



AGIR BUILDING RESILIENCE TO FOOD AND NUTRITION CRISES IN THE SAHEL & WEST-AFRICA

Facts & Figures

4 successive food & nutrition crises: 2005, 2008, 2010 & 2012

In the Sahel in 2014:

- 1.5 million severely malnourished children
- 20 million food insecure people
- 25 million people living in extreme poverty and without any social protection

European Commission humanitarian funding since 2012: **€ 671,4 million** for the Sahel and Mali crises

The EU aims to mobilise **€1.5 billion** for resilience in the Sahel between 2014 & 2020 (11th European Development Fund)

AGIR targets over the next 20 years:

- Zero Hunger
- Reduce chronic malnutrition by more than half
- Reduce acute malnutrition by more than two-thirds
- Significant increase in the number of people who have access to basic services and receive social transfers (cash/vouchers)

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Pastureland and water for livestock are becoming scarce in Niger. In 2013, ECHO funded assistance to 405,000 Nigeriens with food or cash-for-work and supplementary feeding. © WFP/Rein Skullerud

Key messages

- AGIR (the Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative) was launched in 2012 with the aim of achieving 'Zero Hunger' in Sahel within the next 20 years. The EU was closely involved in establishing AGIR and provides continued large-scale support.
- To break the cycle of emergencies in the Sahel, it is crucial to build the resilience of the most vulnerable population groups. Making basic services available to mothers and their children and ensuring that aid programmes effectively target the poorest people are minimal required measures.
- Increasing people's resilience to future stresses and shocks has to be based on a thorough understanding of what makes them vulnerable so that the causes can be addressed.
- Bridging the gap between humanitarian and development aid and encouraging governments to take ownership of this process are preconditions to success. Emergency assistance is needed to save lives but should be provided in a way that promotes durable solutions, for instance by supporting public services such as health care and promoting social services such as seasonal cash transfers.

Situation in Sahel

Countries of the Sahel top the list of countries with the highest child and maternal mortality rates. 1 in 8 children in the region dies before their 5th birthday, most often as a result of preventable disease and malnutrition. Each year more than one million children become severely malnourished while up to 20 million people experience food insecurity. 20% of the population – at least 25 million people - account for 80% of the victims when a crisis hits. A particular effort is needed to strengthen the resilience of these most vulnerable and poorest people.

Food and nutrition crises are becoming more frequent in the Sahel region. Following four successive food and nutrition crises from 2005 to 2012, millions of people face food insecurity and malnutrition on an almost permanent basis, regardless of whether harvests are good.

At the beginning of the 2014 'lean season', the humanitarian situation is again precarious in many areas of the Sahel with critical acute malnutrition and severe food insecurity. Food prices remain high, insecurity across the region persists and harvests have been average.

Origins and aims of AGIR

The aim of AGIR is to help build resilience to the recurrent food and nutrition crises that affect the countries of the Sahel region. AGIR starts from the premise that while emergency response to these crises is crucial to saving lives, the time has come for a sustained effort to help people in the Sahel cope better with these crises – not least since climate change and population growth are likely to exacerbate their frequency and severity.

On 18 June 2012, the European Union hosted a high-level meeting where the idea of an international alliance bringing together governments of the region, regional bodies, donors as well as civil society, was presented. On 6 December 2012, AGIR was officially launched in Ouagadougou with the adoption of a Joint Statement setting out basic principles and priorities.

After developing a Regional Roadmap in 2013, which elaborates principles, priority actions and indicators, the focus of 17 West African countries in 2014 is on the formulation of their national resilience priorities. International support for resilience-building in the Sahel is steadily progressing, with an emphasis on determining areas for priority action over the coming years.

AGIR's strategy

Defining resilience

Based on a series of consultations between Sahelian and West African countries, regional organisations, organisations of agricultural producers and pastoralists, the private sector, civil society, financial partners and non-governmental organisations, AGIR defines resilience as **"the capacity of vulnerable households, families and systems to face uncertainty and the risk of shocks, to withstand and respond effectively to shocks, as well as to recover and adapt in a sustainable manner."**

The four pillars of AGIR

AGIR aims to achieve 'Zero Hunger' - eliminating hunger and malnutrition - within the next 20 years by focusing on four strategic pillars:

- Pillar 1: Restore, strengthen and secure livelihoods and improve social protection for the most vulnerable communities and households.
- Pillar 2: Strengthen nutrition of vulnerable households.
- Pillar 3: Sustainably strengthen agricultural and food productivity and incomes of vulnerable households and improve their access to food.
- Pillar 4: Strengthen governance for food and nutritional security.

Targeted households: focusing on the most vulnerable groups

The Alliance agrees on targeting specific households:

- Small-scale farmers with limited market access, insecure land tenure and little capital to invest in agriculture. They are incapable of producing enough food to feed their families and have few opportunities for income diversification. This group includes a large number of landless rural residents.
- Agro-pastoralists and pastoralists whose capital stock and livelihoods are continually threatened by recurring weather hazards.
- Poor agricultural and non-agricultural workers in urban and rural areas.

A particular focus is placed on the most vulnerable groups, including children under five as well as pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers. A specific effort will target women in light of their predominant role in food production, income generation, education, health and child nutrition.

Benchmarks of success: monitoring resilience

Indicators to measure results include, among others:

- A significant increase in the proportion of vulnerable people who have access to basic social services such as health, education, water, sanitation and hygiene, and who are able to increase their income;
- A reduction of at least 50% in the number of people in high-risk zones who seek food aid and humanitarian assistance;
- A prevalence of global acute malnutrition among children under five which is less than 5% throughout the year (currently often 15%);
- A child mortality rate of less than 2 deaths per 10,000 children (now often higher than this emergency threshold);
- Significant progress on birth spacing and increasing the age of first pregnancy.

The latter goal is vital in a region with the world's highest population growth which is likely to outpace economic growth as well as growth in agricultural production. As the food and nutrition crises in the Sahel are fuelled by a lack of access to food and basic services, but also by economic inequalities which have giving rise to a growing class of ultra-poor, the response must be multi-sectorial.

What has been accomplished so far

Since the launch of AGIR in December 2012, progress has been made on a number of fronts:

- The AGIR Regional Road Map was formally adopted in Paris on 9 April 2013, at a meeting of the Réseau de Prévention des Crises Alimentaires (RPCA).
- EU Development aid Commissioner Andris Piebalgs announced that the EU will aim to mobilize €1.5 billion in funding for resilience in West Africa between 2014 and 2020, under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF).
- At the West Africa meeting of the RPCA in Abidjan on 27 November 2013, with Humanitarian aid Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva in attendance, 17 West African countries confirmed their commitment to finalising their Country Resilience Priorities. Donors, UN and regional bodies and the aid community renewed their commitment to supporting the governments of the region to reaching zero hunger by 2032.

Next steps

Following the adoption of the AGIR Regional Road Map, the priority is to translate the objectives agreed for the region as a whole into action to build resilience at a national level. This step is crucial to guarantee full national ownership of the AGIR agenda with the support of regional organisations and international partners.

Several countries have underlined the importance of breaking away from conventional paths of aid delivery and focusing on integrated multi-sector approaches with proven methods for targeting the poorest and most vulnerable segments of the population. The countries of the Sahel region are expected to present their Country Resilience Priorities at the RPCA meeting scheduled in Paris mid-April 2014.

Concerning international support and AGIR Alliance members, the priority will be to ensure that resilience is prioritised in country-level programming. In the case of the EU, the priority sectors for EU development assistance in the Sahel for 2014-2020 (the 11th EDF) are being finalized and are most likely to include food and nutrition security.

From theory to practice: examples of humanitarian and development projects contributing to resilience

On the humanitarian side

To reach some of the most vulnerable people affected by the food and nutrition crisis in **Mali**, **Oxfam**, with support from the European Union, has helped 3,500 families rebuild their livelihoods in the Kayes region of western Mali. Between August 2012 and February 2013, these families received **cash grants through local banks and a local microfinance organisation**. Most of those who received the money were women, and all who received support also received **training on household budget management, nutrition and hygiene**. As a result, most of these people have not only been able to feed their families through the leanest months of the year, but also to invest in building livelihoods that will make them more resilient to future shocks. ©Oxfam



In **Chad**, the European Union supports an innovative **partnership** between the international NGOs **ACTED and Alima** and the local NGO **Alerte Santé**. This project is reaching 56,000 people, including several thousand children under five who are suffering from acute malnutrition. The project's objective is to fight and **manage severe acute malnutrition**. One important achievement of the project is the **capacity building** of local NGOs in order to ensure sustainable results. ©EU/ECHO

In **Burkina Faso**, in the remote region of Tapoa, the European Commission supports cash transfer and cash-for-work programmes by **Action Contre la Faim**. In exchange for cash to buy food, 900 households have helped to build embankments around rice fields in order to better retain rainwater to enhance future crops. In total, each worker received €90 over two months, the equivalent of about three 100kg bags of sorghum. Overall, the EU has enabled ACF to assist 40 000 people in the region. ©Raphael de Bengy



On the development side



In **Niger**, European aid for food security covers nearly one third of the overall needs of the population. It is channelled exclusively through the National Government's food security Mechanism, allowing the purchase of grain as well as cash for work operations. Thanks to decisive and early action a dramatic situation has been avoided. To this date, and over four months, no less than two million people have been saved from hunger."

In **Burkina Faso**, 18,557 tons of improved seeds were produced by farmers that received support from an EU programme in 2012. The programme also equipped 13 communities with additional harvesting machinery. Seven storage facilities and seven drying fields were constructed. This was complemented by the training of almost 200 people in areas such as production, harvesting and treatment techniques. Finally, four decentralised laboratories were established to support the analysis of seeds and their certification.