



Sahel Resilience Partnership - WFP, UNICEF and GIZ join forces for resilience building in the Sahel

PROTRACTED CRISES IN THE SAHEL

The Sahel suffers from a unique combination of inter-linked factors leading to major crises. Among the multiple, mutually compounding vulnerabilities facing individuals, communities and systems in the Sahel are the following:

- **Recurrent food insecurity:** between 2018 and 2023, the number of food insecure populations in the Sahel has nearly tripled.
- **Persistent high burden of acute child malnutrition:** despite significant investment to provide care and treatment to acutely malnourished children in the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad), the number of children suffering from this condition tripled (from 2.2 to 6 million) between 2015 and 2023.
- **Environmental degradation and climate shocks:** land degradation represents a major challenge, and the situation is likely to exacerbate with sustained deforestation, pollution, overexploitation as well as unsustainable cultivation practices causing the reduction or loss of soils' productive capacity at an alarming pace.
- **Conflict and fragility:** the last decade has seen a sharp increase in conflict, insecurity and violence in the region. Armed conflict has led to forced displacements of over 3 million people, limited access to basic services and led to grave violations against children.



- **Economic shocks and high food prices:** the conflict and overall fragility is leading to decreased tax revenue, increased security expenditure and pressure on social sector expenditure for the welfare of the most vulnerable.
- **Children and women bear the heaviest brunt of risks and vulnerabilities:** half of all Sahelian children live in extreme poverty. Almost two-thirds of children under-five are deprived of basic necessities and resort to negative coping strategies like child labour and child marriage.
- The **growing young population** represents both a challenge and an opportunity for resilience building, social cohesion, gender equality, and civic engagement. Adolescent girls face cumulative burdens due to gender inequalities experienced in earlier years, as well as the intergenerational transfer of gender inequalities borne by their mothers.

A COMMON VISION AND INTEGRATED APPROACH FOR RESILIENCE

In the context of unprecedented challenges facing the Sahel region, the **German Transitional Development Assistance** aims to strengthen resilience of vulnerable people and local structures through a multi-sectorial approach, to create more opportunities for people and systems to cope with crises, to prepare themselves for recurring shocks and stressors to mitigate the negative effects of crises and gradually overcome them permanently through structural changes.

The programme promotes a **Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus** approach to respond to the Sahel crisis.

This requires strengthening the coherence and connections between large-scale capacities for humanitarian action and longer-term actions for development and resilience. This is also about including disasters, conflicts, and other risk analysis, as well as social cohesion strengthening across all programmatic objectives. Lastly, this requires effective **partnerships and coordination with governments, international financial institutions, donors,** and implementation of large-scale initiatives such as the Great Green Wall.

Building on the results of the first generation of **German-funded resilience programmes, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), WFP, UNICEF and GIZ aim to form a strategic alliance for resilience strengthening in the Sahel.**

Together, WFP, UNICEF and GIZ will contribute to resilience-building at scale, with a strong focus on:

- **Climate-resilience:** increasing capacities of vulnerable individuals, communities, ecosystems, and socio-economic systems to adapt to the cascading effects of climate change.
- **Gender mainstreaming, transformative approach, and targeted action:** strategically addressing gender inequalities at all levels, transforming harmful gender norms, and specifically engaging with the most vulnerable to advance gender equality, female empowerment, and female leadership to sustainably build resilient and more equitable communities.
- **Social cohesion:** improving relations between different groups of society and contributing to crisis prevention by furthering peaceful conflict resolution, based on a three-pronged approach: (i) strengthening social relations and community feeling; (ii) strengthening local communities'

capacities for peaceful conflict resolution by capacitating local conflict resolution structures; (iii) mainstreaming a crisis-preventive and peacebuilding approach throughout all fields of actions.

- **Social protection:** since 2020, with support from BMZ/ KfW, UNICEF and WFP implement a joint program on using social protection systems in response to shocks in the Sahel. The programme supports governments in the delivery of shock-responsive cash transfers with the aim of strengthening national social protection systems, but can also provide support where government systems are not yet operational. As this project seeks to strengthen national social protection systems, it is a key investment to support the resilience of the most vulnerable across the Sahel. To realize the potential of deeper resilience impacts, WFP, UNICEF and GIZ will develop linkages and seek synergies between social protection and resilience-centered engagements. This will be done at systems and community levels.
- **Nutrition integration:** nutrition integration across systems is paramount to achieve governments' nutrition targets and human capital wealth and reduce GDP losses. It includes ensuring that food systems supply affordable, nutritious, healthy, and environment-friendly diets; strengthening social protection, health, education, water, and sanitation systems to integrate nutrition; and strengthening the monitoring and measurement system to generate evidence on the effects of the integrated resilience programming approach on nutrition, diet, and resilience outcomes.

Students stand next to their new water fountain in the school of Lifkarine, Mauritania. The school is engaged in delivering an integrated package of resilience interventions including (i) training of the school management committee and award of a school maintenance fund managed by the committee, (ii) a water, sanitation and hygiene package, (iii) the identification and referral of out of school children – supported by UNICEF, (iv) a school canteen, and (v) school vegetable garden supported by WFP. © UNICEF Mauritania, F. Boughaleb, May 2022





WFP, UNICEF and GIZ visit the community site of Kelebele, in Mauritania. © UNICEF Mauritania, F. Boughaleb, May 2022

RESULTS OF THE SAHEL INTEGRATED RESILIENCE PROGRAMME 2018-2023

German-funded resilience approaches developed by WFP and UNICEF contributed to build resilience capacities of **over 3.5 million people (and over 2.7 million children)**.

- **1 million asset creation community members** involved in soil conservation, water harvesting, gardening, compost, and roads infrastructure capacities.
- **167,000 ha of land rehabilitated**, 2,230 ha of garden created, 560 wells and 1,740 ponds created or rehabilitated, to improve production and income generation.
- **Over 2 million children and women** reached through malnutrition prevention interventions and **over 1.2 million children under five** reached through treatment interventions. **Over 2 million children** reached with strengthened primary health care services.
- **453,000 school children benefitted from nutritious meals in more than 1,500 schools**, while school attendance of adolescent girls was incentivized through take-home rations, scholarships or school kits.
- **210,000 boys and girls** attending safer schools, and **over 193,000 boys and girls** supported with distance learning during times of school closure or displacement.
- **378,000 community members reached** with sustainable access to safe water and engaged in community-led total sanitation efforts.
- **Over 30,000 young people** engaged in youth led initiatives for social cohesion and peace.
- **Over 100,000 people** reached through operational or technical capacity strengthening. **6,000 community organizations** strengthened to support community resilience.

KEY OUTCOMES REPORTED

Survey data from beneficiary households shows that overall, **diets are becoming more regular, frequent and diversified, despite the various shocks and stressors affecting the region**. More than three quarters of households stated that the assets created or rehabilitated have reduced day-to-day hardships – many of which are shouldered by women – and helped them to increase or diversify their production through improved water management and soil fertility.

Data from monitoring surveys suggests that the majority of people supported **have an adequate food consumption even during the lean season** – a time during which we see a significant deterioration of food security among the general population in the intervention zones significantly deteriorated.

A qualitative study involving a review of secondary health and nutrition data has confirmed that the implementation of **integrated Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and Nutrition strategies** effectively contributes to the reduction in cases of diarrhoea and acute and severe malnutrition in programme target municipalities (Niger, 2021).

Communities have increased and sustained their ability to withstand seasonal shocks and stressors. In both 2022 and 2023, including when Niger faced its worst food security crisis in a decade, **about 80% of WFP's resilience villages, located in communities identified by the government as extremely vulnerable and representing more than half a million people, did not require humanitarian assistance, resulting in savings of about \$30 million per year**. This resilience capacity has also been demonstrated in villages that have not received cash or food transfers since mid-2021.

Resilience interventions have important co-benefits for the environment and ecosystems. A 2021 NASA analysis based on satellite-imagery of resilience sites in Niger found vegetation indices post-intervention were **nearly 50% higher compared to previous years, and 25% higher than in nearby non-intervened areas.**

Qualitative studies highlighted that community engagement initiatives which **involved the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in community planning and local governance processes** contributed to positive effects on social cohesion and, in the case of women, a better inclusion of their needs in village plans, and, in the case of young people, a better perception in their communities and a strengthened voice and agency.

A 2022 IFPRI study found resilience activities and their planning processes **created spaces of encounter, reducing stereotypes, suspicion and mistrust and enabling stronger bonds between communities and leaders.**

Qualitative evidence also confirmed that more **gender-sensitive, equitable and conflict sensitive basic social services** had the potential to contribute to social cohesion, by addressing root causes and social dimensions of conflicts. For instance, sharing a water system contributed to build cohesion inter and intra communities.

Students working together on their school garden in Rafa, Maradi Region, Niger. WFP's school gardens complement the daily school meals provided to students, and with partners contribute to making a connection between growing food, healthy diets, and environmental education. In 2020, the garden's surplus generated approx. 600 USD. This income was invested in maintaining and expanding the school infrastructure and the garden's capacity. © WFP Niger.

OPERATIONALISING THE NEW SAHEL RESILIENCE PARTNERSHIP

WFP, UNICEF and GIZ will create multi-level Interagency partnerships to provide integrated packages of resilience-building interventions to participating communities and countries. They will foster progression towards reduced need for humanitarian assistance, as well as inclusive development, and social cohesion in the Sahel.

Operationally, this will involve a **well-coordinated and harmonized approach to the selection of communities and targeting** based on joint criteria, and shared **roles along the journey** towards the resilience of households, communities, and countries. The timing of **activities will follow a logical order** in line with seasonality, shocks and stressors, livelihood requirements (sequencing) and are strategically sequenced to maximize long-term impact (progression).

This effort will be based on the following **principles to the provision of resilience-building services:**

- **Convergence** of different partners' interventions in the same geographic locations targeting the same vulnerable people and communities to implement a truly multi-sectoral response, as well as leverage synergies and efficiency gains
- **Concentration** or integration of different interventions over a period of several years to address the multifaceted nature of vulnerabilities and risks, break the cycle of negative coping strategies and allow people to gradually offset risks and invest in a better future.
- **Coverage** or scale to match the scale of the challenges and prevent external pressure on basic services, environmental resources, and support mechanisms in the targeted locations (leveraging other donors contributions will be important to achieve scale).
- **Capacities** at all levels to support communities, local and national governments to take the lead in generating context-specific solutions and building robust coalitions.





Women are preparing groundnut oil. These women are part of WFP's Asset Creation programme. GIZ has equipped them with material and trained them in the production of groundnut oil so that they can diversify their income. © N. Naeser, GIZ ProRES, June 2022

JOINT OUTCOMES OF THE NEW SAHEL RESILIENCE PARTNERSHIP

Outcome 1, Food and nutrition security: target individuals, households, and communities have an enhanced ability to maintain access to nutritious and healthy diets when faced with all types of shocks and long-term stressors, thereby reducing needs for humanitarian assistance.

Outcome 2, Climate-resilient ecosystems: improved resilience and sustainable livelihoods in shock-prone and fragile ecosystems through the restoration of the agricultural potential of degraded lands, including climate proofing community infrastructure, soil conservation/regenerative techniques, water conservation/use practices, and the promotion of diversified foods and fodder crops value chains.

Outcome 3, Resilient social services: vulnerable individuals and communities improve their resilience capacities by using sustainably accessible, equitable, gender-responsive and risk (including climate risks) and conflict sensitive social services (in health, nutrition, WASH, education, child protection, social protection, agriculture).

Outcome 4, Social cohesion: strengthened mechanisms for pacific conflict resolutions, fostered inclusive dialogue and events between different social, ethnic and age groups and ownership and engagement in community processes and outcomes to foster trust and interdependence.

PARTNERSHIP AND COALITION-BUILDING

Working towards resilient and inclusive communities is a joint endeavour that cannot be achieved without partners. It involves first and foremost national governments as the primary responsible party for the safety and well-being of populations. Municipalities and extended government services are in the driver's seat of the resilience programmes

of WFP, UNICEF and GIZ, spearheading planning, implementation, and monitoring of the activities. It furthermore involves communities and partners from academia (like universities) but also UN agencies, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus.

MEASURING RESILIENCE-BUILDING

WFP, UNICEF and GIZ are developing robust Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems to measure their organizations' complementary contribution to resilience building and generate scientific evidence in support of new models. Where possible, the programme intends to run joint analysis on the effect of resilience interventions in areas of convergence where WFP, UNICEF and GIZ are operating. A strong focus is set on strengthening learning with communities themselves, and accountability to stakeholders. This involves real-time monitoring, investments in operational research and real-time or developmental evaluations. Through partnerships with local universities, WFP, UNICEF and GIZ contribute to research and knowledge-sharing on resilience building across the region to institutionalize resilience tools, and help build the future generation of resilience experts.

With thanks to our donor partner

