



Real Time Review of the DFID funded  
humanitarian programmes in the Sahel  
2013-2014

July 2014

**FINAL REPORT**

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## Reference Map

### SAHEL REGION: REFERENCE MAP



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

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Source: UNOCHA

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The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this paper are entirely those of the authors.

They do not necessarily represent the views of DFID and its affiliated organizations, or those of the

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## Acronyms

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| ACF      | Action contre la Faim: <i>Action Against Hunger</i>  |
| AQMI     | Al Qaida au Magreb Islamique: <i>Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb</i>   |
| CRENAM   | Centre de Récupération Nutritionnelle Ambulatoire pour la Malnutrition Modérée: <i>Outpatient nutritional recovery and education centres to treat cases of moderate acute malnutrition</i>     |
| CRENAS   | Centre de Récupération Nutritionnelle Ambulatoire pour la Malnutrition Sévère: <i>Outpatient nutritional recovery and education centres which deal with severe acute cases of malnutrition</i> |
| CRENI    | Intensive nutritional recovery and education centres   |
| CR/PGCCA | Comité Régional de Prévention et Gestion des Catastrophes et des Crises alimentaires: <i>Regional Committee for the Prevention and Management of Disasters and Food Crises</i>                 |
| CSB      | Corn Soya Blend  |
| DAC      | Development Assistance Committee   |
| DFID     | Department for International Development (UK)  |
| DRENA    | Direction Régionale de l'Éducation Nationale: <i>Regional Directorate for education</i>  |
| ECHO     | European Commission Humanitarian Office  |
| ENSA     | Enquête Nationale de Sécurité Alimentaire: <i>National Survey on Food Security</i>   |
| EWS      | Early Warning System   |
| FAO      | Food and Agriculture Organisation (UN)   |
| FCO      | Foreign and Commonwealth Office  |
| FGM      | Female Genital Mutilation  |
| GIE      | Groupement d'Intérêt Economique: <i>Economic Interest Group</i>  |
| HCR      | High Commissioner for Refugees (UN)  |
| HD       | Health District  |
| HI       | Handicap International   |
| ICRC     | International Committee of the Red Cross   |
| IGA      | Income Generating Activity   |
| INSO     | International NGO Safety Organization  |
| IPC      | Integrated Food Security Phase Classification  |
| IRC      | International Rescue Committee   |
| JAM      | Joint Assessment Mission   |
| LRRD     | Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development   |
| MAM      | Moderate Acute Malnutrition  |
| M&E      | Monitoring and Evaluation  |
| MEAL     | Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning  |
| MINUSMA  | United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali   |
| MUJAO    | Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest:  |
| NGO      | Non-Governmental Organization  |
| OECD     | Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development  |
| OFDA     | Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID)  |
| OGB      | Oxfam Great Britain  |
| OSV      | Observatoire de Suivi de la Vulnérabilité: <i>Vulnerability Monitoring Observatory</i>   |
| OXFAM    | Oxford Committee for Famine Relief   |
| PBS      | Personnes à Besoins Spécifique: <i>Persons with Specific Needs</i>   |

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| PDM     | Post-Distribution Monitoring   |
| PRORESI | Program to strengthen the resilience of poor and very poor populations and to improve food security in the most affected regions by the crisis of 2012 |
| REPI    | Projet de Relèvement des Populations suite aux Inondations de juillet 2010:  |
| RTR     | Real-Time Review   |
| RUTF    | Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Foods   |
| SAM     | Severe Acute Malnutrition  |
| SCAP/RU | Community Early Warning and Emergency Response System  |
| SCI     | Save the Children International  |
| SGBV    | Sexual and Gender-Based Violence   |
| SINUS   | UN integrated strategic framework for the Sahel  |
| SMART   | Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely  |
| SMT     | Security Management Team   |
| SPONG   | Secrétariat Permanent des ONG: <i>Permanent NGO Secretariat</i>  |
| STD     | Services Techniques Décentralisés: <i>Decentralized Technical Services</i>   |
| TPM     | Third Party Monitoring   |
| UN      | United Nations   |
| UNDAF   | United Nations Development Assistance Framework  |
| UNHAS   | United Nations Humanitarian Air Service  |
| UNHCR   | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees  |
| UNICEF  | United Nations Children's Fund   |
| URD     | Urgence Rehabilitation Développement: <i>Emergency Rehabilitation Development</i>  |
| USAID   | United States Agency for International Development   |
| WASH    | Water/Sanitation/Hygiene   |
| WFP     | World Food Programme (UN)  |

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The present Real-Time Review looked at the DFID-funded humanitarian programmes in the Sahel region (Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad) in 2013-2014. It focused on three key elements:

- A systemic analysis across the different countries to identify key generic issues and lessons to be learnt, including sector-specific issues of relevance for the whole region;
- Specific issues and constraints that led to differences in programme achievements either between countries or between agencies;
- How flexibility is managed both in relation to operations and in the relation to DFID.

The Sahel belt is regularly affected by a variety of crises where droughts, or sometimes floods, alternate with locust infestations, conflicts over resources and those resulting from the rise of fundamentalist. In this complex and fast-changing context, the DFID funded programmes variously address the following issues:

- Nutrition and food security in the context of a bad harvest or bad pastoral;
- The impacts of the Malian conflict, both in Mali and in neighbouring countries.

## ○ Relevance

The distribution of UK-funded aid is coherent with the level of fragility of the different populations involved. Despite an insufficient focus on food security issues, the wide range of activities funded by DFID in the Sahel reflects a proper understanding of the imperative need for multi-sector action.

## ○ Efficiency

Two-thirds of DFID's 2013 funding for Sahel went to three UN agencies, with WFP taking the lion's share (32% of all UK aid in 2013). NGOs directly received less than a fifth of the resources but actually delivered more than 50 % of the assistance funded by DFID through partnership agreements with UN Agencies.

**Recommendation: Explore further the options of direct allocation of funds to NGO to limit the costs related to the UN intermediary role, which isn't always necessary. This could allow for a better balance of funds between the parts encompassing direct access to beneficiaries and the management costs.**

## ○ Effectiveness and Timeliness

Significant progress has been made in the Sahel in the area of food crisis prediction and diagnosis. However, in spite of existing early warning systems in the region, there remain some crucial time gaps between the analysis of collected data and decision-making processes.

**Recommendation: Resource mobilisation calendars should be adapted to projected variations in the context and aimed at prevention rather than responding to food crises. It is fundamental to ensure that programmes continue both to respect planting dates (rainy season and off-season) and manage hunger gaps (which are different for nomadic groups and farming communities).**

**Recommendation: Wider mutualisation of knowledge within and between field teams could help to draw up more detailed maps of issues, priority needs and characteristics of different operational areas. This kind of synthesis document would be very useful to support advocacy efforts, for example, when Local Development Plans are being drawn up.**

The beneficiary selection process was largely based on the involvement of community selection and complaints committees and on their in-depth knowledge of households. Most of the time, the criteria used (based on the Household Economy Approach methodology) were sufficiently clear and objective to resolve possible disagreements and establish acceptable compromises between committees, villagers and, if necessary, the operating partner. Security risks linked to the context or to project management, were well taken into account by all DFID operational partners. Only in a few cases did operational partners suggest to DFID to adapt projects or programmes. This appears to have been a missed opportunity as DFID is known to be a flexible donor.

**Recommendation: The ability to adapt programmes to context changes remains an area where there is a constant need for improvement, in particular concerning the appropriate choice of M&E indicators, the revision of feedback mechanisms with the populations and the timeliness of programme adjustments.**

## ○ Results and Impact

### Nutrition, WASH and Health

Malnutrition in Sahel is the result of complex processes where family destitution as a result of shocks is often compounded by poor feeding practices, bad hygiene and poor health. Compared to areas where no assistance was provided by external partners (except government support), operational partners observed better values for several key indicators such as the level of use of services, infant mortality rate and level of contraception and a clear improvement in eating and hygiene practices due to the relay system and house visits.

**Recommendation: Although programmes aiming to reduce malnutrition can be very effective, they also encounter numerous difficulties, especially in targeting and supply chains. Despite the known difficulties encountered in the local production sites (reliability, hygiene, etc.), one key area which should be further explored is locally-based production of RUTFs.**

**Recommendation: In the area of reproductive health, sensitization efforts could reinforce the impact already reached in terms of feeding habits, hygiene and access to care. For this, future programmes could take the example of “husband schools” in Niger<sup>1</sup>.**

WASH activities (i.e. a combination of activities improving access to potable water, to basic sanitation and to better hygiene practices) have been central to many of the programmes by DFID’s partners.

**While WASH activities had a real positive impact in the fight against malnutrition and the creation of a healthy environment, some people may stop applying these good practices during the lean seasons or when the basic services are not anymore present.**

**Recommendation: Cultural barriers or any other delicate subject can be overcome by a proper social science analysis of the issues at stake and culturally-adapted community mobilisation.**

### Food and economic security

Food aid remains a real challenge in terms of logistics, programming, targeting, prevention of negative impacts on farming communities, etc. Cash transfers allowed to avoid, or at least to postpone, the adoption of negative strategies (exodus, women and children working), and to protect the livelihoods of those who had been significantly weakened by the crises of previous years.

<sup>1</sup> Example previously described of SCI project, in the department of Tessaoua, Niger (pilot phase).

Supporting income-generating activities has helped to encourage on-farm consumption, improve nutrition and families' health by diversifying food, and covering additional education and health costs. Income-generating activities for women also improve social cohesion, help them to become financially autonomous and consequently reduce the risk that they will resort to harmful survival strategies.

**Recommendation: Enhanced monitoring and the search of innovative approaches are of special importance when managing sizeable food aid programmes.**

**Recommendation: IGA programming requires regular monitoring and follow-up of productive projects and the integration of a regular support to reduce the failure and drop-out rates. In a medium-term perspective, it is also crucial to provide and/or advocate for a continuous support to the IGAs with a view to build communities and individuals' resilience.**

DFID partners have engaged in all kinds of agricultural activities ranging from input distribution programmes to irrigated schemes to family level gardening. Several of DFID's partners also engaged in the distribution of animals. This is seen as a substantial support to rebuild the basis of the family economy.

**Recommendation: In the current agro-climatic context of Sahel, options for more sustainable and medium-term solutions to combat poverty and malnutrition should be explored and are probably to be found in the whole agro-processing sector (forest, livestock, fishing and agriculture products), though there is a shortage of processing units.**

Among refugee populations for instance, there may be possibilities for promoting self-sufficiency and at the same time, for scaling down assistance and introducing selective targeting in a medium-term perspective (2-3 years).

**Recommendation: Gradually decreasing assistance over time and instigating selective targeting should be considered depending on the situation and the needs to be covered, with the goal of promoting self-sufficiency amongst those receiving assistance.**

## Protection and Education

Apart from a few specifically mandated agencies, only a limited number of DFID's partners have made protection of civilian populations a key priority.

**Recommendation: In contexts where protection issues, tensions, even conflicts are largely triggered by manipulated ignorance, it is essential to move forward on the two fronts of protection and education. This approach is expected to have an impact on SGBV and other gender/diversity protection issues not only on the long run, but also relatively rapidly as well.**

## Unexpected effects

**Recommendation: Harmful effects of humanitarian assistance should be avoided or minimized as much as possible. This could possibly be translated into alert or sentinel indicators, which would be integrated into the M&E systems and indicate whether the project may be conducive to some negative or counterproductive effects.**



### ○ Connectedness

The decentralized technical services often do not have financial, material or human means to take over service delivery in the long term.

**Recommendation: In order to promote the active participation and effective ownership by national institutions, one strategy is to proceed to the gradual handing over of the cost of staff and supervision. This requires a medium term perspective (3-5 years).**

To increase the link between emergency solutions and medium-term support, DFID's operational partners have been coordinating among themselves in humanitarian forums. Still, not enough has been achieved in terms of coordination with development actors present in the region. Various needs not covered by humanitarian programs of short duration should be transmitted and better integrated into development programs, specifically in the design of BRACED consortium, in which several of humanitarian DFID partners also participate.

**Humanitarian funding would be required for a minimum period of 12-15 months and if possible for a three year period.**

### Conclusion

There are still a series of caveats and areas where improvements can be nurtured. The following recommendations may help to further improve these programmes, still ongoing:

- Revisit the allocation process between NGO and UN agencies in order to ensure that the highest level of resources reaches the affected populations. This should be done on a real analysis of comparative advantages, capacities and know-how.
- Revise the whole alert and diagnosis mechanism and make it more humble and more "risk taking". The fact that there is much uncertainty in the conclusions of the *Cadre Harmonisé*, which is more based on an attempt to reach consensus between a large panel of stakeholders rather than on sound evidence, should be acknowledged. It would be important to firmly underline the principle of "no regret" and acknowledge the concept of "optimal ignorance" ;
- Continue to explore the possibilities of developing locally-produced RUTFs or other products for treating malnutrition as an alternative to the expensive "Plumpy" products despite existing difficulties in the current and past experiences,
- On the basis of the existing experience in Niger (3N) and Mauritania (EPEL), develop strategies that would facilitate and stimulate the active participation and effective ownership and therefore engagement of nationals in the coordination;
- Develop a culture of "agile institutions" with enhanced and more fluid dialogue between the aid agencies and DFID to ensure the optimal level of flexibility in the programmes and facilitate a permanent and accountable adaptation to changing contexts and needs. For certain agencies, the multi-level bureaucracy and the fear of displeasing donors are giving rise to missed opportunities for programme adaption.

# FULL REPORT

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## 1. Methodology and constraints

### 1.1 Objectives of the Real-Time Review in the Sahel

This report presents the main findings of the Real-Time Review of DFID-funded humanitarian programmes in the Sahel region (Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad) in 2013-2014. This analytical work has been performed by Groupe URD ([www.urd.org](http://www.urd.org)) and is complementary to the Third Party Monitoring exercise (TPM). The field missions were carried out at the end of 2013 and early 2014.

### 1.2 Methodology

The RTE team made full utilization of the results of the Third Party Monitoring (TPM), especially of the comprehensive data base set up in 2013 where project proposals and interim and progress reports could be stored in a systematic manner.

The RTE focused on three key elements:

- A systemic analysis across the different countries to identify key generic issues and lessons to be learnt, including sector-specific issues of relevance for the whole region;
- Specific issues and constraints that led to differences in programme achievements either between countries or between agencies;
- How flexibility is managed both in relation to operations and in the relation to the donor (DFID).

In each country visited, stakeholder interviews and field visits with direct observation and interviews of beneficiaries were carried out, in parallel to consultation of all the appropriate documentation made available by DFID's partners.

The Review is based on the OECD DAC criteria of:

- Relevance
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Connectedness
- Impact

### 1.3 Constraints

While the NGOs responded very positively and were extremely supportive, consultations with the agencies with special status and special rules for external evaluations required much more effort. At the beginning of the Third Party Monitoring, a specific mission to Dakar had to be organized in order to meet the regional offices of UN agencies and getting approval from their headquarters involved a very lengthy process. This affected not only the Third Party Monitoring, but also partly the Real-Time Review. Based on advice from DFID, agencies like the ICRC and the WFP were treated in a special way.

The security situation is very difficult in several countries in the region and this affected both the Third Party Monitoring and Real-Time Evaluation as much as it does DFID's operating partners. Specific measures had to be taken to overcome this situation. They include, when imposed by partners such as UNHCR, to travel with armed escorts. In other contexts, the team had to be totally independent in terms of logistics to go to areas where non African staff would not be going (Northern Mali), to study in-depth the reports of other monitoring systems established by NGO (using African institutions to carry out third-party monitoring) or the organized workshops and other collective exercises to ensure that local actors, partners and affected populations could expose their views to the RTE team.

## **2. Generic issues across the whole Sahelian zone**

### **2.1. Aridity, vulnerability and conflict**

The Sahel belt is regularly affected by a variety of crises where droughts, or sometimes floods, alternate with locust infestations and conflicts over resources. The accelerated recurrence of drought renders inter-crisis recovery largely insufficient to ensure proper coping with any new upcoming hydric stress and rural vulnerability in some part of the region. This situation is worsened by demographic growth, increased pressure over natural resources and the lack of interest on rural issues by donors and some governments over the last decades.

Most recently the rise of fundamentalist groups added a new layer of conflicts, insecurity and vulnerability across the whole region, and led to greater population displacement both across borders and within particular states. It is in this complex and fast-changing context that organisations funded by DFID established their presence and sometimes kick-started new operations in 2012 or 2013.

### **2.2. The need for a cross-sector approach to address multi-dimensional problems**

The DFID funded programmes under study had started in 2013 and many of them were still operational at the time of the RTE field visits (January-May 2014).

These programmes variously address the following issues:

- Nutrition and food security in the context of a bad harvest or bad pastoral conditions resulting from the 2011/2012 bad harvest and its "aftershocks" in terms of destitutions and vulnerability ;
- The impacts of the Malian conflict, both in Mali and in neighbouring countries in terms of vulnerability, aid requirements, protection needs and management of natural resources in fragile environments.

More specifically DFID's identified its main objectives in its 2013-2014 strategy as:

- Reducing morbidity and mortality by fighting malnutrition;
- Supporting health services and the water and sanitation sector;
- Strengthening food security;
- Providing displaced people with shelter;
- Supporting basic protective measures.

This led to a complex choice of programmes and agencies, where NGOs, UN Agencies and Red Cross institutions are the main partners of DFID. In the context of the Sahel belt, years of sector-specific interventions have demonstrated their inability to address multi-dimensional issues. Over the last years, the changing patterns of crises (more and more complex and compounded) and the analysis of root causes led most actors to conclude that multi-sector programming would be required to have any significant impact. Even in the protection sector (which often requires a specific and fined-tuned approach, especially in the case of refugee protection and SGBV<sup>2</sup>), the IRC experience in Mali shows that child protection can require a “whole of community approach”, which is multi-sector in essence.

### 2.3. Programming in low population density areas

Throughout the Sahel, DFID’s partners are operating in areas with the following constraints:

- Low population density in most parts of the sub-region, with rapidly growing urban centres (of different sizes), creating pull and push factors;
- Difficult and costly logistics means needed to access populations in their own settlements;
- Variable but often limited presence of a functioning state system at decentralized levels with stronger bodies at central level ;
- Significant presence of pastoralist societies and nomadic systems of production in articulation with agriculture-based systems. Whilst history recounts frequent tensions between sedentary groups and nomadic people, it tends to forget the complementarities and social contracts that allowed for real complementarities between these different groups.

These factors specific to the Sahelian context significantly impacted the *modus operandi* of humanitarian actors, i.e. the mobility of the teams, the timeframe for programme implementation and the operational costs. In addition, and despite commendable efforts to engage with state service deliverers, the private sector and local NGOs, these constraints led to a lot of substitution by operational actors.

### 2.4. Security of staff and operations

As clearly indicated in DFID Travel Advice websites (see below), there are currently risks of insecurity in the Sahel linked to the Malian conflict (possible importation of tension between rival Tuareg clans), the infiltration of ex-combatants linked to radical Islamic movements (AQMI in Algeria, Mali and Mauritania, and Boko Aram in Nigeria), and informal gold mining (Burkina Faso). There is a possibility that these risks may increase in certain areas (e.g. Bogandé region in Burkina, Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal regions in Mali, or Mbera region in Mauritania).

FCO<sup>3</sup> Travel Advice website available for any updates on the security situation in the region:

- <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/mali>
- <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/niger>
- <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/burkina-faso>
- <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/mauritania>
- <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/chad>

<sup>2</sup> SGBV: Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.

<sup>3</sup> FCO: Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

As a result, the vast majority of DFID’s operational partners have had to put in place relatively sophisticated security management systems, based on sets of procedures (governing the presence of expatriates in the field, travel modalities in the project areas, monitoring and information-sharing systems between their bases and between the neighbouring countries, etc.).

*In Niger, operational areas and humanitarian operators have not been the victims of armed attacks recently. The armed groups seem to be looking for targets with greater institutional weight (police stations, prisons, etc.). Security or “border” monitoring is centralized in Niamey, and information is shared in collaboration with the Gao office (Mali).*

*In Mali, the majority of DFID’s NGO and United Nations partners are members of the Security Management Team (SMT). NGOs funded by DFID work regularly with INSO (also co-funded by DFID) and are involved in an informal group known as the “heads of missions in the North” which meets frequently. In addition to these information sharing and security analysis systems, each DFID partner in Mali has their own monitoring and analysis process, which is updated more or less frequently (every 6 months in the case of Oxfam – guidelines are then produced on the basis of this updated analysis of risk). The incident involving national ICRC staffs who were taken hostage in February in the region of Gao-Kidal (the MUJAO have claimed responsibility) is a new phenomenon that will need to be watched with great care.*

*In the whole region, the context has to be constantly and regularly monitored. In the field, security information is collected on a day to day basis. Various DFID-funded partners produce situation reports each month which describe the main developments in the sub-region in terms of security, socio-demographic trends, population displacement, etc., and which could have an impact on programmes.*



*MINUSMA<sup>4</sup> patrol accompanying an ambulance, in Gao (Mali)*

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<sup>4</sup> MINUSMA: Mission multidimensionnelle intégrée des Nations unies pour la stabilisation au Mali: *United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali.*



### 3. Overview of DFID-supported operations in the Sahel in 2013

#### 3.1. Relevance

##### 3.1.1. Level of aid per country

The distribution of aid is coherent with the level of fragility of the different populations involved. This is notably shown by figures 1, 2 and 3. Besides:

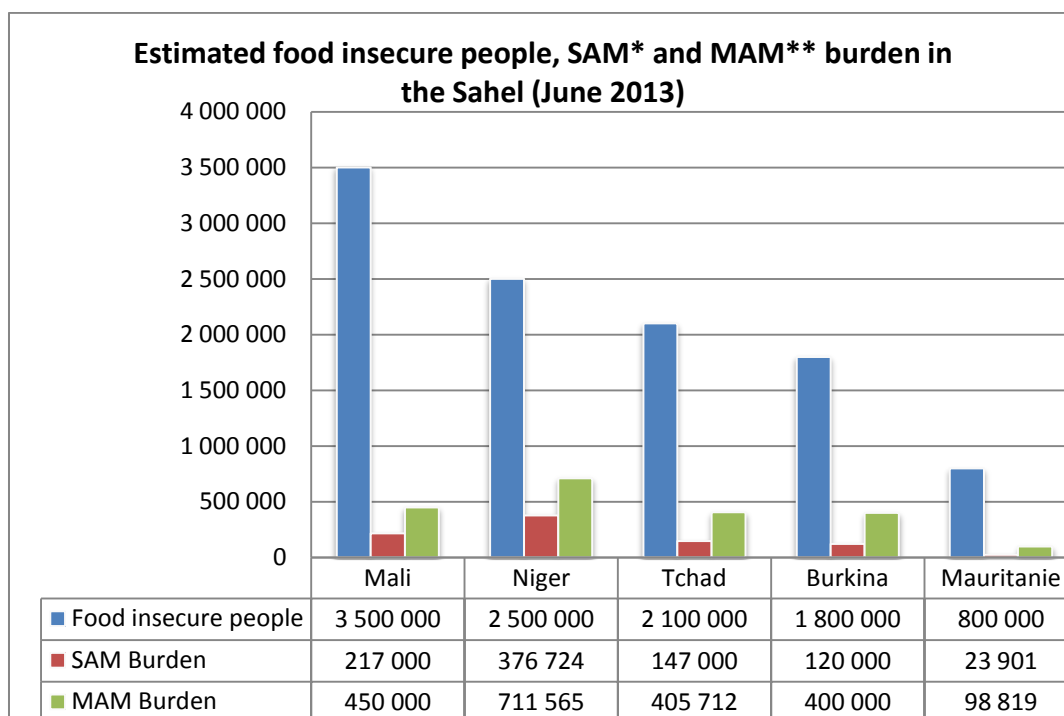
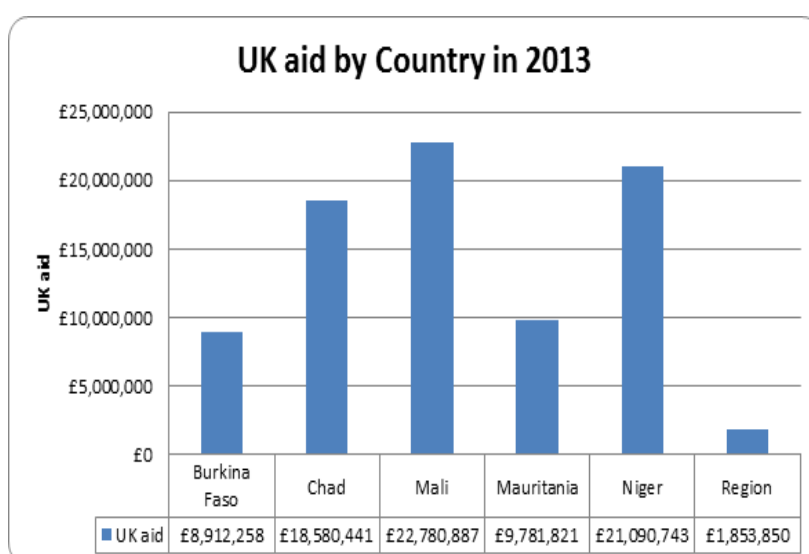


Figure 1: **Malnutrition levels in Sahel, per country.**

Source: Sahel Regional Strategy, Mid-Year Review 2013, OCHA.

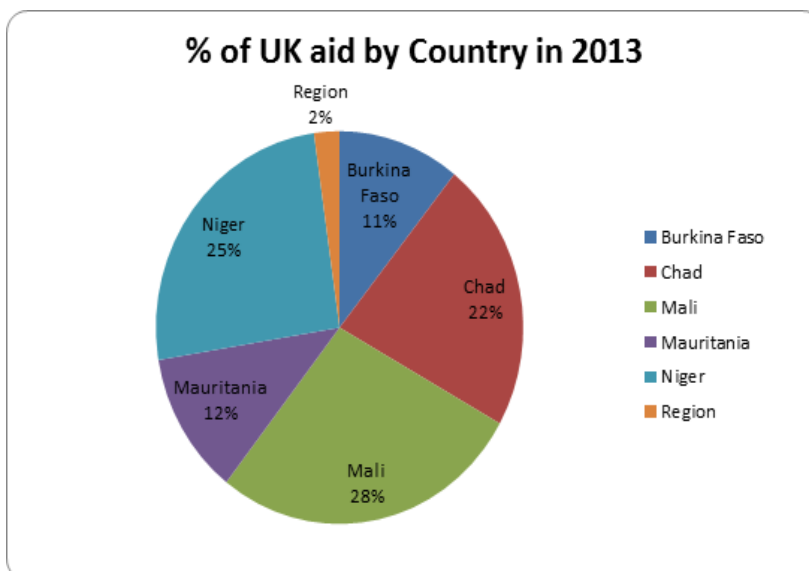
\*: Severe Acute Malnutrition

\*\* : Moderate Acute Malnutrition



The country that received most aid is Mali followed closely by Niger and Chad. Then countries mostly affected by the side-effects of the Mali crisis and by the final after-shocks of the 2011-2012 food crisis.

Figure 2: **Amounts of UK aid in the Sahel region, per country.**



In Mali, there continues to be political instability and a conflict situation in the North;

In Niger and Mauritania, there is substantial chronic food insecurity and large numbers of Malian refugees;

Figure 3: Repartition of UK aid in the Sahel region, per country.

In Chad, there are still significant secondary effects from the 2012 food crisis, a chronically high malnutrition rate in the Sahel belt and long-term refugees.

The smaller allocations to Mauritania and Burkina Faso were mainly aimed at Malian refugee camps and operations to combat malnutrition in specific territorial pockets.

### 3.1.2. Sector choice

The wide range of activities funded by DFID in the Sahel reflects a proper understanding of the imperative need for multi-sector action.

Even if DFID did fund agriculture coping mechanisms initially through NGOs (for instance in Mali with HI in Timbuktu and OXFAM in Gao), this remains relatively limited and is likely to be even more so with the move to delivering agricultural support through the BRACED programme. While agriculture and livestock are obviously among the key pillars of resilience, they are also central to survival “in crisis” (prevention of seed thirsts, support to “destocking processes”, etc.) and should therefore not be “abandoned” to the post-crisis resilience building agenda. The lack of visibility of the humanitarian potential of “agriculture in crisis” unfortunately reflects the relatively weak FAO involvement in the humanitarian field in the region and related limited advocacy on the subject.

Compared to just a few years ago, there is now much more experience of running cash and voucher-based projects in the Sahel region, reflecting the importance of providing people with a broader range of options.

*For example, in the Gao region (Mali), each of the 3 organisations we visited had included a cash-based component in their programmes. While ACF chose cash for work (community work involving the preparation of plots aimed at young people – Bogou), Oxfam ran a food voucher system contribute which clearly boosted trade for the partner shops. As for WFP, after having discussed the most appropriate transfer methods with regard to the needs of the population and the context, they decided to put in place cash distributions. Despite the different implementation methods, all of these*

activities were very beneficial for the population (reduction of harmful strategies, protection of livelihoods and active members of the population who had been significantly weakened by the crisis, etc.). They show that there is increasing expertise in this domain in the region.

### 3.2. Efficiency

In 2013, DFID allocated humanitarian resources to a wide range of humanitarian actors, including UN agencies, NGOs and the Red Cross Movement.

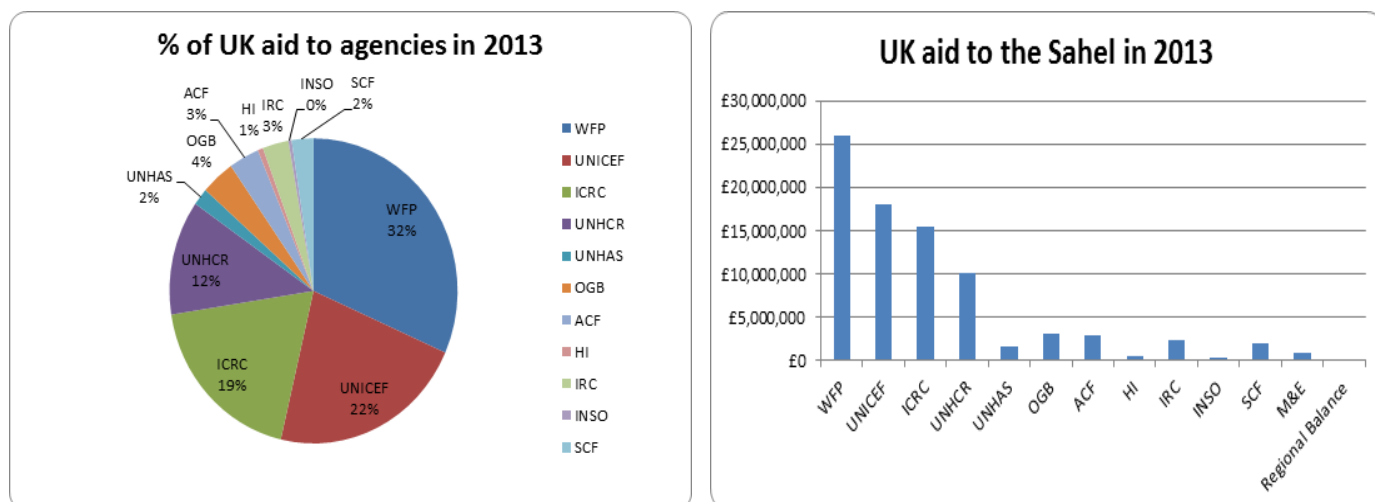


Figure 4 & 5: Repartition and amounts of UK aid in the Sahel region, per agency.

Two-thirds of DFID’s 2013 funding for Sahel went to three UN agencies, with WFP taking the lion’s share (32% of all UK aid in 2013). This can be explained by the fact that the conflict in Mali, and the consecutive massive displacement of populations, has reinforced the threat of food crisis in a region where chronic vulnerabilities already existed due to recurrent droughts and crop failures.

The ICRC received approximately 19% of the whole envelope, allowing it to implement its relatively complex multi-sector assistance and protection mandate in areas with high transaction costs.

NGOs directly received less than a fifth of the resources but actually delivered more than 50 % of the assistance funded by DFID in the Sahel through partnership agreements with UN Agencies. Agencies like UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP deliver most of their assistance through NGOs and to a limited extent through national institutions. The remaining funds are used for coordination, reporting and management issues. Allocating resources directly to NGO could be more efficient in terms of actual percentage of assistance reaching the beneficiaries through a limitation of the number of intermediaries that need to sustain their own institutional set-up. However the financial capacities and the political weigh of NGOs limit their absorption capacity. Therefore, at a time when “transactional costs” become an issue for donors, is seems inevitable that large amounts will be directed to large agencies (which take heavy overhead fees) even if it is at an “efficiency cost”.

**Recommendation: Explore further the options of direct allocation of funds to NGO to limit the costs related to the UN intermediary role, which isn’t always necessary. This could allow for a better balance of funds between the parts encompassing direct access to beneficiaries and the management costs.**

### 3.3. Effectiveness and Timeliness

#### 3.3.1. Diagnosis, decision-making and resource allocation

Significant progress has been made in the Sahel in the area of food crisis prediction and diagnosis. National and regional Early Warning Systems (EWS) are in place and most DFID-funded partners are either involved in these or take their warnings into account when preparing and designing intervention schemes.

*Oxfam's project in Niger supports 6 SCAP/RU5 and 3 OSV6, who collect a variety of indicators related to the agriculture and livestock sectors, the evolution of market prices, health (animal and human) and malnutrition, the environment and natural resources, social relations and conflict and exceptional situations (fires, bushfires, floods, etc.). The OSVs and SCAP/RUs make up the basic network of the monitoring system in terms of food security and should eventually play a major role in the prevention and management of crisis and disaster situations.*

The introduction of a West African approach of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) has been a major step forward in early warning system in the region<sup>7</sup>. Nevertheless, delays and difficulties in getting this appraisal right affected the elaboration of a shared vision and a coordinated response in 2011 and 2012. This was still the case in 2013, with delayed and confusing messages about the severity of the crisis. As a result, it had a negative impact on donor decisions (late and reduced financial contributions, for instance) and delayed the whole response.

In spite of existing early warning systems in the region, there remain some crucial time gaps between the analysis of collected data and decision-making processes. For instance, some late financial validations by DFID (in regard with the most appropriate implementation period) negatively impacted several projects.

*In Burkina Faso, financial validation by DFID (early July) of the SCI project did not allow cash transfers to be carried out at the beginning of the lean period, but only from mid-September until December (4 payments). To launch a cash transfer programme in new operational areas, a minimum of 2 months of operational preparation is felt to be necessary as it includes: presenting the programme to the local authorities and getting them to sign a collaboration agreement; disseminating to the targeted villages and beginning community mobilization; recruiting a full-time team; and, selecting and identifying the beneficiaries.*

*In Chad (ACF), the implementation of health gardens started too late in relation to the best gardening and marketing period in the area (October-November), so as to fully take advantage of the availability of water. Because of some delay in receiving DFID agreement to re-orientate the funds (from October 2013 to December 2013), the women beneficiaries were able to start the market gardening activities, only towards the end of February. This late start implied significantly reduced yields, because of the rise in temperatures between March and May.*

Despite anticipating changes in food prices (at the launch as well as throughout projects), the implementation of projects was disturbed by a very poor agro-pastoral season in 2013-2014. According to several field teams, there is a risk that the current extended lean period will mean that

<sup>5</sup> SCAP/RU: Système communautaire d'alerte précoce et de réponse aux urgences (Community Early Warning and Emergency Response System). A SCAP/RU covers an area which includes several villages.

<sup>6</sup> OSV: Observatoire de Suivi de la Vulnérabilité (Vulnerability Monitoring Observatory)

<sup>7</sup> This version is called "Cadre Harmonisé Bonifié".

it will be necessary to support communities again during the next lean period (June-September 2014). This is why NGOs have issued very strong warnings and advocated for funds to be made available in a timelier manner in order to deal with the threat of an impending food crisis.

*In Mali, 11 humanitarian organisations (including Handicap International, ACF, IRC and Oxfam, all of whom are DFID partners) recently organized a mobilisation (in February 2014) to warn the donor community of the extremely worrying food security situation in the North of the country, and called for funding for emergency aid to be increased.*

*A similar initiative took place in Chad via a consortium made up of the three DFID-funded NGOs (ACF, Oxfam and IRC)*

Throughout the whole of the Sahel area, the dissemination of two tools in particular (analysis of the household food economy and the Harmonised Framework<sup>8</sup>) is very useful in terms of standardising methods, data collection and dialogue between actors. However, there is also a risk that this will reduce sources of triangulation and over time homogenise the analysis of situations.

In numerous contexts, tools for anticipating needs, such as national vulnerability studies or Outcome Analyses show whether specific populations or an entire geographical area are likely to face food insecurity. In this regard, DFID's recent decision to grant a 6-month cost extension is crucial to ensure optimal coverage of seed needs and hunger gaps during the summer of 2014. Indeed, there is a real threat of an impending food and nutrition crisis in several regions (North Mali, the Sahelian belt of Chad, Mauritania and Niger).

**Recommendation: Resource mobilisation calendars should be adapted to projected variations in the context and aimed at prevention rather than responding to food crises. It is fundamental to ensure that programmes continue both to respect planting dates (rainy season and off-season) and manage hunger gaps (which are different for nomadic groups and farming communities).**

### 3.3.2. Targeting and feedback processes

In the first place, the identification of intervention areas is often decided in concordance with the national vulnerability assessments carried out by national authorities (generally on an annual basis). However, the disaggregation level of collected data is often insufficient to highlight pockets of food insecurity and to make comparative analyses of vulnerability below the departmental level, i.e. to identify the most critical communes and villages.

Besides, field-based warning systems (such as the SCAP/RU in Niger or the "Listening Posts" methodology implemented by ACF), or coordination platforms on Food Security, are not widespread and operational across all national territories. Thus, the irregular dispatch of focal points (linked to governmental entities or local authorities) for data collection may introduce a political bias in the identification of priority areas in the national studies<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Since the early 2000s, the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) has been engaged in the development and testing of the Harmonised Framework for the Analysis and Identification of Areas at Risk and Vulnerable Groups in the Sahel, more commonly referred to as the *Cadre Harmonisé* (CH). Initially the CH was tested in six countries (Burkina, Chad, Senegal, Mali, Mauritania and the Niger), with further on-going technical developments and refinement to the tools and process.

Cf. [http://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/templates/ipcinfo/Docs/10.\\_West\\_Africa\\_Brief.pdf](http://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/templates/ipcinfo/Docs/10._West_Africa_Brief.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> In Niger, the studies carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture ("Results of the Harvest") are known to be more exhaustive than the national vulnerability assessments.



Where they exist, DFID partners do promote the exchange of their monitoring information for advocacy purposes, in particular to contribute to national assessments which will determine the geographical scope of the national response.

*In Niger, the regional consultation framework (and its bodies at the communal level), and the food security cluster, act as an exchange and communication platform. In this framework, Oxfam/IDELA took part in vulnerability studies conducted by the Regional Committee for the Prevention and Management of Disasters and Food Crises (CR/PGCCA).*

*The data gathered by ACF's Listening Posts are used to write a quarterly note on food security and the nutritional situation. In Burkina, the Ministry of Agriculture started to apply the Listening Posts' methodology in Ouagadougou and the Eastern region (pilot phase), in complement to the Harmonised Framework and with a view to integrate it into the national EWS scheme.*

*In Chad, WFP actively supports the government to conduct the ENSA (Enquête Nationale de Sécurité Alimentaire) which is the main source of information on the food security in the country. UNICEF do the same for the SMART survey in the realm of nutrition.*

**Recommendation: Wider mutualisation of knowledge within and between field teams could help to draw up more detailed maps of issues, priority needs and characteristics of different operational areas. This kind of synthesis document would be very useful to support advocacy efforts, for example, when Local Development Plans are being drawn up.**

- Key interlocutors whom we met (the district health authority, local technical services, local authorities: mayors and prefects, etc.) were very appreciative of the participatory approach that was used when projects were designed.

*In Niger, the assisted communities appreciated their involvement in the targeting and beneficiary-selection processes (lists finalised by the selection committees and verification visits by the partner). This said, awareness-raising efforts need to be continuous in order to forge and maintain the involvement of communities (water management committees, complaints committees, etc.).*

*Concerning the IRC project (Niger), some key interlocutors (particularly the Health District Manager - HD) underlined the importance of the participatory approach used to run the project. From the beginning, the project was conceived in consultation and in support of the health authorities, steered by the HD. The need to increase coverage of treatment for severe malnutrition without complications (in CRENAS<sup>10</sup>) at the health dispensary level was identified and the selection of dispensaries was partly undertaken in collaboration with the HD.*

*In Chad, the officials of the Regional Health Delegation, the Health Districts and the Health centres was grateful about their collaboration with WFP, UNICEF and IRC in the management of severe and moderate acute malnutrition.*

*In Mali (Gao region), the participatory approach adopted by ACF was greatly appreciated by the different authorities. The implication of the technical services in the design and implementation of the*

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<sup>10</sup> CRENAS: Centre de Récupération Nutritionnelle Ambulatoire pour la Malnutrition Sévère: *Outpatient nutritional recovery and education centres which deal with severe acute cases of malnutrition.*

*project was also very positive in a context where the return of the administration remains a major challenge.*

- The beneficiary selection process was largely based on the involvement of community selection and complaints committees and on their in-depth knowledge of households. In the majority of project settings, village leaders did not take a central role in committees.

*In Burkina Faso, the community leaders such as Village Development Councillors were not necessarily part of the selection committees and played more of a community mobilisation role.*

*In the case of ACF in Burkina Faso, the Action Sociale services were also involved in the targeting of beneficiaries.*

*In Chad, in ACF's and Oxfam's operational areas, in the villages there was awareness of the beneficiary selection process, selection committees were formed and everyone was informed of the selection criteria.*

During the process, almost no complaints were made to village General Assemblies (held to elect committees, clarify criteria and validate lists of names).

If no demands or complaints were made (either directly to the operator or during village assemblies), this is probably due to the synergy between the two committees which made it possible to find a compromise within the community. Besides, the difference in vulnerability was very small between certain beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries (due to the quota approach) and people tended to accept their fate while they waited for new projects in the future.

However, there is still a risk that many complaints were muted due to social pressure or the authority of the village chief.

*In Niger, the SCI operational team (Niger) explained that no complaints were directly made to them (notably via the evaluators), as culturally complaints are not made to the organisation that has come to provide assistance. However, complaints did make their way to village chiefs. In the case of ACF in Burkina Faso, a few appeals were made by committees for people to be added and these were then examined via assessment visits by ACF staff.*

*In Chad, the people explained to the evaluation team that they did not understand ACF's choice to continue operations only in the villages which had received assistance in previous years. It is important to underline that the choice of villages was not made based on the agricultural year of 2013/2014.*

In the end, the village committees (selection, complaints and elders) often considered their role to be that of mediators and negotiated solutions which were satisfactory for everyone in the village. In the majority of cases, reminding people of the criteria, the assessment visits carried out by the operating partner and appeals for patience (with a view to the "next time") by committee members were enough to calm the proceedings.

**Most of the time, the criteria used (based on the Household Economy Approach methodology) were sufficiently clear and objective to resolve possible disagreements and establish acceptable compromises between committees, villagers and, if necessary, the operating partner.**

### 3.3.3. Adaptability and flexibility

- One of the key characteristics of the crises in the Sahel is the high level of uncertainty. To manage this, DFID's partners established monitoring systems based on a variety of indicators in the field and compared them with official data, such as:
  - The prevalence of malnutrition and hygiene-related diseases.
  - Cases of unusual and premature mass displacement. Monitoring this indicator is linked to the analysis of work opportunities and factors of instability in neighbouring countries (Libya, Mali and Nigeria).
  - The evolution of cereal and agricultural produce prices. This data makes it possible to anticipate the coverage of food needs and fluctuations in purchasing power (for foodstuffs).
  - The adoption of coping strategies (gathering wood, women and children working, etc.).
- Certain partners have developed specific nutritional and epidemiological monitoring systems which they are currently testing.

*SCI includes a variety of sentinel indicators as key parameters in its Outcome Analysis. The Outcome Analysis is a framework for analysing vulnerability which is based on the comparison of the current period with a reference period for the different socio-economic groups in a given area. It shows which socio-economic groups will be unable to maintain or protect their livelihoods, and when, and helps to identify and quantify the needs to be covered.*

*ACF's surveillance system, known as the 'Listening Post', allows the impact of shocks on the nutritional situation of children between 6 and 24 months and the food situation of households to be evaluated in real time. It includes the quarterly monitoring of the price of staple foodstuffs (sorghum and millet).*

The majority of NGOs have internal M&E<sup>11</sup> and programme revision mechanisms. The results of activities, planning and the difficulties and issues met can be discussed at various meetings and the necessary adjustments decided.

*SCI has developed a coherent monitoring tools box which includes the logical framework, the M&E plan, the table of indicators and the action points to implement the necessary corrective measures. A system for managing indicators has been tested since December 2013 in Niger (first in Tessaoua, then Niamey and soon in Zinder). For the different SCI offices present in the Sahel area, the sharing of programme information takes place via the regular meetings between the MEAL<sup>12</sup> Officer and the Head of Base. The M&E is multi-sector and the different programmes transfer their information. An M&E exchange meeting is held every quarter bringing together all the bases to discuss all aspects related to M&E and share experiences and good practices. At the national level, the country management meeting allows the Heads of Bases, Heads of Programmes and the Director of Operations to outline solutions to the different operational constraints and challenges that exist. For the HCR, the two annual programme reviews (July and December) are an opportunity to review their partners' activities and budgets. The results of these reviews are systematically shared with all the partners and other actors involved during feedback workshops with management and field staff. On*

<sup>11</sup> M&E: Monitoring and Evaluation.

<sup>12</sup> MEAL: Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning.

*these occasions, the recommendations that are made are discussed, which make it possible to establish an operational consensus and make decisions about the re-adjustments that are necessary.*

- Activity monitoring is largely used by DFID-funded partners across the whole Sahel region as a tool to check if what was carried out corresponded to what had been planned. In these cases, the staff on the ground judged the initial timetable of activities to be realistic and feasible, and did not point to any problems in terms of financial, human or material resources in carrying out the programme.

*Within SCI, an internal monthly programme activity report allows the work of field agents and ongoing and upcoming activities to be closely followed in relation to the schedule and its regular updating.*

*In Chad, the DFID-funded NGOs' planning is rigorous. All the activities they are implementing are realistic in the context. The NGOs' teams in the field have drawn up weekly, monthly and quarterly schedules for the implementation of the projects. The schedules take into account the risks in the context and the distances and travelling conditions in the area. The regular revision of the schedule means that it can be adapted to the state of progress and any changes in the context.*

Activity timetables were regularly updated (for example, by doubling up the amount of some voucher or cash distributions to make up for the initial delay in execution). This type of revision was generally carried out during (weekly or monthly) planning meetings.

Situation monitoring is also a key parameter of overall monitoring. In some cases, the re-orientation of programmes was also based on contextual factors and changes in needs.

*In response to the expressed desire of several families to return to Mali despite the uncertain security situation and lack of basic social services, the HCR was able to provide the necessary resources and organize the return of 623 families (2764 individuals) from the camps of Tillabéri to the region of Gao, between November and December 2013.*

One of the main difficulties highlighted by all partners operating in the Sahel is the identification and monitoring of relevant indicators for nomadic and pastoral systems.

*For the HCR, these result indicators need to be qualified. The standard indicators which are used (nutrition, water) are often not appropriate to evaluate living conditions amongst Tuareg refugees. A regional workshop was therefore organised by the HCR in December 2013 to discuss how to adapt the provision of aid in nomadic environments where SPHERE<sup>13</sup>/HCR standards are sometimes difficult to apply (for example, in terms of quantity of water, the distance between a shelter and a water point, use of latrines, etc.).*

- Only in a few exceptional cases did operational partners suggest to DFID to adapt projects or programmes. This appears to have been a missed opportunity as DFID is known to be a very flexible donor. It is partly explained by some delays in implementation (due to a late financial validation) and

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<sup>13</sup> The Sphere Handbook, *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*, is one of the most widely known and internationally recognized sets of common principles and universal minimum standards in life-saving areas of humanitarian response.

the operational challenges involved, within a short period of time (6-9 months), which did not make programme adjustments possible.

*In Niger, monitoring of the situation did not lead to any requests by Oxfam for possible re-adjustments to the project (though judged to be desirable by IDELA) in the form of the extension of cash transfers or a Cash for Work programme to recuperate land. The reasons given were: the initial framing of the project (lean period) and the national protocol for cash transfers<sup>14</sup>.*

*There was a similar problem in Mali where, in certain cases, the number of beneficiaries (notably for cash distributions) should have been redefined, but this was not requested by DFID's NGO partners. This absence of "reactivity" on the part of the NGOs is regrettable, particularly as DFID says that it is willing to consider any proposed change as long as it is justified.*

*In Chad, the regular collection of information about the price of livestock (ACF project) made it possible to revise the period of distribution of small ruminants. This activity was put back to after Ramadan in order to have cheaper small ruminants. The savings made through buying small ruminants at a lower price made it possible to introduce the health garden activities which were not planned at the beginning of the project. However, due to the delay in receiving an agreement from DFID to re-orientate the funds, this activity started late, at the end of February instead of October/November.*

One of the factors causing blockages in relation to the reactivity of decision-making in response to changes in the context has to do with the weak power of referral of the complaints committees, i.e. the virtual absence of information which was communicated to them.

Indeed, it was observed that beneficiaries were more likely to express their feelings/dissatisfaction through other channels (PDM, informal channels). One of the reasons given was the fear that they would no longer receive aid if they complained to the committees.

*In Niger, the effectiveness of complaints committees was the subject of collective discussion and an experience sharing exercise between a variety of humanitarian organisations (Oxfam, CONCERN, Save the Children, ACTED, ACF and World Vision) in November 2013. The main corrective measures which were decided were to build the capacity of the complaints committees and to diversify the channels through which information could be passed on (for example, by putting in place suggestion boxes in villages and installing telephone lines).*

**Recommendation: The ability to adapt programmes to context changes remains an area where there is a constant need for improvement, in particular concerning the appropriate choice of M&E indicators, the revision of feedback mechanisms with the populations and the timeliness of programme adjustments.**

#### 3.3.4. Managing risks to maintain programme effectiveness

In the highly risk-prone areas of the Sahel, DFID's partners apply a number of measures so that programme implementation occurs with an acceptable level of risk-taking.

<sup>14</sup> The Government and Partners Support Plan is seasonal and transfers are due to expire on 30 September.



Security measures, including contingency plans, the recruitment of security officers, investment in radio and telecommunications and in training are all seen as critical by DFID's partners.

*SCI analyses events, possible incidents and their potential impact on activities during weekly meetings (operational base). The security plan is updated every semester.*

*ACF has a security monitoring system which consists of gathering information in real time in the field (incidents, strikes, robberies, hold-ups, etc.). This information allows the organisation to systematically brief its staff and visitors about the security situation, security rules and how to behave if there is an incident.*

*In Mali, INSO provides NGOs who do not have the competencies to establish monitoring mechanisms and develop contingency plans with support. Training courses on these subjects are very well received.*

Programme-induced security concerns are also seen as part of project management. During cash transfer operations, security risks were relatively moderate when they involved the distribution of vouchers. To minimize the risk of theft and hold-ups, only certain focal persons were informed within the community and at the last minute about the exact day and location of the distribution.

*For cash distributions in Timbuktu (Mali), the WFP secured the sites by systematically warning the forces of the MINUSMA of the date and exact time of the distribution. More generally in Mali, mitigation involves local traders who are responsible for delivering the cash at the distribution sites (for a percentage of 6%). The possibility of using of mobile phones is currently being explored.*

*Having conducted an evaluation of risks in collaboration with the Gao Rural Engineering Directorate (Mali), Oxfam suggested to DFID to re-orientate some activities. The evaluation, which aimed, amongst other things, to evaluate the socio-economic implications of the construction of mini dams, highlighted the major risk of conflict between sedentary and nomadic communities due to this construction. Finally, it was decided to re-direct activities to the rehabilitation of water points. Here, the reactivity of the donor and the effectiveness of exchange channels between field staff, the capital, Oxfam's regional office and DFID allowed a rapid re-orientation of activities (see previous section 3.3.3. on Flexibility and adaptability).*

**Security risks linked to the context or to project management, were well taken into account by all DFID operational partners. As a matter of evidence and except for the abduction of 5 ICRC staff (from the 8<sup>th</sup> of February to the 17<sup>th</sup> of April 20124), no security incidents were reported during or following the operations funded by DFID during the period under review.**

## 3.4. Results and Impact

### 3.4.1. Attribution clause

Many of DFID's humanitarian allocations in the Sahel go towards operations which are also funded by other donors, such as ECHO, USAID/OFDA, etc. In addition, the activities currently being funded by DFID have sometimes been built on existing programmes.

Hence, it is difficult to distinguish and attribute effects or impacts to one sole donor.

*This is the case for ACF's activities in Burkina Faso (Listening Posts, health gardens and distribution of livestock) funded on an emergency response budget line from July 13 to March 14. All of DFID's "livestock" beneficiaries (850 beneficiaries, from October to December 2013) also received cash transfers as part of an ECHO lean period project (5500 beneficiaries, from June to September 2013). In addition, the PRORESI<sup>15</sup> was designed as a relay of the REPI<sup>16</sup> in terms of resilience and will be implemented from April 2014, including DFID project areas.*

*In Chad, the DFID-funded project is part of an IRC multi-donor and multi-sector response (WASH, Health, and Nutrition) in the health district of Mangalmé in the region of Guera.*

### 3.4.2. Project indicators and outcomes

DFID-funded partners have to report regularly on the basis of set performance indicators.

Sometimes, agencies (notably among the UN) have their own result and outcome indicators.

*In Chad, in ACF and Oxfam's area of intervention, baseline, midline and end line assessments are planned to monitor the evolution of food security and livelihoods indicators (such as food consumption and expenditure, Household Food Insecurity Access Scale, Months of Adequate Household Food Provisioning, Individual Dietary Diversification Score, etc.). The review team suggests that it would be useful to take specific periods into account to carry out assessments (lean period, harvest period, etc.) rather than mechanically doing the baseline at the beginning of the project, the midline half way through the project and the end line at the end of the project.*

### 3.4.3. Effects and impacts, by operational sector

#### 3.4.3.1. Nutrition and Health

Malnutrition in Sahel is the result of complex processes where family destitution as a result of shocks is often compounded by poor feeding practices, bad hygiene and poor health.

#### Malnutrition treatment

The treatment of Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) and Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) takes several forms in the region, depending on the country policies and the capacities/competencies of the actors.

Malnutrition treatment approaches adopted by partners generally had the following characteristics:

- **The use of Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Foods (RUTF) (mainly Plumpy/Nutriset).** The sharing of responsibilities between UNICEF (SAM) and WFP (MAM) regularly created confusion. Disruptions to the supply chain may have led to the wrong RUTF products being used for

<sup>15</sup> PRORESI: Programme de renforcement de la résilience des populations pauvres et très pauvres et amélioration de la sécurité alimentaire dans les régions du pays les plus touchées par la crise de 2012 (Program to strengthen the resilience of poor and very poor populations and to improve food security in the most affected regions by the crisis of 2012).

<sup>16</sup> REPI: Projet de Relèvement des Populations suite aux Inondations de juillet 2010 (Project for the Recovery of Populations following the Floods of July 2010).

particular conditions or smaller quantities being given, thus reducing the effectiveness of the treatment.

- **The integration of malnutrition treatment services within health structures.** When applied, this has proven to be effective, notably in Niger since the 2005-06 crisis, through the distribution of RUTF rations, screening and anthropological monitoring, clinical exams for mothers and children, prevention and awareness-raising about food and hygiene practices.
- **Community-based treatment.** Household level and community-based treatment have also been used by several DFID-funded partners. However, the difficulty of controlling RUTF consumption at the family level is regularly seen as a significant weakness of these programmes.

*In Niger, the need to increase coverage of severe malnutrition without complications at the village health dispensary level was identified by IRC in collaboration with the district health authority and the other bodies concerned. IRC took advantage of a Ministry of Health policy, which consists of recruiting and appointing qualified personnel (newly qualified nurses) to health dispensaries. To maintain staff at the village level, their salaries are paid in equal parts by the IRC and the Ministry (50'000 CFA each for a monthly salary of 100'000 compared to 125'000 CFA in a health centre). This approach, which consists of treating severe malnutrition without complications at the dispensary/village level, is the first of its kind in the country. The deployment of nurses to dispensaries is a pilot project in the Filingué department and should be gradually extended to the rest of the country. In the medium term, supporting this decentralisation of health services will require investment in terms of equipment and capacity building (training of nurses).*

*In Chad, there are questions about the reliability of data provided by the health centres (where severe and moderate acute malnutrition are treated). The lack of qualified personnel in the health centres and the demand amongst adults for nutritional products<sup>17</sup> led to an overestimation of the number of admissions and of the discharge rate. Some sources estimate that, due to these biases, the number of registered patients could be twice or even three times more than the real number of children to be treated (see notably the assessment funded by UNICEF and carried out by a national NGO, in April and May 2013).*

**Recommendation:** Although programmes aiming to reduce malnutrition can reveal very effective, they also encounter numerous difficulties, especially in targeting and supply chains. Despite the known difficulties encountered in the local production sites (reliability, hygiene, etc.), one key area which should be further explored is locally-based production of RUTFs. WFP recently created a “quality support capacity” within its Dakar regional office to keep the sector under review and to play a “catalytic role” in that sector. The effectiveness of the treatment might not equal that of ‘Plumpy’ products, but its price would be more affordable for families and local health structures, given their limited budgets.

## Health

- Compared to areas where no assistance was provided by external partners (except government support), operational partners sometimes observed better values for several key indicators such as

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<sup>17</sup> PlumpyNut® and PlumpySup® are considered to be aphrodisiacs for men.

the level of use of services, infant mortality rate and level of contraception and a clear improvement in eating and hygiene practices due to the relay system and house visits.

For instance, the positive impacts noted by SCI (Niger) on the health situation and hygiene behaviour take the form of increased use of health services, number of assisted births, vaccination coverage (in areas where SCI also supports vaccination campaigns and a reduced severity of malnutrition and fewer cases of hygiene-related diseases (diarrhoea, dermatitis, etc.).

In 2008, 10 to 15 severe cases were referred to the CRENI<sup>18</sup>, after each ambulatory service with massive screening. In 2014, during the last massive screening in 3 villages, no severe case and only a few moderate malnutrition cases were detected. It is more difficult to do the same type of analysis (counterfactual) about the malnutrition prevalence, because of the demographic growth rate and the increase in the detection of cases (more massive screenings).

- Since Reproductive Health activities are not taken into account in the funded projects, indicators may remain very low (prenatal consultations, rate of assisted births, family planning). Yet, these have a direct impact on the fight against malnutrition (due to the small gaps between births and early weaning) and are just as significant as the limited availability of food or water-borne diseases.

*Because of the reluctance of husbands to join in at women's meetings, initiatives such as husbands' schools and theatre groups had very positive results in terms of raising awareness about the importance of family planning. Currently in a pilot phase (SCI, department of Tessaoua, Niger), the awareness-raising activities with the husbands could soon be extended to all the health centres in the health district. According to various community leaders (CVD in Burkina), it would be quite possible to address Burkinabe men about reproductive Health issues, by approaching them from the perspective of maternal and child health and the family economy.*

**Recommendation: In the area of reproductive health, sensitization efforts could reinforce the impact already reached in terms of feeding habits, hygiene and access to care. For this, future programmes could take the example of "husband schools" in Niger<sup>19</sup>.**

#### 3.4.3.2. WASH

During the 2013 Sahel response, WASH activities (i.e. a combination of activities improving access to potable water, to basic sanitation and to better hygiene practices) have been central to many of the programmes by DFID's partners.

UNICEF, OXFAM, ACF, IRC and others have all been involved in creating, improving, and rehabilitating water sources either at the village level or in refugee camps. This is an essential part of creating

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<sup>18</sup> CRENI: Intensive nutritional recovery and education centres.

<sup>19</sup> Example previously described of SCI project, in the department of Tessaoua, Niger (pilot phase).

healthy environments, as well as preventing malnutrition. In several pastoral contexts in particular, one difficulty was related to the dual-use wells that the local people wanted (for human and livestock consumption), which some aid actors may not accept on the basis of hygiene standards. This issue gets very sensitive in the Sahel as it involves land rights for water sources.

Hygiene promotion sessions had a real impact on the prevalence of diarrheic diseases and malnutrition. However, this positive effect is likely to be reduced during the lean period when households do not have the means to buy hygiene products.

*In Niger, the Post Distribution Monitoring showed that awareness-raising sessions clearly improved knowledge about hygiene and sanitation in Oxfam's project<sup>20</sup>. What is more, the awareness-raising sessions attracted 398 additional people, or 18% of the group of beneficiaries that had initially been targeted.*

*In Burkina, according to several interlocutors (health staff, community members, SCI agents), awareness messages were effectively communicated to the population (including people who were not direct beneficiaries), especially messages about hand washing, latrine use, exclusive breastfeeding, new-born feeding and other feeding habits for children under five. Still, SCI acknowledged facing a paradox: people know and are willing to apply new practices, but can't afford the basic needs to implement them.*

**While WASH activities had a real positive impact in the fight against malnutrition and the creation of a healthy environment, some people may stop applying these good practices during the lean seasons (when they hardly cover their food needs) or after external support ceases (especially through the home visits of NGO-supported relays, collective sensitization sessions and in some occasions, the mobile services of the closest health centre).**

#### *3.4.3.3. Behavioural change*

- Experience has shown that cultural barriers can be potential hindrances for achieving programme objectives and problematic issues for community mobilization.

*In Malian refugee camps, we were told that cultural barriers limited access to and the impact of community services (particularly Health and Education). Although resistance remains strong, the partner organizations and their community staff have observed a certain breakthrough since 2013, as certain sensitive topics (in particular SGBV-related, including FGM<sup>21</sup>) today can be discussed in focus groups with women.*

*In terms of issues for stronger mobilization, community workers often mentioned: late declaration of births, low incidence of prenatal checks, early marriages, low level of schooling amongst children (particularly girls), cases of sexual and gender-based violence (very few reported to date), some traditional forms of exploitation (among discriminated groups). These themes are also relevant for communities living in host Sahelian areas, who are often very similar in terms of cultural mores and lifestyles as the majority of Malian refugees (Tuaregs).*

<sup>20</sup> According to the PDMs, 100% of households knew that diarrhea and stomach ache were illnesses linked to poor hygiene, as opposed to 35.9% who had known before the awareness-raising sessions).

<sup>21</sup> FGM: Female Genital Mutilation.

*In Chad, the population in the operational area is structured into social classes (nobles, habibs, hadads, etc.). The nobles are generally livestock farmers and land owners. The habibs and the hadads are generally considered to belong to inferior classes who are subject to the nobles and they are the only ones who do certain activities (blacksmiths, farmers, etc.). This structuring of the population makes targeting the most vulnerable and promoting agricultural activities difficult. Indeed, traditional authorities and village representatives regularly involved in dialogue with external stakeholders (humanitarian organizations) come from the nobility. Gaining access to the habib and hadad minorities is often difficult. The nobles are not very interested in agricultural activities but the habibs and hadads who practice them are generally not landowners and cannot expand an activity or make significant changes to farming practices without the agreement of the landowners.*

- The experience in Malian refugee camps shows that the cultural proximity of community staff is key to identify and follow-up on specific vulnerable and protection cases (including, but not limited to, separated children, SGBV and forced and early marriage...<sup>22</sup>).

*For instance, working in close collaboration with the mid-wives and formulating appropriate messages and approaches to talk about SGBV, especially its negative impacts on the health of women could help to detect and then refer cases to the community relays for home visits and proper follow-up. The more sensitive questions have to be addressed in specific small groups (SGBV, sharing of aid by low castes, exploitation and forced recruitment of children...). To detect these sensitive cases, the people concerned need to know that they can speak to certain trusted focal points connected to a partner organisation (home visits<sup>23</sup>), to the HCR (pre-interview during recording), or to the health post. It will then be a case of establishing communication between these focal points to follow this up.*

- When there is appropriate cultural communication, certain messages lead to isolated cases of changed behaviour and can have a knock-on effect.

*In the Malian refugee camps, field staff reported the following situations: fathers deciding to send their daughters to school rather than marry them off; preference expressed for “local reintegration” by members of the “low” caste to escape the hierarchical system. At Goudebou camp (Burkina), a Tuareg chief said that a lot of people regret not having sent their children to school because when they return to Mali they see that this helps them to find work. Besides, in most refugee camps, no discrimination against lower classes (Bella) was observed and similar numbers of girls and boys attended the schools.*

**Recommendation: Cultural barriers or any other delicate subject can be overcome by intensive and culturally-adapted community mobilisation.**

<sup>22</sup> In the framework of refugee protection in Mbera camp, the identified vulnerabilities are: at-risk children, separated or unaccompanied children, at-risk women or girls (including female-headed households, victims of forced or early marriage, etc.), at-risk elderly persons, persons with serious medical problems, handicapped people, persons in need of legal and physical protection, cases of gender-based and sexual violence and family unification, single-headed families.

<sup>23</sup> In Niger (refugee host areas or ZAR), some “welcome visits” are carried out by the relays to orient the newly arrived families.

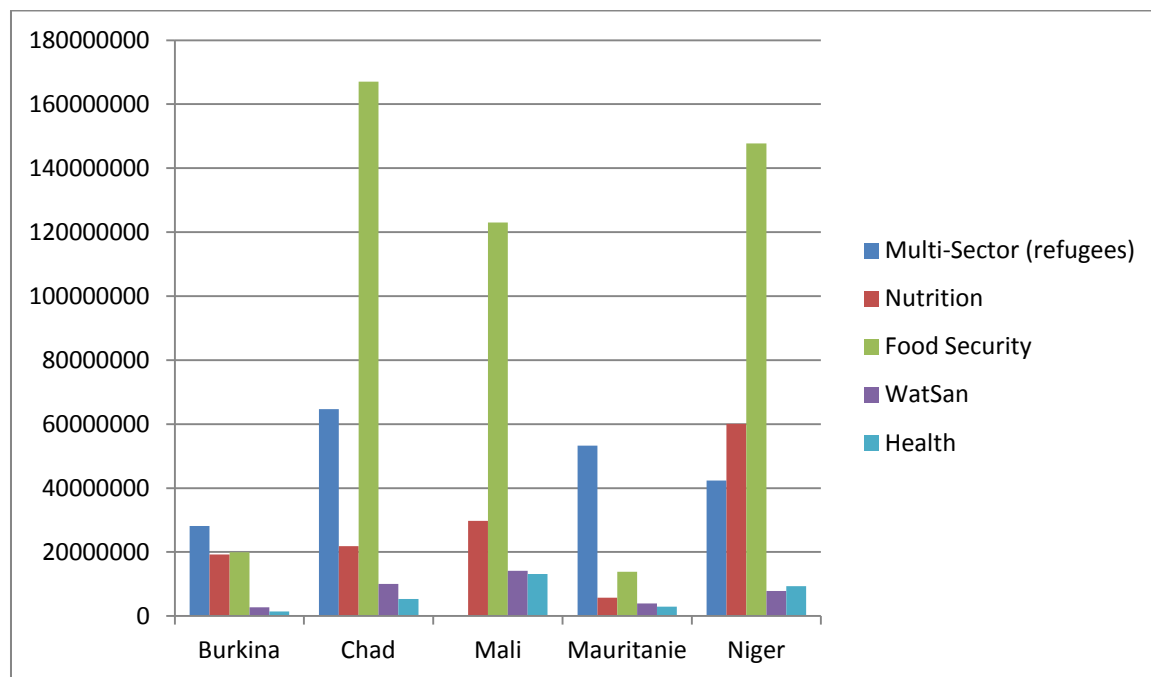


### 3.4.3.4. Food and economic security

The food security sector has been evolving very quickly and in most of the countries visited, DFID's partners and their programmes are amongst the most advanced in the field of innovations especially in what relates to cash transfer.

#### Food aid

The figure below shows, in terms of total financial value, the predominance of external funding (all donors) towards food security in the 5 Sahelian countries under review.



**Figure 5:** Sahel crisis 2013: Funding per Cluster by Country (as of 27 December 2013)<sup>24</sup>

The two main actors in this sector are ICRC, implementing its distribution through national Red Cross societies, and WFP working through its network of partners. Coordination with and contribution to government food aid programmes is also a key parameter in the food aid sector. WFP has large supply chains across the whole region while ICRC focuses its activities in Northern Mali. Important hubs, such as Mopti for Mali and Ndjamena for Chad are important parts of the system.

Food aid is either imported regionally or locally procured. Food allocation to beneficiaries is done through NGOs who have developed sophisticated targeting, post monitoring and complaints mechanisms. Most of the time, food is of appropriate quality. Several problems occurred when an insect infestation in Corn Soya Blend (CSB) resulted in serious difficulties for the distributing partners.

<sup>24</sup> Based on Humanitarian Funding (US\$), Financial Tracking Service FTS UNOCHA.

Similarly, food distributed just before the expiry date has created some difficulties in the field. Pipeline problems have regularly resulted in incomplete food rations being distributed.

Food aid has taken many different forms in the region, from direct distribution to the most vulnerable beneficiaries (unconditional, in-kind food aid), school feeding, supplementary feeding to support mothers involved in malnutrition treatment programmes, food for seed protection, etc.

**Recommendation: Enhanced monitoring and the search of innovative approaches are of special importance when managing sizeable food aid programmes in the difficult conditions prevailing in the Sahel. However it remains a real challenge at all levels: in terms of logistics, programming, targeting, preventing negative impacts on farming communities or on programmes aiming at setting-up cereal banks, etc.**

### Cash and Vouchers

- Where food was available and accessible in local markets, there was a strong incentive for WFP to move towards cash rather than food distributions, in order to bring costs down, which include handling and logistics. Hence, in parallel to general food distributions (in refugee camps and in those areas where the injection of cash could provoke high inflation), WFP offered both unconditional and conditional cash programmes, for the poorest families during the critical period of the lean and harvest season (to procure food) and to help them recover from the lean season.

These programmes were generally multifaceted, including cash transfers when feasible (for instance, in Mali, only in the main cities of the North) and cash or food for assets programmes (intended to construct or rehabilitate infrastructures, such as small dams, wells and horticultural perimeters).

*In Chad, there was an appropriate combination of food distribution and cash transfers.*

*The DFID funded NGOs (ACF and Oxfam) in collaboration with WFP combined food distribution and cash transfers. According to PDM assessments and people's feedbacks, beneficiaries mainly used the cash to cover food needs to complement the supplies that were distributed (notably sugar, tea and condiments) and to repay debts from the lean period (respectively around 53% and 28% in ACF's intervention area). According to the results of the Oxfam PDM (Niger), 93% of the amounts received were used for food. However, in the end these payments covered between 33% and 80% of monthly costs, as the initial payments were used to repay earlier debts (testimonies of beneficiaries). In addition, despite the 3 cash payments, the targeted households said that they had spent 29% of a received cash grant (intended for an income-generating activity) on food due to particularly poor harvests in October 2013 (around 80% of households reported almost no cereal or fodder crops).*

*In Northern Mali, a large part of the food assistance, such as the school canteen support provided by WFP, was "in kind" (imported rice, millet, sorghum bought in the sub-region or the country, imported legumes and oil). Though this type of assistance was particularly appreciated by the beneficiaries, at the same time it had dual repercussions on farm prices. Thus, in Timbuktu, these drops in prices prevented the producers (rice growers using motor pumps) from selling their production and limited the profitability of the production tools (pumps, etc.).*

- Although largely used to cover a large scope of needs, cash transfers did not allow beneficiaries to cover all their basic needs (food, clothing, education and health) during the lean period, as food is seen then as a top priority. Only in some rare cases, a share of the cash payments was saved to replenish the livestock or launch an IGA<sup>25</sup> (e.g. purchase of ruminants, petty trade...).

*In Burkina Faso, the planned amount for cash transfers was 32.500 FCFA (decided by the national support plan). The aim was to cover about 60% of monthly household food needs.*

*The cash transfers mainly allowed the beneficiary households to increase their cereal stocks by buying food supplies at a relatively low price (post-harvest period in November, December). In comparison with the previous years, the beneficiary households were able to postpone for a few months the difficulties related to the lean season (from April to June, and sometimes also July) and therefore reduced the tendency to resort to harmful survival strategies (food quantity reduction, work exodus, pledge or sale of their fields or herds, women and children working in gold mining sites, prostitution, etc.). Thus, cash transfers also helped to protect livelihoods.*

*According to the last PDM (carried out by SCI in Burkina), approximately 60% of their beneficiary households would be able to cover their food needs until May or June 2014, by combining the cash support and their last harvest (October 2013). Furthermore, the cash transfers had allowed 40% of households to delay the adoption of negative strategies.*

**Cash transfers allowed to avoid, or at least to postpone, the adoption of negative strategies (exodus, women and children working), and to protect the livelihoods of those who had been significantly weakened by the crises of previous years.**

### Income-Generating Activities (IGA)

- Supporting income-generating activities has helped to encourage on-farm consumption, improve nutrition and families' health by diversifying food, and covering additional education and health costs. Income-generating activities for women also improve social cohesion (occupation, social relations, mutual help mechanisms, etc.), help them to become financially autonomous and consequently reduce the risk that they will resort to harmful survival strategies (food quantity reduction, work exodus, women and children working in gold mining sites, prostitution, etc.).

*Within Economic Interest Groups (GIE<sup>26</sup>) or village groups, the women manage the money they receive to cover the needs of the family. The groups can also be given easier access to interest free loans, so that women can conduct other activities individually such as sheep fattening and selling cereals. In a small number of cases, the group produces a mutual help fund, which can be used to help a member in difficulty.*

*In several countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger), the operational staff stated that these productive groups allowed women to be empowered in decision-making and feel "stronger" and more supportive of each other. At the household level, the husband is always consulted, but the woman feels "protected" or more empowered in their decision-making, due to the presence of the collective.*

<sup>25</sup> IGA: Income Generating Activity.

<sup>26</sup> GIE: Groupement d'Intérêt Economique: *Economic Interest Group*.

*In Chad, the project supported the establishment of 20 groups representing approximately 300 women. This activity was very well conducted throughout. The period of implementation is compatible with the season and the inputs and materials are provided in sufficient quantity. A significant part of their production has been sold and has brought them an income. For these women, it was the first time they had had their own income. In Gao (Mali), income-generating activities specifically targeting young women have helped them to get out of the vicious circle of prostitution, which has become a significant problem due to the presence of the MINUSMA troops.*

- Beyond the technical support provided during the short emergency phase, the productive groups need continuous accompaniment to consolidate their organisation, their financial health and possibly launch new, sustainable income-generating activities (weaving, soap production, small businesses, etc.). They should be consolidated by reinforcing their capacity to manage themselves and to last over time

*Regarding the SCI project (Niger), it seems realistic for the Economic Interest Group to ask for a surplus of about 10% to be added to the in-kind reimbursement of the cereals distributed. This could have benefits on several levels:*

- *Providing members with a greater quantity of cereals at the next lean period;*
- *Extending the mutual help system to very vulnerable families (who are not beneficiaries of assistance programmes)*
- *Considering other types of support by the Economic Interest Group, such as school supplies at the beginning of the school year; farm equipment and inputs during the planting season, etc).*

*Concerning market gardening support activities run by Oxfam in Mali, the longer term strategy of creating a network of women's groups (with the aim of establishing a federation) will help to consolidate these activities and should be supported.*

Not all income-generating activities are certain to be maintained over time because the beneficiaries are not necessarily provided with support throughout a minimum cycle, including livestock reproduction, reselling and the renewal of the starting capital (agriculture, trade, crafts...).

It is important to recall that the success of such income-generating activities depends not only on the initial training<sup>27</sup>, but also on regular coaching.

At the time of the visit, very few operational partners had current estimates of the number of IGAs that were abandoned or were unsuccessful, or of the IGAs that were launched without grants and those still active. This type of information should be taken into account in the final (internal) evaluations of the projects, with a view to learning lessons.

- In terms of IGA targeting, it is necessary to find the right balance between motivation, aptitude and economic necessity. After the first wave of income-generating activities which act as a showcase, to demonstrate and encourage further activity, the next wave of income-generating activities should target both vulnerable people (who are willing and able) and intermediate categories (to avoid their potential destitution).

In any case, regular support for the most fragile entrepreneurs would help to avoid projects being abandoned or failing due to different kinds of shocks.

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<sup>27</sup> On this matter, it is important to develop modules which are adapted to people who are illiterate.

**Recommendation:** In order to increase its impact, IGA programming requires regular monitoring and follow-up of individual (or collective) productive projects and the integration of a regular support (through a kind of coaching) to reduce the failure and drop-out rates. In a medium-term perspective, it is also crucial to provide and/or advocate for a continuous support to the IGAs launched during the emergency phases, in a view to build the foundations of the communities and individuals' resilience capacities.

### Agriculture and livestock

In many areas of the Sahel, DFID-funded partners have engaged in all kinds of agricultural activities ranging from input distribution programmes to irrigated schemes to family level gardening.

Several of DFID's partners engaged in the distribution of animals (sheep, goats and poultry). This is seen as a substantial support to rebuild the basis of the family economy, the majority of the households targeted having lost a large part of their economic assets (livestock) during the previous years of drought and food crises<sup>28</sup>. Agencies involved in this type of programme identified the primary importance of accompanying livestock beneficiaries during the first year after the distribution of animals in order to minimise losses (essentially linked to diseases), preserve the breeding core and avoid too much selling off of household herds (during lean periods or in the event of a food crisis).

*In Mali, a certain number of partners, such as Oxfam, have decided to limit livestock distributions due to concerns about the quality of fodder resources for the coming months. Indeed, during the field visits, a lot of animals in poor condition were observed in some livestock markets such as Gao.*

*ACF's vaccinations/training in Mali, carried out in collaboration with the technical services, is an example of good practice to be encouraged.*

*In Chad, several lessons drawn from the implementation of this activity in the past made it possible to substantially improve it for the current project. The population and the technical services are very satisfied with the implementation of this activity. They underlined the low mortality of animals and the quality of their feed.*

In the food and economic security sector, projects have sometimes been replicated by the non-beneficiary population.

*A health garden project (involving a village women's group) was replicated on the basis of advice from a group that was supported by ACF (Liptougou, Burkina). Similarly, in Burkina Faso, techniques in cutting and conserving natural fodder and in composting were shared and adopted by households that were not direct beneficiaries of the project. These households therefore represent a category of secondary beneficiaries, about 7-9% of the initial caseload.*

In a growing number of areas of the Sahel, livestock farming is becoming the only option as crop cultivation limits have receded. Nevertheless, actions to support livestock farming may be limited by the poor yields (in terms of area) of fodder crops, due to conflicts between livestock farmers and

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<sup>28</sup> Animals constitute a physical saving which the family can use in a food crisis situation or other major crisis.

crop farmers (occupation of transhumance corridors) and the pressure from animals on natural resources.

**Recommendation: In the current agro-climatic context of Sahel, options for more sustainable and medium-term solutions to combat poverty and malnutrition should be explored and are probably to be found in the whole agro-processing sector (forest, livestock, fishing and agriculture products), though there is a shortage of processing units.**

### **Increasing the autonomy of communities**

The risk of reinforcing aid-dependency has also been regularly raised by DFID's partners.

Among refugee populations, there may also be possibilities for promoting self-sufficiency and at the same time, for scaling down assistance and introducing selective targeting in a medium-term perspective (2-3 years). In the camps (even more than in the refugee host areas of Niger), the main difficulties for implementation would be: the fact that there is not a great deal of variation in levels of vulnerability between population groups and that the conditions in the camp do not favour more self-sufficient lifestyles.

*For the Malian refugees, the combination of food aid (food and/or vouchers) and productive support (income-generating activities) would aim to put refugees back on the road to self-sufficiency and increase their (transferable) capital and knowledge with the perspective of returning to Mali (in the short to medium term).*

*Then, based on a more precise profiling study, it would be possible to study the feasibility of a system for gradually decreasing assistance, for example: 1/ the most vulnerable (PBS<sup>29</sup>) receive food (or/and cash) vouchers and income-generating activities; 2/ the intermediate category (less vulnerable): vouchers for a smaller amount and income-generating activities; 3/ the "comfortable" category: vouchers for a lower value.*

**Recommendation: Gradually decreasing assistance over time and instigating selective targeting should be considered depending on the situation and the needs to be covered, with the goal of promoting self-sufficiency amongst those receiving assistance.**

### **3.4.3.5. Protection and Education**

Apart from a few specifically mandated agencies (ICRC in conflict zones and UNHCR in relation to refugee populations), only a limited number of DFID's partners have made protection of civilian populations a key priority.

*In Mali (Gao region), Oxfam has integrated protection issues as part of the response (Protection & gender activities). The implementation of this "pilot activity" for the NGO has highlighted coordination challenges with other actors involved (ICRC). Furthermore, though it is still difficult to measure the impact of such activities, it has helped to identify the need for protection in the area.*

<sup>29</sup> PBS: Personnes à Besoins Spécifiques : *Persons with Specific Needs*.



Yet, protection and education have to be seen as cross-cutting issues, for instance in relation to child abuse or SGBV, especially when they get problematic according to the context features (high density displacement sites, fights over resources...).

*Regarding the Malian refugee population, more could be done to ensure cases of children dropping out of school are properly followed up, to promote the schooling of girls and children from discriminated groups (in particular from Bella and “mixed”<sup>30</sup> families), and to detect and assist SGBV victims (currently, the caseload is most probably under-estimated).*

*There may not be enough reintegration possibilities for children (10-11 years old) who have never been to school, notably through literacy and vocational training sessions. This specific segment of the population is of particular concern, as they might become the target of forced recruitment (by armed groups).*

*In the field of education in the camps, the schooling rates remain lower than expected<sup>31</sup>. This is largely due to the fact that very little existed before the influx of Malian refugees and thus, everything had to be built from scratch, from the building of schools, the recruitment and training of teachers, and awareness-raising amongst parents about the importance of education and regular school attendance.*

**Recommendation: In contexts where protection issues, tensions, even conflicts are largely triggered by manipulated ignorance, it is essential to move forward on the two fronts of protection and education. This approach is expected to have an impact on SGBV and other gender/diversity protection issues not only on the long run, but also relatively rapidly as well.**

#### **3.4.3.6. Unexpected Effects**

- Negative effects need to be minimized, such as the strategy developed by certain families of keeping children malnourished in order to be able to receive assistance, or the repercussions of aid on security for staff and the population.

*The occurrence of such risk was observed by operational teams in Niger and Chad.*

*That’s why, in Niger, the IRC has targeted women for cash transfers based on HEA criteria and without malnourished children (contrary to other beneficiaries and programs).*

*In Chad, several testimonies and observations confirmed that the RUTF, used to treat severe acute malnutrition (PlumpyNut®), has acquired a very high commercial value in the villages and thus, been diverted for adult consumption. Several health centre staff suspected “that mothers employed certain practices to reduce the weight of their children before taking them to the health centre. “Also, mothers and their husbands negotiate with the health centre managers and the volunteers to get their children admitted”, (statement by an agent of the Regional Health Delegation in Mao).*

<sup>30</sup> The term of « mixed » family refers to cases of children who have « been given to another family, generally of a higher cast, to work for them.

<sup>31</sup> This is said although the schooling rates need to be clarified after the recording operations via the biometrical procedure. Indeed, the possible over-registration of refugee children could exert a downward effect on the schooling rates.

- Projects can also have unplanned and positive effects when they provide sustainable support to local communities not directly targeted by the project, thus making them more autonomous and contributing to medium term development.

*Around the Malian refugee camps (Burkina Faso, Niger and Mauritania) and host areas (Niger), the local population received the Malian refugees favourably. Their presence sometimes boosted local markets and considerably developed economic and commercial exchanges, due to the increased availability of water, healthcare, and Tuareg networks. According to the prefect in Intekane (Niger), “a city was born”. As mentioned previously (§3.4.3.2.), a large number of non-beneficiaries assisted and applied the recommended practices on hygiene. According to several focus groups with villagers, the health benefits observed should convince those who are more reluctant.*

*Oxfam (in Niger) and SCI (in Burkina) observed that other villagers adopted new agricultural practices (for instance, on poultry farming) and launched income-generating activities after having attended awareness-raising and preparation sessions (intended in the first place for some direct beneficiaries).*

- Peaceful cohabitation and some development gains (Education, Health and Economy) have been the result of projects which benefited local communities (rehabilitation/construction of drilling sites, dams and schools, setting up of water conveyance systems, free access to healthcare, etc.). These efforts need to be supported by aid organizations and local authorities now and after the Malian refugees have left, so that the presence of the refugees can serve as a springboard to increase the resilience of Sahelian communities.

*Around Mbera camp (Mauritania), the chronic vulnerability of local populations and the forthcoming removal of thousands of Mauritians (registered as refugees) may soon reveal a dilemma of aid equity and result in unrest<sup>32</sup>, if parallel efforts are not deployed to contribute to the recovery and resilience of local populations who suffered from the previous 2012 food crisis and remain chronically insecure. Indeed, another food crisis can never be completely ruled out given the limited improvement in malnutrition indicators<sup>33</sup>.*

*At the end of May 2014, a JAM<sup>34</sup> took place in order to assess the needs of the host population. The sectors which were mentioned for increased support among the local population were: Health and Nutrition; “Wash in Nut”; Agriculture and Livestock (including animal health).*

*For the benefit of both refugee and host populations, one interesting avenue for action includes destocking programmes (with or without slaughter)<sup>35</sup>. The purchase of animals (by the aid agency) from big herders can be used for the distribution of live animals (stockbreeding of small ruminants) or as food for beneficiary groups. Simultaneously, it serves as a cash injection for the bigger herders and boosts the local economy.*

<sup>32</sup> Such discontent already led to some incidents in 2012 and 2013.

<sup>33</sup> Malnutrition rates in 2013 reached 13.1% (GAM) and 2.3% (SAM) during the summer lean season, which is as bad as in 2012. UNICEF Mauritania Monthly Situation Report, January 2014.

<sup>34</sup> JAM: Joint Assessment Mission.

<sup>35</sup> In times of drought, destocking programmes allow the animals of bigger herders to be protected, by avoiding starvation and disease due to lack of pasture, and to preserve the health of the remaining herd. It also helps the pastoralists to buy grain at pre-crisis levels and fill the hunger gap more effectively.

*In Burkina Faso, the need to support the resident population is also essential because a large part of the out-camp<sup>36</sup> refugee population (25% of the total, according to the last biometric registration) will probably choose to stay in the area.*

**Recommendation:** In the first place, harmful effects of humanitarian assistance should be avoided or minimized as much as possible. This could possibly be translated into alert or sentinel indicators, which would be integrated into the M&E systems and indicate whether the project may be conducive to some negative or counterproductive effects. Furthermore, the positive secondary effects should be consolidated before any emergency programme ends, so as to ensure there is continuity with the medium-term development of Sahelian areas, which face recurring shocks and chronic vulnerability.

### 3.5. Connectedness

For the RTE analysis, two important aspects of the DAC criteria, “connectedness”, were looked at:

- Coordination within the aid system and with the National Authorities
- Links between Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD)

#### 3.5.1. Coordination

##### The aid coordination mechanism

- In all Sahelian countries where DFID-funded programmes were implemented, DFID partners were very engaged in coordination mechanisms, especially through the cluster system. Coordination with national and local authorities is often uneven, especially outside of the realm of coordination mechanisms based in capital cities.

Discussion platforms on food security at the national level or even regular meetings to discuss, for instance, an integrated rural development strategy (agriculture, livestock farming, and environment), are still at the infancy stage

*In Burkina, another body is the SPONG<sup>37</sup>, a national platform which brings together national and international humanitarian and development NGOs, foundations, research and training centres, youth movements and thematic networks. This platform allows civil society organizations to get to know each other and to act in a coherent manner in the field and conduct joint advocacy activities vis-à-vis the state and the Technical and Financial Partners.*

What is more, other coordination issues between operating partners were mentioned during our visits. In Northern Mali, for example, it appears that the amounts distributed per household in cash activities could be multiplied by 7 depending on the organisation.

<sup>36</sup> They do not live in the camps and have decided to live with the local population because of a strong cultural proximity, or even family connections.

<sup>37</sup> SPONG: Secrétariat Permanent des ONG : *Permanent NGO Secretariat.*

Hence, it is essential that there is a move towards greater consultation between organisations in order to harmonize the amounts given.

- The Decentralised Technical Services<sup>38</sup> (including health authorities) were almost always involved in the implementation of DFID partners' projects (essentially for joint monitoring and supervision operations) and as such benefited from reinforced capacity.

*In Maradi (Niger), the livestock department has 120 para-veterinary auxiliaries (of which 102 were trained by the SCI project) who form an epidemiology warning system. However, with its own funds, the department can only carry out supervision visits once a year, during vaccination campaigns.*

*In the Health sector, SCI provides substantial assistance to the district health officer in terms of respecting national protocols, via subsidies for health staff (26 positions, out of a total of 100 in the department), logistical support, equipment and medical supplies. Yet, in the present situation, it is very likely that a lot of the positions which are 100% subsidized would disappear if humanitarian funding stopped.*

- However, the technical services often do not have the capacity to take over projects, which raises questions about the long-term sustainability of the activities.

*In Niger, SCI staff stated that the HD and the Regional Health Director do not have sufficient leadership and commitment to impose health policies at all levels, reinforce supervision and give instructions to bodies and recruit the necessary human resources.*

*In the sector of early warnings, advocacy efforts are still strongly required to make incipient national mechanisms more effective. For instance, Oxfam (Niger) works at the level of the DNPGCCA<sup>39</sup>, for the definition of budgetary allocations to regional and sub-regional committees, the popularization of the national strategy and for the formal recognition of local SCAP/RUs.*

Regarding collaboration with state partners, another issue is the cost of support, which is high and sometimes judged to be excessive by operating partners, particularly per diems. All aid actors should pay for the participation of technical services and local authorities (mayors, prefects, representatives of regional committees and ministries, etc.), whether in connection with planned activities (including workshops and training courses) or simple meetings, to ensure that projects go smoothly. The fact that there is no harmonization of per diems between different organizations complicates the task of operating partners<sup>40</sup>.

Taking into account the lack of financial resources at the local level (due to low budget payments and corruption), advocacy is still required at the national level to increase the responsibility of local state services and prepare the handing over of programmes supported by international aid organizations.

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<sup>38</sup> STD: Services Techniques Décentralisés: *Technical Decentralized Services*.

<sup>39</sup> DNPGCCA: Dispositif National de Prévention et de Gestion des Catastrophes et Crises Alimentaires

<sup>40</sup> In Niger, UN agencies pay state officials an average of 25000 CFA per day compared to NGOs who pay an average of 10000CFA.

*It is for this reason that IRC has included an Advocacy section in an ECHO project (to be launched in March 2014), to establish transfer strategies and exit strategies along with the authorities and other aid organizations. In Niger, this could be taken up by a national advocacy platform<sup>41</sup>, which has recently been put in place by several NGOs and in which ECHO and UNICEF are actively involved.*

In terms of the sharing of costs and responsibilities, one approach consists of involving national authorities from the very onset of project elaboration (through joint evaluation missions and in accordance with local development plans). Later, this can lead the operational partner to subsidize only partially the staff dedicated to the project in the supported services (health or decentralised technical services). This permits to create a basis for negotiation for the authorities to gradually begin to pay these salaries.

*In Niger, the need to increase coverage of severe malnutrition without complications at the village health dispensary level was identified by IRC in collaboration with the district health authority and the other bodies concerned. IRC took advantage of a Ministry of Health policy, which consists of recruiting and appointing qualified personnel (newly qualified nurses) to health dispensaries. To maintain staff at the village level, their salaries are paid in equal parts by the IRC and the Ministry (50'000 CFA each for a monthly salary of 100'000 compared to 125'000 CFA in a CSI). This approach, which consists of treating severe malnutrition without complications at the dispensary/village level, is the first of its kind in the country. The deployment of nurses to dispensaries is a pilot project in the Filingué department and should be gradually extended to the rest of the country. In the medium term, supporting this decentralisation of health services will require investment in terms of equipment and capacity building (training of nurses).*

**Recommendation: Although the will to maintain or take over activities sometimes exists, the decentralized technical services often do not have financial, material or human means to do so in the long term. In order to promote the active participation and effective ownership by national institutions, one strategy is to proceed to the gradual handing over of the cost of staff and supervision. This requires a medium term perspective (3-5 years).**

### LRRD

In the medium and long-term perspective, the impact of aid programmes will be increased due to the involvement of local authorities and community associations.

*In refugee camps in Burkina Faso, positive results in education (host population and refugees) have shown the effectiveness of awareness-raising campaigns conducted in collaboration with the DRENA<sup>42</sup> and parents associations. The advocacy work vis-à-vis the Ministry of Education in favour of a better quality of teaching should also promote the construction of a large school using permanent materials, which will be used by host villages in the future.*

<sup>41</sup> The main Health advocacy themes today are: the deployment and assignment of health personnel (including auxiliaries, nutritionists, hygienists, etc.); partnership and sustainability of contracts put in place by the health authorities (subsidy shared to pay the salaries of CRENAS, CRENAM and CRENI staff); Insufficient budgetary payments at the local level, which does not allow the district officer to supervise CSIs or carry out mobile outings.

<sup>42</sup> DRENA: Direction Régionale de l'Éducation Nationale: Regional management for national education.

*In Mali, while the administration is having difficulty re-establishing itself in formerly occupied areas, cooperation between humanitarian actors funded by DFID and the local authorities has been both essential and beneficial. Some reticence was noted due to the fact that the Malian authorities had also been involved in the conflict in the North. However, the possible risk of loss of neutrality was dealt with in an acceptable manner, notably due to the significant part played by Malian staff within partner organisations.*

To increase the link between emergency solutions and medium-term support for community resilience, DFID's operational partners have been coordinating among themselves in humanitarian forums. Still, not enough has been achieved in terms of coordination with development actors present in the region in order to discuss the context and vulnerabilities, reinforce their activities, make them more complementary and finally contribute to enhancing the resilience of individuals and communities.

*The HCR is at a key step where the emergency response should open new perspectives towards medium and long term actions (of the resilient type). This shift will have to be operated in close collaboration with the government, the regional authorities, and the technical decentralized services. And to support the mobilization of funds by the government, the HCR took part in a regional initiative called « Conflict prevention and peaceful cohabitation », which was held in Nouakchott in April 2014. Moreover, in the UN integrated strategic framework for the Sahel (SINUS, 2014-16)<sup>43</sup> and the Strategic Response Plan<sup>44</sup>, the HCR is very active within the Resilience group, to make sure any residual cases of refugees will benefit from these programmes. UNDAF's<sup>45</sup> projects are also coming in support to the governments affected by the Malian refugees' crisis.*

Various needs not covered by humanitarian programs of short duration should be transmitted and better integrated into development programs, specifically in the design of BRACED consortium, in which several of humanitarian DFID partners also participate.

For example, the loss of water and communities for which humanitarian teams observed on the ground a real motivation and ability to engage in productive activities (gardening or other) should be taken into account for potential water works.

**Humanitarian funding would be required for a minimum period of 12-15 months to be able to work continuously and consistently and thus create a real impact on the chronic vulnerabilities of the area's populations.**

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<sup>43</sup> It includes 3 dimensions: Resilience, Security and Governance.

<sup>44</sup> Out of a total of 100 million USD, support for returns and socio-economic integration adds up to 25 million USD. The current financing rate of the strategic response plan is 3%

<sup>45</sup> UNDAF: United Nations Development Assistance Framework



## 4. Conclusion

Although there are always means and areas for improvement, the RTE study concludes in general terms, that the DFID funded programmes in Sahel during 2013 have been:

- Relevant;
- Efficient,
- Effective,
- With a significant positive impact
- Demonstrating a commendable effort to reach an acceptable level of coherence;
- Doing their best to link humanitarian aid and development requirements.

A series of reasons have been identified behind this positive judgment:

- DFID always allocates resources to well-chosen and experienced partners.
- Most of these partners have demonstrated a strong commitment to learning in the last ten years;
- Despite not having a permanent presence in the field, DFID's presence and contact with the partners has been regular and frequent enough to establish a climate of confidence and relatively close relations with its partners.

Yet there are still a series of caveats and areas where improvements can be nurtured. The following recommendations may help to further improve these programmes, still ongoing:

- Revisit the allocation process between NGO and UN agencies in order to ensure that the highest level of resources reaches the affected populations. This should however not be done in a biased or prejudiced way against one or the other parts of the humanitarian aid segment but on a real analysis of comparative advantages, capacities and know-how.
- Revise the whole alert and diagnosis mechanism and make it more humble and more "risk taking". The fact that there is much uncertainty in the conclusions of the *Cadre Harmonisé*, which is more based on an attempt to reach consensus between a large panel of stakeholders rather than on sound evidence, should be acknowledged. This can be done through statements on "working hypotheses", "projections", "state of the health of our knowledge". It would be important to underline firmly the principle of "no regret" and acknowledge the concept of "optimal ignorance" ;
- Continue to explore the possibilities of developing locally-produced RUTFs or other products for treating malnutrition as an alternative to the expensive "*Plumpy*" products despite existing difficulties in the current and past experiences,
- On the basis of the existing experience in Niger (3N) and Mauritania (EPEL), develop strategies that would facilitate and stimulate the active participation and effective ownership and therefore engagement of nationals in the coordination;
- Develop a culture of "agile institutions" with enhanced and more fluid dialogue between the aid agencies and DFID to ensure the optimal level of flexibility in the programmes and facilitate a permanent and accountable adaptation to changing contexts and needs. For certain agencies, the multi-level bureaucracy and the fear of displeasing donors are giving rise to missed opportunities for programme adaption.



