



Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems Research

Case study—Regional approaches to addressing food insecurity in the Sahel, and the contribution of social protection

Clare O'Brien, Cécile Cherrier, Carol Watson and Jenny Congrave
January 2017

About the research programme

The [Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems](#) study is a research programme (2015 to 2017) led by Oxford Policy Management (OPM), in consortium with the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) and INASP. Its aim is to strengthen the evidence base as to when and how social protection systems can better respond to shocks in low-income countries and fragile and conflict-affected states, thus minimising negative shock impacts and reducing the need for separate humanitarian responses.

The research is funded by UK Aid from the UK government, as part of the Department for International Development's (DFID's) Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Programme (HIEP), an initiative to improve the quality, quantity and use of evidence in humanitarian programming.

Six case studies form the core of the analysis of the features of a social protection system that facilitate its use to respond to shocks, and of the ways in which social protection, humanitarian assistance and disaster risk management systems can best work together for a more effective response. The three in-depth case studies—of Mozambique, Mali and Pakistan—explore the issue across a wide range of shocks, and reviewing a number of social protection interventions. Two light-touch case studies, of the Philippines and Lesotho, focus on a single shock. Finally, a light study of the Sahel region reviews regionwide mechanisms for responding to food security crises.

About this report

This is the full case study report for the Sahel. The study reviews the main shocks and crises affecting the Sahel region of west Africa. It explores the regional approach to addressing a specific type of crisis, that of food insecurity, and whether and how social protection contributes to that response. The Sahel as a region is relatively integrated: many regional bodies and coordination mechanisms already exist and are working on issues common to humanitarian assistance, social protection, climate change and food security. Their experience may provide insights relevant to other regions. A summary briefing note is published separately. So, too, is a [working paper](#) that explores the issue of community perspectives on social protection in the Sahel.

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the insights provided by those we interviewed, formally and informally, for this research, including on the margins of a series of regional meetings on food security and humanitarian issues. These include representatives of national governments, multilateral and bilateral donors, UN agencies and non-governmental organisations at national regional and global levels. The team also acknowledges the support of DFID's project lead, Heather Kindness. We warmly appreciate the comments made by DFID, the World Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) on earlier drafts of this study, and further clarifications and insights from the FAO, ECHO, CaLP and the wider research team during the revision process.

The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.

Suggested citation: O'Brien, C., Cherrier, C., Watson, C. and Congrave, J. (2017), 'Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems Research: Case study—Regional approaches to addressing food insecurity in the Sahel, and the contribution of social protection', Oxford Policy Management, Oxford, UK.

Executive summary

Approach and method

Globally, the frequency, size and duration of natural, economic and political disasters and crises are on the rise. Governments and international agencies alike are committed to finding a way forward that responds more efficiently and effectively to shocks. Our research explores two themes in relation to this: first, the potential role of long-term social protection systems in response to large-scale shocks; and second, opportunities for coordination (and possible integration) of humanitarian interventions, disaster risk management (DRM) and social protection.

The Sahel as a region is relatively integrated: many regional bodies and coordination mechanisms exist and work on issues common to humanitarian assistance, social protection, climate change and food security. In our case study we explore the regional approach to addressing a specific crisis, that of food insecurity, and whether and how social protection contributes to that response. We review the main shocks affecting the six countries of focus (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal), examine the elements of social protection systems that are in place, and analyse the relevance and effectiveness of key regional initiatives for responding to food insecurity. The study then draws out the implications of these findings for shock-responsive social protection. It has been conducted on the basis of a series of literature reviews, working sessions with national and regional policymakers and technicians, and complementary individual interviews.

Shocks and vulnerability

The Sahel may be characterised as a region where the livelihoods of the primarily rural agropastoral communities are threatened by multiple recurrent and interconnected shocks. It is among the regions most vulnerable to climate change and deteriorating environmental conditions: it is estimated that over 80% of lands are now degraded. Severe natural hazards, particularly repeated droughts since the 1970s, have contributed to widespread food and nutrition insecurity, with both the frequency and impact of crises growing in intensity over the years as the effects of climate change accumulate. Since 2008, climate shocks have been compounded by serious economic and financial shocks, particularly with high food and energy prices. More recently, complex political crises and conflicts have resulted in a critical level of forced displacement, contributing to generalised insecurity, threatening lives and eroding livelihoods.

Low human capital rates, high poverty and high levels of gender inequality place Sahel countries at the bottom of the Human Development Index ranking and below the average for sub-Saharan Africa. In all six countries under review, 40% or more of the population lives below the poverty line. In 2016 some 19 million of the 89 million-strong population was estimated to be food insecure.

The challenges in the Sahel region are now structural and cross-cutting. Crises emerge from the combination of different triggering cyclical factors (climatic hazards, variability of cereal prices, restriction of cross-border trade flows, pressure on natural resources, conflicts, etc.) in a context of significant structural constraints (poverty and inequality, fragile ecosystems, desertification, demographic pressure, etc.) and production constraints (limited access to land and no guarantee of land property rights, low access to inputs and agricultural services, etc.). The ever growing population has limited access to food in spite of steadily increasing cereal production over the past 30 years. Food crises are increasingly close together and can no longer be perceived as 'exceptions' (calling on emergency responses) but must be seen as the new 'order' (calling on long term intervention strategies).

The humanitarian response to food insecurity

The management of food crises in the Sahel has traditionally been based on emergency aid in the form of targeted transfers to vulnerable households (transfers of food, money, food vouchers, animals or agricultural inputs, sometimes in exchange for work) and actions to promote nutrition. The international humanitarian community makes a major contribution to this response. Nonetheless, the number of people it targets is only a fraction (about half) of the total estimated to be in need of support: others may be expected to be covered by governments or communities, or may not receive any assistance. This underlines the importance of routine social protection arising from strengthened systems as part of a response to chronic food and nutrition security needs.

The reduced resilience of households and the fact that part of the population is chronically food insecure are leading to an increase in the volume (and cost) of emergency aid from one crisis to the next. Furthermore, with the increase in the frequency of crises in the Sahel, trends in asset erosion and chronic food security will worsen. The humanitarian system finds itself under great strain when it deals, year after year, with problems that are actually chronic in nature.

Overview of social protection in the Sahel

The Sahel has been one of the last regions in sub-Saharan Africa to engage in the development and consolidation of social protection systems for the poorest and most vulnerable. For a long time, social protection in many countries was confined to a few areas of contributory social insurance (such as health insurance and retirement benefits) covering only civil servants and a limited number of workers in the formal economy. Until recently, social protection was almost non-existent for workers in the informal economy and the economically inactive. Only some measures were in place for certain categories of chronically vulnerable people such as those with disabilities, or orphans and vulnerable children; these were often limited in magnitude and scope, fragmented and uncoordinated.

Since the early 2000s, under the impetus of a number of African-wide declarations, action plans, and the African Union's policy framework, concerted national efforts have been made to improve social protection. The six countries under review all now have a national social protection strategy or policy. These generally i) place social protection within a risk management framework for both idiosyncratic and covariate shocks; ii) identify the need to strengthen the collection and analysis of data on poverty and vulnerability, including through early warning and targeting systems; iii) highlight food and nutrition security as a focus; iv) identify social transfers as an instrument of choice to reach the poorest and most vulnerable; and v) underscore the importance of multisectoral action and a move towards integrated and coherent social protection systems. These frameworks thus appear conducive to the development of shock-responsive social protection.

New social protection programmes have emerged including: long-term, regular cash transfer programmes for extremely poor households; seasonal cash transfers; long-term labour-intensive public works programmes; 'home-grown' school feeding programmes linked to local markets; health fee waivers; and measures to set up general health insurance. The introduction of national social cash transfer programmes over the past five years is noteworthy. In the classification of degrees of maturity of a social protection system presented in the conceptual framework for this research, Senegal might be characterised as having a 'state-led commitment' to social protection, as it is not only expanding its social assistance system but its flagship initiative for the poor is co-funded by the state. Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso may be considered to be at a slightly lower level of maturity: the state expresses a desire to expand its programmes while the main interventions are for the time being funded largely by development partners. Next come Chad and Mauritania, which have more recently developed national social safety net programmes largely funded and

supported by the World Bank and DFID as part of overall efforts to establish systems through which to implement their national social protection strategies. Many countries are considering how to develop and refine components of a social protection system including targeting methods, payment mechanisms, grievance management, social registries and management information systems.

Until recently, public expenditure on social protection has been consistent with the low profile of the sector. Prior to the introduction of cash transfers, spending on non-contributory social assistance was mostly well below the average of 1.7% of gross domestic product for sub-Saharan Africa; a large proportion of expenditure on non-contributory social protection was absorbed by general subsidies for fuels and food products. Lately, donors, led by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, have encouraged a transition from general subsidies towards targeted social transfers. Advocacy to expand social protection to the poorest and most vulnerable has intensified, in particular through efforts by UNICEF, the World Bank, DFID, the ILO and ECHO. This has resulted in a rapidly changing social protection landscape in the Sahel, opening up a broadening range of options for the introduction of shock-responsive social protection, depending on the maturity of the system.

The contribution of intergovernmental bodies and mechanisms for food security

A significant feature of the Sahel is the set of regionwide institutions, strategies and initiatives that aim to address recurrent crises, particularly those related to food and nutrition security. We first review structures that governments can join as members: the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and the G5 Sahel. We also consider the major initiatives by which these bodies and others collaborate to respond to food insecurity, notably the Cadre Harmonisé assessment process, the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA) and the Global Alliance for Resilience (AGIR)¹.

Intergovernmental bodies

ECOWAS, as a policy-making body, works on strengthening and harmonising the social protection policies of its member states as part of its wider remit. It uses its regional agricultural policy, known as ECOWAP, to promote the use of social assistance to address food security crises through, among other things, the establishment of a regional grain reserve (not yet sufficiently advanced to be a central part of shock-responsive social protection), the adoption of a Charter for the Prevention and Management of Food Security Crises, participation in the Zero Hunger initiative (launched by the UN in 2014 and still at early stages of implementation), and the elaboration of a regional Social Safety Net Support Programme that aims to reduce food and nutrition insecurity.

The Safety Net Support Programme states clearly the need to shift from a 'reactive' approach to crises towards one that promotes livelihoods and resilience. Whilst encouraging the development of long-term social assistance by national governments, it highlights the opportunity for linking these with DRM systems. Among the challenges in efforts to implement the regional programme is the intersectoral nature of social protection and food security which requires broad-based coordination and collaboration among a variety of sectoral stakeholders.

CILSS, the technical wing of ECOWAS, provides support to member states in the formulation, analysis and coordination of sectoral policies; training; collection, analysis and dissemination of

¹CILSS, the RPCA and AGIR are all known by their French acronyms. ECOWAS is known in French as the CEDEAO.

information; research and knowledge management; and policy implementation through multi-country pilot projects. CILSS has set up a regional mechanism for the prevention and management of food crises (PREGEC), conceived as a system for gathering and disseminating information on food security through rapid assessments, agricultural surveys, the analysis of satellite data and market analysis. CILSS is now working on a methodology and tools to analyse and measure resilience in the Sahel and west Africa, with an initial phase of work planned for 2016–20. The challenge, as with other regional initiatives that cross sectors, will be to achieve the required level of coordination and integration needed to promote and support truly integrated action for maximum impact on both chronic and acute food and nutrition insecurity.

An additional regional grouping of five member states in the region is the **G5 Sahel**. With a dual focus on regional security and development, this body includes enhancing resilience and human capital development as one of its key objectives. The G5 Sahel offers a forum for cooperation on these themes, with potential to bridge the gaps between programme interventions in these areas, including through shock-responsive social protection. Again, however, issues of coordination among different regional and national actors loom large as it seeks to implement its programme.

Coordination mechanisms

The assessment of the agricultural season is the main source of information for decision-making in formulating food strategies. This has been strengthened through the use of the Harmonised Framework for the Analysis and Identification of Areas at Risk and Vulnerable Groups in the Sahel—the **Cadre Harmonisé**—developed by CILSS as a tool to allow for better prevention and management of both acute and chronic food security crises. The Cadre Harmonisé has become a regional reference instrument for both governments and their partners: it presents the food security situation, provides early warning and estimates the size of populations affected by food insecurity, though it cannot identify precise communities in need.

Data collected through the Cadre Harmonisé are validated through six stages, which include the two annual meetings of the RPCA in April and December. The **RPCA** is a forum for discussion, and a space for dialogue on action in the event of a food security crisis. It draws on the political leadership of ECOWAS together with the West African Economic and Monetary Union (known as UEMOA), and is driven by the CILSS with the support of the Sahel and West Africa Club². It brings together these and many other government and non-government stakeholders, including development partners. Members agree on the actual and prospective food and nutrition situation, as well as on measures to be taken to address crises. The RPCA meetings have recently (2016) started paying more attention to the relevance of social protection for addressing food insecurity.

The PREGEC Charter commits members to a non-binding 'code of conduct' to improve food and nutrition security analysis; and improve governance and strategies for preventing and managing food security crises, including by incorporating instruments for food crisis management in national action plans. To facilitate its application, the RPCA has drawn up guidelines on instruments for food crisis management, which includes those for both emergency response and medium- and long-term development as well as instruments to strengthen information management. The framework—which prominently includes cash transfers—offers valuable guidance for countries and is thus an important input for further discussion and action around shock-responsive social protection, though our analysis indicates that the opportunity for using instruments flexibly across

² The UEMOA is a customs and currency union of a subset of Francophone ECOWAS member states. The Sahel and West Africa Club is a regional coordination initiative of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

both emergencies and longer term social protection is much greater than the RPCA's framework suggests.

ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS coordinate the regional alliance, **AGIR**, which has four strategic objectives, of which the first focuses on social protection. AGIR aims to more effectively tackle the structural causes of food and nutrition insecurity in west Africa and to enhance links between humanitarian and development actions, by assisting countries to elaborate their national priorities for resilience. Some 17 countries have now joined, working on priorities linked to the regional roadmap adopted in 2013. International partners also participate. Many of the numerous initiatives from intergovernmental organisations and their donors to strengthen resilience in the Sahel make explicit reference to the AGIR framework, and the six countries under study include social protection as an integral part of their national resilience priorities. The next challenge is to integrate the PRP-AGIR in the relevant sectors and implement them. A draft evaluation of AGIR that is in progress suggests now is the time for governments to rationalise the frameworks for resilience and to take on more leadership of the AGIR process, to ensure alignment of the activities of donors with their national priorities.

It is clear that the range of regional structures and initiatives that might be relevant to improving the use of social protection to respond to shocks at the national level is substantial. At the same time the array of plans, programmes, frameworks and activities risks becoming overwhelming. Not all countries are members of the same bodies so they find themselves in slightly differing sets of conversations. Some structures and programmes are set up to compensate for perceived shortcomings in others that already exist, while others are created to explore the similar theme of resolving food insecurity from different perspectives (climate change, security, social protection, nutrition etc.). These perspectives often emerge from the interests of funders, in both development and humanitarian organisations. Agencies working on related issues nationally may not always perceive the relevance of the regional activities for their own priorities, especially if the actors delegated to represent the member state are not drawn from the sector that leads implementation of those activities at national level. These will be among the key challenges moving forward.

Selected regionwide initiatives by development partners

The outline of a few key regional frameworks or initiatives led by development partners in the Sahel suggests potential for shock-responsive social protection.

The **UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel**, endorsed in July 2013, consolidates certain strategic objectives for all UN agencies—including WFP, FAO, UNICEF and the International Organisation for Migration, among many others—into a single document. It identifies resilience as one of three components to restore stability in the region along with governance and security, and represents the UN contribution to AGIR. Social protection is identified in it as one of the five areas of intervention to improve resilience along with the analysis of risks and vulnerabilities, livelihoods, nutrition, and DRM. Because the strategy aims to bring together the existing plans of UN agencies, many actions refer to providing support to existing mechanisms and networks, so they do not add to the number of approaches to strengthening resilience; moreover, it does not come with additional funding. For the moment it may be too early to discern the impact of the drafting of this document on the implementation of activities that might have taken place anyway.

A multi-donor trust fund supported by DFID funds a regional **Adaptive Social Protection** programme (ASP) covering the six countries under review, with implementation by the World Bank. 'Adaptive social protection' as a general term refers to interventions that aim to support development while reducing vulnerability to climate change (Béné, 2012). The term is associated with, but slightly different to, shock-responsive social protection because of its exclusive focus on

climate-related risk and because it is concerned with living with climate impacts over the long term, not only responding to specific crises. One component is therefore improving the functioning of DRM systems such as early warning systems. Scalable social protection interventions may be another part of the solution, as may programmes that enhance the resilience of households and communities and promote diversification of income-generating opportunities.

The ASP's resources are mostly used by national governments to develop their own interventions, but the fund also supports broader analytical, technical assistance and capacity-building activities managed by the World Bank. At the regional level, ASP activities have been designed to improve coordination among the activities of the focal countries and to expand knowledge on how to support the most vulnerable—in the Sahel and beyond—in managing shocks and disasters.

The European Union is one of the largest contributors of humanitarian aid to the Sahel, especially through its humanitarian directorate, ECHO. One initiative it funds—though did not initiate—is the support of **national alliances of NGOs** that deliver ECHO-funded assistance. The first was launched in Niger in 2012; they now operate in all six countries under review. They serve as technical fora to improve coordination, information exchange, harmonisation of approaches and advocacy around cash transfers and their institutionalisation. Since 2015 representatives of the alliances have convened an annual regional workshop to draw up a joint roadmap for priority actions, which include general recommendations on themes including targeting of beneficiaries, setting transfer values and contributing to the design of national social protection policies.

Cash Working Groups, initiated by CaLP, have been present in the region since 2008. Their role in bringing together humanitarian and development partners—including government representatives—to coordinate activities and share information on one particular social protection instrument, cash transfer programmes, is most effective when both parties have a mutual interest in collaborating. For humanitarian agencies this might be because a country is elaborating development policy frameworks that affect their operations, particularly if there is a shift from humanitarian to development programming to respond to food insecurity; for development partners, there may be an interest in learning from the accumulated experience of the humanitarian agencies in delivering cash transfers. Other factors that improve the effectiveness of Cash Working Groups' contribution to collaboration between humanitarian and development actors include leadership by a specialist in strategy rather than by purely technical experts, and participation in cluster or sector working group meetings. A challenge for the groups is that of limited resources, since none has a funded position for cash coordination.

Conclusions

Delivering a more effective response to shocks

States, intergovernmental and international organisations in the Sahel are willing to extend social protection to vulnerable groups, particularly to better protect populations against covariate shocks and prevent acute food crises. Intergovernmental structures and mechanisms lend greater visibility to the *policy question* of the need to improve linkages between humanitarian assistance and development initiatives across many sectors. They have contributed to a greatly increased exchange of knowledge among the countries, among both governments (such as during RPCA meetings) and NGOs (eg. through the ECHO alliances and Cash Working Groups). In some cases regional collaboration is improving some aspects of diagnosis and monitoring of food security shocks and of the responses to them, such as through the Cadre Harmonisé. AGIR, initiated in 2012 and led by regional institutions, has strengthened the drive for the expansion of social protection to the most vulnerable populations.

To date, the regionwide mechanisms have not yet been as prominent in *implementing* programmes. Several possible contributing factors emerge:

- many of the policy initiatives outlined above have been launched within the last few years and are still at the stage of formulation rather than implementation (eg. AGIR's resilience priorities);
- the process of arriving at a consensus on, and securing financing for, initiatives that are intended to support many countries at once while those countries' needs differ—such as the regional food security reserve—is slow and complex;
- there remains a sense among some that regional mechanisms should reflect national governments' priorities rather than attempting to influence the design of national interventions; and
- the multisectoral nature of the challenges in the region—food security, social protection, nutrition, security etc.—makes it difficult for member states' delegates from one sector to speak on behalf of all the interlocking initiatives in other sectors.

Towards better integration of humanitarian, DRM and social protection systems

A key challenge for coordinating regional multisectoral initiatives is the number of dimensions that one might wish to coordinate: within and between regional bodies, within and between countries, across sectors etc. The 'resilience' agenda provides one key point of convergence in the wave of new Sahel strategies launched since 2011. There is a need to address the risk that competition among international actors could overshadow coordination; there are clear issues of national capacity to carry these strategies forward; and both institutional anchorage and cross-sectoral coordination pose significant challenges at national level that still need to be sorted out.

Setting up shock-responsive social protection systems also calls for greater coordination between humanitarian actors and development actors, especially where interventions have developed in parallel with little dialogue to date (often the case with emergency and longer term cash transfers, for example). With many national social protection programmes in the Sahel still at an early stage, humanitarian actors in the region are often covering chronic needs. The gradual transition of beneficiaries from one system to the other requires policymakers to consider whether and how national programmes might respond to seasonal needs; consider social protection programmes in national contingency plans to address prolonged droughts and other disasters; work to improve and harmonise targeting methods; pay careful attention as to if, and how, single registries might contribute to a response to crises; and design flexible methods of financing. These national-level policy questions are similar to those that policymakers must address elsewhere in the world. But the reliance of many countries in the Sahel on non-governmental humanitarian responses to deliver long-term needs is distinctive from some other regions (such as Latin America, where emergency response is mostly government-led); and the fact that there is much in common among countries in the Sahel in the types of food security shocks they face means that there is merit in exploring solutions through regionwide collaboration.

Disaster preparation and management plans would need to be improved by strengthening links with early warning systems (led by the Cadre Harmonisé), regular assistance programmes, and financing mechanisms. The adoption of multi-year public expenditure programming and budgeting is an important step towards the improvement of budgetary predictability in general and the accountability of emergency-related operations.

Next steps at the national level

With national social protection programmes in the Sahel still at an early stage and having very limited reach, the expansion of their coverage to ensure basic social protection to poor and vulnerable populations remains a priority and will take many years. Their development is, of course, a prerequisite for the integration of shock-responsive elements; but shock-responsive social protection systems will not be achieved solely by integrating elements of 'vertical' or 'horizontal' expansion to these few small national programmes. The need for interventions by development and humanitarian partners will therefore continue. These are already well underway.

With state- and non-state interventions in place to respond to seasonal and chronic food security needs, it is important to strengthen the links between them. Mali offers an example of this. For some years, some humanitarian actors have been working to harmonise their approaches on seasonal transfers, particularly with a view to align (or transfer) them to national systems. There is a growing awareness of the need for rapprochement between state-run and humanitarian systems around this issue.

Finally, it is appropriate to pay greater attention to needs and local dynamics in the design and implementation of these state-led and partner-led mechanisms; and also to support the strengthening of informal social protection mechanisms and adaptive livelihood strategies.

Recommendations

Seven key recommendations cover:

- **Regional policies**—promoting awareness among national social protection actors of the opportunity to embed social protection in updates to regional policies, including in agriculture.
- **Understanding of social protection at regional level**—conversely, continuing to find ways of promoting understanding of social protection among regional policymakers in other sectors.
- **Intersectoral coordination**—strengthening exchanges nationally between the representatives of the agricultural ministries who participate in regional policymaking, and the representatives of ministries responsible for social protection and DRM.
- **Comparative data analysis**—there might be a benefit in an organisation such as CILSS expanding its synthesis of the data it receives on food security throughout the region, eg. through greater comparative analysis across countries.
- **Supporting social protection development**—recognising the importance of the gradual expansion of routine social protection as a valid contribution to improving responsiveness to shocks in itself, even before building in elements that expand programmes vertically or horizontally on a temporary basis.
- **Links between DRM, social protection and funding**—considering how to strengthen links between early warning systems data and social protection, to increase the predictability and timeliness of funds.
- **Multi-year programming and budgeting**—considering whether and how regional data such as the Cadre Harmonisé can feed into multi-year programming rather than annual responses.

Contents

Executive summary	ii
Abbreviations	xii
1 Approach and method	1
1.1 Research questions	1
1.2 Approach taken for the Sahel case study	1
1.3 A note on terminology and research scope	2
2 Shocks and vulnerability	4
2.1 Poverty analysis	4
2.2 A region in permanent crisis	6
2.3 Constant humanitarian needs	8
3 The humanitarian response to food insecurity	11
3.1 The international humanitarian response	11
3.2 A change in the response?	12
4 Overview of social protection in the Sahel	15
4.1 An apparent willingness to expand basic social protection	15
4.2 Public expenditure on social protection	20
4.3 Implications for shock-responsive social protection	21
5 The contribution of intergovernmental bodies and mechanisms to the promotion of food security	22
5.1 ECOWAS	23
5.2 CILSS	27
5.3 The G5 Sahel	28
5.4 Key coordination mechanisms	29
5.5 Implication of these structures for shock-responsive social protection	35
6 Selected regionwide initiatives by development partners	36
6.1 UN: The UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel	36
6.2 World Bank: The Adaptive Social Protection programme	37
6.3 ECHO: ECHO-funded NGO alliances	39
6.4 CaLP: Cash Working Groups and related activities	40
7 Conclusions	42
7.1 The contribution of regionwide mechanisms to delivering an effective response to shocks	42
7.2 How can humanitarian, DRM and social protection systems better work together?	43
7.3 Implications for next steps at the national level	44
7.4 Recommendations	45
Annex A References	47
Annex B Detailed methodology	51
Annex C Social protection under Niger's PRP-AGIR	53

List of tables, figures and boxes

Tables

Table 1	Basic demographic data	4
Table 2	Basic socioeconomic data	5
Table 3	Food insecure people, 2016, by country	8
Table 4	Prevalence of malnutrition in children under five years of age	9
Table 5	Humanitarian assistance for food security in the Sahel, 2014–16	12
Table 6	Humanitarian funding requirement, 2017, by country	12
Table 7	Main national social cash transfer programmes	18
Table 8	Public expenditure on social assistance excluding subsidies, around 2008-12 (% of GDP)	20
Table 9	Membership of intergovernmental structures	23
Table 10	Meetings attended by the research team	52

Figures

Figure 1	Typology of shock response	3
Figure 2	Livelihood zones across the Sahel	5
Figure 3	People affected by a natural disaster in the Sahel, 2008–15	6
Figure 4	Occurrence of natural disasters in the Sahel, 1970–2014	7
Figure 5	Conflict IDPs and refugees, 2009–15	8
Figure 6	Food insecure people (millions), 2013–16	9
Figure 7	Our typology of social protection	16
Figure 8	The RPCA's set of instruments for food crisis management	32

Boxes

Box 1	Overview of ECOWAS and UEMOA	23
Box 2	Promoting social assistance for food security through the resilience agenda	25
Box 3	Main activities of the ASP	38
Box 4	Priority actions for the 3N initiative as set out in Niger's PRP-AGIR	54
Box 5	Social protection in Niger's 3N Initiative	55

Abbreviations

AGIR	Alliance Globale pour la Résilience
ARC	African Risk Capacity
ASP	Adaptive Social Protection
CaLP	Cash Learning Partnership
CILSS	Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel
CoP	Community of Practice
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DRM	disaster risk management
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department
ECOWAP	ECOWAS Agricultural Policy
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FEWS NET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
HEA	Household Economy Approach
HIEP	Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Programme
ILO	International Labour Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPM	Oxford Policy Management
PREGEC	Dispositif régional de prévention et de gestion des crises alimentaires
PRIA	Regional Agricultural Investment Programme (<i>Programme régional d'investissement agricole</i>)
PRP	Priorités Résilience Pays
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Programme
RISE	Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced
RPCA	Food Crisis Prevention Network
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UEMOA	West African Economic and Monetary Union
WFP	World Food Programme

1 Approach and method

1.1 Research questions

Globally, the frequency, size and duration of disasters and crises—be they the consequence of natural phenomena or economic or political shocks—are on the rise. The cost of responding to these disasters has been increasing, too. While national governments bear the main responsibility for mitigating the risk of shocks and responding to them, the demands placed on the international humanitarian community to provide assistance continue to grow. The value of international humanitarian assistance keeps hitting record highs—the last three years have each seen the highest ever levels of assistance provided—yet the gap compared with what is needed continues to widen (Development Initiatives, 2016).

Many shocks are predictable and protracted, and often slow-onset. For this reason governments and international agencies alike are committed to finding a way forward that responds more efficiently and effectively, rather than reactively, to shocks: they aim to 'use existing resources and capabilities better to shrink humanitarian needs over the long term', in the words of the Grand Bargain made by the humanitarian and development communities at the World Humanitarian Summit ('Grand Bargain', 2016, p. 14). Many actors are now asking whether and how long-term social protection systems can be part of the solution, since these are already intended to meet the needs of the poorest households, to build resilience and to respond to crises.

This research programme has been commissioned to explore this issue. We examine two related but distinct themes: first, social protection and its potential role in shock response; and second, the opportunities for coordination (and possible integration) of humanitarian interventions, disaster risk management (DRM) and social protection.

Our overarching research question is: **What factors enable social protection systems to be responsive to shocks and to deliver effective shock response?**

There are two associated sub-questions:

1. What features in the design and implementation of social protection systems facilitate an effective response to shocks?
2. How can humanitarian, DRM and social protection systems best work together for effective responses to shocks?

We are addressing these by means of a series of six case studies—including this one—and a number of related outputs (a literature review, synthesis report, toolkit and others).

1.2 Approach taken for the Sahel case study

A significant feature of the Sahel is the set of regionwide institutions, strategies and initiatives that aim to address recurrent crises, particularly those related to food and nutrition insecurity. This light study highlights the specific nature of the regional approach to addressing food insecurity in the Sahel and examines whether and how social protection contributes to that response.

The study focuses above all on intergovernmental entities of subregional scope (Sahel and/or west Africa). It also looks at some key initiatives by international aid actors and regional civil society structures. The review does not intend to draw up a comprehensive and precise mapping of programmes implemented by each actor or by each government. Rather, it seeks to clarify their respective approaches to the issue and their interactions (or lack thereof). Where country

perspectives are presented we focus on the six Sahel countries identified as priorities by DFID for this research programme, namely Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal³. More specifically, our objectives are to:

- clarify what the aspiration to 'shock-responsive social protection systems' can mean in a practical way in the Sahel;
- specify the institutional aspects raised by this question which go beyond the national framework and need to be dealt with at the regional level, and consider how effectively the regionwide institutions address these aspects; and
- review how institutions and bodies from different sectors collaborate to facilitate an improved response to food security shocks.

This study has been conducted through a series of literature reviews, participation in several regional meetings, working sessions with national and regional policymakers and technicians, and key informant interviews (see Annex B for details). The literature reviews focused particularly on vulnerabilities, crises and shocks in the Sahel; the state of formal and informal social protection; regional mechanisms for crisis preparedness and response; and current regional initiatives aiming to strengthen the links between social protection, DRM and resilience-building activities. This work made it possible to draw up a list of the main regional actors and relevant consultation platforms.

Individual interviews were conducted with staff from relevant regional organisations through purposive and network sampling. Given that their headquarters are spread across different cities in the Sahel and beyond, these were mostly conducted by telephone or Skype. More than 50 key informants have been contacted since the start of the research programme in March 2015. The interviews sought to comprehend what individuals understand by the notion of “shock-responsive social protection systems” and the main issues that they perceive, to what extent they work with actors from other relevant sectors, etc.

1.3 A note on terminology and research scope

It is useful to define the term ‘shock-responsive social protection’, since all social protection is inherently intended to respond to shocks. In this research we use the term ‘shock’ to refer implicitly to covariate shocks, i.e. those that affect large numbers of people and/or communities at once. Covariate shocks may be natural, economic or political. We focus on the types of covariate shock that affect a substantial share of the population and result in a ‘crisis situation’ that is likely to trigger an international humanitarian response. However, we do not cover the influx of refugees, which triggers specific international mechanisms and is not the sole responsibility of the host country, or disease outbreak, which calls primarily for a response from the health system.

We adopt a broad definition of social protection which encompasses a range of instruments including, for example, food distributions, cash transfers, school feeding, grants for goods and basic foodstuffs, subsidies, health insurance and pensions. The overall research programme therefore considers both contributory and non-contributory instruments. Similarly, state and non-state social protection providers are included. We include interventions that can be put in place in advance of a shock to mitigate its impact, not only those implemented after the event.

Two further concepts merit a brief mention here as they drive the diagnosis of what types of needs a country must address, and what sort of response is feasible (OPM, 2015). First, in terms of need, we recognise that social protection needs in relation to covariate shocks fall into three categories:

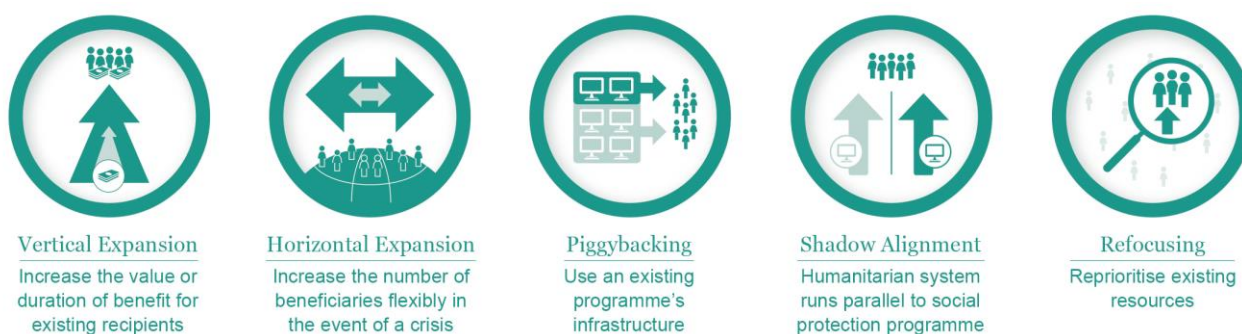
³ A detailed case study of Mali is available separately (O'Brien et al., forthcoming).

structural, seasonal and humanitarian. 'Structural needs' refer to the type of chronic poverty commonly addressed by long-term social protection programmes. 'Seasonal needs' refer to cyclical crises whereby every year or so, poor weather or other conditions push an additional number of households into requiring short-term assistance. 'Humanitarian crisis needs' refer to the occasional exceptional year or event when communities that usually manage without any assistance find themselves in need of support.

Second, in terms of response, we note that the ability of a formal (as opposed to informal, household-level) social protection system to handle shocks depends to a large part on the degree of maturity of the system. Our emphasis on understanding opportunities for using state-run social protection systems to respond to shocks means that our studies cover countries where some kind of system is in place. In some cases it is only nascent and we take into account the implications of this.

A starting point for the research was a thorough literature review which identified five main ways in which social protection and humanitarian assistance interventions may adapt or collaborate to address needs arising from covariate shocks (OPM, 2015). We have organised these into a typology of shock response (Figure 1):

Figure 1 Typology of shock response



Source: OPM (2015).

In brief, systems are not only shock-responsive if they provide top-ups to existing beneficiaries or temporarily add beneficiaries to existing social protection programmes (which we term 'vertical expansion' and 'horizontal expansion' respectively)—although these are two commonly perceived options, often referred to as 'scaling up' an intervention in response to a shock. Other possibilities include taking advantage of part of an existing programme's infrastructure, such as a database or its personnel, while delivering an entirely different intervention ('piggybacking' on the system); running a separate humanitarian intervention that is designed to have the characteristics of a long-term social protection intervention, in order to facilitate subsequent integration ('shadow alignment'); and, if no additional budget is available, simply 'refocusing' existing resources on the priority households suffering from the shock. This typology is referred to in the report.

2 Shocks and vulnerability

Key points

- The Sahel is a region of high population growth—the population has doubled in the last 20 years, reaching 89 million in the six countries—and high geographical mobility, vulnerable to climate change and deteriorating environmental conditions and heavily dependent on subsistence agriculture.
- Low human capital rates, high poverty and high levels of gender inequality place Sahel countries at or near the bottom of the Human Development Index ranking.
- The region experiences low and irregular rainfall which, over the last 50 years, has had an increasingly negative impact on poverty reduction and food security. Floods and droughts have become more frequent and severe.
- Dependence on the market for access to food has made the region vulnerable to price volatility.
- Nomadic pastoralism, combined with forced displacement owing to political crises and conflicts in the region—eg. in the Lake Chad basin and in northern Mali—has resulted in a high level of population movement, placing increased pressure on food resources and basic services in some areas.
- Hunger and food insecurity are among the main humanitarian and development issues. Prolonged, structural food insecurity has become the norm, overlapping with short-term, but recurring, acute food insecurity. In 2016 about 19 million people in the region were facing food insecurity.
- Repeated shocks have led to significant asset erosion by households in the Sahel; and with a climate shock roughly every three years it can be hard for households to rebuild their assets before the next shock. This reduces resilience over time.

2.1 Poverty analysis

The Sahel is a transition zone between the south of the Sahara desert and the less arid Sudano-Sahelian belt. The Sahel is among the regions most vulnerable to climate change and deteriorating environmental conditions: the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates that over 80% of lands are now degraded. These lands are home to a large percentage of the population of the Sahel (Table 1).

Table 1 Basic demographic data

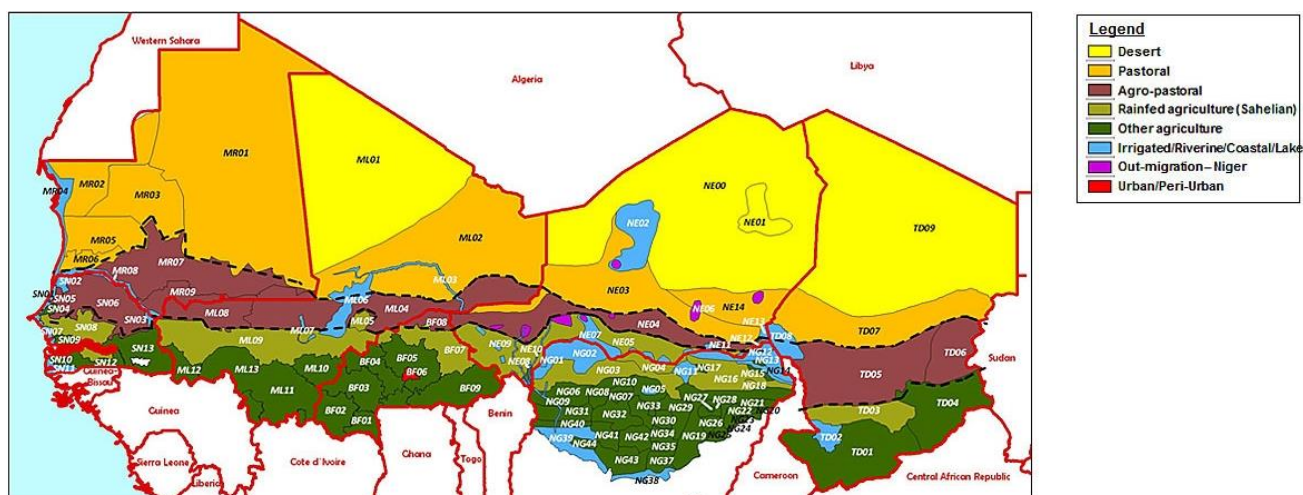
Indicators	B. Faso	Chad	Mali	Mauritania	Niger	Senegal
Population (million)	18	14	18	4	20	15
Rural population (%)	70	76	60	40	81	56
Fertility rate (births per woman, 2014)	5.5	6.2	6.2	4.6	7.6	5.1
Annual population growth (%)	2.9	3.3	2.9	2.4	4	3.1
Population under 14 (%)	46	48	48	40	50	44
Pop. on degraded land (% , 2010) ¹	73	45	60	24	25	16

Source: World Development Indicators, World Bank, except data on population living on degraded land which is from the United Nations (UN) Human Development Report 2013. Notes: Unless otherwise specified the data refer to 2015. (1) 'Degraded land' means land that has lost some of its natural productivity owing to human-caused processes which have resulted in eg. erosion, sand dune encroachment, salinisation or loss of biodiversity (see eg. FAO overview [here](#)).

The population of the Sahel has doubled over the past 20 years, reaching 89 million in 2015 in the six countries under review here, and it is expected to double again by 2040. Although population density varies greatly from country to country, it has rapidly increased over the past few decades. While the decline in mortality is rather well advanced, the decline in fertility is very slow (OECD, 2013). Fertility rates are among the highest in the world, resulting in very high population growth, particularly in Niger, where half of the population is below 14 years old. Population growth is

accompanied by geographical mobility and an urbanisation process which began in the 1950s and is characterised by the emergence of small secondary towns (FAO, 2014). However, the rural population is expected to remain significant in a context characterised by increased competition to access and use natural resources (OECD, 2013). At the economic level, the Sahel is characterised by a lack of diversification and a high dependence on subsistence farming. The agricultural sector employs the majority of the region's workforce and largely contributes to its gross domestic product (Table 2). Farming, livestock and fishing continue to be the main sources of livelihood in the Sahel. In areas with too little rainfall, rain-fed agriculture gives way to pastoralism as the dominant source of livelihood. While a significant part of the populations of Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal and Chad live from irrigated agriculture, Mauritania and Niger are considerably arid and a large part of their populations live from nomadic pastoralism (Figure 2). Although the primary sector plays a key role in the economy, it remains underdeveloped and depends almost exclusively on three to four months of annual rainfall between July and September. It is characterised by very low use of inputs (seeds and fertilisers), as well as by the lack of mechanisation and a weak market presence. By 2050, it is estimated that small farms (4 ha on average) would represent three-quarters of all farms in west Africa, and small producers are expected to continue to produce a large majority of food crops and export production (OECD, 2013).

Figure 2 Livelihood zones across the Sahel



Source: <http://www.hea-sahel.org>.

In this context, **poverty** rates have stagnated at very high levels (Table 2).

Table 2 Basic socioeconomic data

Indicators	Burkina Faso	Chad	Mali	Mauritania	Niger	Senegal
Socioeconomic indicators						
Poverty headcount ¹ (%)	40	47	44	42	49	47
Rural	48	53	51	59	55	57
Urban	25	21	19	21	19	33
HDI ranking (out of 188, 2014)	183	185	179	156	188	170
Macroeconomic indicators						
GDP per capita (current US\$)	590	776	724	1371	359	890
Primary sector (% of GDP)	34	52	41	21	36	18

Source: World Development Indicators, World Bank, except HDI ranking which is from the Human Development Report. Notes: Unless otherwise specified the data refers to 2015. (1) Poverty headcounts using national poverty line in the following years: 2008 for Mauritania, 2009 Mali, 2010 for Senegal, and 2011 for Chad and Niger, 2014 for Burkina Faso.

Even though poverty is concentrated in rural areas, urban migration motivated by the search for economic opportunities also tends to exacerbate urban poverty. The agricultural workforce is moving in particular towards the informal service economy in rural and urban areas (African Development Bank *et al.*, 2015). Low human capital rates, high poverty and high levels of gender inequality place Sahel countries at the bottom of the Human Development Index (HDI) ranking and below the average HDI for sub-Saharan Africa.

2.2 A region in permanent crisis

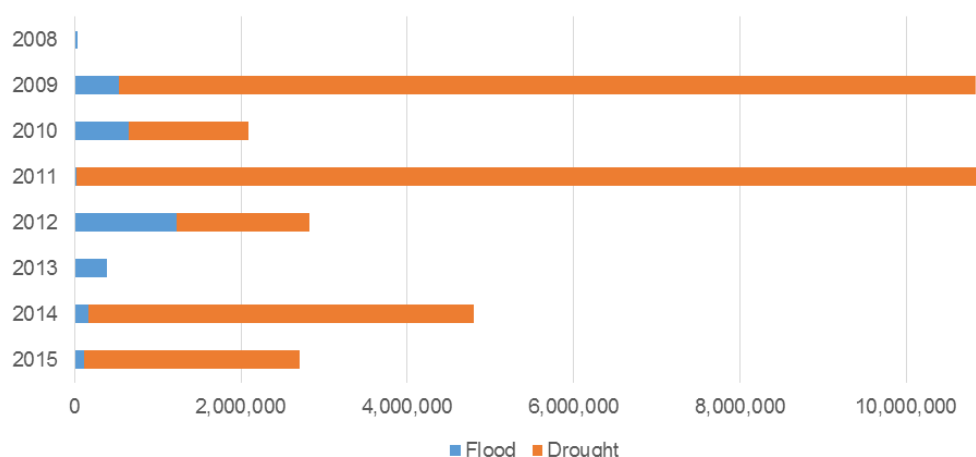
In the Sahel, crises are multiple and interconnected: they include crises relating to food security, the environment, demography and security among others. These vary in their speed of onset, duration and geographical location⁴. We note here some of their main features.

2.2.1 Natural shocks

The region is characterised by annual rainfall of 200-600 mm, with wide variations and irregular rains, which are major obstacles to food security and poverty reduction in the region. The situation has worsened in the past 50 years. “[The] combined effects of population growth, land degradation (deforestation, monoculture and overgrazing), reduced and irregular rainfall, and the lack of coherent environmental policies and clear development priorities, have contributed to the transformation of a large part of the Sahel in dry lands, resulting in the degradation of land and water resources” and a major environmental crisis (UNEP, 2011).

Since the beginning of the 1970s, the region has been subjected to severe natural disasters, particularly repeated droughts, which have led to widespread hunger and made food insecurity the main humanitarian and development issue. Over the years, these crises have become more frequent and their impacts more extreme. The predominance of the primary sector makes the economies vulnerable to climate volatility. Now, the region is particularly affected by climate change with frequent droughts and floods (Figure 3). Between 1970 and 1993, the region experienced 20 years of drought, then the rains become more irregular in terms of timing, quantity, and geographical scope affecting the region's farmers and herders.

Figure 3 People affected by a natural disaster in the Sahel, 2008–15

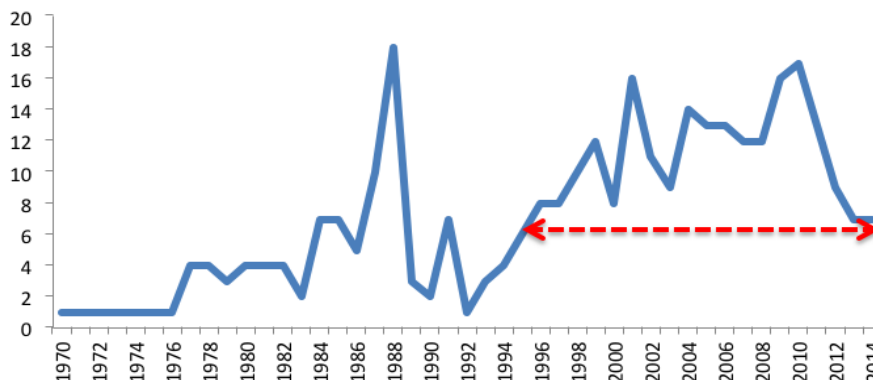


Source: Various authors, based on the EM-DAT database of the CRED. Note: Data refer to the six countries under review.

⁴ See the conceptual framework for an overview of the characteristics of different types of shock ([OPM, 2015](#)).

The frequency and magnitude of floods has also increased (Figure 4). By 2050, it is estimated that the increase in greenhouse gas emissions will cause temperatures to rise by 3C–5C and that extreme climatic events will be more frequent.

Figure 4 Occurrence of natural disasters in the Sahel, 1970–2014



Source: Cherrier and Laanouni (2015), based on the EM-DAT database of the CRED.

2.2.2 Economic shocks

Since 2008, the effects of climate shocks have been compounded by those of serious economic shocks, particularly with high food and energy prices, and by the global financial crisis. The majority of people in the Sahel, the poor in particular, are now very heavily dependent on the market for access to food⁵. This makes food price volatility and changes in purchasing power very important determinants of food and nutrition insecurity.

The region is subject to price volatility due to multiple causes. Analyses of the food situation during the 2012 crisis, for example, highlighted a contrast between changes in food production and changes in prices. Several factors can explain this apparent paradox: overvaluation of production, speculative practices, panic among consumers, interventions to replenish public stocks, barriers to regional trade, etc. (Galtier, 2012). Even though price stabilisation appears an important measure to prevent food insecurity, the task is complex and requires a regional approach integrating Sahel countries and coastal countries.

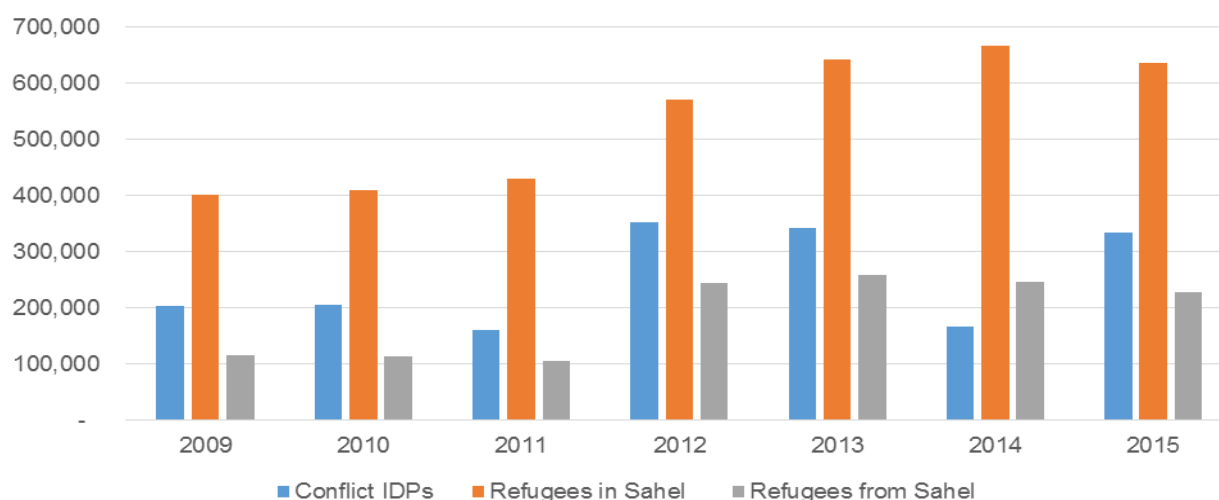
2.2.3 Political shocks and displacement

Political crises and conflicts have resulted in a critical level of forced displacement in the region (Figure 5). This movement is in addition to, and interacts with, the population movements that come from the long tradition of nomadic pastoralism in the Sahel (World Bank and UNHCR, 2013). In 2011–12, the political crises in Côte d'Ivoire and Libya led to hundreds of thousands of migrants returning to their Sahelian communities of origin, resulting in a loss of income for the latter coupled with increased pressure on already poor food resources and basic services. Since the beginning of 2012, the conflict in Mali has caused significant internal displacement and the influx of refugees in neighbouring countries. With tensions in Nigeria and in the Central African Republic, fears of political, social and economic instability in the region continue to exacerbate, restricting regional trade and voluntary migration, discouraging investors, and diverting political attention and resources towards the fight against insecurity rather than focusing on the causes of vulnerability to

⁵ The poorest Sahelian households (25% of the population) spend over 70% of their income on food (ECHO, 2012). Price rises force some to reduce their consumption of cereals to the point where their caloric intake is insufficient, or reduce consumption of other foods in order to maintain cereal consumption, exposing them to dietary deficiencies.

shocks (Fallavier, 2014). With respect to the Lake Chad Basin (adjacent to Chad, Niger and Nigeria), the food and nutrition situation has reached crisis level, due first to the conflict and population displacement which disrupt production and markets.

Figure 5 Conflict IDPs and refugees, 2009–15



Source: IDPs data from IDMC data, <http://www.internal-displacement.org>; Refugee data from UNHCR Global trends reports. Notes: 'Refugees in Sahel' and 'Refugees from Sahel' figures refer respectively to refugees residing in, or coming from, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger or Senegal.

2.3 Constant humanitarian needs

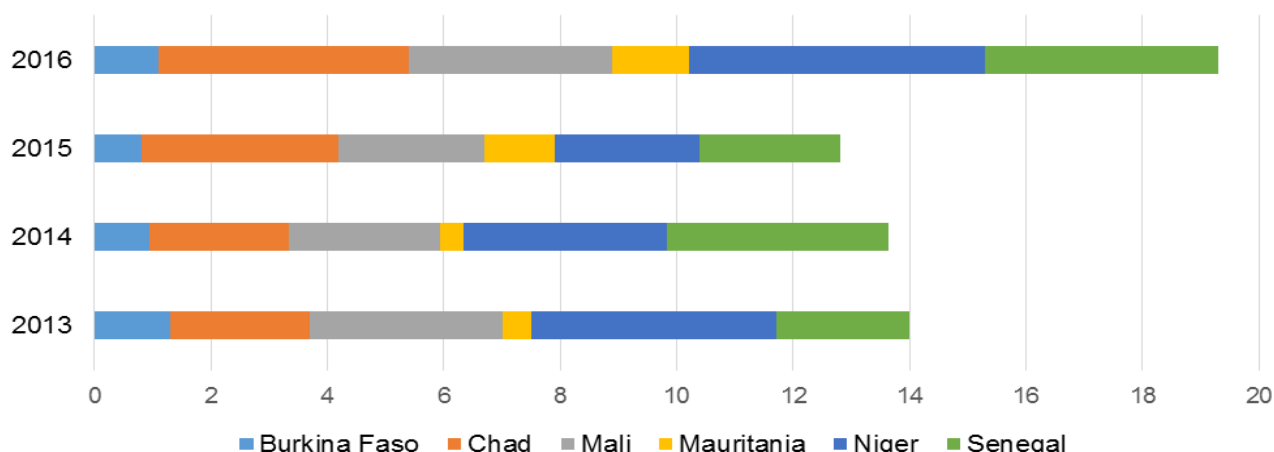
The Sahel region is faced with a chronic food and nutrition crisis caused by intertwined structural factors and regularly exacerbated by cyclical factors. Prolonged and structural food insecurity has become the norm, overlapping with short-term, but recurring, acute food insecurity. Many households have difficulties covering their caloric needs even in normal years (ECHO, 2012). The combination of natural disasters (mainly droughts and floods) and disasters of human origin (social conflicts, armed conflicts and economic crises) promotes the transition of chronic food and nutrition insecurity towards an acute stage. Although the prevalence of food insecurity is tending to decrease in the region, the number of persons faced with food insecurity keeps increasing because of population growth (FAO et al., 2015). At the end of 2016 over 19 million people found themselves in a situation of chronic food and nutrition insecurity in the six countries included in the present review (Table 3 and Figure 6).

Table 3 Food insecure people, 2016, by country

Country	Food insecure people (millions)
Burkina Faso	1.1
Chad	4.3
Mali	3.5
Mauritania	1.3
Niger	5.1
Senegal	4.0
Total	19.3

Source: OCHA (2016a). Notes: This is the breakdown of the 2016 figures in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6 Food insecure people (millions), 2013–16



Source: Authors based on OCHA (2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2016a). Note: (1) Data for 2013 are from January 2014, data for 2014 are from January 2015, data for 2015 are from December 2015, data for 2016 are from December 2016. (2) Totals amount to 14 million in 2013 and 2014, 13 million in 2015 and 19 million in 2016.

In particular, the prevalence of child malnutrition is continuously very high in the region, reaching alarming levels (Table 4). Although Senegal and Mauritania have low to average prevalence rates for stunting (an indicator of chronic malnutrition), these are high to very high in the other countries. Chronic malnutrition affects close to 40% of children under five years old, half of whom in a severe form. With the exception of Senegal, the prevalence of wasting (an indicator of acute malnutrition) is constantly above emergency thresholds.

Table 4 Prevalence of malnutrition in children under five years of age

Country	Year	Stunting (%)	Wasting (%)
Burkina Faso	2010	35	15
Chad	2015	40	13
Mali	2006	39	15
Mauritania	2012	22	12
Niger	2012	43	19
Senegal	2014	19	6

Source: Various authors, based on World Development Indicators, World Bank. Note: As defined by the World Health Organisation, the alert threshold corresponds to a 10% prevalence rate of acute malnutrition in children between 6 and 59 months, and the emergency threshold to a 15% prevalence rate.

Even though the Sahel has always been faced with food and nutrition crises, particularly during severe droughts, these crises have changed in nature (Cherrier, 2012). The challenges in the Sahel region are now structural and cross-cutting. Crises emerge from the combination of different triggering cyclical factors (climatic hazards, variability of cereal prices, restriction of cross-border trade flows, pressure on natural resources, conflicts, etc.) in a context of significant structural constraints (poverty and inequality, fragile ecosystems, desertification, demographic pressure, etc.) and production constraints (limited access to land and no guarantee of land property rights, low access to inputs and agricultural services, etc.). The ever growing population has limited access to food in spite of steadily increasing cereal production over the past 30 years. Food crises are increasingly close together and can no longer be perceived as 'exceptions' (calling on emergency responses) but must be seen as the new 'order' (calling on long term intervention strategies).

These repeated crises no longer give poor households the possibility to rebuild their livelihoods before the next shock. Repeated shocks have led to significant asset erosion by households in the Sahel. Trends in asset erosion play a major role in reducing households' resilience (IASC, 2013; Michiels and Egg, 2007). Asset erosion is a traditional adaptation mechanism; when a price crisis occurs, households sell part of their assets (for example, small ruminants) in order to be able to maintain their consumption level. Asset erosion also concerns human capital assets: some households are forced to reduce healthcare costs, which then makes them more vulnerable to malnutrition. But when crises are consecutive, not all households manage to rebuild their capital before the arrival of the following crisis. Household asset erosion has increased due to the increasing frequency of crises in recent years (2005, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2015). Many households thus have very low or non-existent resilience.

In this context, food and nutrition security remains the main area of intervention of humanitarian actors. As long as up to half of the children in the Sahel are malnourished, and likely to develop physical and cognitive impairments, it is difficult to see how the region can become resilient to the many shocks which beset it. Thus, in the present study (and the rest of this document), we are particularly interested in the case of acute food and nutrition crises (regardless of their causes—drought, conflict, etc.), in particular those during which emergency thresholds are exceeded, which then triggers the mobilisation of international humanitarian aid. The study is particularly about transnational mechanisms set up to address them.

3 The humanitarian response to food insecurity

Key points

- The response to food crises has traditionally been in the form of emergency targeted in-kind or cash transfers in the absence of an effective response from national social protection systems
- The response of the international humanitarian community—whilst significant—covers only a fraction of the estimated need.
- OCHA's plan for 2017 requires \$1.3 billion for their targeted groups, across all clusters, in the six countries. Assistance will be focused on addressing chronic food insecurity, high malnutrition, population displacement, epidemics and vulnerability
- The nature of the response to food insecurity has changed over time. In the 1970s and 1980s the focus was on ensuring food supply: cereal supplies were imported as part of policies to improve the availability and price stability of food products. By the 1990s, food security was recognised globally as multidimensional (availability, food access, food use and the stability of these over time)
- In this millennium, even with the government regulating to stabilise food prices and encouraging cereal production, the situation of agricultural households has not changed as they face constraints in both production of and access to food, against the backdrop of a series of food security crises.
- With the amount of humanitarian funding required to tackle chronic food insecurity rising, several major policy pronouncements in the Sahel have been explicit that the humanitarian community should work more on building resilience to shocks; plan to a medium-term rather than annual timeframe; and support the ability of national social protection systems to contribute to the response. Similarly, actors working on social protection interventions should plan how to improve their response to food insecurity.

Section 2 detailed the extent of the humanitarian need in the Sahel. This section explores the response to that need by the humanitarian community and considers the emergence of the discourse regarding the possible role of social protection systems in a humanitarian response.

3.1 The international humanitarian response

The management of food crises in the Sahel has traditionally been based on emergency aid in the form of targeted transfers to vulnerable households (transfers of food, money, food vouchers, animals or agricultural inputs, sometimes in exchange for work) and, more recently, actions to promote the nutrition of young children and breastfeeding women in particular.

The international humanitarian community makes a major contribution to this response. OCHA's [Sahel Humanitarian Dashboard](#), issued a few times a year, consistently records over 100 organisations supporting humanitarian response across all sectors in the region (covering northern Nigeria, north and east Cameroon and The Gambia as well as the six countries that are the focus of the present report). Much of this effort is aimed at promoting food security: as of 2016 the number of people targeted by food security clusters—in the sense of being the planned recipients of assistance—is greater than that targeted by any other cluster, at 7.7 million in the wider region (OCHA, 2016b). Nonetheless, the number targeted by an international humanitarian response is only a fraction of the total estimated to be in need of some kind of support: others may be expected to be covered by governments or communities, or may not receive any assistance (Table 5). In turn the number who actually receive support can be a fraction of the intended target.

The figures demonstrate a recognition by the international humanitarian community that even if they were to be able to fund and deliver all their intended assistance they would not expect to cover 100% of needs. This underlines the importance of routine social protection for as part of a response to chronic food security needs.

Table 5 Humanitarian assistance for food security in the Sahel, 2014–16

Year	No. of people targeted (million)	Targeted population as % of needs
2014	10.0	40%
2015	9.3	46%
2016	7.7	52%

Source: OCHA (2014b, 2015c, 2016b). Note: Figures refer to OCHA's wider definition of the Sahel as outlined in the paragraph above.

OCHA has estimated that, for 2017, the humanitarian community will require \$1.3 billion to help the people they plan to target, across all clusters, in the six countries under review, plus a further \$1.3 billion for Cameroon and Nigeria, the other two countries it counts as part of the Sahel (OCHA, 2016a) (Table 6). Support will primarily be for addressing chronic food insecurity, high malnutrition, population displacement, epidemics and addressing vulnerability.

Table 6 Humanitarian funding requirement, 2017, by country

Country	Humanitarian funding requirement (\$ million)
Burkina Faso	61
Chad	589
Mali	293
Mauritania	75
Niger	271
Senegal	16
Total	1,305

Source: OCHA (2016a). Note: This is across all clusters, not confined to food security.

3.2 A change in the response?

The nature of international and government responses to chronic and acute food insecurity has changed over the decades⁶. In the 1970s the crises were considered to stem from supply-side shocks: during the 1973-74 crisis nearly one-third of cereal supplies were imported, half in the form of food aid. Policies at the time were focused on improving the availability and price stability of basic food products, including through subsidies of inputs and an expansion of national security stocks managed by cereal offices as well as community stocks (village granaries, cereal banks). Gradually the average amount of food per person increased, yet physical and economic access to food become a major issue. During the 1980s, food insecurity continued to be tackled with imports of cereals and sales at regulated prices, as well as cash transfers and public works programmes. By the 1990s the multidimensional nature of food security was recognised globally to include four components: availability, food access, food use, and stability of these other three over time (see eg. Gross *et al.*, 2000). A succession of food security crises have occurred in the new millennium even while cereal production doubled or tripled. Food sovereignty has become the reference framework for public policy in the Sahel. In parallel to the regulation / stabilisation of food prices, governments have encouraged the revival of cereal production with the aim of reducing dependency on agricultural imports. However, this has not been enough to change the situation for agricultural households who suffer constraints in both production—limited access to land, inputs

⁶ This paragraph on the historical response to food insecurity in the Sahel is derived from Cherrier and Laanouni (2015).

and/or agricultural services, or no guarantee of land property rights—and access, determined mainly by income and food prices, with markets having become the main source of food supply.

Against this backdrop, international humanitarian aid has certainly helped to save many lives. Yet it does not provide a response to chronic food insecurity. Nor, with aid targeted at households that are already food insecure, does it respond to the problem of household asset erosion described in section 2.3 above, whereby slightly less poor households survive the crisis by selling off their last assets. In a context of recurring crises, this crisis management model based on targeted emergency aid is not sustainable and its effectiveness is compromised. The reduced resilience of households and the fact that part of the population is chronically food insecure, are leading to an increase in the volume (and cost) of emergency aid from one crisis to the next. Furthermore, with the increase in the frequency of crises in the Sahel (due to climate change and the volatility of international markets in particular), trends in asset erosion and chronic food security will worsen (Galtier, 2012). The humanitarian system finds itself under great strain when it deals, year after year, with problems that are actually chronic in nature.

This has led to a policy debate in the region with two lines of enquiry. The first is whether and how it is possible for the humanitarian community to redirect its efforts to a greater focus on increasing resilience to shocks. The second, given that the mandate of national social protection programmes is in general to support those in long-standing poverty, is that there is an argument for encouraging the expansion or adaptation of national social protection systems to support people affected by, for example, chronic food insecurity.

Several significant policy announcements recently have been explicit that this should be the direction of travel. In 2013, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee—the primary global mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance, including both UN and non-UN humanitarian partners—issued a major call to action for humanitarian actors in the Sahel to do, 'more to build resilience and reduce the future humanitarian case load' (IASC, 2013, p.1). It noted,

'A new mission for the humanitarian community in the Sahel is to engage, partner with, and influence, [...] development actors much more systematically than in the past in order to build greater resilience of this fragile community. A number of fault lines will need to be bridged in order to deliver such an integrated response.' (IASC, 2013, p.1).

On an operational level the IASC recognised that the new mission required humanitarian actors to invest substantially in helping communities to avoid selling their assets and to speed up recovery after a crisis, so that households did not deplete their assets faster than they could restore them. At around the same time there was a step change in humanitarian policy response in the region, with OCHA issuing its first three-year (rather than one-year) Humanitarian Response Plan for the Sahel in 2014, covering 2014-16 (OCHA, 2014a). This contained a strong resilience-building theme:

'The task of reducing tomorrow's humanitarian case-load is also a crucial goal in the Sahel context. Hence, for the first time, a three-year (rather than one year) strategy has been prepared that allows us to set more ambitious goals for ourselves, and to go about these tasks more systematically. Building new levels of partnership too, between humanitarian actors and the Governments of the region and between the humanitarian and the development communities are central to this new vision [...] The region's large humanitarian case-load will only start to substantially reverse when the underlying drivers of this vulnerability are addressed.' (OCHA, 2014a, p.6)

The theme has continued since then: the 2017 Overview of Humanitarian Needs and Requirements, for instance, states an intent to shift, 'from delivering aid to ending need wherever possible' (OCHA, 2016a, p.3).

There is a recognition that by streamlining mechanisms in the response of the humanitarian community to provide regular and predictable transfers to people in a situation of chronic or seasonal food insecurity, greater effectiveness and efficiency may be ensured, so that foreign aid funds are better used⁷. In the context of agricultural policies as well, social protection and safety nets in particular are promoted as important instruments to strengthen resilience and protect the livelihoods of the most vulnerable households.

As detailed in section 4.2, public expenditure on social protection is low. In the current context where national social protection systems are unable to expand, the approach has been to ensure better coordination between national governments, under the mandate of regional institutions; and better coordination between governmental and humanitarian actors. These approaches will be further elaborated in sections 5 and 6 respectively.

⁷ In this regard, donors tend to recommend Ethiopia's PSNP programme (*Productive Safety Net Programme*) to other developing countries, particularly because it appears to be less costly than providing humanitarian aid in times of disaster. It has been estimated that the response to the 2011 food crisis in Ethiopia through the PSNP cost \$53 per beneficiary, compared to \$169 per targeted beneficiary through humanitarian response mechanisms. The consequences of the crisis have also been considerably less severe in the region. The PSNP is more responsive to the early signs of a crisis. It is thus more effective at responding (International Development Committee, 2013).

4 Overview of social protection in the Sahel

Key points

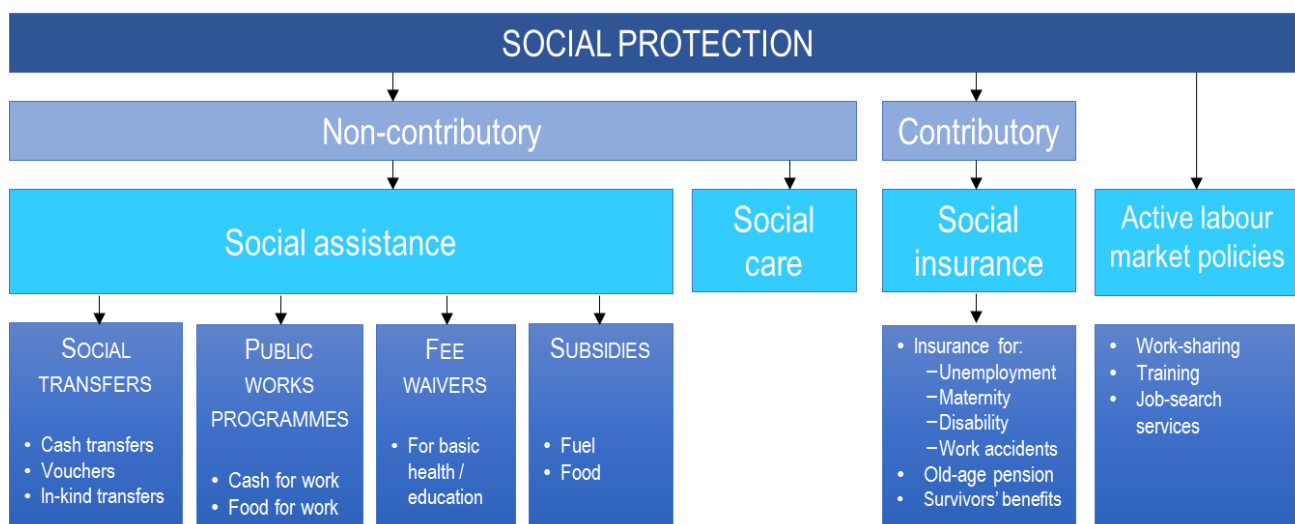
- In the early 2000s, the African Union and International Labour Organisation led efforts to establish Africa-wide declarations on social protection. In sub-Saharan Africa the Sahel was one of the last regions to consolidate social protection systems.
- The series of major crises in the last decade have led to an intensification of efforts to expand social protection to the poorest and most vulnerable.
- Each country now has a national social protection strategy or policy, formulated with support from UNICEF and with a emphasis on multisectoral action.
- Subsidies for food or fuel products are tending to be complemented with, or replaced by, long-term cash transfers, public works programmes, school feeding programmes and health fee waivers. Of the six countries, Senegal's cash transfer programme is the most institutionalised within government systems; Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger are all implementing programmes, though at a smaller scale; Mauritania and Chad are starting to elaborate similar schemes.
- As part of a drive to consolidate social protection into a more unified system, national governments are all looking at common issues which will also have an effect on the use of social protection to respond to emergencies: these include eg. targeting, payment mechanisms, grievance management, social registries and management information systems (MISs).
- Until recently levels of public expenditure on social protection in the six countries have been low, between 0.5% and 1.6% of GDP. The introduction of cash transfers, in particular, has brought about a rise more recently.
- With the introduction of a non-contributory social assistance programme in each country in the last five years—and the expansion of other types of social protection—the range of options for the introduction of shock-responsive social protection is now much greater; however, coverage in these programmes remains low.

4.1 An apparent willingness to expand basic social protection

The Sahel region was one of the last regions in sub-Saharan Africa to be engaged in the development and consolidation of social protection systems for the poorest and most vulnerable. Globally, social protection is generally considered to encompass both contributory and non-contributory interventions, the latter including cash and in-kind support and the provision of basic services such as assistance to the elderly or people with disabilities (see Figure 7 for the typology we use in this research). Yet for a long time in the Sahel, the understanding of social protection in many countries was confined to a few areas of contributory social insurance (such as health insurance, work accident and retirement benefits) covering only civil servants and a limited number of workers in the formal economy. Until recently, social protection was almost non-existent for workers in the informal economy and the economically inactive. Only some measures of assistance were in place for certain categories of chronically vulnerable people such as those with disabilities, or orphans and vulnerable children; these measures were often limited in magnitude and scope, fragmented and uncoordinated.

In the early 2000s a number of Africa-wide declarations on social protection were elaborated under the leadership of bodies including the African Union and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). In particular, the African Union launched a 'Plan of Action for Promotion of Employment and Poverty Alleviation' in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in 2004; one of its 11 priority areas was, 'Improving and strengthening the existing social protection schemes and extending it to workers and their families currently excluded, as well as occupational health, safety and hygiene' (African Union, 2004). There followed the Livingstone Call for Action at a regional conference on social protection for ministers from eastern and southern Africa in 2006, which noted that a basic package of social transfers was affordable with the resources of governments and development partners, and a similar call for action in Yaoundé, Cameroon, later that year.

Figure 7 Our typology of social protection



Source: OPM (2015).

The African Union's 'Social Policy Framework for Africa', issued in 2008, brought these together with a list of recommended actions for member states that included incorporating social protection in national development plans; developing and putting into practice action plans for social protection based on the concept of a minimum package (amongst which it suggested basic health care and benefits for groups including children, informal workers and older people, as well as mentioning employment guarantee schemes and social care); guaranteeing funding through the national budget; and coordination and consultation within government and with development partners and civil society (African Union, 2008). It is notable for the present research that one of its 13 recommended actions was, 'Utilize social protection instruments as a means of safeguarding the poor from global financial and economic shocks', which indicates the recognition of the relevance of long-term social protection for dealing with covariate risk.

The series of major crises which have affected the region since that date have led to an intensification of efforts to expand social protection to the poorest and most vulnerable⁸. In the Sahel, the issue remains closely linked to food and nutrition security and resilience. The deterioration of living conditions of rural populations and alarming levels of child malnutrition have been deemed a failure of agricultural policies, on the one hand, and of traditional food aid, on the other. This has aroused a growing interest among many actors, particularly among humanitarian actors, in the use of regular and predictable cash transfers able to allow vulnerable households to meet their needs and build their resilience capacities, while generating positive effects on the local economy. Development actors involved in social policies, such as UNICEF and the World Bank, have echoed this desire, supporting feasibility studies, the formulation of national social protection strategies, and implementation of cash transfer programmes while advocating for, and providing support for, strengthening systems.

4.1.1 Government-level initiatives

The six countries under review here all now have a framework through which to develop and implement social protection initiatives. The right to social protection is explicitly included in the constitutions of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Chad ratified the ILO's Convention no. 102 on Minimum Standards of Social Security in 2015, while Senegal and Mauritania have been

⁸ See, for example, Cherrier (2012), Fallavier (2014) and Holmes and Braunholtz-Speight (2009).

signatories to parts of the ILO Convention no. 102 since the 1960s. The Sahel countries now each have a **national social protection strategy (or policy)**, the formulation of which has been widely supported by UNICEF. These strategic documents contain many similarities in terms of approach, guidelines and prioritisation of activities around what can be perceived, *inter alia*, as a development framework for shock-responsive social protection systems. They place social protection within a more general risk management framework which recognises the importance of establishing both idiosyncratic and covariate risk response mechanisms. They identify the need to strengthen the collection and analysis of data on poverty and vulnerability, including through early warning and targeting systems. Food and nutrition security is often identified as a major strategic focal area, and social transfers as an instrument of choice to reach the poorest and most vulnerable. The importance of gradually moving towards integrated and coherent social protection systems is also highlighted. Finally, these strategic documents emphasise the importance of multisectoral action in conjunction with other structures and national policies. These policy frameworks and guidelines thus appear to be conducive to the development of shock-responsive social protection systems.

Previously, universal subsidies on some food or fuel products were quite commonly used as a response to crises in the region, though these were often inefficient and did not necessarily benefit those affected (Fallavier, 2014). In recent years, governments in the Sahel have become aware of the role that other social assistance programmes can play in reducing poverty, building social cohesion, developing human capital, and strengthening vulnerable households' resilience to shocks. New social protection programmes have emerged, often with assistance of international development partners: long-term, regular cash transfer programmes for extremely poor households; seasonal cash transfers to households suffering from food and nutrition insecurity; long-term labour-intensive public works programmes; 'home-grown' school feeding programmes linked to local markets; health fee waivers for the poorest; as well as measures seeking to set up general health insurance (Hodges and Médédji, 2016a).

The introduction of **national social cash transfer programmes** in the past five years is particularly noteworthy since this type of instrument was not used in the region prior to the turn of the millennium (apart from Cape Verde). Several countries have made a commitment to roll out continuous social cash transfer programmes, such as Jigisèmèjiri in Mali, the *Programme nationale de bourses de sécurité familiale* (PNBSF) in Senegal, or the social safety net project within the 3N initiative (*'les Nigériens Nourrissent les Nigériens'*) [*'Nigériens Nourish Nigeriens'*] in Niger (Table 7). These programmes are still in their infancy and their coverage is limited: they benefit a small proportion of individuals in extreme poverty, and are only in place in some areas of the country. Moreover, most remain largely dependent on external financing—except in Senegal—and the capacity of national structures often remains low. Nonetheless the political will to eventually scale up seems to be present.

Progress in delivering social protection policy varies across the countries. We do not have space here to detail the social protection interventions in each country but a few salient points merit highlighting⁹. In the classification of degrees of maturity of a social protection system that was presented in the conceptual framework for this research, Senegal might reasonably be characterised as having a 'state-led commitment' to social protection, as it is not only expanding its social assistance system but its flagship initiative for the poor is co-funded by the state¹⁰. Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso may be considered to be at a slightly lower level of maturity, with 'state-led interest' in social protection: the state expresses a desire to expand its programmes while the main interventions are for the time being funded largely by development partners and generally

⁹ See eg. Hodges and Mededji, 2016a and 2016b for further analysis of social protection in the region; and the Mali case study report that is part of this research for more details on that country (O'Brien *et al.*, forthcoming).

¹⁰ See OPM (2015) for the conceptual framework.

designed with external technical assistance, though within the framework of a nationally designed policy. Next come Chad and Mauritania, which have more recently developed, smaller national social safety net programmes largely funded and supported by the World Bank and DFID as part of overall efforts to establish systems through which to implement their national social protection strategies.

Table 7 Main national social cash transfer programmes

Country	Name	Year transfers began	Managed by	Main source of financing	Coverage
Burkina Faso	Burkin-Naong-Sa Ya	2015	Project Management Unit (Ministry of Social Action and National Solidarity)	World Bank	Planned: 40,000 HH in 2016 (North, East, Centre East)
Chad	National Safety Nets project (proposed pilot)	(planned)	Safety Net Unit (CFS) under Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation	World Bank	Planned: 15,200 HH (cash transfers in rural Sahel and South; cash for work in urban / peri-urban N'Djamena)
Mali	Jigisèmèjiri	2013	Project Management Unit (Ministry of Finance)	World Bank	Actual: 43,600 (Sep 2015)
Mauritania	Social Transfer Program	2017 (planned)	Tadamoun Agency, under supervision of the Social Protection Unit within the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development	World Bank / Government; other donors expected	Planned: 100,000 (whole programme, of which World Bank contribution 25,000 HH) Scheduled: 5,100 HH by Jan 2017
Niger	Projet de filets sociaux	2010	Project Management Unit under Prime Minister's Office	World Bank	Planned: 80,000 HH for cash transfer; 60,000 employed in public works
Senegal	PNBSF	2013	Délégation Générale à la Protection Sociale et à la Solidarité Nationale (president's office)	Government and World Bank	Actual: 200,000 HH (end 2015) Planned: 250,000 (2016), 300,000 (2017)

Source: Burkina Faso, Niger, Senegal—Hodges and Médédji (2016a, p.20). Chad—World Bank (2016a, 2016b). Mali—World Bank (2015a). Mauritania—World Bank (2015b, 2017). Note: HH = household.

- The rapid expansion of the PNBSF in **Senegal** is striking. The PNBSF, launched in 2013, is largely financed by domestic resources. The budget for the PNBSF alone (CFA 20 billion in domestic resources and about CFA 5 billion from the World Bank) is higher than the total budgeted for all safety net programmes in 2011 (CFA 23 billion) (Hodges et Mededji, 2016a). The programme already reached 200,000 households by the end of 2015, equivalent to about 59% of the population of the first poverty quintile. Coverage is expected to be expanded to 250,000 households in 2016 and 300,000 households in 2017, which would correspond to 89% of the first quintile population. Such coverage remains, however, an exception.
- In **Mali, Niger** and **Burkina Faso**, the planned coverage of the flagship cash transfer programmes by 2016-17 equates to around 10-15% of households in the lowest income

quintile (Hodges and Médédji, 2016a)¹¹. Note that this implies coverage of only around 2-3% of the total population, so it is likely to be premature to expect that these programmes could expand flexibly in the event of a crisis.

- **Mauritania** has developed an ambitious social transfer programme aiming to cover all households living in extreme poverty (approximately 100,000) by 2020 (starting with 25,000 in its first phase (\$15 million). The transfers will be conditional on participation in human capital promotion and income generation activities and are set within broader support for the development of a social protection system, including establishment of a national social registry and implementation of an expanded early warning system to trigger social protection contingency plans.
- **Chad** has just developed (2016) a national social safety nets project, funded by the World Bank, which includes cash transfers to 6,000 poor households in two regions (one in the Sahel and one in the south), and cash-for-work for 9,000 beneficiaries in urban and peri-urban areas of N'Djamena. Efforts are now underway to establish the institutional and operational features for implementation of the project, which includes support for systems-building (for a total of \$10 million over five years). The World Bank is explicit in its project development objective that it intends to, 'lay the foundations of an adaptive safety nets system' (World Bank, 2016b, p.ii). The long-term vision is for, 'a safety net system that will ultimately be capable of expanding program coverage in response to shocks, especially for households vulnerable to climatic and seasonal shocks and temporary food-insecurity' (World Bank, 2016b, p.27).

National governments are looking at a certain set of common issues that are emerging in each country as part of the drive towards consolidating social protection initiatives into a more unified system. These issues, all relevant to shock-responsive social protection, are identified succinctly by the World Bank in the outline of its support for the proposed safety net programme in Chad:

'Effective delivery of SSNs [social safety nets] requires well-designed service delivery instruments to support systemic functioning and to ensure that adaptiveness can be supported. The proposed project will help Chad develop these critical tools, including *targeting, payments mechanism, grievance management, social registry, and MIS* [management information systems]. These instruments will not only support effective delivery of programs, but are also essential to responding to shocks' (World Bank, 2016b, p.16; italics added).

Many countries have been reviewing their targeting mechanisms (ie. who should be the recipient of any benefit), especially from the point of view of assessing the relative merits of the two methods that have been commonly used in development and humanitarian programming, namely the proxy means test and the Household Economy Approach (HEA) respectively, which result in the selection of a very different set of beneficiaries for programmes. Single registries—computerised databases either of programme beneficiaries or of vulnerable households more broadly—are also a major focus at the moment. With the support of the World Bank, all six countries are now engaged in efforts to set up single registries¹². There is a manifest willingness to move towards integrated social assistance systems through these single registries, often with a view to establishing universal health coverage. Some governments are considering integrating contributory and non-contributory systems.

Other features of a social protection system that are being addressed by national governments include ensuring alignment between the policy framework and the programmes implemented; links

¹¹ In the case of Mali, this estimate takes into account the Common Framework on seasonal safety nets established in northern Mali by humanitarian actors but now developed in collaboration with the Jigisemejiri national programme.

¹² See eg. Barca and Chirchir (2014) for clarification of the concepts of single registries and their merits and challenges.

between social assistance and complementary measures (such as behaviour change communication, physical access to quality social services, etc.); payment mechanisms; and the national financing of programmes in the long-term (Hodges and Médédji, 2016a). There are significant gaps in national structures for supporting social protection systems (starting with institutional arrangements) and a need to build implementation capacities, particularly at the decentralised level.

Some commentators note as well the importance of taking into consideration community dynamics and cultural practices to maximise the benefits of social protection programmes and avoid adverse effects on social cohesion or the resilience of communities (eg. Cherrier, 2014; Matthews, 2016; Watson, 2016). In the absence or inadequacy of formal social protection services in a large part of the Sahel, informal social protection mechanisms act as vital safety nets. They are grounded in ties of social solidarity based on kinship, religion, locality or friendship. They connect individuals and groups, and encourage a pooling of risks and shared responses to common life-cycle and livelihood risks. However, such mechanisms are themselves vulnerable to different shocks and stresses. They thus appear more effective at addressing idiosyncratic shocks affecting isolated individuals or households, rather than covariate shocks affecting entire communities. There are some promising examples of how external assistance can build on, strengthen and enable these informal mechanisms to contribute more effectively to shock-responsive social protection¹³. Of course, such efforts must be seen as complementary to, rather than a replacement for, formal social protection mechanisms which remain the responsibility of the state (Watson, 2016).

4.2 Public expenditure on social protection

Levels of public expenditure on social protection have—until recently, at least—remained generally low in the region, consistent with the low profile of the sector. Prior to the introduction of cash transfer programmes cited above, spending on non-contributory social assistance was mostly well below the average of 1.6% of gross domestic product (GDP) for all developing countries and 1.7% of GDP for sub-Saharan Africa (Table 8) (Monchuk, 2014; World Bank, 2015). For example, in Mali, the budget for social transfers in 2009 corresponded to only 0.5% of GDP, while 27% of the population experienced food insecurity (Cherrier *et al.*, 2011b). In Burkina Faso, spending on social assistance, excluding energy subsidies, represented only 0.9% of GDP in 2009, while 20% of the population experienced food insecurity. Niger, with the equivalent of 1.6% of GDP allocated to safety nets in 2008, may be an exception, but it should be pointed out that this aggregate figure includes short-term humanitarian assistance programmes (Hodges and Médédji, 2016a).

Table 8 Public expenditure on social assistance excluding subsidies, around 2008-12 (% of GDP)

Country	Reference year	Cash transfers	In-kind transfers	School feeding	Public works	Fee waivers	Other	Total
Burkina Faso	2010	0.0*	0.4	0.4	0.0*	0.0*	-	0.8
Chad	Data unavailable							
Mali	2009	-	0.4	0.1	0.0*	-	-	0.5
Mauritania	2012	0.4	0.8	0.1	-	-	-	1.3
Niger	2008	0.0*	1.4	0.1	0.1	-	-	1.6
Senegal	2011	0.0*	0.0*	-	-	0.1	-	0.1

Source: World Bank (2015d). Note: (*) denotes expenditure of less than 0.05% of GDP.

¹³ Analysis of informal social protection in the Sahel is presented in a separate working paper (Watson, 2016).

During the same period, a large proportion of public expenditure on non-contributory social protection was absorbed by general subsidies for fuels and food products (Monchuk, 2014). In Burkina Faso, general subsidies represented 90% of public expenditure on social assistance for the period 2005-09 (Monchuk, 2014). These universal energy subsidies were extremely expensive (0.7% of GDP in 2007, in the case of Burkina Faso) but had little impact on the poorest people (Cherrier *et al.*, 2011a; Monchuk, 2014). Donors contributed a large proportion of public expenditure on safety nets—for example, up to 80% in Burkina Faso for the period 2005-2009—often through *ad hoc* financing linked to short-term projects (Monchuk, 2014).

Over the past few years, donors, led by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, have sought to encourage a transition from general subsidies towards social transfers targeted at the poorest and most vulnerable groups. At the same time, as with the global movement in favour of social protection, advocacy to expand social protection to the most deprived has intensified, in particular through efforts by UNICEF, the World Bank, DFID, the ILO and ECHO. During the last few years, these efforts have resulted in a rapidly changing social protection landscape in the Sahel. The available budgetary data presented in Table 8 above, covering the period 2008-12, do not reflect this new trend. In a few countries, however, a large drop in spending linked to general subsidies, and a rising trend with respect to public expenditure allocated to safety nets, were observed. In Burkina Faso, spending on social assistance has thus more than doubled, from 0.8% of GDP in 2010 to 2.1% of GDP in 2014. Senegal's commitment to the PNBSF has considerably added to its expenditure on social assistance¹⁴.

4.3 Implications for shock-responsive social protection

The fact that all the countries in the region have introduced non-contributory social assistance programmes within the last few years means that the range of options for the introduction of shock-responsive social protection is much greater than it was five years ago. Clearly, a social protection programme must exist in order for it to become shock-responsive, except in those cases of 'shadow alignment' to a social protection programme, where the humanitarian response is designed to look like a social protection intervention in order to smooth an eventual transition (see Figure 1 above). However, one should bear in mind the scale of these new interventions in comparison to the estimated number of households in chronic poverty, or, indeed, to the total population. With each country having a population of 14-20 million (except Mauritania, at 4 million), a cash transfer programme that reaches only a few thousand households cannot be expected directly to adapt to handle the needs of the millions who face food insecurity: this would take years of investment. Their use to address covariate shocks may include the 'piggybacking' model by which the intervention itself is not expanded, but components of its system are borrowed by agencies to deliver other interventions. Meanwhile other types of social protection programme with a longer history, such as fee waivers or subsidies, may have a much wider coverage.

¹⁴ We were unable to obtain recent budget figures for Senegal or any of the other countries listed, besides Burkina Faso.

5 The contribution of intergovernmental bodies and mechanisms to the promotion of food security

Key points

- Countries of the Sahel belong to intergovernmental regional bodies, including ECOWAS, CILSS and G5 Sahel, and collaborate through initiatives they organise, eg. Cadre Harmonisé, RPCA and AGIR.
- ECOWAS refers to using social protection for food security in its regional agricultural policy (rather than in a social protection policy). Its programme document proposes a Regional Social Safety Net programme, a Regional Food Security Reserve and the Zero Hunger Initiative. As a policy body, ECOWAS's role is in policy development more than in implementation.
- ECOWAS's safety net programme calls on states to use long-term social assistance for structural and seasonal needs, prioritising support to national programmes. The food security reserve, planned since 2010, is only just starting to be set up. The Zero Hunger Initiative, which aims to eradicate hunger through a focus on agriculture and social protection, is also at an early stage. The intersectoral nature of both social protection and food security poses a challenge to implementation.
- CILSS's role as ECOWAS's technical arm for food security and drought prevention is valuable for promoting knowledge-sharing across countries. Social protection is not core to its traditional expertise. In the past it has acquired skills in new areas such as nutrition, so the same might be possible, though many other sectors are also competing for attention.
- The G5 Sahel, set up in 2014, has a primary focus on cross-border governance and security, and views resilience initiatives as a means of achieving its objectives in that field. It attends RPCA meetings but so far has not been very explicit about the contribution of social protection to its agenda.
- Cadre Harmonisé assessments are a reference for food security analysis and have become more relevant since they started examining food insecurity from all causes, not just drought. Data quality is variable. The assessments are not designed to pinpoint precise areas in need of assistance.
- RPCA meetings give decision-makers a space to review data on food security and plan a response. Representatives tend to come from agriculture or food security rather than social protection. Recently, efforts have been made to improve understanding of the role of social protection for food security.
- By declaring social protection as one of its strategic pillars, AGIR—a process for countries to identify their resilience priorities—has enhanced recognition of the sector's relevance for food security. International organisations often explicitly reference it. The next challenge is to promote national government ownership and bring in all relevant sectors within the country to support implementation.
- Social protection is one of numerous multisectoral themes attempting to engage with one another, which makes for a complex policy process.

Governments across the region face common challenges to improve food security: they require a similar set of processes for identifying and responding to chronic and acute needs, building longer term resilience and monitoring progress. Regional bodies can play a role in providing guidance on policy approaches and instruments for use by member states; aggregating and disseminating information gathered from the national level; and designing and delivering programmes that respond to issues that extend beyond national borders. We review here the main agencies and their contribution to the policy debate.

We focus here on structures that governments can join as members: the Economic Community of West African States (**ECOWAS**), the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (**CILSS**) and the **G5 Sahel**. We also consider the major platforms and initiatives by which these bodies and others collaborate to respond to food insecurity, notably the **Cadre Harmonisé** assessment process, the Food Crisis Prevention Network (*Réseau de prévention des crises alimentaires*, **RPCA**) and the Global Alliance for Resilience (**AGIR**)¹⁵. The organisations vary not only in their objectives but also in their membership, which necessarily has implications for the extent to which national governments participate in the activities initiated by each (Table 9).

¹⁵CILSS, the RPCA and AGIR are all known by their French acronyms. ECOWAS is known in French as the CEDEAO.

Table 9 Membership of intergovernmental structures

Country	ECOWAS	CILSS	G5-Sahel
Burkina Faso	Member	Member	Member
Chad	-	Member	Member
Mali	Member	Member	Member
Mauritania	- (*)	Member	Member
Niger	Member	Member	Member
Senegal	Member	Member	-

Source: OPM. Note: (*) Mauritania left ECOWAS in 2000.

The structures are complex and interlocking: as we will see below, ECOWAS and CILSS, together with the West African Economic and Monetary Union (*Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest-Africaine*, UEMOA) drive both the RPCA and AGIR platforms.

5.1 ECOWAS

Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Senegal are all members of ECOWAS as well as the UEMOA¹⁶. Both entities have a remit to create a common market with eventual economic and monetary union (Box 1). ECOWAS is a regional economic community comprising 15 member states, including French-, English- and Portuguese-speaking countries of west Africa¹⁷. Mauritania withdrew from ECOWAS in 2000; Chad has never been a member as it is part of the central African rather than west African community.

Box 1 Overview of ECOWAS and UEMOA

ECOWAS was established in 1975. It is among eight Regional Economic Communities recognised by the African Union in 2006, which are expected to converge to create a single African Economic Community by 2027, with economic and monetary union and free movement of goods and factors of production. Its founding treaty provides that it “shall ultimately be the sole economic community in the [west African] region for the purpose of economic integration and the realisation of the objectives of the African Economic Community.” Its mission is economic and social: it seeks to promote cooperation and integration to improve living standards, promote relations among its member states and contribute to their development.

The relationship between ECOWAS and UEMOA is governed by an Agreement signed in 2004, which seeks to promote the “coordination and harmonisation of actions” of the two communities for the “strengthening of integration in west Africa.” At the institutional level, UEMOA is characterised by being ahead of ECOWAS to the extent that community institutions have better operational capacity, while ECOWAS institutions seem to be more in a development phase. This is probably due, in part, to the heterogeneous nature of ECOWAS countries compared with those of UEMOA in linguistic terms and in their administrative and legal culture in particular.

Source: abridged from African Development Bank (2013).

ECOWAS, as a policy-making—and, indeed, political—body, works on strengthening and harmonising the social protection policies of its member states as part of its wide remit. It uses its regional agricultural policy, known as ECOWAP, to promote the use of social assistance to address food security crises. The link is established in ECOWAP's Regional Agricultural

¹⁶ UEMOA is a customs and currency union consisting of a subset of ECOWAS member states, namely seven of the eight Francophone countries—Guinea is the exception—plus Guinea-Bissau. We do not discuss it in depth here as its activities are not strongly connected with links between social protection and humanitarian assistance.

¹⁷ Equivalent economic communities elsewhere on the continent include eg. the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

Investment Programme (*Programme régional d'investissement agricole*, PRIA), of which there are also national equivalents (*Programmes nationaux d'investissement agricole*, PNIA). The PRIA is a large agricultural development programme with three primary objectives (GEA, 2014):

1. Strategies to promote food sovereignty, including **intensification of agriculture** through programmes relating to seeds and fertilisers.
2. Promotion of an **environment favourable to regional agricultural development**, including in relation to the regulation of markets, changes to tariffs and promotion of commerce.
3. The **reduction of food insecurity** and promotion of stable and sustainable access to food. This third objective contains a number of initiatives linking social protection with food security, including, among others, the elaboration of a Social Safety Nets Programme, the establishment of a regional grain reserve, the adoption of a Charter for the Prevention and Management of Food Security Crises, and the Zero Hunger initiative.

With ECOWAP now 10 years old the revision of both the overarching regional agricultural policy, and also the PRIA and the set of PNIAs, is underway: second-generation documents are due in mid-2017. We understand from key informants that member states have been advised to consider new cross-cutting themes in preparing the new documents; however, with so many plausible intersections between food security and other themes—nutrition, climate change, employment and gender, for example—it may be difficult to integrate all the linkages being promoted by agencies offering technical assistance. Social protection is reportedly not prominent in the new drafts.

A significant aspect of this programme is that, as the PRIA is part of ECOWAS's agricultural policy, it is the ministries of agriculture of the respective countries—not the ministries of social affairs—that meet to discuss its progress (GEA, 2014). Meanwhile the ECOWAS Humanitarian and Social Affairs Directorate proposes to work on the formulation of a regional social protection strategy. Some of the implications of this division are discussed further below.

We review next some of ECOWAS's main programmes linking social protection with food security under the PRIA. The extent to which these have moved from policy to practice is variable¹⁸.

5.1.1 Regional Social Safety Net Support Programme

The Regional Social Safety Net Support Programme, adopted in 2013, has an overriding objective to reduce food and nutrition insecurity (see Box 2). It conceives a 'bottom-up' rather than 'top-down' approach, focusing first on the capacity of member states to implement their own programmes and systems, and intending later to draw on this experience to build regional standards. It is explicit that *long-term* social assistance must be a priority for addressing both structural and seasonal needs:

While [the] logic of supporting 'innovative operations' is still more than ever necessary, the intensity of the Sahelian crisis underscored the urgent need to roll out ambitious national safety nets to meet their coverage targets. (ECOWAS, 2012b, p.6)

We see the challenge in distinguishing between social protection that is serving its regular function of supporting households, and its role in responding to shocks: the discussion is about shifting the timing of interventions to be *ex-ante* rather than *ex-post*, recognising the long-term needs of many of those who are assisted by short-term aid. The programme states clearly this prioritisation of

¹⁸ ECOWAS and UEMOA, through their units in charge of food security, along with CILSS, jointly manage the regional alliance, AGIR, of which the first pillar focuses on social protection. AGIR is discussed separately in section 5.4.3.

interventions intended for preventive purposes, to support households' livelihoods, rather than those that are delivered after a crisis has occurred:

Food crises in the region are recurrent, intensifying and increasingly complex; this is worrying. [...] A “reactive” approach to managing food crises is needed, but must be accompanied by a preventive approach aiming to **protect and promote the livelihoods of the most vulnerable households**. (ECOWAS, 2012b, p.7; bold in the original).

Box 2 Promoting social assistance for food security through the resilience agenda

ECOWAS's Regional Social Safety Net Support Programme is summarised succinctly in Hodges and Mededji (2016a, p.10):

'[The programme] gives priority to 'preventive safety nets', by which it means safety nets that aim to 'protect and promote the livelihoods of the most vulnerable households', as an alternative to the traditional reactive approaches to managing food crises. The programme's [...] expected outcomes are twofold, focusing first on the capacity of member states to formulate, implement and assess preventive social safety nets 'within their crisis prevention and management systems' and, second, on the establishment of regional standards for the design and implementation of social safety net programmes and the testing of an incentive scheme to promote them.

'The first outcome, which is seen as a prerequisite for the second, envisages setting up a 'network to pool experience and information on the regional level' (Activity 1.1), the co-financing of innovative safety net programmes (Activity 1.2) and evaluations to capitalize on their experience (Activity 1.3), along with a 'capacity building programme for state actors to design, steer, coordinate and implement social safety net programs and policies' (Activity 1.4).

It cites three justifications in this regard (ECOWAS, 2012b). First, despite progress to improve the reactivity of crisis response systems such as contingency plans and early warning systems, it remains difficult to ensure that aid reaches those who need it in a timely manner. Second, emergency responses may save lives but generally cannot prevent asset erosion, so they do not preserve the resilience of affected populations. Third, they can be expensive and of limited benefit if the aid arrives late or is poorly targeted.

Whilst encouraging the development of long-term social assistance programmes by national governments, the regional programme highlights the opportunity for linking these with DRM systems, and calls for their coordination with other instruments promoted by PRIA, urging 'synergy with crisis management systems: rely[ing] on the administration capacities of a predictable safety net program to shore up crisis management systems' (ECOWAS, 2012b, p.11).

A key challenge for efforts to implement a regional programme that supports social assistance, and that is housed within an agriculture policy, is the intersectoral nature of both social protection and food security. Social protection itself is generally split across numerous ministries at national level—which might include eg. those responsible for planning, finance, social affairs, education or health—and there is not a natural focal point for delivery of the regional initiative. In turn this means that by concentrating social protection interventions on their value for promoting food security, the agricultural programme may be overlooking other equally valid linkages at national level. Hodges and Mededji (2016a) note that while the Regional Social Safety Net Support Programme emerged from an important direction, namely that of strengthening the resilience of households that are vulnerable to food crises,

[...] It appears not to appreciate fully the multiple objectives of safety nets, or of non-contributory social protection, and their impacts in a wide range of sectors and fields going beyond food security and nutrition. These include, for example, their potential role in [...] the

reduction of inequality and peace-building, the promotion of human capital development through improved access to education and health services, the fight against HIV-AIDS [...] and many other areas of potential impact and interest. (Hodges and Mededji, 2016a, pp.10-11).

A further complicating factor is that as some agencies are responsible for dealing with a specific type of shock, policy responses for dealing with drought and food insecurity find themselves being developed separately from, say, those for floods or political and economic shocks.

In a related initiative, ECOWAS has recently been exploring the idea of establishing a regional network for sharing experiences of social assistance through three complementary activities—a community of practice, a programme of short-term training courses, and a Master's programme. A regional initiative at this level makes quite a lot of sense by allowing for economies of scale and knowledge-sharing opportunities among countries (Hodges and Mededji, 2016a). A study to support the design of a framework for regional training and exchange has been conducted and a training workshop on social safety nets was held in November 2016 (Hodges and Mededji, 2016a, 2016b; ECOWAS, 2016a).

5.1.2 Regional Food Security Reserve

Cash assistance is only one option to address chronic and acute food insecurity. Another that can be used flexibly to deal with structural, seasonal and humanitarian crisis needs is a food reserve. Food stocks can contribute to in-kind transfers in crisis response, but can also address chronic food insecurity (e.g. through school feeding); the release of stocks can stabilise prices for the population; and local purchases to build up stocks can ensure a guaranteed price for local producers, and thus increase their incomes and boost local production.

ECOWAS decided in 2010 to establish a **Regional Food Security Reserve** through PRIA. Its aim was to improve crisis response and reduce dependence on international assistance, complementing the efforts of member states. As of 2016 it was only just being put in place. It expects to combine a physical stock to secure supply (about one-third) and a financial reserve to reduce costs and diversify the forms of food assistance (about two-thirds) (ECOWAS, 2012c; OECD Sahel and West Africa Club, 2016). The main storage sites for the physical reserve are to be divided into four zones: Western (including Senegal); Atlantic Gulf; Central (including Mali and Burkina Faso); and Eastern (including Niger). As Chad and Mauritania are not members of ECOWAS they are not covered. The mobilisation of the reserve is due to be triggered by the results of the Cadre Harmonisé assessments (see section 5.4.1 below). The approach is based on three intervention levels and, in theory, on a principle of subsidiarity: the first (local) line of response is supported by a second at national level, which is in turn supported by the third at regional level (ECOWAS, nd).

The process of translating the policy decision into operational reality has been slow on account of the variable demand for such a reserve among member states, and the practicalities of having to agree who should fund it and where the reserves should sit. There is also a challenge to achieve greater articulation and coherence between food reserves at different levels, as highlighted in an RPCA meeting in 2015. For now the establishment of the reserve is not sufficiently advanced to be a central part of shock-responsive social protection in the region.

5.1.3 Zero Hunger Initiative

The Zero Hunger Initiative, supported by the FAO and launched by the UN Secretary General in 2014, aims to eradicate hunger by 2025 by encouraging key stakeholders to work together to

implement the PRIA and PNIAs; to design social protection programmes linked to production; and to ensure that nutritious and healthy food is produced for consumption (ECOWAS and FAO, 2014). The Zero Hunger Initiative advises a focus on four types of intervention: two more agricultural in orientation and two more relating to social protection, namely the social safety nets and food reserves described above. The initiative is presented more as a lens through which to consider the effectiveness of existing programmes and strategies, rather than a separate programme. It advises the review at national and regional levels of strategies and policies that have an impact, directly or indirectly, on hunger, with a view to considering whether more can be done to improve their impact. In particular, it recommends reviewing the PRIA to consider how well it is integrated with other sectoral policies including that of social development (ECOWAS, 2012a).

As with the regional safety net programme and the food security reserve, the Zero Hunger Initiative is at an early stage of implementation. As of mid-2016 the conceptual framework was being elaborated, and a technical note on the integration of social protection with agriculture had been produced as a contribution to the revision of ECOWAP (ECOWAS, 2016b).

5.2 CILSS

Following a series of severe droughts the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) was established in 1973 by six countries of west Africa with a mandate to invest in research to address food insecurity and drought. It now has a membership of 13, including all six countries studied here. As the technical wing of ECOWAS, CILSS supports member states to collect, analyse and disseminate information. It conducts research and knowledge management, delivers training, and supports policy formulation, analysis and coordination. It runs some limited implementation of food security and environmental policies through multi-country pilot projects.

CILSS is supported by member states and development partners and is led by an executive secretariat in Burkina Faso, which is responsible for setting and implementing strategic guidelines and for coordinating the system. It also has two specialised institutions. One, the AGRHYMET regional centre in Niger, provides information and training on food security and the environment in the region, and coordinates activities related to the Cadre Harmonisé. The other, the Institut du Sahel in Mali, has a mandate to coordinate and promote scientific research in the fields of environment, agriculture, markets, population and development. Two examples of major CILSS initiatives provide an illustration of its activities (besides those described more fully in section 5.4):

1. The CILSS has set up a regional mechanism for the prevention and management of food crises (**PREGEC**), which gathers and disseminates information through rapid assessments, agricultural surveys, the analysis of satellite data and market analysis. The assessment of the agricultural season, discussed at three meetings annually in June, September and November (besides the RPCA meetings—see section 5.4.2 below) is the main source of information for decision-making in formulating food strategies. The PREGEC's members go beyond the delegates from CILSS member countries who come from agricultural statistics departments, early warning departments and food security analysis units; it also includes others who work on regional and international information systems for food security such as FAO, WFP and FEWS NET, as well as development partners such as the European Union and USAID (RPCA, 2010).
2. The CILSS is now working on a **method and tools to analyse and measure resilience** in the Sahel and west Africa, with an initial phase of work planned for 2016–20. In May 2016 it launched a platform with technical assistance from the FAO under its programme, 'Information pour la sécurité alimentaire et nutritionnelle et résilience pour la prise de décision' (INFORMED), funded by the European Union. The initiative plans to build the capacity of statistical institutes, national units for food security analysis, ministries of agriculture, intergovernmental and international organisations and universities and research centres. These

must subsequently play a role in conducting national exercises on resilience measurement and analysis, starting with the six countries under review. Ultimately, it is expected to cover all countries in the CILSS-UEMOA-ECOWAS area.

Key informants noted, first, that the role of an agency for collecting and analysing data, such as CILSS, is a useful one; and, second, that its strengths in information management are currently concentrated in its core areas of expertise such as agricultural surveys and market analysis.

In relation to the first point, one respondent explained that the sharing of technical knowledge at the regional level was a useful principle for improving coherence and reducing disparities between neighbouring countries; it encouraged member states to pay attention to progress being made elsewhere in the region and enabled good practice to be shared more swiftly than if member states had to exchange information on a bilateral basis. There was a suggestion that there might be scope for CILSS to improve its synthesis of the national data it receives, perhaps including retrospective reviews or comparative data analyses. The recent establishment of a technical agency, the Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (*Agence Régionale pour l'Agriculture et l'Alimentation*, ARAA) in ECOWAS itself is seen by some as an attempt to offer an opportunity to diversify the possible sources of technical data on food security beyond CILSS, though at the same time exposing some risk of duplication.

In relation to the second point, social protection as a theme is relatively new to the food security agenda, so does not yet form a core part of CILSS's technical capacity. Its ability to lead knowledge management in this field is inevitably stronger in other dimensions of food security that have been longer established. CILSS itself might benefit from training in social protection, not only for specialists but also for experts working in other areas such as agriculture, in order to generalise the understanding of the contribution of social protection to resolve food insecurity. The FAO is already making links with the CILSS in this regard. It was observed by a key informant that this addition of a new lens through which to analyse food insecurity is, in principle, achievable: in the last decade nutrition was similarly integrated into the policy agenda, with such success that the term 'food and nutrition security' is now commonly used in the Sahel. At the same time, absorption capacity may be limited by the number of multisectoral themes—resilience, climate change and so forth—competing for attention.

5.3 The G5 Sahel

One more regional grouping of member states is that of the [G5 Sahel](#). Arising out of concerns with the growing security threats and rise of terrorism in the region, this new body was set up in February 2014 in Mauritania with a focus on security and development. Its five member states are Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad. Each establishes a national coordination committee made up of experts in relevant fields, under the supervision of the national development ministry. The presidents of these national committees serve as focal points for the G5 Sahel. Of interest to this research is that one expert in each country is designated the 'resilience focal point'.

The G5 Sahel has four principal objectives as set out in its, 'Strategy for the Development and Security of G5 Sahel Countries' (G5 Sahel, 2016):

1. Strengthening defence and security
2. Improving governance
3. Promoting infrastructure development
4. Enhancing resilience and human capital development.

The G5 Sahel perceives resilience to fall within its remit as it makes the link between climate and environmental shocks, food insecurity, pressure on natural resources, and underemployment of young people with 'delinquency', migration and security. Recognising that others are already leading policy debates in this area, it declares that its strategic objectives in this area adhere to the resilience priorities of AGIR (see section 5.4.3 below). However, while being explicit about supporting improvements to the supply of health care services and education, the G5 Sahel's overarching strategy does not refer to social protection interventions.

Overall, therefore, the G5 Sahel offers a forum for cooperation around the inextricably linked risks of insecurity and underdevelopment in the Sahel—with potential for bridging the gaps between programme interventions in these areas, including through shock-responsive social protection. Nevertheless, there are some concerns that the body has been developed within an already crowded regional and sub-regional institutional context and also that it does not fully address security issues emanating from both the north (Libya) and south (Nigeria) of the Sahel (European Union External Action Service, nd). In an example of the close ties between all the regional agencies and mechanisms, the G5 Sahel joined the RPCA network in April 2016 (see section 5.4.2 below) and thus sent its own delegates from each country to attend the 2016 RPCA meetings.

In the same way that ECOWAS's social protection activities, emerging from its regional agriculture policy, may seem harmonised with other food security and nutrition activities but are not strongly linked with the broader social protection agenda, we can see that the G5 Sahel is viewing social protection and resilience specifically from the lens of improving national and regional security—an equally valid cross-sectoral link, but one that leads to a rather different approach towards eg. improving collaboration between actors.

5.4 Key coordination mechanisms

5.4.1 The Cadre Harmonisé: a significant step towards improved collaboration

We noted above that every country in the region requires a method for analysing areas and populations experiencing food and nutrition insecurity. In this new millennium, CILSS developed a **Harmonised Framework for the Analysis and Identification of Areas at Risk and Vulnerable Groups** in the Sahel—the **Cadre Harmonisé**—to provide harmonised tools for this purpose, to allow for better prevention and management of food security crises (CILSS, 2014).

Originally intended to provide estimates of the number of people suffering from food insecurity as a result of drought only, in recent years its criteria have changed such that it now measures food insecurity deriving from any cause (CILSS, 2015a). It classifies the procedure as a 'meta-analysis', drawing together information from several sources with the objective of informing decision-makers and guiding action and response within the region. It is not intended to be a purely mathematical calculation but rather a consensus reached by reviewing the various data sources in order to find a 'convergence of evidence' about the state of food insecurity by geographical area (CILSS, 2014). In 2008, it was agreed to introduce certain elements from the analysis of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification ([IPC](#)) into the Cadre Harmonisé, such as the severity scale and cartographic protocols (such that all countries in the region have an agreement as to what is classified as 'severe crisis', 'extreme crisis' etc.)

As a first step, the Cadre Harmonisé was tested in the six countries covered by this study. CILSS is now coordinating an initial acceleration phase (2014–2018) for the implementation of the Cadre Harmonisé in the 17 countries of the CILSS-ECOWAS-UEMOA area. Countries are expected to have an analytical unit based in a relevant government body that is responsible for compiling the national data (CILSS, 2015b).

The Cadre Harmonisé represents a significant contribution to the management not only of acute food security crises but also to chronic food insecurity: it has become the reference instrument—though not the only instrument—in the region for presenting the food security situation, providing early warning and estimating the size of populations affected by food insecurity¹⁹. The analysis emerging from the Cadre Harmonisé informs the December meeting of the RPCA (see section 5.4.2) and guides the planning of interventions and programmes. If necessary, it triggers regional and national food crisis management mechanisms. Some challenges, of course, remain. A few cited by our respondents include:

- The quality of data, coming from numerous sources from agencies with different capacities and resources, is inevitably variable.
- There can remain anomalies in the data, especially eg. at borders between countries, where similar zones either side of a national border may be classified differently.
- There is a challenge in estimating and locating vulnerable populations. Since 2014, the basis for the estimates in the Sahel has been the HEA profiles (IPC, 2015). The approach is not intended to hone in on the precise communities in need.

Nonetheless the institutionalisation of the Cadre Harmonisé has made it possible, among other things, to no longer only respond to crises but to use information systems to prepare for them, and to allow for a real harmonisation of analyses and potential alerts (with FEWS NET and the United Nations system in particular).

5.4.2 RPCA

RPCA meetings

Data collected through the Cadre Harmonisé are validated through six consultation stages, which include the two annual meetings of the RPCA in April and December. The RPCA is 'a forum for discussion and free and informal reflection, a platform for exchange, encounters and information analysis, a space for dialogue on actions to be conducted in the case of a crisis' that is unique in Africa (RPCA, 2010). It draws on the political leadership of ECOWAS and UEMOA, and is driven by the CILSS with the support of the Secretariat of the [Sahel and West Africa Club](#) based in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). It brings together these plus regional and international information systems, development partners, humanitarian agencies and NGOs as well as professional agricultural, civil society and private sector organisations. Members agree on the evaluation and prospects for the agropastoral, food and nutrition situation, as well as on the measures to be taken to address crises.

The twice-yearly meetings are central to its function. They are attended by decision-makers and designed to be strategic: in the December meeting, for example, stakeholders review the data on the current agricultural season in order to plan the response to any food insecurity that is identified. This contrasts with the PREGEC meetings which are more technical, being used to pull together the data themselves. Recently the RPCA meetings have also attempted to expand beyond the confines of analysing food security and production in the current season, to encompass broader technical presentations and discussions on issues of relevance. In December 2016 linkages with nutrition and social protection were a central theme of the whole meeting. This was a step forward in linking the different themes, and helped to further anchor analyses and interventions in these areas as part of a broader multisectoral approach to food insecurity. Among the main conclusions

¹⁹ Other data sources also contribute to countries' understanding of the situation, including eg. situation analyses conducted by WFP, and UNICEF's Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys.

and recommendations of the meeting was the need to develop a clear vision and undertake effective measures to address nutrition and social protection, in the light of the fact that these are part of the strategic pillars of AGIR (RPCA, 2016).

Two brief observations can be made regarding the feasibility of using the RPCA meetings to enable social protection actors to work alongside others working on humanitarian assistance, DRM and food security. First is that member states tend to be represented by people working in sectors such as agriculture and livestock, or nutrition; ministries responsible for social affairs tend to be less represented for now. Second, RPCA meetings are held in different countries, and not only in the Sahel. Participants from government agencies of member states are reimbursed but others such as those from NGOs or UN organisations are not. The financial imposition can limit agencies' ability to take part, which can sometimes reduce coherence of discussions between meetings.

The PREGEC charter and instruments

The RPCA also strengthens the overall effectiveness of stakeholder interventions through the application of the **Charter for Food Crisis Prevention and Management** ('Charte PREGEC'). This charter was signed in November 2011 by ministries of food and agriculture of ECOWAS member countries plus Chad and Mauritania, and approved at a meeting of ECOWAS heads of state in February 2012. Under the charter, governments, development partners and civil society organisations who are party to it commit to a 'code of conduct' to work on improving the collection and analysis on food and nutrition security; improving governance for the prevention and management of crises; and agreeing on a strategic framework to prevent and manage crises, including by defining instruments for food crisis management and including them in national action plans. The charter is not legally binding.

With the evolution of the approach to food and nutrition crises, and to facilitate the application of the Charter, the RPCA also drew up an annex consisting of a framework outlining a recommended **Set of Instruments for Food Crisis Management**, validated at its April 2012 meeting. It lists the instruments under two 'pillars' of support: Pillar 1 for emergency response ('Direct and immediate support to the most vulnerable populations') and Pillar 2 for medium- and long-term development ('Post-crisis support and prevention of food and nutritional crises'). A third set of instruments relates to information management.

The sets of instruments proposed in the first two pillars, for emergency response and longer term social protection, are similar (Figure 8). They are both grouped into instruments that support availability of food, and those that support access to food. Each instrument is described with its objectives, conditions of use, advantages and disadvantages. Some, such as nutrition programmes and cash transfers, are listed under both pillars. Others are listed as being appropriate for either emergency or long-term use, but are not in both: for example, free distribution of food is listed as a possible instrument under Pillar 1, while input subsidies are listed only under Pillar 2.

The framework offers valuable general guidance for countries as to the instruments that they might have at their disposal both to respond to emergencies and to promote longer term social protection. Cash transfers, widely endorsed by humanitarian actors as a more cost-effective tool, are now prominently featured in it. They are used today in the phases of emergency response and humanitarian post-crisis recovery. They were implemented in response to the 2012 food crisis, sometimes on a large scale, particularly in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Chad and Mauritania. To a lesser extent, they have also been used in prevention phases.

Figure 8 The RPCA's set of instruments for food crisis management

	Pillar 1: Emergency response		Pillar 2: Medium- and long-term measures	
1. Food availability	1A Food distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food distribution • Food for work • Nutrition programmes 	1A Food distribution / reserves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School feeding programmes • Nutrition programmes • Food reserves
	1B Food availability on the market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monetisation • Direct livestock support 	1B Increased agricultural production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Input distribution • Input vouchers • Input subsidy • Credit for purchase of inputs • Reduction of import taxes on agricultural inputs and equipment • Crop insurance
2. Food access	2A Income support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food vouchers • Cash vouchers • Cash transfers • Cash for work 	2A Income support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food subsidy • Cash transfers • Income-generating activities
	2B Regulation of food prices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of import barriers • Import subsidies • Reduction of VAT on food products 	2B Limitation of food price increase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Export restrictions • Reduction of import barriers • Import restrictions
			2C Market functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure projects • Warrantage
			2D Access to credit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subsidised credit • Loan guarantees • Microfinance

Source: RPCA (2013). Note: See RPCA (2013) for RPCA's full description of the advantages and disadvantages of each.

The challenge today is to identify the right combination of instruments to respond effectively to malnutrition, hunger and reduced resilience. In a context of limited budgetary resources and implementation capacities, how can cash transfers, food reserves and health fee waivers be combined? How can investments in terms of prevention and response to crises and agricultural transformation be combined?

The opportunity for using instruments flexibly across both emergencies and longer term social protection is much greater than the RPCA's framework suggests. While recognising that the RPCA may have condensed its list of instruments listed under the two pillars in the interests of space, we note that, for example, public works programmes (cash and/or food for work) and vouchers are cited only under Pillar 1, for emergency response, whereas they play a considerable role in broader social protection. Conversely, school feeding programmes and distribution of agricultural inputs such as seeds are cited only under Pillar 2, while evidence from the present research programme has revealed—in the Sahel and elsewhere—that they can be used as part of an emergency response (eg. the World Food Programme's use of school feeding programmes as a crisis response intervention in Mali, and the Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO's) distribution of seeds following the drought in Lesotho). This may reflect the fact that the framework was drawn up around the same time that the approach to tackling food insecurity was changing in the region, away from its previous focus on food supply as being primarily responsible for food security, towards a broader understanding of the multiple causes of food insecurity.

5.4.3 AGIR

Formation and objectives of the alliance

ECOWAS, UEMOA, CILSS and their partners, already collaborating through the RPCA, formed [AGIR](#) in December 2012. AGIR aims to more effectively tackle the deep, structural causes of food and nutrition insecurity in west Africa. The alliance, initiated under the influence of the European Union, aims to combine humanitarian and development expertise to eradicate hunger and malnutrition by 2030. The ambitious target demonstrates the immense challenge faced by the region in terms of food and nutrition security and also corresponds to the commitment made under the ECOWAS 'Zero Hunger Initiative' (see section 5.1.3 above). AGIR intends to mobilise—within a unified approach—available resources for social protection, livelihoods, nutrition, maternal and child health, agricultural development and natural resource management so that they benefit the most vulnerable populations.

A total of 17 countries have now joined the alliance. The intention is that each produces a document—their National Resilience Priorities (PRP-AGIR)—that sets out, in a consistent manner, its priorities for improving resilience. A regional roadmap was adopted in April 2013. This clarifies the approach, strategic guidelines and performance indicators for the alliance. AGIR provides a framework of four strategic objectives to guide financing for resilience (ECOWAS *et al.*, 2013):

1. Improve **social protection** for the most vulnerable households and communities in order to secure their livelihoods.
2. Strengthen the **nutrition** of vulnerable households.
3. Sustainably improve agricultural and food production, the incomes of vulnerable households and their **access to food**.
4. Strengthen **governance** in food and nutrition security.

Pillars 1 and 2 (social protection and nutrition) illustrate the multisectoral nature of the alliance, and the recognition that the food security crisis is chronic and calls for multi-year assistance—a significant paradigm shift in relation to the priority previously given to agricultural production and food availability.

A senior expert group brings together the alliance during RPCA meetings to define guidelines and review progress. International partners also participate. Since 2015, a small technical unit (CT-AGIR) has been operational in the CILSS to support countries in the formulation of their PRP-AGIR and facilitate implementation.

Progress and results to date

The efforts of AGIR have strengthened the emergence of social assistance in the region. The governments of the six countries of interest here have developed their PRP-AGIR²⁰. All include a strong social protection component. In this, AGIR appears to have galvanised action to expand social protection to the most vulnerable (see, by way of illustration, an overview of Niger's PRP-AGIR in Annex C). The social protection pillar of Niger's PRP-AGIR appears to be specifically focused on food and nutrition security, in line with the first objective of the National Social Protection Policy (though other aspects of social protection are mentioned elsewhere). By contrast, Burkina Faso's PRP-AGIR integrates other dimensions of social protection and does not exclusively target groups vulnerable to covariate risks. This pillar also targets other groups such as people with disabilities, persons living with HIV-AIDS and women and children living in urban

²⁰ As of November 2016, Mauritania and Senegal's PRP-AGIR are still being validated.

areas, and includes forms of intervention such as providing supplies to people with disabilities and general health insurance (Government of Burkina Faso, 2015).

Meanwhile, many of the numerous initiatives from intergovernmental organisations to strengthen resilience in the Sahel make explicit reference to the AGIR framework, and thus support social protection programmes which could be regarded as shock-responsive. Among humanitarians, this vision has particularly encouraged ECHO to work on the harmonisation of approaches adopted by its partners based on cash transfers in order to provide food assistance and strengthen resilience (for example, in Niger and northern Mali). This work also involves a modest attempt to obtain a seasonal safety net model which could be passed on to national authorities.

AGIR is recognised today nationally, regionally and internationally. Its integrated approach has advanced a broader understanding of food security, and drawn attention to other crucial dimensions, particularly social protection and nutrition, and to the targeting of groups most at risk and vulnerable to crises. An evaluation of the impact of the first two years of the AGIR process on policy engagement on food security in the region, in progress at the time of writing, confirms that it has increased awareness of the linkages and made resilience more visible as a topic on the policy agenda (RPCA, 2016). The development of the PRP-AGIR has been an opportunity to revisit the causes and responses to food crises, and to reflect on how to build synergies between humanitarian and development work. The process has been long; however, the fact that the resulting PRP-AGIR vary from one country to the next indicates some level of national ownership.

The next challenge is to integrate the PRP-AGIR in the relevant sectors and implement them. The approach can be hindered by conservative approaches favouring agricultural production and food availability (pillar 3), to the detriment of social protection (pillar 1) and nutrition (pillar 2). For many years the first two pillars were only rarely discussed at RPCA meetings. AGIR's institutional anchorage remains very marked by the entry point of food security: at the RPCA meetings, member states tend to be represented by ministers responsible for agriculture and food security (rather than those responsible for social protection). This can limit the implementation of the multisectoral approach promoted by AGIR, and of the social protection pillar in particular:

- In Burkina Faso, for example, the PRP-AGIR must be coordinated by the National Food Security Council. The capacities of this Council need to be broadened and strengthened through the participation of other actors from the sectors of health, nutrition, social action, education, infrastructure and development (Government of Burkina Faso, 2015).
- In Niger, in contrast, AGIR is coordinated by the Office of the High Commissioner to the 3N Initiative under the Presidency. The implementation of the social protection pillar is “under the responsibility of the Ministry in charge of social action and the advancement of women in partnership with the [National Mechanism for the Prevention and Management of Food Crises and Disasters] and the safety net cell under the prime minister's office, [donors], communities and agencies of the [United Nations] and NGOs in the field” (Government of Niger, 2015, p.66).

As for financing, AGIR was conceived as an alliance aiming to better harmonise existing financing, and not as an additional programme requiring financing from donors (which would have run the risk of it continuing to be only a temporary initiative without any genuine regional foothold). Several years after its launch, AGIR continues to be regularly and wrongly perceived as 'another resilience initiative' which must be financed by donors, although in some countries AGIR is starting to result in a mobilisation of national resources for resilience: for example, in 2015 Mali was working on revising its Finance Act in order for it to better reflect the resilience priorities.

The draft evaluation of AGIR that is in progress suggests that now is the time for governments to rationalise the frameworks for resilience and to take on more leadership of the AGIR process to

ensure alignment of the activities of donors with their national priorities (RPCA, 2016). Meanwhile, donors could support the development of national capacity in this area and identify a few priority actions. In short, the alliance is at a point where it might usefully move from policy identification to implementation.

5.5 Implication of these structures for shock-responsive social protection

It is apparent from the range of structures and initiatives described here that the number of regional bodies developing policies and guidelines—and, in some cases, conducting activities—that might be relevant to improving the use of social protection to respond to shocks at the national level is substantial. At the same time this array of activities risks becoming overwhelming. Not all countries are members of the same bodies so they find themselves in slightly differing sets of conversations. Some structures and programmes are set up to compensate for perceived shortcomings in others that already exist, while others are created to explore the similar theme of resolving food insecurity from different perspectives (climate change, security, social protection, nutrition etc.). These perspectives often emerge from the interests of funders, from both development and humanitarian organisations. Agencies working on related issues at national level may not always perceive the relevance of the activities of regional bodies for their own priorities, especially if the actors delegated to represent the member state are not drawn from the sector that leads the implementation of those activities at national level.

The complexity does not even stop with the Sahel-wide or west Africa-wide bodies outlined here. Beyond this—and outside the scope of the present review—there are Africa-wide and even global initiatives that add further strategic frameworks, guidance documents and meetings of relevance. To cite just three examples, all six countries studied here are associated with:

- the [African Risk Capacity](#), the continent-wide initiative that provides insurance to countries against extreme weather events, to mitigate the consequences of climate shocks eg. drought;
- the Francophone Community of Practice on social cash transfers in sub-Saharan Africa, which brings together 18 countries to exchange knowledge and best practice on cash transfer programmes. The annual meeting in 2016 included a series of sessions focused on the role that national cash transfer programmes could play in a crisis²¹; and
- the global [Scaling Up Nutrition](#) project which aspires to end malnutrition, and which has included some discussion on the relevance of social protection interventions for improving nutrition.

Nonetheless, the complexity does not mean these bodies are irrelevant. Many of the initiatives are developing slowly over time, and greater ownership of them by member states is emerging. As some key informants noted, it would be ambitious to expect the smooth and simultaneous resolution at regional level of numerous multidisciplinary issues that all have an impact on food security—of which social protection is just one—and that affect member states differently. The provision of spaces for information collection and analysis, dialogue and the coordination of policy approaches still holds value.

²¹ Through participatory sessions, cash transfer practitioners acknowledged: (i) needing to work with other actors within the social protection system in order to operationalise links with humanitarian action; (ii) having a strategic framework at the level of government and a forum for dialogue with humanitarian actors; and (iii) reflecting on the adaptability of their programmes (e.g. adaptation of accompanying measures, frequency of payments, etc.).

6 Selected regionwide initiatives by development partners

Key points

- Development partners are contributing to shock-responsive social protection in the Sahel both at a regional level and within countries. There is a role to play at both levels.
- The UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel has resilience as a priority and includes social protection as a component. Its implementation consists of technical assistance provided by UN agencies.
- The Adaptive Social Protection programme, managed by the World Bank and aiming to facilitate access to effective adaptive social protection systems by poor and vulnerable populations in the Sahel, is working mainly at national level to support government structures working on social assistance and food security.
- The ECHO-funded alliances of its partner NGOs have been established to provide a technical forum for sharing knowledge, and to increase their visibility as a relevant contributor to policy debates on cash transfers. This can help improve 'shadow alignment' of NGO interventions with those of the government, and 'piggybacking' of humanitarian interventions onto government systems.
- The Cash Working Groups initiated by CaLP for humanitarian purposes, and now extended to cover the development agenda, have most traction when there is a mutual desire from both types of stakeholder to share knowledge and learn from one another, regardless of the crisis context.

Some regionwide initiatives that take into consideration the use of social protection programmes to respond to chronic or acute food insecurity, or a transition from humanitarian assistance to long-term social protection activities, are led and financed by international development partners rather than under the auspices of regional groupings of member states.

It is pertinent to note that donors and development partners vary in their approach to the design and delivery of Sahel-wide initiatives according to the project. Some initiatives, such as the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, aim to deliver a broad vision for the region as a whole, focusing less on the details of implementation in any specific country. In contrast, others, such as the World Bank's Adaptive Social Protection programme, focus primarily on the set of individual countries—including, for instance, having staff located at country level—and aim to work directly with national governments to support national social protection programmes. Both approaches have a role to play in delivering improvements to food security across the Sahel.

We offer here a summary of a few of the main initiatives that are acting across the six countries covered by this study and that illustrate the general direction of travel of this topic in the Sahel²². This is not a compendium as there are more than can be presented in this light review; many have their own publications that explain more fully their objectives and progress to date. We have selected an example each of an initiative either initiated, funded or implemented by the UN, a development partner (the World Bank), a humanitarian partner (ECHO) and NGOs (Cash Working Groups) respectively.

6.1 UN: The UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel²³

The **UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel**, endorsed by the Security Council in July 2013, is 'integrated' in the sense that it consolidates certain strategic objectives for all UN agencies—including WFP, FAO, UNICEF and the International Organisation for Migration, among many others—into a single document. The fact that the Security Council has got involved to, 'an unprecedented degree', is seen by the IASC as a demonstration that, 'The awareness of the 'inter-

²² A comprehensive recent list of donors' and other entities' regional development strategies for the Sahel is provided in Donini and Scalettaris (2016, p.20). Another list of about a dozen strategies is outlined in Helly et al. (2015).

²³ Other relevant regional policy initiatives by the UN include eg. the FAO's programme on social protection to strengthen resilience for food and nutrition security in the Sahel and west Africa (see eg. FAO, 2016).

connectedness' of the Sahel's development, humanitarian and security challenges has never been higher' (IASC, 2013, p.6). In many cases responsibility for delivering objectives and actions is shared by more than one agency. The strategy comprises three strategic goals to restore stability in the region. The third, relevant to this study, is that, 'Humanitarian and development plans and interventions are integrated to build long-term resilience' (UN, 2013, p.22)²⁴. The 'resilience' agenda is another of the many cross-sectoral approaches to addressing chronic and acute needs, not only in the Sahel but globally, as Donini and Scalettaris (2016) note:

'As elsewhere, resilience is the new buzzword. This notion has become the key concept for international aid in the Sahel. It has become so popular *inter alia* because it is presented as a bridge between development and humanitarian approaches.' (Donini and Scalettaris, 2016, p.12).

The goal is further broken down into objectives and more concrete actions, of which supporting the promotion of basic services and social protection systems is one. Many actions refer to providing support to existing mechanisms and networks, such as the Cadre Harmonisé, RPCA and PREGEC as discussed above, so do not add to the number of approaches to strengthening resilience.

A strategy and roadmap for the operationalisation of this component was validated in May 2015 (UNDG, 2015). The roadmap, which is intended to set out the UN's commitment to the AGIR partnership, reflects quite closely the objectives and actions of the overarching Integrated Strategy for the Sahel: social protection is again identified in it as one of the five areas of intervention, along with the analysis of risks and vulnerabilities, livelihoods, nutrition, and DRM. UNICEF is the lead agency for this area. The outcomes expected during 2015-17 included developing tools that could inform 'risk-sensitive social protection', such as tools to identify the risks that social protection policies should take into account, and 'stress-testing' how well existing policies would withstand and respond to such risks; and developing guidance for 'resilient social protection strategies'.

The strategy is a means of consolidating the planned activities of UN agencies into one document, and does not come with additional funding. Its implementation consists mainly of the technical support provided by UN agencies to deliver the kind of initiatives reported elsewhere in this report, eg. assistance from the FAO to the G5 Sahel to help it elaborate its own priorities for strengthening resilience. For the moment it may be too early to discern the impact of the drafting of this document on the implementation of activities that might have taken place anyway. A recent update on progress in implementing the Integrated Strategy for the Sahel makes no reference to social protection activities and rather little on the broader resilience agenda (UN, 2016).

6.2 World Bank: The Adaptive Social Protection programme²⁵

Recent efforts to expand social protection have been largely motivated by the persistent recurrence of covariate shocks linked to climate change. A multi-donor trust fund has been set up to support a regional **Adaptive Social Protection** programme (ASP) covering Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal. DFID has undertaken to contribute up to £43 million during 2014 to 2018 to this fund managed by the World Bank. The World Bank implements the

²⁴ The first two strategic goals cover governance and security arrangements respectively.

²⁵ Interventions by development agencies in the region on humanitarian assistance, social protection and/or DRM include activities by eg. the US, UK, French and Spanish development agencies (eg. USAID's Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced (RISE) programmes which brings together more than two dozen projects working to promote resilience, especially in Niger and Burkina Faso. Moreover, some global bilateral programmes have a strong presence in the Sahel though they are not confined to the region: this includes eg. DFID's [Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters \(BRACED\)](#) programme, which is operating in five of our six countries under review and which aims to build the knowledge and evidence base on what works in climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and response.

ASP, which seeks to facilitate access to effective adaptive social protection systems by poor and vulnerable populations in the Sahel (see World Bank, 2016c for information on its main activities).

'Adaptive social protection' refers to interventions that aim to support development while reducing vulnerability to climate change (Béné, 2016). The term is associated with, but slightly different to, shock-responsive social protection because of its exclusive focus on climate-related risk and because it is concerned with living with climate impacts over the long term, not only responding to specific crises.

The ASP framework is based on the premise that, 'nations vulnerable to climate change can better manage risk by better integrating DRM with social protection' (World Bank, nd). One component is therefore improving the functioning of DRM systems such as early warning systems (Box 3). Scalable social protection interventions may be another part of the solution, as may programmes that enhance the resilience of households and communities and promote diversification of income-generating opportunities. They are meant to be flexible: they, 'can protect poor households from climate and other shocks before they occur (through predictable transfers, building community assets, and other programs that help them cope) and by scaling up to respond to extreme events when they hit' (World Bank, 2015). Special attention must be paid to ensure that their implementation avoids any negative impact on the environment.

Box 3 Main activities of the ASP

- Safety net programmes that can be easily scaled up to respond to climate-related and other types of shocks: cash transfers to the poorest and affected persons; and public work programmes, which can also support climate-resilient infrastructure development in vulnerable areas;
- Complementary activities, eg. training on basic skills and livelihood diversification, and measures aimed at strengthening human capital (e.g. which promote health and hygiene practices);
- Strengthening early warning and climate information systems (including analyses of market prices) that can be used for targeting and planning purposes and to help design effective emergency response and adaptation programmes;
- Formal and informal insurance or risk financing mechanisms that may complement and support social protection systems and build long-term resilience;
- Interventions that facilitate productive paid employment or the conduct of income-generating activities among poor people and encourage them to diversify livelihoods, to facilitate risk management and to enable households to manage different risks;
- Targeting mechanisms that help identify those most vulnerable to risks related to natural disasters and climate change;
- Adequate monitoring systems to ensure good governance and accountability;
- Impact evaluations likely to generate systematic knowledge and rigorous evidence on the effectiveness of adaptive social protection systems.

Source: del Ninno (2016).

The largest share of the Fund's resources must be used directly by governments to pilot learning and innovation programmes. The Fund also supports analytical, technical assistance and capacity-building activities managed by the World Bank. At the regional level, the ASP's activities are designed to improve coordination among countries and to expand the knowledge base on how to support the most vulnerable: it aims to, 'contribute to advancing regional dialogue on strategic areas in order to promote strengthened adaptive social protection' (World Bank, 2016a, p. 21). To date the ASP has had a greater focus on its partnerships at the national level, with government structures working on social assistance and food security (often including those implementing cash transfer programmes supported by the World Bank) and with international organisations, than on the regional bodies and their initiatives (del Ninno, 2016).

The many challenges that scalable social assistance programmes pose in the Sahel (e.g. in terms of feasibility in light of capacity constraints, and financial viability) are the subject of studies conducted by the ASP and are not dealt with here. As discussed above, the coverage of these programmes is still low. They are often only present in a few areas of the country, in areas with the poorest people who are not necessarily the ones most affected by covariate shocks. Thus, this strategy to integrate adaptive mechanisms cannot itself meet the challenge of ensuring shock-responsive social protection in the coming years. There is now an awareness of the state's responsibility to ensure, as far as possible, equal treatment between areas where assistance is provided by (new) national programmes and areas where assistance is first and foremost provided by humanitarian actors.

6.3 ECHO: ECHO-funded NGO alliances

The provision of humanitarian assistance, the reduction of food insecurity and the promotion of linkages between development and humanitarian interventions to improve longer term resilience is central to the role of ECHO in the Sahel, as globally²⁶. ECHO has had a multiyear Sahel Strategy for a decade which has aimed to support the treatment of hundreds of thousands of malnourished children and contribute to strengthening the resilience of vulnerable populations (ECHO, 2016). We could, therefore, cite several of its interventions as being relevant for the analysis of the way that regional initiatives are contributing to improving links between social protection and humanitarian assistance. Here we focus on one that has emerged rather organically in the Sahel, namely the support of national alliances of NGOs that provide ECHO-funded humanitarian assistance.

The creation of alliances among ECHO-funded NGOs was not a requirement of ECHO: the idea arose in Niger in 2012 as a way of improving coordination and exchange of ideas and strengthening the ability of the NGOs to conduct joint advocacy to national governments on better linking humanitarian with development activities. The initiative to fund partners to align on programmatic objectives and modalities was successful, and other countries followed suit: there are now alliances of ECHO-funded NGOs in all six of the Sahel countries under review here, sometimes extending to NGOs not funded by ECHO but working in a similar field. Each alliance has a slightly different mandate and focus: some, for example, focus narrowly on seasonal cash transfers, others more broadly on overall food security. In Senegal the alliance looks at all aspects of food security and nutrition. In Chad, the focus is on social assistance and social protection (CARE International, 2016). The alliances have two major functions:

- They offer a **technical forum** for sharing knowledge and ideas, since NGOs that run emergency cash transfer programmes necessarily have a lot of processes in common. Some alliances go beyond simple information exchange and aim to progress to the harmonisation of some of their practices, such as developing common logframes with the same outputs, indicators and monitoring mechanisms, or reaching agreement on common targeting methods. This may even extend to the harmonisation of resources, including sharing personnel.

²⁶ The EU is one of the largest contributors of humanitarian aid to the Sahel, including through support to over 1 million people affected by food insecurity. ECHO is also contributing to the resilience objective of the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa. ECHO is also the fund manager for DFID's '[Providing Humanitarian Assistance in Sahel Emergencies \(PHASE\)](#)' project that aims to provide humanitarian assistance—including in response to food insecurity, conflict and natural shocks—and help people cope with future disasters. The Commission's humanitarian action in the Sahel is guided by the 2014-2016 UN Sahel Humanitarian Response Plan which aims to strike a balance between emergency response needs triggered by conflicts and disasters and longer term chronic vulnerability, thus seeking to reverse the pattern of growing humanitarian needs and building the resilience of the most vulnerable.

- By working as a unified group, the NGOs strengthen their position to conduct **advocacy** with governments and other actors as a visible stakeholder, enabling them to carry more weight in discussions on system-wide processes such as the single registries.

The first of these activities is a step towards what might be classified as the 'shadow alignment' of NGO interventions to government-led interventions, in the terminology of this research: by harmonising with one another, NGOs are also moving towards a situation in which, as a block, they may be able to better align with government programmes. The second also helps with alignment of NGO and government interventions, as well as improving the possibility of NGOs being able to 'piggyback' onto government systems by contributing to their development.

Meetings of alliance members do not substitute for the need for the NGOs to consult also with the government in order to better harmonise their activities. One respondent noted that this interaction would be likely to come from workshops, cluster meetings or bilateral meetings.

Since 2015 the ECHO alliances have further consolidated their regional coordination by hosting an annual 'Inter-alliance' meeting attended by representatives of the six ECHO alliances with similar aims of improving technical understanding and creating and following up on a roadmap and general recommendations on themes including targeting of beneficiaries, setting transfer values and contributing to the design of national social protection policies (see eg. ECHO, 2015). The 2016 inter-alliance meeting proposes four channels for advocacy by the alliances, namely the promotion of single registries, the institutionalisation of social safety nets, monitoring the implementation of national social protection, food security and nutrition policies, and assisting government structures to elaborate and monitor their national response plans (for food insecurity) (Action contre la Faim, 2016).

6.4 CaLP: Cash Working Groups and related activities

ECHO's funding of the national alliances of its partner NGOs builds on advocacy work already undertaken by the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP), a global consortium of NGOs, to support cash coordination. Since 2008 CaLP has supported the setup of coordination mechanisms for actors implementing one type of social protection instrument—cash transfer programmes—at national and subnational level in west Africa. There are now 10 active Cash Working Groups in the region, including the Sahel belt and beyond²⁷.

Initially, the focus of the Cash Working Groups was very much humanitarian. With the reframing of the issue of chronic food insecurity in the Sahel as being a matter also for long-term development, it made sense to open the groups to others working on social protection and national policy frameworks. The participation of actors who span the humanitarian and development sectors (such as Oxfam and UNICEF) helps to bridge the gap. The Cash Working Groups now engage with all actors, including UN agencies and relevant government ministries, which lends them a different focus to the ECHO alliances. In the case of Mali the government, represented by the social protection directorate in the Ministry of Solidarity and Humanitarian Action, co-leads the group (CaLP, 2016).

The groups are most effective in linking social protection and humanitarian initiatives when there is a mutual advantage to doing so. On the one hand, humanitarian actors may seek to engage with development actors to ensure that their perspectives are heard, especially if they are working in a context where national development policy frameworks are being prepared that will influence their work, or if advocacy on social protection aligns with the internal mandate of their agency.

²⁷ Other regions worldwide where CaLP has an office have also progressively set up Cash Working Groups.

Meanwhile, those involved in national policy processes may wish to link up with the humanitarian actors if they know that the latter have expertise in cash transfer programming that they might learn from. A key informant observed that this mutual benefit is of more relevance to the effectiveness of the mechanism, and the active participation of both humanitarian and development actors, than the fact of whether households' needs are acute rather than chronic.

The groups, once established, no longer belong to CaLP. Each develops its own priorities: they are not determined at a regional level. Cash Working Groups have generally succeeded in bringing together actors working on cash transfer programmes and highlighting the role of cash as a potential entry point to link emergency response with long-term social protection²⁸. They tend to focus on technical issues such as the calculation of transfer values, rather than on political discussions; and their purpose is not to harmonise the activities of participants. However, a recent evaluation of Cash Working Groups in two countries of the Sahel recommended that, even with the focus on technical discussions, the effectiveness of the groups' contribution to the policy process may be enhanced if the group lead has expertise in strategy development (CaLP, 2016). The evaluation also noted that the contribution of the group to national strategies and policies is further promoted if a member of the group participates in the cluster meetings (in an emergency context) or sector working group meetings (in a non-crisis context) that are part of the institutional setup in the countries of the region. A challenge for the groups is that none has dedicated funding for coordination of cash: they draw as much as they can on the expertise of their membership but have limited capacity to produce content or common tools. This contrasts with the ECHO alliances which fund a full-time position for coordination and the production of technical input.

The linkages between the Cash Working Groups and ECHO alliances have evolved differently in the different countries: in some they overlap while in others they complement one another. Actors involved are now working to clarify the roles and mandates of each at regional and country level, with the Cash Working Group becoming a multisector coordination tool not confined to food security, while the ECHO alliance remains focused on food security and nutrition. In countries where the share of responsibilities is the clearest (such as Mali), the ECHO alliance is more leading on technical input and the development of tools, while the Cash Working Group is disseminating it and opening discussions to all stakeholders. The two groups cooperate in their engagement with government counterparts.

²⁸ This ties in with some other activities on the topic led by CaLP, including a [learning event](#) in July 2014 on exploring the links between emergency and long-term cash transfer programmes in the Sahel, attended by representatives of governments in all six countries under review as well as NGOs and other key stakeholders; and a [guidance note](#) for humanitarian practitioners about how to consider taking social protection interventions into account during humanitarian programming (Kukrety, 2016).

7 Conclusions

Key points

- Governments, intergovernmental organisations and their partners are willing to extend social protection to the most vulnerable groups in the Sahel in order to better protect populations against covariate shocks and to prevent acute food crises.
- The series of food security crises over the last decade, combined with global movements in favour of social protection, are encouraging a transition from humanitarian response to long-term transfers linked with nutrition or resilience.
- Regional (intergovernmental) structures are playing a useful role in lending greater visibility to the policy question. They are increasing exchange of knowledge and promoting collaboration between countries, especially on diagnosis and monitoring of food security shocks.
- To date they have been less prominent in delivering interventions, perhaps in part because many initiatives are only recently launched. Where implementation has begun it is often slow. There is some sense that regional initiatives should be reflecting, rather than driving, national priorities.
- The multisectoral nature of the challenges in the region can make it difficult for member states' delegates from one sector to speak on behalf of all interlocking initiatives in other sectors (social protection, food security, nutrition, climate change ...)
- Numerous relevant strategic frameworks exist at regional level. Many system-building activities are required to integrate the humanitarian and development approaches (targeting, single registries etc.). Multi-year programming may help.
- State-led programmes alone will not be sufficient to incorporate the identified initiatives for many years as their coverage of the population is still low. This highlights the importance of strengthening links between state and non-state initiatives, and between those and informal social protection, rather than expecting that state-led interventions will be able to substitute for the others.

7.1 The contribution of regionwide mechanisms to delivering an effective response to shocks

This study highlights the willingness of states, intergovernmental and international organisations to extend social protection to the most vulnerable groups in the Sahel. The increase in frequency and intensity of covariate shocks have strongly encouraged the expansion of social protection in the region in recent years. Two major trends underlie this general dynamic; both are in line with the implementation of shock-responsive social protection systems. First, given that acute food and nutrition crises are no longer exceptional but rather a chronic problem, programme implementers have encouraged the adoption of innovative instruments to prevent and respond more effectively to food and nutrition insecurity (such as predictable cash transfers within an integrated intervention aimed at building resilience). At the same time, Africa-wide and global movements in favour of social protection have stimulated national interest around these issues. There is a desire to move from the current practice of seasonal transfers during cyclical peaks in food and nutrition insecurity, towards longer term transfers linked to either nutrition or resilience. The expansion of basic social protection is also increasingly considered within a broader objective of building resilience to other shocks such as those related to eg. climate change, insecurity or population displacement.

We have seen that intergovernmental structures and mechanisms are playing a notable role in lending greater visibility to the *policy question* of the need to improve links between humanitarian assistance and development initiatives across many sectors. They have highlighted the common features of issues being addressed by the six countries under review, which has led to a greatly increased exchange of knowledge among the countries, among both governments (such as during RPCA meetings) and NGOs (eg. through the ECHO alliances and Cash Working Groups). In some cases regional collaboration is improving some aspects of diagnosis and monitoring of food security shocks and of the responses to them, such as through the Cadre Harmonisé. AGIR has strengthened the drive for the expansion of social protection to the most vulnerable populations.

We have also seen that, to date, the regionwide mechanisms have not yet been as prominent in *supporting the implementation* of new programmes. This may be because many of the policy initiatives outlined in this paper have been launched recently and, naturally, have focused on situation analysis and policy formulation before moving to implementation: AGIR, for example, started by assisting countries to design national resilience priorities, which has taken some years. Cases such as the regional food security reserve, which has been slow to launch, illustrate the complexity of arriving at a consensus on, and securing financing for, initiatives that are intended to support many countries at once while those countries' needs differ. There remains a sense among some that, in any case, regional mechanisms should not be attempting to drive the delivery of national interventions but rather that they should be reflecting national governments' own priorities. Above all, the multisectoral nature of the challenges in the region can make it difficult for member states' delegates from one sector to speak on behalf of all the interlocking initiatives in other sectors. Considering how to forge closer links between humanitarian assistance and social protection systems may be a reasonable question to address chronic food insecurity in the Sahel; but so, too, is the matter of improving links between humanitarian assistance and other multisectoral issues as diverse as security or nutrition. We cannot expect regionwide initiatives to address these simultaneously.

7.2 How can humanitarian, DRM and social protection systems better work together?

Over the last two sections we have reviewed two different types of system and/or initiative that contribute to a response to food security crises across the Sahel: the formal structures to which governments adhere as member states (section 5), and the regionwide programmes of development partners and humanitarian actors (section 6). A key question of our research, as noted in section 1.1, is to understand not only their individual contribution, but also how the different components can better work together, regardless of sector. Regional mechanisms such as the RPCA serve as a model of good practice for regional collaboration, yet there are many multidimensional coordination challenges:

- coordinating *within* agencies (eg. several departments and agencies within ECOWAS);
- coordinating *across* agencies, generating synergies among the initiatives from the numerous intergovernmental organisations described here (ECOWAS, CILSS etc.);
- coordinating *between regional and national levels*, communicating regional priorities to national actors and *vice versa*;
- coordinating *across national frameworks*, ensuring coherence in strategies, policies and interventions led by different government agencies; and
- coordinating *across sectors* and across multisectoral approaches.

These challenges are compounded by the complexity of regional groupings, such as the fact that Mauritania and Chad are not members of ECOWAS, while Senegal is not in the G5 Sahel.

A multitude of initiatives and strategic frameworks at regional or international level relate to issues concerning the establishment of shock-responsive social protection systems. These often call for multisectoral approaches. To take the example of resilience, we have seen a 'wave of new Sahel strategies launched since 2011' in which resilience is one of the main areas of convergence (Helly *et al.*, 2015, p.8). While there are 'no significant differences in their understanding and analysis of the main objectives' of these strategies, 'there is a risk that competition among international actors could overshadow coordination in Sahel-Saharan contexts' (Helly *et al.*, 2015, p. 1).

The capacity of state government structures in the region to coordinate, absorb and manage the available resources is a significant challenge not referred to in the strategies. Beyond the funds to be mobilised, this raises the more general question of the availability of relevant regulatory bodies. (Helly *et al.*, 2015, p. 9).

Nationally, this raises the question of institutional anchorage and cross-sectoral coordination. The focal points for the different initiatives are often drawn from specific sectors and they struggle to mobilise coherent action. A higher level of coordination may seem necessary, but the creation of interministerial structures will not suffice. The issue is much more about how different sectoral actors can learn to work together in the field. Each country has made particular choices for the coordination of multisectoral initiatives at the national and regional level, and various setups are being developed to locally coordinate multisectoral initiatives reporting to different focal points at the central level (for example, nutrition security initiatives and resilience initiatives). These experiences merit being the subject of a review, analysis and exchanges between countries.

In addition to the challenge of multisectoral coordination among government structures and their development partners, the issue of setting up shock-responsive social protection systems calls for coordination between humanitarian actors and development actors. Emergency cash transfers (set up in the context of short-term humanitarian interventions) and social cash transfers (set up with government actors in the context of expanding social protection), have developed in parallel with little dialogue between the actors. While national social protection programmes are still embryonic and fragile, humanitarian actors in the region are often covering chronic needs. The gradual transition of beneficiaries from one system to the other requires policymakers to consider whether and how national programmes might respond to seasonal needs; consider social protection programmes in national contingency plans to address prolonged droughts and other disasters; work to improve and harmonise targeting methods; pay careful attention as to if, and how, single registries might contribute to a response to crises; and design flexible methods of financing. These national-level policy questions are similar to those that policymakers must address elsewhere in the world. But the reliance of many countries in the Sahel on non-governmental humanitarian responses to deliver long-term needs is distinctive from some other regions (such as Latin America, where emergency response is mostly government-led); and the fact that there is much in common among countries in the Sahel in the types of food security shocks they face means that there is merit in exploring solutions through regionwide collaboration.

Disaster preparation and management plans would need to be improved by strengthening links between early warning systems (led by the Cadre Harmonisé), regular assistance programmes, and financing mechanisms. In Senegal, for example, there is no predetermined response strategy for food emergencies. With such a strategy—defined institutionally, technically and financially—it would be possible to streamline spending on food emergencies by increasing the predictability and availability of funds as soon as necessary. Currently, the 'forecasts of the Cadre Harmonisé cannot be considered in the budget for the following year: the results come out in October / November, which is too late in relation to the budgetary timetable' (Dionizio, 2015). The adoption of multi-year public expenditure programming and budgeting, in conjunction with the adoption of UEMOA's harmonised budgetary framework, are a very important step towards the improvement of budgetary predictability in general and the accountability of emergency-related operations.

7.3 Implications for next steps at the national level

Despite recent efforts, national social protection mechanisms are still at an early stage in the region. Coverage remains very limited, especially in remote areas and those affected by insecurity (like northern Mali) where needs are enormous. There are many challenges scaling up these

emerging programmes and systems, which will require several more years. The development of shock-responsive social protection systems therefore will not be achieved solely by integrating elements of 'vertical' or 'horizontal' expansion to a few existing (or future) national programmes, given their limited coverage: this would have the effect of further widening the gap between populations having access to state services, who could benefit from even more responsive services, and other populations—and hence regional disparities within a country, against an often already sensitive background. This does not mean there is no place for vertical or horizontal expansion of such programmes; but that would need to be examined on a case-by-case basis. The need for interventions by development and humanitarian partners will therefore continue, alongside informal social protection mechanisms.

The expansion of coverage of state mechanisms ensuring basic social protection to vulnerable populations remains a priority and a prerequisite for the integration of adaptive elements. This is already well under way in the countries, in particular through programmes supported by the World Bank, building on the support previously provided to the development of social protection strategies, often by UNICEF and, in some cases, the ILO. It is appropriate to pay greater attention to needs and local dynamics in the design and implementation of these mechanisms (in particular around issues of targeting, and complementary services to prevent malnutrition and to strengthen livelihoods). A constant challenge is to ensure that the implemented systems are themselves resilient to shocks, before being shock-responsive, which particularly involves counter-cyclical funding mechanisms.

Subsequently, it is important to strengthen the links between state-run systems and the initiatives of humanitarian actors who cater to seasonal and chronic needs. This should help to meet the challenge of expanding basic social protection in remote or insecure areas. This dynamic also seems to be in process, with interesting experiences in Mali for example²⁹. For some years now, some humanitarian actors have been working to harmonise their approaches on seasonal transfers, particularly with a view to align (or transfer) them to national systems. There is a growing awareness of the need for rapprochement between state-run and humanitarian systems around this issue.

In addition to the contributions of the state-run social protection system to preventing and responding to crises, and the strengthening of links between state-run social protection, DRM and humanitarian interventions, a third path suggested here would be to strengthen, or at least take into account, informal social protection mechanisms and adaptive livelihood strategies. This is crucial to achieve local acceptance and ownership of the mechanisms to make them viable. From the perspective of providing vulnerable populations with (more) shock-responsive social protection, the vision suggested here is therefore to implement 'hybrid, resilient social protection systems that are shock-responsive and community-sensitive'. This requires a great deal of continued cross-sectoral dialogue and coordination at central and decentralised levels of the kind reviewed here.

7.4 Recommendations

1. **Regional policies.** Promote awareness among social protection actors of the opportunity of updating ECOWAS's regional agricultural policy and its companion documents, the PRIA and PNIA, as a space for embedding social protection initiatives into the policy response for food insecurity.
2. **Understanding of social protection at regional level.** Conversely, continue to find ways of promoting understanding of social protection—including its opportunities to contribute to

²⁹ This is the subject of another, more detailed, case study conducted under this research programme. A preparatory document for this study was published in January 2016 (OPM, 2016b).

impact, but also the constraints it faces in accommodating linkages across numerous sectors eg. education, health and food security—among regional policymakers in these other sectors.

3. **Intersectoral coordination.** At national level, strengthen exchanges between the representatives of the agricultural ministries working on regional policies such as ECOWAP and AGIR and attending RPCA meetings, and the representatives of ministries responsible for social protection and DRM.
4. **Comparative data analysis.** There might be a benefit in an organisation such as CILSS, that collects national data on poverty and vulnerability from member states, expanding its synthesis of the data it receives, eg. through greater comparative analysis across countries. This might help to highlight progress that might point to successful policy solutions implemented by certain countries, or alternatively highlight anomalies in the assessment of the vulnerability of areas in different countries that have similar characteristics.
5. **Supporting social protection development.** Recognise the importance of the gradual expansion of routine social protection as a valid contribution to improving responsiveness to shocks in itself, even before building in elements that expand programmes vertically or horizontally on a temporary basis.
6. **Links between DRM, social protection and funding.** Consider how to strengthen links between early warning systems data and social protection, to increase the predictability and timeliness of funds.
7. **Multi-year programming and budgeting.** Consider whether and how regional data such as the Cadre Harmonisé can feed into multi-year programming rather than being used for annual responses.

Annex A References

- Action contre la Faim (2016), 'Communiqué sur l'atelier régional inter-alliances de Dakar', Action contre la Faim.
- African Development Bank (2013), 'Intégration régionale en Afrique de l'Ouest : Défis et opportunités pour le Sénégal', African Development Bank.
- African Development Bank, FAO and ECOWAS (2015), 'Croissance agricole en Afrique de l'Ouest : Facteurs déterminants de marché et de politique', African Development Bank.
- African Union (2004), 'Plan of action for employment and poverty alleviation. Assembly of the African Union third extraordinary session on employment and poverty alleviation, 3-9 September 2004, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. EXT / Assembly / AU / 4 (III) Rev. 3', African Union.
- African Union (2008), 'Social policy framework for Africa. First session of the AU conference of ministers in charge of social development, Windhoek, Namibia, 27-31 October 2008. CAMSD / EXP / 4(I)', African Union.
- Barca, V. and Chirchir, R. (2014), '[Single registries and integrated MISs: De-mystifying data and information management concepts](#)', Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.
- Béné, C. (2012), '[Social protection and resilience to climate and disaster. IDS Programme Briefing](#)', Institute for Development Studies, Brighton, UK.
- CaLP (2016), '[Les modèles de coordination des transferts monétaires en Afrique de l'ouest : Mali et Mauritanie](#)', CaLP.
- CARE International (2016), 'Rapport atelier. L'adhésion des membres de l'alliance Tchad pour la protection sociale et les filets sociaux', août, CARE International.
- Cherrier, C. (2012), 'Les transferts sociaux pour la sécurité alimentaire et nutritionnelle dans le Sahel', European Commission.
- Cherrier, C. (2014), 'Transferts Monétaires et Résilience : Renforcer les liens entre transferts monétaires d'urgence et programmes nationaux de transferts sociaux dans le Sahel', CaLP.
- Cherrier, C., del Ninno, C. and Razmara, S. (2011a), 'Burkina Faso Social Safety Nets', World Bank.
- Cherrier, C., del Ninno, C. and Razmara, S. (2011b), 'Mali Social Safety Nets', World Bank.
- Cherrier, C. and Laanouni, F. (2015), 'Protection Sociale et Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle : Le cas du Sahel'.
- CILSS (2014), 'Cadre Harmonisé : Identification et analyse des zones à risque et des populations en insécurité alimentaire et nutritionnelle au Sahel et en Afrique de l'Ouest', CILSS, AGRHYMET.
- CILSS (2015a), 'Session 1.4. Introduction à l'approche et au cadre analytiques du CH', from training course on the Cadre Harmonisé for food security actors in Mali, CILSS.
- CILSS (2015b), 'Session 1.5. Poser les bases du consensus technique', from training course on the Cadre Harmonisé for food security actors in Mali, CILSS.
- del Ninno, C. (2016), 'La protection sociale adaptative : Intégrer des éléments "adaptatifs" dans le système de protection sociale'. Présentation faite à la CoP francophone le 19 mai 2016 à Brazzaville, Congo.
- Development Initiatives (2016), '[Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2016](#)', Development Initiatives.
- Dionizio, V. (2015), 'La Prévisibilité des Dépenses Publiques Liées à la Sécurité Alimentaire et Nutritionnelle au Sénégal', Brussels: Advisory Service in Social Transfers.
- Donini, A. and Scalettari, G. (2016), 'Planning from the future. Component 2. The contemporary humanitarian landscape: malaise, blockages and game changers. Case study: regional humanitarian challenges in the Sahel', draft, King's College London, Feinstein International Center and Humanitarian Policy Group.
- ECHO (2012), 'ECHO Crisis Report. Sahel Sitrep n°4', ECHO.

- ECHO (2015), 'Atelier régional inter-alliances de partage des expériences et de capitalisation. Rapport de l'atelier'. Avec la participation des Alliances Sécurité alimentaire du Burkina Faso, du Mali, de la Mauritanie, du Niger, du Sénégal et les partenaires du Tchad. Niamey du 7 au 9 décembre', ECHO, December.
- ECHO (2016), 'DG ECHO Sahel Strategy: Key contributions and results since 2007', European Commission.
- ECOWAS (2012a), 'Note d'orientation stratégique vers une sécurité alimentaire de proximité en Afrique de l'Ouest : « Faim Zéro en Afrique de l'Ouest », Dept. of Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources.
- ECOWAS (2012b), 'Regional Social Safety Net Support Program in West Africa', Dept. of Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources.
- ECOWAS (2012c), 'Réserve régionale de sécurité alimentaire', ECOWAS in collaboration with UEMOA, RESOGEST, CILSS, le Hub Rural, EU, USAID, UNOPS.
- ECOWAS (2016a), 'ECOWAS to mainstream social safety nets for food security and nutrition approach in West Africa', ECOWAS.
- ECOWAS (2016b), 'Rapport d'activités du premier semestre 2016', Agence Régionale pour l'Agriculture et l'Alimentation, ECOWAS.
- ECOWAS (nd), 'ECOWAS: a regional reserve to prevent and manage food crises in West Africa', ECOWAS.
- ECOWAS and FAO (2014), 'Zero Hunger Initiative for West Africa: Eradicating hunger by 2025', FAO.
- ECOWAS, CILSS and UEMOA (2013), 'Global Alliance for Resilience—AGIR—Sahel and West Africa, Regional Roadmap adopted on 9 April 2013', Sahel and West Africa Club, OECD.
- European Union External Action Service (nd), '[Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel](#)', European Union External Action Service.
- Fallavier (2014), 'Social Protection in Sahel's Drylands: A review of the literature on climate-adaptive social protection for use in the Sahel', *mimeo*.
- FAO (2014), 'Évaluation sur le droit à l'alimentation dans la région de la CEDEAO', FAO.
- FAO (2016), 'Social protection in the Sahel and West Africa. Strengthening resilience for food security and nutrition', FAO.
- FAO, IFAD and WFP (2015), 'The State of Food Insecurity in the World. Meeting the 2015 international hunger targets: taking stock of uneven progress', FAO.
- Galtier, F. (2012), '[Note sur la crise alimentaire en cours au Sahel](#)', CIRAD.
- GEA (2014), 'Les processus d'intégration régionale de la CEDEAO et la coopération internationale', GEA.
- Government of Burkina Faso (2015), 'Priorités Résilience Pays (PRP-AGIR-Burkina) 2016-2020', Burkina Faso.
- Government of Niger (2015), 'AGIR : Priorités résilience pays - PRP AGIR/Niger', Haut Commissariat à l'Initiative 3N.
- 'Grand Bargain' (2016), '[The Grand Bargain—a shared commitment to better serve people in need](#)', World Humanitarian Summit.
- Gross, R., Schoeneberger, H., Pfeifer, H. and Preuss, H.-J. (2000), 'The four dimensions of food and nutrition security: definitions and concepts', Inwent and FAO.
- G5 Sahel (2016), '[Stratégie pour le Développement et la Sécurité des Pays du G5 Sahel](#)', G5 Sahel.
- Helly, D., Théroux-Bénoni, L.-A., Galeazzi, G., Maïga, I. and Ouédraogo, F. (2015), 'Sahel strategies: Why coordination is imperative', Institute for Security Studies / ECDPM.
- Hodges, A. and Mededji, D. (2016a), 'Support to the design of a regional exchange and training framework on safety nets in West Africa. Part I: Regional synthesis report', Oxford Policy Management.

- Hodges, A. and Mededji, D. (2016b), 'Support to the design of a regional exchange and training framework on safety nets in West Africa. Part II: Country reports', Oxford Policy Management.
- Holmes, R. and Braunholtz-Speight, T. (2009), 'Strengthening Social Protection for Children: West and Central Africa', UNICEF and ODI.
- IASC (2013) 'Resilience: Why does it matter to the humanitarian community? Sahel as a case study'. Inter-Agency Standing Committee Principals Meeting, 17 December 2013, ICRC, Geneva
- International Development Committee (2013), 'Post-2015 Development Goals. Eighth Report of Session 2012-13. Volume II: Additional written evidence', The Stationery Office.
- IPC (2015), 'IPC Support to West Africa 2015', IPC.
- Kukrety, N. (2016), '[Working with cash based safety nets in humanitarian contexts. Guidance note for humanitarian practitioners](#)', CaLP.
- Matthews, H. (2016), 'Child Sensitive Adaptive Social Protection. A consultancy to map and identify SP opportunities for Save the Children in West Africa, Nov-Dec 2015. Presentation of findings', Save the Children.
- Michiels, D. and Egg, J. (2007), 'Les politiques de prévention et gestion des crises alimentaires : Enseignements de la crise du Niger de 2005. *Etudes*'. Paris: MAEE, DgCiD.
- Monchuk, V. (2014), 'Reducing Poverty and Investing in People: The New Role of Safety Nets in Africa', World Bank.
- O'Brien, C., Congrave, J., Sharp, K. and Keïta, N. (forthcoming), 'Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems Research: Case study—Social protection and humanitarian responses to food insecurity and poverty in Mali', Oxford Policy Management, Oxford, UK.
- OCHA (2014a), '[2014-1016 Strategic response plan Sahel region](#)', OCHA.
- OCHA (2014b), '[Humanitarian dashboard](#)', OCHA, January.
- OCHA (2015a), '[Sahel: A call for humanitarian aid. Responding to the needs of people affected by crises in the Sahel](#)', OCHA.
- OCHA (2015b), '[Sahel: A call for humanitarian aid. Responding to the needs of people affected by crises in the Sahel in 2016](#)', OCHA.
- OCHA (2015c), '[Sahel: Humanitarian dashboard \(September 2015\)](#)', OCHA.
- OCHA (2016a), '[2017 Sahel : Overview of humanitarian needs and requirements](#)', OCHA.
- OCHA (2016b), '[Sahel: Humanitarian dashboard \(September 2016\)](#)', OCHA.
- OECD (2013), 'Peuplement, marché et sécurité alimentaire', OECD.
- OECD Sahel and West Africa Club (2016), 'Maps & facts no. 41, August 2016: the Regional Food Security Reserve', OECD.
- OPM (2015), '[Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems - A research programme for DFID. Working Paper 1: Conceptualising Shock-Responsive Social Protection](#)', OPM.
- OPM (2016a), '[DFID Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems research: Literature review](#)', OPM.
- OPM (2016b), '[Recherche sur les systèmes de protection sociale réactive aux chocs. Document de travail 2 : Etude de cas du Mali. Document préparatoire](#)', OPM.
- RPCA (2010), '[Dispositif régional de prévention et de gestion des crises alimentaires \(PREGEC\)](#)', CILSS.
- RPCA (2012), '[Charte pour la prévention et gestion des crises alimentaires au Sahel et en Afrique de l'ouest](#)', Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat, OECD.
- RPCA (2013), '[Set of instruments for food crisis management](#)', Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat, OECD.
- RPCA (2016a), '[32nd annual meeting. Summary of conclusions. Abuja \(Nigeria\) 12-14 December 2016](#)', RPCA.

- RPCA (2016b), 'Analyse des effets du processus AGIR sur les engagements politiques et la gouvernance de la sécurité alimentaire et nutritionnelle au Sahel et en Afrique de l'Ouest', Draft report, December. RPCA, ECOWAS, CILSS, UEMOA, Club du Sahel and OECD.
- UN (2013), 'Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Sahel Region', UN Security Council, June [the annex to this document is the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel].
- UN (2016), 'Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel', UN Security Council, June.
- UNDG (2015), 'UNDG WCA Strategy & Road Map to operationalize the resilience building approach at the country level in the framework of the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel', UNDG.
- UNEP (2011), 'Sécurité des moyens d'existence. Changements climatiques, migrations et conflits au Sahel', UNEP.
- Watson, C. (2016) '[Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems Research. Working Paper 3: Shock-Responsive Social Protection in the Sahel: Community Perspectives](#)'. OPM.
- World Bank (2015a), 'Aide mémoire Mali. Mission d'appui à la mise en oeuvre du projet d'urgence sur les filets sociaux (Jigiséméjiri) (Don IDA H835-ML). Mission du 12 au 26 octobre 2015', World Bank.
- World Bank (2015b), 'Project Appraisal Document on a proposed grant in the amount of SDR 10.7 million (US\$15 million equivalent) and a proposed Sahel Adaptive Social Protection grant in the amount of US\$4 million to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania for a Social Safety Net System project April 23, 2015', World Bank.
- World Bank (2015c), 'Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Program. Addressing the challenges of climate change and disaster risk for the poor and vulnerable. Annual report, November 2015', World Bank.
- World Bank (2015d), '*The State of Social Safety Nets 2015*', World Bank.
- World Bank (2016a), 'Implementation status & results report. Chad Safety Nets Project', December, World Bank.
- World Bank (2016b), 'Project Appraisal Document on a proposed grant in the amount of SDR 3.6 million (US\$5.0 million equivalent) and a proposed Adaptive Safety Net Multi-Donor Trust Fund grant in the amount of US\$5.0 million to the Republic of Chad for a Safety Nets Project August 9, 2016', World Bank.
- World Bank (2016c), 'Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Program. Addressing the Challenges of Climate Change and Disaster Risk for the Poor and Vulnerable. Annual Report 2015', World Bank.
- World Bank (2017), 'Implementation status & results report. Mauritania Social Safety Net System', January, World Bank.
- World Bank (nd), '[Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Program Trust Fund. Overview](#)', website accessed January 2017.
- World Bank and UNHCR (2013), 'Global Program on Forced Displacement. Forced displacement of and potential solutions for IDPs and refugees in the Sahel—Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania & Niger', World Bank.

Annex B Detailed methodology

B.1 Approach to the research

The overall research combines both quantitative and qualitative data gathered through a combination of desk-based research (literature review and interviews) and six country case studies, three in-depth and three light ones (document review, consultations with key informants and stakeholders). In-depth case studies provide detailed information gathered over at least three in-country research periods, accompanied by regular consultations and interactions with key stakeholders in-between the missions. The light case studies analyse information relevant to the main research questions, but during just one in-country research period and focusing on specific aspects particularly interesting to examine (such as an effective DRM system, a successful experience in piggybacking, or multiple regional initiatives aimed to deliver effective shock responses). The research has three main components: normative, diagnostic and explanatory:

1. **Normative:** this component ensured key terminology and concepts were clarified leading to consistency across the project e.g. on the objectives of social protection and key enabling factors and constraints as identified by the literature. Some of this was completed during the literature review and inception phase consultations. The aim was to identify what qualifies as a shock-responsive social protection policy and system, their properties and the links to humanitarian interventions.
2. **Diagnostic:** this component mapped out social protection policies and systems and considered their (actual and potential) degree of responsiveness in the context of different shocks. It also provided descriptive analysis of broader processes that influence that effectiveness, such as political considerations, the budget process and the legislative framework.
3. **Explanatory:** this component addressed the question ‘why’? It examined the factors underlying the patterns and results highlighted at the diagnostic stage. Its objective was to provide information on the reasons why policy and systems have evolved and performed as outlined. Factors considered include: policy design and implementation details, administrative / operational capacity, political economy variables and financing sources and arrangements. The analysis was applied to both social protection policies, systems and to the coordination or integration (and/or lack thereof) between social protection and humanitarian shock response.

B.2 Analytical tools

Answering the research questions required the application of a broad set of analytical tools covering different themes and pursuing different objectives. These are:

1. **Mapping and analysis of stakeholders, power relations and governance:** This set of tools analyses the people and organisations who are—or might be—involved in contributing to a shock-responsive social protection system; their mandates, interest and influence, the way they organise themselves and their capacities. It consists of stakeholder analysis, institutional analysis and organisational capacity assessments.
2. **Vulnerability / poverty analysis:** This involved creating a ‘risk and vulnerability profile’ for each country or region, drawing on secondary quantitative and qualitative data from a range of reputable sources.
3. **Mapping and analysis of policies and systems for social protection, humanitarian assistance and DRM:** This involved reviewing and updating existing mappings and collecting information relating to the design of relevant policies and systems and the features of policy delivery. Following the mapping exercises, policy analysis was conducted to review explanatory factors.

4. **Budget / financial analysis:** This involved review of the macroeconomic environment and medium term outlook of key economic indicators; review of budgetary processes and rules for allocation of budgets, their use and reallocation within and across sectors or administrative entities; analysis of sources and levels of expenditure allocated to social protection, DRM, humanitarian response, and (if relevant) climate change; and financial analysis of specific social protection, DRR / DRM, or humanitarian response programmes or interventions.

Our approach paid attention to issues of conflict and fragility and their impact on the development and implementation of policies and systems that can respond to shocks. This has been linked to the questions explored under analytical tools such as the vulnerability analysis and financial analysis, since conflict and fragility may have a bearing on topics such as the assessment and mitigation of risk and issues surrounding funding cycles.

B.3 Overview of stakeholder consultations

We noted in section 1.2 that many discussions were held on the margins of regional meetings. A list of regional meetings attended by the research team is presented in Table 10.

Table 10 Meetings attended by the research team

Format and theme	Organiser	Place	Date	Number and profile of participants
Webinar: 'Stratégie intégrée des UN pour le Sahel: Présentation de la composante Protection Sociale de la feuille de route pour la résilience'	UNICEF	Webinar	May 2015	25 people, donors working in social protection, resilience and nutrition
Workshop: 'Establishing greater connections between ASP, ARC and related programming in the Sahel'	World Bank	Washington, United States	Aug 2015	25 people, World Bank staff and other donors
Sahel and West Africa week 'Sécurité alimentaire et résilience'	SWAC	Milan, Italy	Oct 2015	200 participants from west African governments, intergovernmental organisations, civil society, donors, etc.
Restricted meeting of the Food Crisis Prevention Network	CILSS, SWAC	Paris, France	Apr 2016	150 participants, RPCA members (member countries and donors)
Meeting of the regional Cash Working Group: 'Liens entre transferts monétaires humanitaires et systèmes de protection sociale'	CaLP	Dakar, Senegal (*)	May 2016	10 participants, humanitarian actors
Annual meeting of Francophone group of the CoP on social cash transfers in sub-Saharan Africa	World Bank, UNICEF	Brazzaville, Congo	May 2016	90 participants, members of governments, technical managers from ministries implementing cash transfer programmes, and donors
2nd annual inter-alliance workshop for knowledge sharing	ECHO alliance	Dakar, Senegal	Dec 2016	Around 40 people, mostly from international NGOs and donors
West Africa regional membership event	CaLP	Dakar, Senegal	Dec 2016	Around 40 people, mostly from international NGOs and donors

Source: OPM. Notes: (*) participation by videoconference.

During the CoP meeting on social cash transfers in sub-Saharan Africa, the research team organised a half-day session on the links between social protection and humanitarian assistance, and a round table on the notion of 'shock-responsive social protection systems', comprising government technicians from both within and beyond the Sahel. These sessions allowed participants to gain a preliminary understanding of the problem and to identify some priority areas in this field. They also provided an opportunity for the research team to better grasp the day-to-day reality of technicians working on these issues.

Annex C Social protection under Niger's PRP-AGIR

This annex offers an overview of the AGIR National Resilience Priorities (PRP-AGIR) set in Niger, paying particular attention to the manner and degree to which social protection is taken into account. It assesses how the National Resilience Priorities can be seen to contribute to the promotion of a shock-responsive social protection system. It also looks at the correspondence between the social protection pillar of the AGIR National Resilience Priorities (set in 2015) and Niger's National Social Protection Policy (PNPS), developed in 2011.

C.1 Overview of Niger's PRP-AGIR

The PRP document sets AGIR firmly within the national 3N Initiative, as a way to reinforce the resilience aspect of the 3N Initiative. National dialogue processes were thus conducted under the authority of the High Commissioner for the 3N Initiative (HC3N), attached to the presidency, with a focal point for AGIR supported by the EU. The PRP-AGIR document sees itself as a 'reference framework' and a 'tool for orientation and action' for all interventions in the domain of resilience. It focuses on, 'the struggle against chronic food vulnerability, chronic malnutrition, and the harmful effects of climate change and variability'. It aims thus to address the 'structural vulnerability' that is seen to characterise 25%–35% of the population (Government of Niger, 2015)³⁰.

The vulnerability analysis presented in the PRP-AGIR document identifies both cyclical or short-term causes (such as insect infestations, food price fluctuations and conflicts) and structural causes (droughts, poor performing rural production systems, climate change and variability, persistent impoverishment of the population, high population growth, lack of access to basic social services, insecure land tenure, institutional instability and governance deficits in the sector, rural exodus and accelerated urbanisation combined with unemployment and underemployment). Key target population groups include: 450,000 agricultural, agro-pastoral and pastoral households (5 million people) seen to be chronically vulnerable due to insufficient production to meet essential needs; an annual addition of 400,000 children under five and 270,000 pregnant and lactating women suffering from malnutrition; about 560,000 individuals affected by floods; and 50,000 victims of conflict. Other target groups include the unemployed, people with disabilities or chronic illness, young people and adolescents of poor households who are out of school. Some 16 out of Niger's 67 departments are identified as chronically vulnerable and 18 departments identified (on the basis of annual assessments) to be at risk of short-term vulnerability.

For 2016-2020, the aim is to address the needs of 6.3 million people classified as very poor and chronically vulnerable to food and nutrition insecurity and living in the geographic areas identified as chronically vulnerable, all the while, however, maintaining vigilance in regard to other groups who may need short-term, emergency responses. The objectives are to (i) reduce by 50% the population structurally vulnerable to food and nutrition insecurity, (ii) bring the current prevalence of global malnutrition of 46% to below the emergency threshold of 40% and the current 15% global acute malnutrition (during the lean season) to below the emergency threshold of 10%, (iii) increase grain production by 35% and producer revenues by 20%, and (iv) ensure effective functioning of coordination and implementation mechanisms in the domain of resilience.

Priority actions for each of the four AGIR strategic pillars are outlined in Box 4. These components and priority actions, particularly the first two components, are well within the domain of priorities of both adaptive and shock-responsive social protection.

³⁰ Unless otherwise stated, citations are free translations from French drawn from République du Niger (2015).

Box 4 Priority actions for the 3N initiative as set out in Niger's PRP-AGIR

Social protection and livelihood: The aim of this pillar is, 'to contribute to improving the food and nutrition situation of the most vulnerable households and to ensure protection and reinforcement of their livelihoods in order to increase resilience to shocks.' Priority interventions are:

1. Protect livelihoods through **social transfers** (to about 700,000 chronically poor households and a further 80,000 households in zones affected by occasional shocks and crises), the development of **agricultural insurance**, and strategic **de-stocking**.
2. Respond to volatility of basic food prices through support for **community grain stocks** at local and commune levels, systems of warrantage (an inventory storage and credit system), the reduction of post-harvest losses, and targeted **subsidies** on basic food and productive inputs.
3. Reduce the risks and effects of floods and other localised catastrophes by strengthening the institutional capacity of actors for the prevention and management of floods and the reconstitution of livelihoods of household previously affected.
4. Enhance school attendance in vulnerable zones through **school feeding programmes** and risk management in the school environment (emergency preparedness clubs).

Nutrition: i) promote a multi-sectoral approach to nutrition and its integration within sectoral policies and programmes; ii) establish programmes that address nutrition directly and indirectly; iii) strengthen access to nutrition and health services, promote reproductive health, and strengthen prevention and treatment of illnesses with high morbidity and mortality rates.

Agricultural and food production, incomes and access to food: Improvements to: i) water resources and use for agriculture, pastoralism and fishing; ii) food production for poor households (through promotion of improved seed varieties and micro-fertilisation, soil and water conservation and methods to combat insect infestation); iii) household economy of agro-pastoralists and pastoralists (through reconstitution of pastoral livelihoods and measures around productive assets); iv) diversification of revenue and access to markets (through income-generating activities, promotion of rural and peri-urban employment, traditional solidarity mechanisms, and the improvement of market systems).

Governance of food and nutrition security: i) improve capacities in resilience of state and non-state actors, coordination at national and commune level, better targeting of the most vulnerable, and integration between emergency and development; ii) establish a harmonised national database of the most vulnerable households, improve local / commune systems for rapid information and monitoring and evaluation; iii) operationalise reforms aimed at improving access to finance for small producers, secure land tenures, protection of occasional workers in informal and agricultural sectors, governance of grain markets, measures to combat speculation, structures for support and advice.

Source: Abridged and translated from Government of Niger (2015, pp.7-8).

A variety of donors are already aligned around components of the PRP-AGIR (and the 3N Initiative): these include, among others, the European Union; the UN system; a programme for strengthening resilience in the face of food insecurity in the Sahel (P2RS); the USAID programme on resilience and economic growth in the Sahel; the World Bank's programmes for emergency management and urban development, pastoral development, climate resilience, community action, and family farming (though the ASP is not clearly identified here); and an Islamic Development Bank programme on food security and resilience.

C.2 Links between Niger's PRP-AGIR and the PNPS

The PRP-AGIR document makes note of Niger's 2011 PNPS in reproducing work on vulnerability categorisation and targeting issuing from the PNPS's first strategic axis, which focuses on reducing food and nutrition insecurity and for which HC3N is the lead government agency. Inclusion of social protection within the PRP-AGIR is seen to correspond to the third axis of the 3N Initiative, which, while not mentioning social protection, envisages the "improvement of the resilience of populations to climate changes, food crises and catastrophes." The PRP-AGIR notes,

AGIR leads us, in the sectors and priority axes at the heart of the 3N Initiative, to accentuate programmatic orientations targeting more specifically the most vulnerable, those who are the most exposed to food and nutrition insecurity (PRP-AGIR, p. 27)

In the presentation of the first pillar on social protection, the PRP-AGIR notes that the PNPS foresees reduction of vulnerability of the population and improvement in the coverage of social protection through an appropriate strategy to target the most vulnerable. It is recognised that social protection cuts across sectors and policies and that food and nutrition insecurity linked to droughts, floods, price rises and indebtedness are among the factors that accentuate vulnerability and undermine resilience. It thus makes the link between social protection and the priorities of the 3N Initiative as shown in Box 5.

Box 5 Social protection in Niger's 3N Initiative

The 3N Initiative foresees the use of social transfers both in emergencies and over the medium term. Each year, Niger develops a support plan to support targeted groups affected by immediate humanitarian risks to access food and protect their livelihoods. Three categories of interventions are undertaken:

1. Targeted food distribution or unconditional cash transfers to households in severe food insecurity, and subsidised grain sales to households in moderate food insecurity, with cash- or food-for-work;
2. Non-food distributions—agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilizer and kits of agricultural material), small ruminants or chickens to herders and agro-pastoralists—and subsidised sale of animal feed;
3. Support for the prevention and treatment of malnutrition through distributions of nutrition supplements and services for children and pregnant and lactating women, along with awareness-raising measures on essential family care practices, access to water, etc.

On a multi-year basis, support to very poor households is provided through conditional and unconditional social transfer projects. These include the social safety net programme financed by the World Bank that provides CFA 10,000 a month over 24 months (see Table 7 above) and the school feeding programme.

The PRP-AGIR further explains, “[g]iven the chronic dimension and magnitude of food and nutrition insecurity, an effective strategy for food security and poverty reduction through adapted mechanisms of social protection such as safety nets (non-contributory transfers to the poorest and productive safety nets), is essential and should thus be reinforced. This will favour improvement of living conditions and food and nutrition security for households in both ‘normal’ periods and in periods of crisis.”

Source: Abridged and translated from Government of Niger (2015, pp. 7-8).

The four priority domains of intervention for PRP-AGIR’s social protection pillar may be seen as closely linked to the priorities and objectives identified in the PNPS in its first strategic axis on food and nutrition security, but with elements pertaining to the other four PNPS axes as well (these are social security, work and employment; basic social services and infrastructure; actions for vulnerable groups; and strengthening the legal and regulatory framework for social protection). Some priority interventions foreseen in the PNPS find correspondence with other PRP-AGIR’s pillars; and in other cases there are no correspondences.

Both the PNPS and the PRP-AGIR/3N Initiative foresee the development of improved targeting and a unified registry of vulnerable groups; both highlight the importance of expanding social transfers (social safety nets) along with appropriate accompanying measures (a ‘cash plus’ approach); both propose a variety of mechanisms and tools beyond direct transfers (for example subsidised grain and agricultural inputs; systems of *warrantage*); and both emphasise the need to build on and strengthen existing structures. Both also clearly link food and nutrition security, and see support for livelihoods and resilience as critical for the response to structural vulnerability, while also acknowledging the need for responses to cyclical shocks or emergencies. As such, both contain elements of the adaptive social protection approach, and are aware of the need to be both shock-responsive in the sense of focusing on improving the effectiveness of specific risk

management systems and mechanisms. Below are some of the key nuances observed between the PNPS and the PRP-AGIR:

- The PNPS takes an overtly rights-based approach. The PRP-AGIR includes attention to aspects which infer rights (such as strengthened land tenure or protection of workers in precarious conditions); though this is not an explicit framework, the document does mention the right-based approach as a cross-cutting principle.
- The PNPS includes public works and, from the right-based focus, suggests consideration of a move towards employment guarantee schemes. The PRP-AGIR maintains the language of food- or cash-for-work mechanisms and does not fully develop these as a social protection measure; it does, though, identify the need to generalise labour-intensive public works linked to environmental conservation and the construction of health and education infrastructure.
- The PNPS stresses the need to address not only livelihood risks and vulnerabilities—the key framework for the PRP-AGIR and the 3N Initiative—but also specific risks linked to gender and the life cycle (children, young people, women, older people) and to disability and chronic illness, and foresees potential for such measures as, for example, social pensions for older people and services for people with disabilities. With the exception of nutrition priorities around women and children, the promotion of schooling for young people in zones at risk, and some attention to women’s access to land and jobs, these aspects are less evident in the PRP-AGIR, which targets beneficiaries rather by their livelihood category (producer groups such as farmers, pastoralists, agro-pastoralists) and their degree of vulnerability to food and nutrition insecurity and other environmental shocks.
- The PNPS includes a priority axis on contributory social insurance mechanisms with a focus on expanding social protection to those not yet covered, as well as support for traditional solidarity mechanisms. While contributory social security is largely lacking as a theme in the PRP-AGIR, there is a highlight there on agricultural insurance. Traditional solidarity mechanisms are identified as important in the PRP-AGIR, which highlights two in particular—women’s *tontines*, or rotating credit groups, and the pastoral system of *Habbanae* (animal lending), as important to promote as a means of enhancing resilience; and the protection of workers in the informal sector is highlighted under the PRP-AGIR’s fourth pillar on governance, where adequate pay and social security and contribution to health insurance at retirement are raised.

The nuances observed between the PNPS and social protection components foreseen within the PRP-AGIR do not imply shortcomings in the PRP-AGIR’s social protection pillar. The measures set out for social protection in the PRP-AGIR may, in fact, be seen to go even beyond the mandate of the HC3N in its role of lead agency for the PNPS strategic axis 1 on food and nutrition security by, for example, including school feeding programmes to enhance education (a measure foreseen in the PNPS’s fourth axis) and the strengthening of structures for localised risk reduction (a measure foreseen in the PNPS’s third axis).

The AGIR initiative, in its focus on strengthening livelihoods and resilience and risk management around covariate shocks due to environmental conditions and stress, as fully appropriated by the national 3N Initiative in the PRP-AGIR, seems to be an excellent example of how an international and regional initiative can stimulate and boost a number of the multiple strands of social protection that is needed in the Sahel, particularly around shock-responsive social protection. Renewed impetus would now be needed around other essential strands of social protection as laid out in the PNPS. And it may be that current mobilisation around the global Social Protection Floor initiative in Niger is providing just such an impetus—as noted in Hodges and Mededji (2016b).