaps the best example of opportunities that can be generated through the WARO. For such proposals, decisions are made at regional level rather than at country level, and the WARO was both a useful instrument to link up country offices with the ECHO TA in charge in Dakar, but also to facilitate cross country approach harmonization to be able to present a coherent proposal across country offices supported by two different HQs.

**Figure 3: ACF financial volume trend in the region since 2005.**



Source: WARO

**Figure 4: Relative financial volume for regional projects per country.**



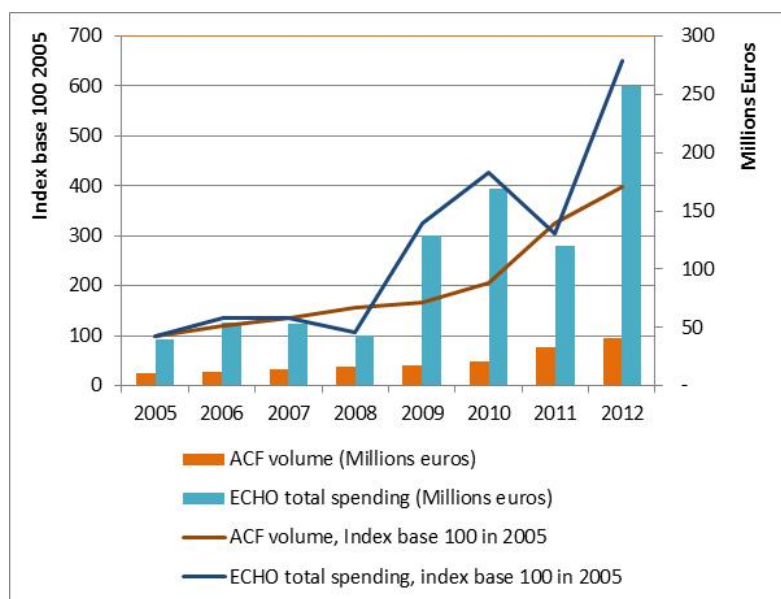
Source: WARO

### But how successful has really been the regional financial up scaling?

These trends seem really positive, but looking more closely, the picture looks a bit more nuanced:

- Several projects labelled as facilitated by the WARO or truly regional projects would probably have been funded without the WARO: Ivory Coast crisis projects or even the ECHO mitigation project in 2012 could have been negotiated bilaterally. WAROs role has clearly been effective at accelerating the proposal formulation process, but estimating WARO's *net* contribution to financial up scaling is not straightforward.
- A significant share of the financial up scaling is related to opening on new country offices rather than to increased volume of operations in each country. 6 new offices (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal and the WARO) have been opened since 2005, and their operations represent about 68% of the financial growth in the region over the period. Since WARO opening in 2009, 3 office have been open (Nigeria, Senegal and the WARO), representing about 17% of the financial growth.
- ACF growth in the region has been slower than spending of its key donors. Graph 5 shows ACF overall volumes trends in the region (all donors) versus ECHO spending trends. When ACF operations quadrupled since 2005, ECHO spending was multiplied by 6. ACF operations grew by about 25% between 2011 and 2012, when ECHO spending doubled. Simultaneously USAID food crisis related spending (Food for peace and OFDA) jumped from around 130 M USD for Northern and Western Africa in 2011, up to over 300 M USD for the Sahel region only in 2012. Here we are not arguing that ACF growth should have followed the exact same trends as donor spending, yet looking at funding availability, ACF financial up scaling over the last few years looks good, but not fantastic and with such massive growth of available funds in the region one could wonder if donor liaison is the most limiting constraint to ACF growth in the region or whether absorption capacity isn't more problematic? Project implementation efficiency data reported in section 4.5.2 provide useful insights.

Figure 5: ACF financial volume versus ECHO spending trends



Note: ACF Volume corresponds to overall ACF budget trend as reported in figure 3, including funding coming from UN agencies. ECHO spending corresponds to overall spending (toward all kind of recipients), including funding towards UN agencies. Source: WARO and ECHO website. Source: WARO and [ECHO website](#)

#### 4.2.4 Lessons learnt

The WARO clearly proved a dynamic interface with donors active in Dakar or not permanently represented in the Region. Although it isn't clear if fund raising is indeed the most pressing constraint to ACF operations growth in the region, there is room for improvement to make this fund raising and donor function more operational and better tailored to country office's needs. Here are a few lessons emerging from this initial learning phase, particularly steep in 2012, at times of a major regional crisis.

- When several country offices and HQs need to be involved, changes for delays are decupled, and forward planning is all the more critical for complex project development. This lesson has already been learnt by the WARO which tries to be as proactive as possible at informing country offices and HQs. Procedures have been discussed on worked on in late 2012. Yet, they already appear difficult to implement as donor led project development timelines are simply often incompatible with a too heavy consultation process.
- Proactivity works both ways, and the WARO needs to be well informed about funding gaps in country offices so it can effectively represent them in front of donors represented in Dakar. Up to date country strategy documents are essential for this purpose.
- Contacts and relationships matter as much as procedures: it is critical for the representative to be well connected with all key stakeholders within Country Offices and in operational HQs. Face to face briefings in all HQ as well as country visits and regional working session are critical for that purpose.
- Concrete tools such as country strategies, as well as a rooster of programs for which country offices are seeking funding opportunities to be regularly updated and communicated to the WARO offices are useful (good practice: Guinea country office).

## 4.3 Advocacy

### 4.3.1 *Actively engaging with Dakar stakeholders*

As the WARO was established as an NGO platform, ACF naturally established working relations with other WAHRF NGOS represented in Dakar (Oxfam GB and Save the Children UK). But regular and solid working relations were also quickly established with other NGOs (e.g. Helen Keller International, MSF, Alima...), UN agencies (primarily FAO, WFP, UNICEF, and OCHA), and well as donors represented in Dakar (solid links with ECHO in particular).

Indeed, soon after the WARO was established, the representative quickly and actively engaged in various Dakar-based humanitarian forums, starting with the regional IASC and the very active Food Security and Nutrition Working Group (FSNWG) despite a small team until recently, the WARO also tried to consistently engage in other thematic regional humanitarian forums such as the Nutrition working group or the DRR working group.

ACF contribution to key Dakar forums (IASC and FSNWG) is very much welcomed and valued by its partners:

- ACF inputs are seen as well informed, connected with ground realities, constructive and careful of joint priorities and challenges,
- ACF is considered as having made particularly valuable inputs by UN agencies to prepare regional diagnostics and consolidated appeals,
- ACF technical expertise in Nutrition and ability to communicate and input on policy issues with sound technical background is particularly valued,
- And last, ACF is perceived as a fairly independent and energetic voice, able to push and challenge its partners on technical and policy issues. Such dynamism is highly valued by UN and Donor staff, often most constrained by their institutions.

Yet, it is important to realise that such forums are largely attended by like-minded stakeholders. At regional level, with limited discussions around operational issues, NGOs, UN, and Humanitarian donors defend relatively similar positions. For example, the need to more effectively address and prevent undernutrition is a concern widely shared in these forums. In terms of fund raising, all Dakar stakeholders share much interconnected interests. ECHO, for instance, has been actively pushing for more emergency funds to be dedicated to the Sahel since 2005.

So yes, the WARO has been active in Dakar forums, yes, its inputs are much appreciated by its peers, but estimating its effective contribution to significant policy changes is difficult, especially as most Dakar stakeholders are pushing towards similar directions and that any progress is but nature the result of a collective efforts. The Regional Advocacy strategy clearly identifies its targets, and few of them sit in Dakar humanitarian forums.

But ACF, although perhaps less consistently, has also engaged in Food and nutrition security forums managed by regional institutions. ACF influenced the ECOWAS humanitarian policy formulation process through an OCHA consultation, and, as a steering committee member ACF is fully engaged in the on-going review of the “Cadre Harmonisé”, the framework for national early warning systems adopted by the CILSS and now based on the IPC.



ACF strategy (which advocacy objectives at these levels) tactics (how to achieve them) to influence policy orientation in such forums is still underdeveloped.. Beyond being able to produce sound evidence and articulated argumentation to defend its views, staff seniority, consistent attendance to meetings and staff continuity are key enabling factors to effective advocacy in regional forums.

### *4.3.2 Support to country based advocacy*

Country based advocacy has been fairly developed in the past in countries like Niger, but until recently, it is not clear how much has been done in the region. The WARO and country offices are following initiatives as “SUN”, but more as observers than as drivers.

But things are changing, and conditions WARO support to develop country-based advocacy initiatives are now well established for a solid push:

- A West Africa Advocacy strategy has been established but the WARO, with some ACF-UK support and in consultation with interested country offices. This regional advocacy strategy is strongly aligned with the AMAI and identifies three priority areas (scaling up CMAM, risk management and seasonality, and nutrition sensitive agriculture), lists key targets, and details specific messages.
- Significant funding to support the implementation of this advocacy strategy has been secured through a 3 years AFD program, financing one Advocacy advisor and one nutritionist in Dakar, as well as resources and personnel to implement national advocacy initiative in three countries (Niger, Burkina Faso, and Sierra Leone). Dakar based staff shall not only be able to support the implementation of the ACF project, but to develop further initiatives to contribute to the implementation of the regional strategy.
- Advocacy Action plans are now being developed in the 3 countries supported by the AFD grant.
- WARO starting to engage in actively disseminating ACF reports.

### *4.3.3 Relations with ACF advocacy efforts*

The WARO effectively facilitated ACFUK-led advocacy initiatives such as the Zero Hunger Series project, and one of the key value-added of the WARO was to be able to effectively relay regional information towards HQ for media communication during crises. The WARO has allowed quick and easy access to information by all ACF network members, regardless the affiliation of country offices in the region.

Coordination within the ACF network in relation to advocacy issues is still problematic. While the readership of ACF- UK has been formally reaffirmed, the main resources dedicated to advocacy in the region been provided by AFD and channelled through ACF-FR, this leadership will (and already is) likely keep being regularly challenged. This confusion is naturally not desirable for effectiveness of HQ support to the WARO and country offices.

### *4.3.4 Evidence - based advocacy?*

Beyond solid strategic planning and influencing tactic, effective and relevant advocacy needs to be grounded on solid evidence. Ability for the WARO and country offices to assemble and analyse data to inform advocacy processes is considered as too limited.

The current thinking is that access to M&E and project related learning data is critical, and that, this is more easily done for regional projects on which the WARO has a direct handle than on others. This position is

debatable, and with limited investment on coordination with operational HQ, or county offices, one can easily imagine that the WARO could access M&E and project learning information generated in the region.

What seems clear is that there is still limited clarity about which data shall be gathered by the WARO office and for which purpose. The advocacy strategy is vague about the required evidence to back up advocacy messages, and interests differ within the network: when some argue that the WARO should gather data about the evolution of regional contexts, others believe that access to program monitoring data is key. Regardless the type of information required, data aggregation should be strategically managed with regards to required analyses.

#### **4.3.5 Transition management**

Communication skills, sound technical knowledge, professional and personal network, as well as and institutional knowledge are key assets to effective advocacy, and these were key strengths of Patricia Hoorelbeke, the first WARO representative.

Despite a rather positive perception of the recent representative transition by external stakeholders, largely related to the new representative communication skills, dynamism, and ability to quickly grasp institutional dynamics, personnel turnover has not been ideally managed to prevent information and network losses. The process to mitigate the relative long representative gap (about 3 months) has not been satisfactorily managed: the new representative received one short briefing by the former representative (who luckily is now posted in Dakar), and a rapid briefing by the outgoing Desk officer in charge. This poorly managed hand over process generated massive information and network loss, which of course is particularly detrimental for the WARO capacity to ensure continuity in its advocacy efforts. One of the other key and rare strength of Patricia Hoorelbeke was to combine policy level engagement skills with technical nutrition and food security knowledge. While senior food security is currently available in the WARO team, senior nutrition expertise is required in Dakar for the WARO to be able to sustain nutrition related policy engagement in Dakar forums.

### **4.4 Programme coordination: quality, coherence and learning**

#### **4.4.1 An objective identified as relevant**

Quality, standardisation and capitalisation are stated as one of the 4 pillars of WARO's mandate, and the WARO MOU is formulated as such:

*“the West Africa regional strategy, made on a participatory basis (both HQ and Country Offices) represents a common frame for interventions. This tool should make possible a common approach amongst ACF country offices and monitoring regional trends. Those standard interventions have proved its effectiveness and are impact driven”*

There is a clear consensus among ACF and among regional country offices that cross country exchanges, sharing of learning and best practices, and harmonization of practise and approaches (when deemed relevant and not as a standard procedure!) would add value to ACF work, and help enhance quality. This objective is also seen as relevant by financial partners, themselves working at regional scale, and often interested in disseminations of best practices. Having a regional integrator office is a clear advantage for that purpose.

Markets and people, and cattle movement being fairly liberalized through the region, program coherence between ACF country offices and with other stakeholders' interventions is important to avoid developing perverse incentives.

#### *4.4.2 A push for harmonisation through multi-country projects*

The WARO mostly approached the coherence agenda through multi-country projects. Regional projects can be classified in 4 types:

- **Type 1 - Patchwork projects:** regional projects are actually combinations for different projects with different logic in different countries of the region.
- **Type 2 - Harmonized interventions:** Similar intervention framework, but different modalities of intervention (activities, targeting criteria and methods, etc...).
- **Type 3 – Cross-border projects:** addressing an issue overstepping borders in two neighbouring countries.
- **Type 4 – Synergetic projects:** one activity relevant to the regional level, or to several countries in the region.

Regional projects are mostly of type 2 (except the advocacy component of AFD, rather of type 4, and its operational component, rather of type 1), and the WARO, taking a leadership role at project design phase has been pushing for approaches and practices standardization. Beyond logical framework project harmonization, the WARO pushed for standardisation of technical approaches such as the use of HEA methodology for targeting, sometimes combined with specific training to implement new technical approaches.

Beyond this central push for harmonisation, the WARO has developed a few small scale capitalisation or training projects (health garden capitalisation, Workshop FS/NUT). Other opportunities have been generated (UNICEF-HKI-ACF joint proposal for regional universities nutrition curriculums, but ACF is finally not being involved in the program), demonstrating the potential for WARO led partnership. Donors met, starting with ECHO, are all very open to think about learning and capacity building projects. The resilience agenda with probably reinforce such opportunities.

Lastly, a cholera cross-border project (Sierra Leone / Guinea) has successfully being implemented and documented. However, it isn't clear what has been the WARO contribution to the success of this project, for which design, implementation and learning seem to have been very much country led..

#### *4.4.3 Push back and limitations*

Country offices and HQ have often resisted WARO pressure to harmonise technical approaches. HQ staff argued that technical support was not falling under WARO mandate, and Country offices weren't always convinced about the value added of harmonisation or has no time to adapt their practices in the middle of an emergency response. For example, the Niger country office refused to adopt specific targeting procedure for a DFID funded CFW program when it was implementing a much larger WFP funded program (probably with At least partial DFID funding!) though other (and simpler) targeting modalities.

In 2012, project related learning efforts attempted by the WARO are largely focused on running cross country analysis of M&E data. Yet, it is proving challenging for the WARO to quickly access M&E information, and beyond monitoring project versus classical performance indicators, it isn't fully clear how much such analysis will be helpful to generate innovative learning.

#### *4.4.4 Lessons learnt*

Indeed, 2012 experiences raise questions about the best way for the WARO to play its role of enhancing regional coherence and harmonisation: should it primarily through facilitation of learning, cross country

exchanges and capacity building, or should also be through standardisation of approaches for multi country grants? The 2012 experience illustrates standardisation can hardly be imposed by the top, especially in emergencies, and especially since the WARO has a limited handle on technical support. Another lesson is that approaches harmonisation and capitalisation requires long term investment and commitment though had-hoc initiatives. Indeed, the full cycle identification of an issue with learning potential, the data collection process, analysis, witting up and dissemination takes time – way longer than the implementation of an emergency project.

A question that the WARO may need to reflect on is the relevance of harmonisation and standardisation. Despite similarities across contexts, situations may differ between and within countries. The temptation for harmonisation is always great when looking at things with macro lenses, and although monitoring and reporting may be facilitated with harmonisation, it may sometime sbe at the expense of relevance and effectiveness.

## **4.5 Management**

### **4.5.1 WARO governance**

The WARO Governance system is fully formalised in a MOU signed between, ACF-UK, ACF- FR, ACF- E, and ACF-US, and is summarized in Figure 6. As is started as a DFID funded WAHRF management unit, the WARO was initially managed by ACF-UK. In 2011, ACF –FR took over, and it is now being managed by ACF-E since early 2012. It was recently agreed that the rotation system should terminate, and that ACF-E would remain in charge of the WARO management.

Here is a summary of key responsibilities for each management level:

#### **IEC**

- Approval of annual budget, HQ contributions, and strategic plan of WARO
- Propose MoU revision (incl. extension to other HQ) to the SC or decide on termination
- Decide inclusion of additional HQ parties to the MoU
- Report of WARO results and progress to the ICC (International Chairman Committee)
- WARO issues are discussed regularly during IEC meetings

#### **Operational and Finance Directors**

- Evaluate financial and strategic risks linked to WARO
- Approve annual budget and strategic plan to be proposed to the IEC
- Follow-up and orientation of the regional strategy
- Problem solving
- Follow-up WARO performance indicators
- Validate Regional Representative position recruitment
- Every ACF meeting

#### **Desk in charge**

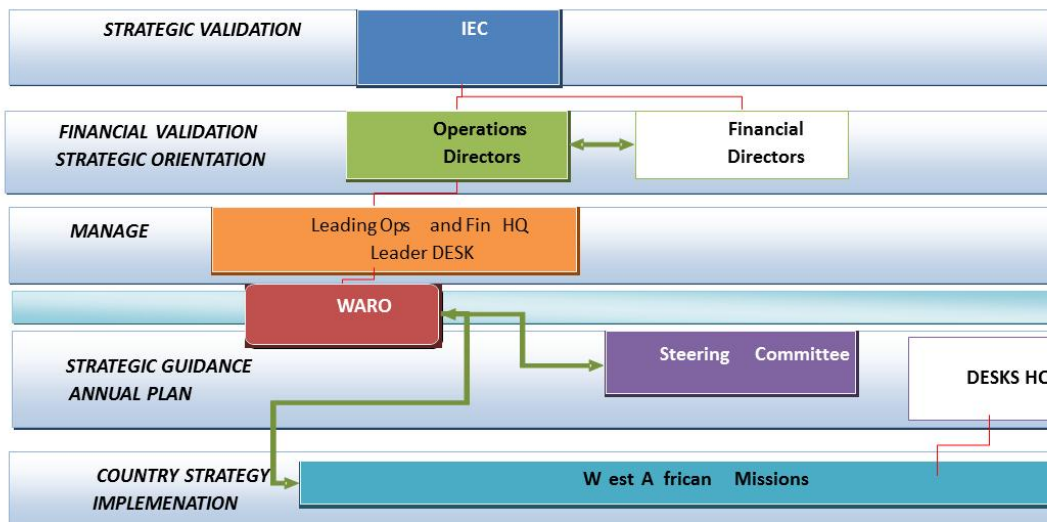
- Regional Representative backstopping and support
- Coordination of WARO issues within managing HQ
- Chairs Steering Committee
- On demand contacts

#### **Steering committee**

- Validating strategic issues related to Regional Strategy and programs

- Together with the Regional Team, defining the Regional Annual Plan and Budget
- Propose structure & functioning of the regional support team to Operations Directors
- Mobilizing and guiding missions and HQs teams to achieve the objectives and results of the regional strategy
- Ensuring alignment of missions' strategies with the regional strategy and missions' participation in the regional dynamic
- Ensuring the correct transmission of information to missions and HQs teams regarding regional approach and projects
- Reporting WARO evolution and follow-up to Operations Directors group
- Resolving any potential conflict between the Regional Team and missions if required
- Proposing in writing any relevant changes to the MoU and submitting them to the Operations Directors' group and the Executive Directors' group.
- The steering committee should meet about every two months through conference calls and twice a year physically.

Figure 6: WARO governance structure



Source: WARO MOU

The conception of this management structure is very inclusive, intending to involve different layers of the ACF structure into the WARO management system. This is of course very relevant as all HQ and management layers need to learn about this operational innovation, and as the WARO implies both programmatic management and strategic orientations for the network. Rotation of line management was also a way for all interested HQ to more closely learn about the WARO.

Inclusiveness should be good for learning, but is necessarily constraining in terms of effectiveness, reactivity, and accountability. Here are a few examples of sub-optimal management of the WARO, mostly related to complexity of the management structure:

- The steering committee is not really able to fulfil many of its official roles, either because it didn't meet regularly enough, or because some of its tasks (underlined above) would require dedicated management authority and time, which most members do not have.

- The rotation system for the first three years of existence of the WARO is very long and it has limited the ability of the HQ in charge to hand over knowledge and networks to the new representative in charge.
- Neither the WARO representative nor the Desk in charge have very good formal access to ACF top level management, and much of WARO influence within the ACF networks needs to pass through informal contacts.
- Despite this full-fledged governance structure the information level of many HQ staff about the WARO was still limited until recently.
- Governance deficiencies led the WARO representative to initiate several processes beyond her mandate: (1) draft MOU, (2) propose cost sharing between HQ, (3) initiate discussions and drafting of ways of working document.

#### 4.5.2 Multi-country grant management

##### Fluid management of the WAHRF

The WARO was originally setup as a WAHRF coordination unit. It was understood and agreed with DFID that ACF staff in Dakar would coordinate and network with other stakeholders in Dakar, but also that the Regional team would play a role of first point of contact with DFID in the region, contribute to build the capacity to ACF staff in the region on technical issues, and channel project proposals through to the regional fund, and consolidate reporting.

Indeed the WAHRF was conceived as a regional fund, prepositioned for a period of two years, which could be used for an emergency response in the region. Country offices could submit fund requests through to the Dakar coordination team, only for emergency response. Significant share of the WARO team as well as some additional means (mission costs, workshops...) were covered by a “program window”, independent from the operations.

WAHRF project management came with its lot of problems, but overall, it went fairly well, and perhaps better for ACF than for other members of the consortium (CARE, Oxfam, Save the Children, and MSF). The WAHRF team was both dedicated to the WAHRF facilitation, and relatively small given the scope of the program (a total of 8 projects were funded over 2 years), and harmonization across interventions wasn’t considered as an objective, reduction potential tensions between country offices and the overarching program unit. Last, the 2009-2011 period, expert in Niger, Chad and Ivory Coast, were times of more limited funding availability 2012, de facto adding value to a regional fund.

##### Overstretched capacities in 2012

As mentioned earlier, 4 multicountry grants have been negotiated in 2012, 3 of which are directly related to the 2012 Sahel Emergency. The first half of 2012, until at least October, has been fairly challenging, with the management of multi-country grant fuelling important tension between the WARO and HQs and sometimes among HQs. Some of these difficulties are reported in Table 2.

**Table 2 : Financial and technical challenges in managing Multi-Country projects**

	Financial support	Technical support
<b>Example of difficulties</b>	<b>Long and sinuous reporting flowchart:</b> Country Offices → managing HQ → WARO (consolidation)	<b>Lack of clarity about who does what:</b> both HQ and WARO technical staff providing recommendation of



	<p>→ Grant holding HQ.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Late reporting,</li> <li>• Difficult for WARO to proactively manage the grant without timely financial information.</li> </ul>	<p>similar aspects, with limited coordination and sometimes with limited coherence.</p> <p><b>Amendment management:</b> Consultation has sometimes been minimal for emergency projects, and which created tensions at amendment stage, when new WARO technical staff in charge requested inputs for HQ staff who had not been involved in project design.</p>
<b>Underlying reasons</b>	<p><b>No 100% dedicated WARO admin coordo</b> until September 2012. Reporting delays have accumulated.</p> <p><b>Lack of ACF homogenisation</b> across financial management systems, preventing harmonisation at WARO level.</p> <p><b>Different ways of working across HQs</b>, ACF-E allowing for pre-validation of financial reports and BFU by the WARO, while ACF-F retaining this tasks at HQ level</p>	<p><b>Too directive attitude from WARO</b> staff at emergency projects design stage created tensions, inherited by the new team.</p> <p><b>Different needs for different country offices:</b> country offices working under Madrid tend to be more autonomous and receive more limited technical support for the HQ. These COs have had the tendency to use WARO available support more often than ACF-FR supported country offices.</p> <p><b>ACF-F reforming its own internal governance procedures</b> to give more responsibilities to Country Offices (the new DEAL), and therefore, beyond coordination issues, seeing the role of the WARO as a backward movement toward more support to country offices</p> <p><b>Project specific communication flowchart</b>, and donor specific procedures (for DFID a lot more responsibility in terms of reporting is delegated to the WARO, one reason being very demanding reporting schedule (monthly) which would be impossible to meet if reports has to first be validated by HQs. Recent ECHO funded project have even been more confusing as ECHO requested the WARO to take technical backstopping responsibilities for country specific grants (Mali and Mauritania)</p> <p><b>Heavy WARO staff turnover</b> between design and implementation/amendment phases.</p> <p><b>Junior or new to ACF technical staff, without clear functional management from HQ, and with a Rep gap</b> → communication mistakes from WARO staff and limited understanding and support for HQ staff.</p>
<b>a</b>		

Clear division of responsibilities, smooth coordination and communication between Country offices, the WARO and HQs (HQs supporting the county programs, as well as the HQ signing the grant) are important to prevent and overcome coordination and communication challenges 3 set of guidance avec been produced to clarify roles and responsibilities:

- Project specific communication flow chart (DFID, ECHO mitigation),
- The MOU,

- Ways of working produced by the new representative in November 2012.

The key elements of these global agreements are that: (1) The WARO is responsible for grant management; (2) the signing HQ is responsible for contractual obligations and therefore reporting, and (3) technical support remains under the responsibility of supporting HQs. Discussions around the formulation of a MOU and the preparation of the ways of working document have been useful to communicate accumulated tensions and frustrations. These consultation processes have been important, as much as outcomes, although one could regret that more structured procedures had not been formalised earlier.

The MOU and the ways of working documents are key steps forwards, yet, our assessment is that such documents are not likely to fully prevent future coordination and communication problems.

- The WARO mandate formulation is still confusing as the WARO is meant to be responsible for grant management, but technical and financial responsibilities remain under HQs...
- Some contextual elements, as much as the lack of formalisation of communication rules and ways of working explain difficulties: staff turnover, opening of Senegal country offices at the same time as demanding WARO workload, quick proposal design process (difficult to expend it in emergencies), different capacities in different HQs, limited time for WARO staff briefing (either Madrid, or Paris, or London, but never all), gap of representative, some program staff new to ACF, lack of support from HQ who had not been fully involved in recruitment process...
- Beyond the need to improve procedures for multi-country grant management, one of the major sources of tensions across HQs is that the WARO has accepted to take M&E and program support responsibilities for single country grants which it was agreed that its support role, whatever it is, should be restricted to multi-county grants.

### **Late project implementation, but not really more than other projects in the region.**

Difficulties related to coordination of HQ and WARO support certainly conducted to inefficiencies in the way support dedicated resources have been used. WARO dedicate resource may have been better used on other priorities, but more importantly perhaps the question is whether regional project could be implemented efficiently and effectively despite such coordination issues.

The ACF Sahel response evaluation reported that despite a timely reaction and formulation of response programs, implementation has sometime been delayed, with important tranches of food and cash distribution been delivered after the lean season. The question we tried to ask is: when they occurred were implementation delays greater from regional projects?

We can only provide a partial answer to that question, yet, a quick analysis (Table 3) of BFUs for all projects in country offices that implemented bit regional and national projects in 2012 suggest that (1) slow grant expenditure is very common in the region, (2) for some countries (Mauritania, Mali, and to some extent, Burkina Faso, Niger), slow to very slow grant expenditure is alarmingly frequent, illustrating significant implantation delays, (3) regional projects tend to be more often affected by slow expenditure rates, but the difference is limited; (4) results are not shown in the below table, but a similar analysis suggest that emergency response projects (< 1 year) are a lot more often *very late* than non-emergency response projects, however, longer term projects hover suffer smaller delays, since the proportion of somewhat late and very late project is similar (about 66%) to that of emergency response projects.

**Table 3: Project execution delays in the region**

Country	Type of project	%very late projects among projects executed in the country	% somewhat or very late among projects executed in the country
Burkina Faso	National	22%	44%
	Regional	67%	100%
	Total	33%	58%
Guinea	National	33%	67%
	Regional	0%	0%
	Total	25%	50%
Mali	National	64%	82%
	Regional	100%	100%
	Total	69%	85%
Mauritania	National	71%	71%
	Regional	67%	67%
	Total	70%	70%
Niger	National	33%	83%
	Regional	50%	100%
	Total	38%	88%
Sierra Leone	National	29%	71%
	Regional	0%	50%
	Total	22%	67%
Chad	National	29%	29%
	Regional	0%	0%
	Total	25%	25%
TOTAL	National	42%	64%
	Regional	50%	71%
	Total	44%	66%

**Source:** Budget follow up information, 2012. Uptate from November 2012 to January 2013, depending on projects.

**Very late project:** time consumption (%) – budget consumption (%) > 15%, **somewhat late project:** 15% > time consumption (%) – budget consumption (%) > 7.5%. A similar rule is used by the WARO office for its regional projects budget follow up work. See rough data in annex 6.4

All in all the key information is that budget consumption rates are on average very slow in the region, and alarmingly so for specific countries. This is not easy to tell with certitude based on the information collected for this evaluation, and although regional projects are a little worse than others, the WARO has probably little to with such delays: main reasons are likely to do with country offices constraints: delays in receiving funds (see. Sahel response evaluation), staffing, security...

### On-going changes

Most people with ACF at all levels (HQs, WARO, country offices) are well aware about these coordination and management difficulties. This diagnostics has already been done several times: such difficulties were well documented in reports from Barcelona meeting in August 2012, the new representative has documented these difficulties, and the IEC has launched a work on formulation of procedure for complex projects, including WARO like multicounty emergency grants.

The WARO team has been stabilised since October 2012 (new turnover phase coming soon), and communication flows have progressively smoothed up. Delays in financial management, accumulated from the period when there was no dedicated admin staff, are getting resorbed. Moreover, current program development efforts are not emergency related, and when calls are appropriately anticipated, non-emergency project formulation allow for well-developed consultations processes.

### 4.5.3 Performance management

The WARO performance management is still not fully developed: foreseen performance indicators are not all measurable, and others may provide wrong incentives (see below), but more importantly, the WARO rep wasn't informed about them and when required, no information system is in place to monitor them. Finally, one of the 4 objectives (program quality and coherence), isn't measured by any indicator.

This lack of functional performance management system, 3 years down the line, contrasts with the ambition of ACF to be able to measure the value added of the WARO and prioritise efficiency.

**Table 4: WARO performance indicators**

Indicators proposed in MOU	Comments
Net participation to scaling-up : number of beneficiaries, financial volume, number of projects per sector	How to measure this? Programs, even if funding is facilitated by WARO will always be implemented by COs, and the % of attribution to the WARO is problematic
Annual margin	Diverging views with the ACF Network about this indicator. How can the WARO generate margin without Being operational, and what percentage of overheads to attribute to the WARO is it facilitates fundraising?
Number of regional contracts signed	Incentive to facilitate multi-country programs when experience proves that their value added is debatable and their management complicated.
Number of new donors involved in West Africa	OK
ACF participation in Regional Forums and contacts with new stakeholders	Not specific enough to measure influence
Number, visibility and impact of ACF publications	Information systems are required to measure visibility and impact indicators, it is not clear if these are worth the investment?

Source: MOU

### 4.5.4 Human Resources

#### HR key to WARO achievements

As mentioned earlier in relation to advocacy, human resources have been key to WARO early developments. Patricia Hoorelbeke, the first WARO representative, has been particularly influential in shaping the WARO and in turning opportunities into a number of successes.

Patricia's knowledge of the region, connections in Dakar forums, ability to expand her network, knowledge of the ACF network, dynamism and ability to deliver quality outputs in short timeframes have clearly been critical. This is not to minimise Christophe Breyne inputs, with strong Food Security technical background and good knowledge of the region.

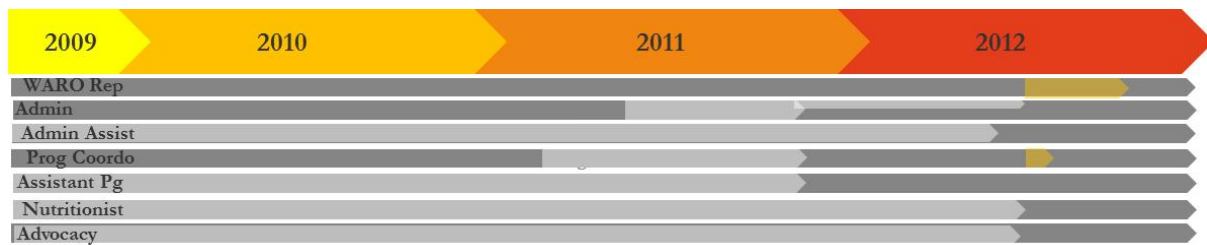
A committed solid WARO core team was clearly a strength for the WARO, but too some extent it was also a risk, with the WARO being much personalised. So much so that the WARO was sometimes seen as "Patricia's office" within ACF network.

This is easy to tell this now that changes have occurred, but human resources strength and risk have perhaps not been managed proactively enough. Someone taking the lead of such an office would need to be more closely involved in the strategic thinking (or more acutely aware) around development of such an office. Although the financial stability of the offices has been guaranteed by the ACF network commitment, and although there is strong evidence that ACF was overall satisfied by WARO earlier development the representative wasn't comfortable about the lack of vision of what the WARO should aim for in the next 5 to 10 years. Indeed, beyond what it should not become (an additional management layer), WARO documentation, but also ACF senior management staff are not very clear about their ambitions for WARO's future.

### Major changes in 2012

2012 has seen major changes and upscale in WARO HR structure: the representative, the program coordinator, and assistant program coordinator have changed; the admin coordinator position has been resumed (no dedicated admin coordinator from mid-2011 to mid-2012), an assistant admin position has been open, and finally nutrition and advocacy advisors positions have been created. Figure 7 gives a summary picture of the staff structure change in 2012.

Figure 7: Staff structure changes since 2009



Having a more fully fledged team is clearly good news for the WARO ability to deliver on its mandates and objectives, a securing funding for the representative and admin team (ACF) and the nutrition and advocacy advisors (AFD) are major steps ahead.

Yet, the 2012 changes (upscale and staff turnover) could have been much better managed:

- **The 3 months representative gap** was probably difficult to avoid with a one month contract termination notice. Yet, the and over process could have been much better managed: the two reaps only met twice for half a day, a large number of contacts have been lost, it took weeks for the new representative to identify key documents in the archives file, and nobody in the HQ was really able to transfer the information (the desk in charge left a few weeks after the new rep came in). This chaotic transition doesn't seem to have too much impacted on external relations, but internally it has largely contributed to internal communication difficulties during the second half of 2012. Some program development initiatives started prior to the representative change have simply been forgotten.
- **New staff recruitment management has not been ideal.** All WARO technical staff is either new to ACF, junior or is working on new themes with limited backstopping. This is a really difficult situation for a team meant to deliver support to coordination team in country, and for which responsibilities, and scope of action are still being defined. Moreover, recruitment process have not always been ideal (all HQs have not always been involved), and briefings were too limited (not all HQs involved).

- **Outcomes have been difficult to manage** at all levels (HQs, country offices, and perhaps first and foremost for the WARO team), fuelling tension and confusions. Limited HQ support has been provided to the WARO team during the WARO representative gap.

## 5

### 5 Conclusions and recommendations

#### 5.1 *The WARO experiment is an overall success*

A bit more than 3 years after the opening of the WARO, conceived as an experiment in which the ACF network as consistently, but carefully invested, the balance is clearly positive. The WARO has been an effective tool to enhance strategic programming at regional level, is has also been an important vehicle to better represent ACF in regional humanitarian forums. In terms of fundraising, it has strengthened contacts with Dakar based donors, allowed to consolidated relationships with DFID in the region, and facilitated the work with new partners such as SIDA and AFD. Overall regional funding figures have significantly progressed since the WARO has open, but much less than funds availability. This is likely to be related to limited absorption capacities by country offices rather than by lack of proactive fundraising.

More nuanced is WARO’s role in supporting the implementation of multi-country grants. Tight schedules, sometimes too directive attitude by WARO staff and too limited consultation at program design stage, understaffing (esp. admin) in the WARO, unclear roles and responsibilities of the WARO, different ways of working in different HQ and for different donors, as well as junior, new to ACF, and representative gap have contributed to create confusion, fuel tensions, and at the end generate inefficiencies.

Finally, WARO’s potential in enhancing quality, standardisation and capitalisation, has been underexploited, possibly because too much efforts and energy has been invested in Managing or supervising project implementation.

Clearly WARO’s role in regional strategic development advocacy, and fundraising should be promoted. Most important points of tension is about the priority to be given to multi country grants, the type of multi – country grants to be prioritized, the role of the WARO in supporting project implementation, quality, standardisation and capitalisation, as well has the need to be involved in the project support and M&E to deliver on quality promotion.

#### 5.2 *3 possible scenarios for the future of WARO*

WARO’s role has evolved relatively opportunistically, starting as a program coordination unit, developing advocacy and fund raising activities, and seizing opportunities to manage new multi-country grants. It is now even providing technical support to specific country projects. Our assessment is that although it was important to leave enough scope for the WARO to experiment different functions, it is now time for ACF needs to be clear about WARO’s role for the future, playing on WARO strengths and immediate value added, but also on a long term operational vision for ACF.

**Recommendation 1:** ACF needs to make a strategic choice about WARO’s role, communicate it internally and externally, and manage opportunities accordingly.

We have identified 3 possible scenarios to help envisioning possible strategic options. Others are probably possible, but we believe these 3 options are representative of potential models for the WARO.



**Table 5: Scenarios for WARO's future**

	<b>Regional Strategic developments Office</b>	<b>Today “Grey zone”</b>	<b>Regional operations desk</b>
Roles	Regional strategic development, advocacy, learning and capitalization, and regional emergencies facilitation	In addition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design and tech support for multi country grants</li> <li>• A few country grants with WARO support (on request)</li> </ul>	In addition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversight of country directors</li> <li>• Tech, admin , log, HR support</li> <li>• Coordination of regional emergencies with HQ support</li> </ul>
Potential strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low financial commitment</li> <li>• Preserving HQ identity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seizing funding opportunities</li> <li>• Low financial commitment</li> <li>• Preserving HQ identity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reducing HQ costs</li> <li>• Coherence and harmonization of support at regional level</li> <li>• More tailored technical support</li> <li>• Emergency response</li> <li>• + Funding opportunities</li> <li>• Strengthen ACF</li> </ul>
Potential weakness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missing funding opportunities (?)</li> <li>• Countries cannot fully benefit from ACF common strengths</li> <li>• Limited leverage for cross fertilization and learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different procedures for different projects, overlap with HQ, and slow information flow: confusion, inefficiencies and reputational risks</li> <li>• Losing focus on strategic WARO issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenging transition (HR, Fin Sys)</li> <li>• Difficult way back</li> <li>• HQ/WARO duplications</li> <li>• accountability and effectiveness of reporting systems</li> </ul>

### **5.3 Which model to prioritize?**

ACF and the WARO have been working on complex project procedures, to better define roles and responsibilities, rationalize communication in relation to multi-country projects. We believe this is useful and should be better institutionalised (see below), yet, we also think that having a third administrative layer, with significant project management responsibilities, with different procedures for regional projects that for country projects should be managed as a constraint rather than an opportunity. Having a third party involved in the formulation and management of emergency projects is not desirable. Trying to formulate procedures that will improve the communications and relationships in emergencies will marginally contribute to simplify the complexity of the problem. Multi-country projects in emergencies should be formulated as a last resort option rather than as a strategic choice.

**Recommendation 2:** Our first recommendation in terms of strategic choice is that the WARO should move away from today’s grey zone, either trying to reduce its involvement in the management of regional programs as much as possible to avoid confusion (see below for details), or delegating full operational responsibilities to the regional level.

A regional operations desk is not a model to be dismissed too quickly in the region. It could clearly be relevant for different reasons, first of which allowing country offices in the region to benefit from a wider spectrum of ACF strengths, which seems needed as ACF growth in the region has been relatively limited compared to fund availability. The fact that doors are so strongly regionally organised is probably unique to West Africa as well as the importance of the regional level in terms of advocacy. Finally, this is a unique chance to revisit the “unicity principle”, which although it has been a strength in the early days of ACF development is perhaps now turning into a constraint to ACFs operations growth. Save the Children and Oxfam, far from shifting back from their regional organisation model in the region, are now engaging a process of merging regional offices, precisely with the idea to deliver better support to county offices.

**Recommendation 3:** carefully consider delegating more operational responsibilities to a regional office to allow for unified support to be provided to country offices in the region.

In the short term, the only practical option is to go for the “Regional Strategic office”. This is not a move to cut WARO responsibilities, but beyond strategic development, advocacy and donor liaison, to refocus its efforts on quality, learning, and promotion of harmonisation through capacity building. The approach to be used would be to coordinate and strengthened ACF technical development and learning efforts in the region rather than to enforce harmonisation and technical approach through coordination of project design.

**Recommendation 4:** In the short term, go for the **strategic developments office** model, focused around below mandate and short term priorities:

- **Mandate:** Regional strategic development (facilitate regional strategic update, develop regional partnerships), advocacy, learning and capitalisation (develop and manage regional learning projects), and regional emergencies response facilitation (donor liaison, regional communication focal point for ACFIN in emergencies, but no additional dedicated HR).
- **Priority 1:** Seek funding for learning and operational research multi-country projects to be managed by the WARO, in line with ACF technical and advocacy priorities.
- **Priority 2:** Reinforce ACF own analysis of regional trends, and be able to propose and update ACF understanding of regional context.

## **5.4 Adjustments required to make the most of the “strategic office” model**

### **5.4.1 Manage and generate funding opportunities**

Emergency donors like DFID, SIDA and possibly others with no regional representation will want to keep working through multi-country projects, even if such grants do not add much programmatic value beyond saving transaction costs for their own agencies. The WARO should keep offering a model that accommodates these donors. Yet, such donors’ priority is to be able to get consolidated report on time, and beyond classical donor liaison, reporting consolidation should be the only responsibility managed by the WARO.

Donors with better representation in the region (ECHO, OFDA) do not see much value added to multi-countries grants if ACF is not able to offer truly synergetic programs in the region. Such multicounty grant are not at the advantage of ACF either, they are more complex and risky to manage, and do not fit very well with ACF operational structure.

Thematic projects, with longer time horizon (hence with more limited coordination and time pressure) and true potential for cross country fertilisation, operational research and learning are difficult to fund. Moreover, learning and capitalisation objectives are better met when they are funded through other grants. They require different skills; tend to be under-prioritized when directly attached to operational projects; and perhaps most importantly imply very different timeframes. HQs are normally in charge of such projects, yet, it is difficult for HQs to access regional funds, and to facilitate cross country exchanges as effectively than for the WARO.

*Examples of possible areas for thematic projects:* Nutritional Causal Analysis, cost effective approaches to CMAM, resilience and nutrition, maximizing nutritional impact of FS interventions, (cost) effective methods for impact assessment for food security interventions, advocacy campaigns on ACF priorities.

**Recommendation 5:** Limit numbers of multi-country grants for emergency projects, reduce WARO role to reporting consolidation and donor liaison, and concentrate on identifying and responding to thematic regional opportunities.

## Clarify evidence base advocacy

### 5.4.2 Build an effective governance system

The WARO governance system has effectively involved different HQs as well as different levels of ACF governance structure, contributing to disseminate learning from this experiment throughout the organisation. But the challenge has been the lack of effectiveness of governance mechanism, with in particular steering committee meetings being unable to affectively orient the WARO and the Desk officer in charge never really being in a position to manage the WARO. Despite its relative inclusiveness (with the exception of the technical department that wasn't included at the early stage), HQ staff weren't very much informed about WARO developments until the 2012 Sahel crisis. Moreover, the WARO has no functional performance evaluation system. And finally, in the context of recommendation 4 the WARO governance system needs to be adapted to a more important focus on quality and learning and to more limited interests in program management.

**Recommendation 6:** Reform the WARO governance along the following lines:

- Line management of WARO representative = 1 Operations director (UK), in consultation with others.
- Larger steering committee (including senior technical advisors, senior advocacy) meeting twice a year, chaired by Ops Director, managed by WARO rep, and focused on strategic advising (e.g. regional strategy, yearly action plan, governance reforms...).
- Better **indicators** to review WARO performance.
  - Volume (beneficiaries, \$) of operations for which the WARO played a significant donor liaison role,
  - Number of new donors that the WARO contributed to engage with in West Africa,
  - List of policy processes in which ACF played a significant role at regional level,
  - Country office satisfaction of WARO advocacy support,
  - # Policy briefs authored or coauthored by WARO staff,

# Capitalization of operational research reports authored or coauthored by WARO staff.

- Build on ACF efforts to develop ISP impact evaluation methods and approaches to develop **an impact evaluation framework for the WARO strategy**. The WARO team could be in charge of facilitating (planning, fundraising, training of field teams, technical backstopping) West Africa impact evaluation effort, in coordination with HQ technical departments.
- Performance review **process**: Line managing Ops director presenting performance to other Ops and Tech Directors on yearly basis.

### 5.4.3 Role, responsibilities and procedures

Along with mandates and priorities formulated under recommendation 4, the WARO with the guidance of the Steering Committee should quickly clarify roles, responsibilities and procedures for the below processes. Once clearly established, such procedures should be widely disseminated across the network staff.

**Recommendation 7:** Define and communicate roles, responsibilities and procedures adapted to ACF priorities.

- **Formulate** and **communicate** HQs/WARO/COs roles, responsibilities for identification,

formulation, technical support and evaluation of **thematic projects**.

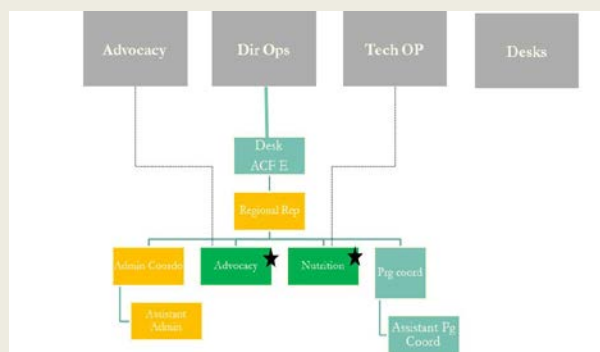
- **WARO rep to be systematically invited to ACF EMT** when an emergency strikes in the region.
- **Formulate** and **communicate** ways of working to accommodate partners that will want to keep funding multi-country operational projects, seeking a minimal involvement of the WARO (reporting consolidation, donor liaison).

#### 5.4.4 Define and implement an HR strategy

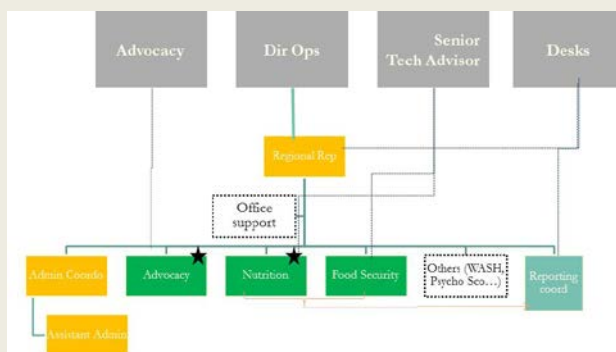
A greater focus quality, learning, and promotion of harmonisation through capacity building will require a different HR strategy, prioritising senior technical staff, with autonomy, ability to engage in policy dialogue, and with specific fundraising objectives. The below recommendation specific the main lines of a HR strategy objective that would support a reformed WARO positioning.

**Recommendation 8:** adapt HR strategy to WARO role.

- Seek funding for priority positions (see below),
- Senior staff, working under senior technical advisors backstopping,
- Secure funding for family posting for all positions,
- 2 years contracts, with fundraising objectives attached to each senior technical staff.
- National position for reporting coordinator.



**Today:** Orange –funded by ACF funds, Green + star – partially secured, light blue – not yet secured.



**Recommended:** Orange –funded by ACF funds, Green + star – Partially secured, green without start: to seek funding in priority, light blue – not yet secured, dotted line: second priority.

### 5.5 Success factors and lessons for potential other regional offices

This report is suggesting ways to help focusing the WARO on a more specific niche, and play a facilitating rather than a leading role as a “**strategic developments office model**”. Despite such recommended adjustments, our evaluation of the first 3 years of the WARO is clearly positive. WARO has clearly add value to ACF in the region, especially in strategic development and advocacy, beyond negotiating and managing several multi country projects in response to the Sahel 2012 emergency, it has also helped securing funding for one strategic project (AFD), as well as offered a platform to attach collaborative projects (RECA, CALP).

Here are a few lessons and decisive ingredients for the WARO early development success. Some of these are relatively obvious, but basics lessons are often critical.

### **West Africa and Dakar opening unique opportunities**

- A regional approach in West Africa is extremely relevant, starting with donor liaison, as many traditional ACF donors are not permanently represented in the Region. In this respect (access to donors) the Dakar is probably a unique place (Nairobi isn't comparable in this respect).
- The Sahel context is very comparable and interrelated across the region. Regional integration (markets, development policies...) are more integrated in the ECOWAS zone than anywhere else in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Dakar isn't just a hub for the humanitarian sector (useful for coordination) but also for regional institutions<sup>2</sup> (much more important for advocacy opportunities))

### **A solid start**

- The WARO was partially funded by the WARHF grant for the last two years, and this program was essential for the WARO to establish its legitimacy. The WAHRF was partially focused around networking and coordination, helping the WARO to build foundations for its own development. Clearly, having secured institutional funding in line with some of its strategic orientations has been an important factor of WARO's development.

### **People have been decisive to WARO's success**

Here are key qualities that Patricia Hoorelbeke could offer to ACF as a regional representative. This ability to quickly add value has been important to WARO early development.

- Ability to formulate quickly relevant strategic and programmatic documents,
- Solid professional networks in the region and within ACF HQ,
- Combining technical and management skills,
- Having something to offer to country offices (quality technical support, strategic vision for the region, networks in various countries).

### **Solid interests and commitment from HQs is critical**

Representatives sometimes deplore too weak ACF involvement in the WARO, yet, significant HQ support has been provided in a useful and decisive way.

- Resources dedicated to regional strategy formulation,
- Significant and committed core cost funding.

### **Proactive communication is required**

One cross cutting element that was underdeveloped is internal communication. Few people were aware of WARO developments and mandate before the 2012 Sahel emergency which led HQ staff to interact more

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<sup>2</sup> Ouagadougou (CILSS) and Niamey (Agrymet) also host important regional institutions with regards to regional food security

closely with the WARO. In the future, it would be important for ACF to more proactively manage internal communication about innovative projects. Donor partners too need to better understand how responsibilities are shared between WARO, HQs and Country Offices. A maximum of harmonisation of ways of working across HQs is critical in this respect.

## 6 Annexes

### 6.1 Annex 1: List of interviewed people

#### WARO Staff

Anais Lafitte	WARO	Regional Representative
Barbara Frattaruolo	WARO	Programme Coordinator
Cristina Garcia	WARO	Administrator
Magali Dulauroy	WARO	Nutrition Specialist
Martin Morand	WARO	Advocacy Specialist
Alexandre Gachoud	WARO	FSL Specialist
Christophe Breyne	WARO/CALP	CALP advisor / Ex Programme Coordinator

#### WARO Steering Committee Members

Mariana Merelo Lobo	ACF-UK	Operations Director
Vincent Taillander	ACF-France	Operations Director
Vincent Stehli	ACF-Spain	Operations Director
Anne-Dominique Israel	ACF-France	Senior Nutrition Advisor
Eric De Monval	ACF-France	Desk Officer (Sierra Leone/Liberia)
Charmaine Brett	ACF-USA	Desk Officer (Nigeria)

#### Country Directors

Franck Vantelle	ACF-Spain	Mali CD
Anne Bichard	ACF-France	Burkina Faso CD
Thierry Metais	ACF-Spain	Niger CD
Nicolas Méron	ACF-Spain	Mauritania CD
Claire Berthomieu	ACF-France	Sierra Leone CD
Hannibal Woredu	ACF-France	Liberia CD
Thomas Loreaux	ACF-France	Ivory Coast CD
Beatriz Navarro Rubio	ACF-Spain	Guinea CD
Yann Dutertre	ACF-Spain	Senegal CD

#### Other HQ Staff

Marisa Sanchez Peinado	ACF Spain	Nutrition Advisor
Julien Jacob	ACF Spain	FSL Advisor
Olivier Longué	ACF Spain	General Director
Anne-Lyse Coutin	ACF-France	FSL Desk



Olivire Freire	ACF-France	Nutrition Desk
Gilles Bonnet	ACF-France	Financial Director
Florence Daunis	ACF	IEC Advisor
Olivie Freire	ACF-France	Nutrition Advisor
Elena Gonzalez	ACF-UK	Advocacy Advisor
Fabienne Rousseau	ACF-France	Nutrition Advisor
Elise Rodrigez	ACF-France	Advocacy Advisor
<b>External Stakeholders</b>		
Patrick David	FAO	Regional Advisor Emmergencies
Jan Eijknaar	ECHO	Resilence and Agir Technical Assitant
Helene Berton	ECHO	Sahel Technical Assitant
Jean-François Brière	DFID	Programme Manager
Stephanie Sobol	OFDA	Support Relief Group
Mbake Niang	Oxfam GB	Programmes Director
Naoura Labidi	WFP	Regional Food Security Advisor
Patricia Hoorelbeke	UNICEF	Nutrition Advisor / /Ex WARO REP
Noël Tzekouras	OCHA	Depute Regional Representative

## **6.2 Annex 2: Documentation reviewed**

- OCHA, Sahel Regional Strategy, 2013
- ACF WARO, MOU in the Management of the Regional WARO Office, ACF, 2012
- ACF West Africa Operational Strategy, 2011 - 2015, ACFD, 2011
- ECHO, Humanitarian Implementation Plan 2013, West Africa and Sahel Region, 2012
- ACF WARO, West Africa Advocacy Initiative – Nutrition For Survival And Development Malnutrition Zero In West Africa Stop Malnutrition Advocacy Initiative Nutrition For West African Children 2011-2015
- ACF WARO, Guidance Note on Ways of Working between WARO, Countries/ Missions and HQs
- ACFWARO, Sitreps, Steering Comitee Meeting minutes, Madrid (2012) and Dakar (2011) mettings minutes
- ACF, External Evaluation of ACF International’s Response to The West African Sahel Food Crisis 2012, Draft Report
- ACF WARO, Budget Follow Up data, Financial Data, Job Descriptions
- USAID, 2012, Sahel JPC Strategic Plan: Reducing Risk, Building Resilience and Facilitating Inclusive Economic Growth

## 6.3 Annex 4: Terms of Reference

### Objectives of the Evaluation

1. To assess the added value of having an ACF regional structure in West Africa.
2. To review the experiences (positive and negative) of WARO since its founding.
3. To provide strategic and operational recommendations for the future of WARO.

### Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation will address 5 key areas relating to WARO activities and must investigate the questions hereunder, and provide recommendations for the future of WARO (as outlined in section 6).

1. ACF West Africa Strategy
  - How coherent is the strategy with the strategies of UN agencies, the main donors and NGOs?
  - Is the strategy in-line with the regional analyses of the humanitarian sector?
  - How does WARO contribute to a more effective implementation of the ACF West Africa Strategy?
  - How does WARO contribute to better coordination across the 'WARO network' (HQs involved in WARO Steering Committee) and West Africa country missions?
  - Does WARO facilitate the alignment of country strategies with ACF West Africa Strategy?
  - How has WARO contributed to the roll-out of the SUN initiative across ACF countries of operation?
  - Is the coordination of emergency preparedness and response positioning support given by WARO fit for purpose?
  - How can ACF improve the follow up of the West Africa strategy and consolidate more data analysis from different missions to improve WARO positioning?
2. Funding
  - How has WARO contributed to attracting more funding for ACF operations and to funding dedicated to the treatment of malnutrition?
  - What effect does WARO have on the ability of individual missions to secure funding?
  - What effect does WARO have on the ability of ACF to secure emergency funding?
  - Does WARO serve as an appropriate mechanism through which to receive and disburse funds to missions across the region?
3. Advocacy
  - Has WARO contributed towards a more coherent regional advocacy strategy?
  - Does WARO give ACF increased leverage in the region in terms of advocacy?
  - Have WARO advocacy activities been effective in putting nutrition higher on the agenda for donor government and national governments?
4. Programme Coordination
  - Has WARO lead to a more coherent implementation of programmes across the region?

- Has WARO increased efficiency in the implementation of regional programmes?
- Has WARO facilitated and enhanced experience, information and knowledge sharing (technical or otherwise) across ACF country programmes?
- How does WARO contribute to better coordination (in general) across ACF West Africa country programmes?
- How does WARO contribute to enhanced partnership with local and/or international actors?

#### 5. Management

- Is the current management structure of WARO suitable for the intended objectives?
- What are the main strengths and weaknesses of the role of the WARO steering group approach?
- What actions have been taken by ACF HQs to enhance ownership of the WARO mandate and ensure its added-value is strengthened, and what further or other actions could be taken?
- Are the current validation, information and communication procedures and systems between the HQs, the WARO and the country missions efficient? How could they be improved?
- Has the shared housing of the WARO and the ACF-Senegal mission proven beneficial?
- What has it implied in terms of risk management and resource optimization?
- Is the sharing of roles & responsibilities between the WARO and the HQs efficient and appropriate for ensuring a satisfactory management of the project cycle for regional programmes? Here one should pay particular attention to the role of technical and finance staff and to associated operational processes for the follow-up of and support to regional project management.
- Is there a need to revise the positions of some WARO team members, and revisit the sharing of responsibilities between the WARO, the HQs and country missions, in order to enhance efficiency and streamline validation, information and communication processes?
- Is the governance mechanism democratically structured?

#### 6. Recommendations and the future of WARO

- Is the creation of a regional office on the model of what was done for the WARO an experience that would be worth replicating?
- Assess the vision of ACF International in the region over the next 5 to 10 years.
- What do HQs and country missions think the WARO should do, not do or improve on?
- Could WARO have added-value in providing human resource, logistics and supply chain support to the missions?
- What would be the key lessons learnt from the WARO experience that should be taken into account when creating another regional structure: factors of success, challenges & stumbling blocks, mitigating measures, governance mechanisms, operational processes, etc.?
- The evaluation is expected to produce dated, measurable and specific recommendations on what should be done to enhance the added-value and efficiency of the WARO, at the various levels which have been explored during the evaluation: country mission, WARO and HQ, in the fields of governance, management & operational processes, strategy, program coordination and funding.

## 6.4 Annex 3: BFU data

Pays	Contract Red = Regional	Start	End	Date BFU	Total Budget		% money /%time		%time - % money	
					(Budget currency)	Total Spent	Red = Very late Orange = late Green = about on time	Red = Very late Orange = late Green = about on time		
Mali	A1AE	12/07/2011	12/07/2015	31/12/2012	1 797 745	335 965	0,51	0,18		
	A4AA	01/08/2009	31/12/2012	31/12/2012	931 390	853 235	0,92	0,08		
	A4AD	12/07/2011	11/04/2015	31/12/2012	1 797 745	335 965	0,48	0,21		
	B2AA	29/09/2011	31/03/2013	31/12/2012	559 973	409 213	0,87	0,11		
	D3AB	21/11/2011	20/11/2012	06/02/2013	86 326	66 405	0,63	0,44		
	D3AC	16/05/2012	18/03/2013	06/02/2013	855 026	750 003	1,01	-0,01		
	D4AA	01/05/2012	31/12/2012	06/02/2013	471 656	136 849	0,25	0,86		
	F7AA	31/03/2012	31/07/2013	06/02/2013	328 845	48 932	0,23	0,49		
	F7AB	07/12/2012	31/12/2012	06/02/2013	2 436 000	0	0,00	2,54		
	H9AB	01/09/2012	31/03/2013	31/12/2012	50 000	14 867	0,52	0,28		
	J3AC	20/07/2011	19/07/2014	06/02/2013	611 639	183 770	0,58	0,22		
	JGAA	01/03/2010	31/08/2014	06/02/2013	2 000 001	1 223 848	0,94	0,04		
	JGZA	15/03/2012	31/12/2012	06/02/2013	97 783	73 800	0,67	0,37		
Niger	F1AB	01/03/2012	31/03/2013	31/12/2012	842 238	456 511	0,70	0,23		
	H9AE	01/05/2011	30/10/2013	31/12/2012	2 000 001	1 179 917	0,88	0,08		
	KBAB	01/01/2012	31/12/2013	31/12/2012	230 000	47 045	0,41	0,30		
	A1AC	01/05/2012	28/02/2013	31/12/2012	1 000 000	659 238	0,82	0,15		
	F2AC	20/08/2012	30/06/2013	31/12/2012	900 000	80 292	0,21	0,33		
	E2AC	01/09/2012	31/08/2015	31/12/2012	595 202	0	0,00	0,11		
	A4AD	01/01/2013	31/12/2015	31/01/2013	1 050 720	203 465	7,06	-0,17		
	NEE2AC	01/09/2012	31/08/2015	30/11/2012	714 244	0	0,00	0,08		
Guinee	J7AA	01/01/2012	31/12/2013	31/12/2012	225 000	139 492	1,24	-0,12		

	F3AA	25/03/2012	25/03/2013	31/12/2012	100 000	30 497	0,40	0,46
	F4AA	01/12/2012	30/09/2013	31/12/2012	501 310	0	0,00	0,10
	<b>GNA1AD</b>	15/05/2012	31/12/2012	30/11/2012	510 092	518 914	1,18	-0,15
Mauritania	JGAA	01/03/2010	28/02/2014	31/12/2012	1 225 948	1 107 518	1,27	-0,19
	A4AB	01/01/2011	31/08/2013	31/12/2012	450 000	438 232	1,30	-0,22
	<b>F1AA</b>	01/03/2012	31/03/2013	31/12/2012	940 250	376 975	0,52	0,37
	<b>F7AA</b>	01/08/2012	31/05/2013	31/12/2012	3 010 403	539 790	0,36	0,32
	A1AE	01/05/2012	31/03/2013	31/12/2012	384 844	185 113	0,66	0,25
	B2AA	03/09/2012	04/09/2013	31/12/2012	1 216 594	95 434	0,24	0,25
	H7AB	01/10/2012	30/06/2013	31/12/2012	29 217	2 509	0,26	0,25
	H9AB	01/08/2012	30/06/2013	31/12/2012	50 000	594	0,03	0,44
	HA9C	01/11/2012	31/05/2013	31/12/2012	561 215	66 618	0,42	0,17
	<b>MRA1AF</b>	01/08/2012	15/12/2012	30/11/2012	510 000	458 836	1,01	-0,01
Senegal	A1AA	01/04/2012	30/04/2013	31/12/2012	535 000	303 818	0,82	0,13
	D3AA	20/07/2012	30/12/2012	31/12/2012	419 718	182 420	0,43	0,57
Sierra Leone	<b>A13</b>	15/05/2012	31/12/2012	31/12/2012	490 535	490 534	1,00	0,00
						387 401		
	D3E	01/05/2012	31/03/2013	31/12/2012	847 927 118	511	0,63	0,27
						813 424		
	D3G	01/08/2012	31/12/2012	31/12/2012	813 432 929	118	1,00	0,00
	<b>E4A</b>	01/09/2012	31/08/2015	31/12/2012	618 749	29 909	0,44	0,06
	F4C	01/03/2012	28/02/2013	31/12/2012	200 000	84 712	0,51	0,41
	G1A	01/02/2010	31/01/2013	31/12/2012	902 401	807 789	0,92	0,08
	H3H	01/08/2012	31/03/2013	31/12/2012	28 200	16 684	0,94	0,04
	H7AB	01/05/2012	31/12/2013	31/12/2012	147 379	41 931	0,71	0,12
	D6B	01/06/2012	31/12/2012	31/12/2012	84 986	78 696	0,93	0,07

Burkina Faso								
Z6D	01/09/2012	31/12/2012	31/12/2012	9 541	9 541	1,00	0,00	
A3A	01/05/2012	01/04/2015	31/12/2012	3 358 080	826 622	1,07	-0,02	
A3B	01/04/2011	31/03/2013	31/12/2012	1 236 848	1 001 010	0,92	0,07	
H3I	15/10/2012	30/04/2013	31/12/2012	24 415	3 718	0,39	0,24	
H3H	15/05/2012	31/12/2012	31/12/2012	64 174	55 627	0,87	0,13	
H3F	01/12/2012	31/03/2013	31/12/2012	90 596	56 443	2,49	-0,37	
H0A	01/01/2012	31/12/2013	31/12/2012	9 500	10 213	2,15	-0,58	
BFF7AA	01/05/2012	28/02/2013	30/10/2012	3 351 207	94 152	0,05	0,57	
BFF1AA	01/03/2012	31/03/2013	30/12/2012	639 094	341 376	0,69	0,24	
E4B	06/09/2012	31/08/2015	30/12/2012	1 432 355	47 009	0,31	0,07	
D6A	25/05/2012	31/12/2012	31/12/2012	3 970 000	3 964 335	1,00	0,00	
A1F	01/06/2012	28/02/2013	31/12/2012	2 150 000	1 332 168	0,79	0,16	
Tchad								
H1F	10/07/2012	30/04/2013	30/11/2012	103 827	96 757	1,92	-0,45	
H2G	01/02/2012	31/01/2013	30/11/2012	88 594	86 624	1,18	-0,15	
G1A	01/07/2012	30/06/2013	30/11/2012	164 339	121 021	1,76	-0,32	
F7D	01/04/2012	31/12/2012	30/11/2012	1 000 000	579 539	0,65	0,31	
F7C	01/05/2012	30/04/2013	30/11/2012	6 199 999	5 228 323	1,44	-0,26	
F1B	01/03/2012	31/12/2012	30/11/2012	507 048	499 212	1,10	-0,09	
B2E	01/05/2012	30/04/2013	30/11/2012	991 475	827 562	1,43	-0,25	
A1N	01/02/2012	30/09/2012	30/11/2012	1 025 000	1 002 046	0,78	0,27	
A1M	01/02/2012	31/01/2013	30/11/2012	1 120 000	1 041 872	1,12	-0,10	