

FOOD CRISIS, GENDER, AND RESILIENCE IN THE SAHEL

Lessons from the 2012 crisis in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger



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This report deals with the issues, or rather, with the responses to the 2012 food crisis in the Sahel, from a gender perspective. The field research, which was conducted in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, builds on past work and reflects the statements made by local people.

Oxfam Research Reports are written to share research results, to contribute to public debate and to invite feedback on development and humanitarian policy and practice. They do not necessarily reflect Oxfam policy positions. The views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of Oxfam.



This research report is dedicated to the memory of Aboubacar Traoré (12 May 1971–26 June 2013), programme performance and accountability manager for Oxfam Mali. Aboubacar passed away in June 2013, shortly after organizing the fieldwork for this study in the Kayes region. He was a true pillar for the research team and is fondly remembered by his colleagues.

CONTENTS

Abbreviations and acronyms	4
Executive Summary	5
1 Introduction	7
2 Analysis of farmers' perceptions of the crises	13
3 Energy and limited involvement, a mixed picture for women	25
4 Emergency responses from a gender standpoint.....	32
5 Conclusions and recommendations	40
Bibliography	45
Notes	47
Annex: Data collection tools	48
Acknowledgements	56

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
ANR	Assisted Natural Regeneration
ATAD	<i>Alliance Technique d'Assistance au Développement</i> (Technical alliance for development assistance)
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
IGAs	Income-generating activities
ILAF	<i>Initiative Locale d'Action par la Femme</i> (Local women's action initiative)
Karkara	A national NGO (Niger)
MMD	A village savings and loan system based on tontines
NGO	Non-government organization
SPR	Soil protection and restoration
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association
WSC	Water and soil conservation
WFP	World Food Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The social structure of Sahelian communities has changed considerably over the years. This change is chiefly manifested in the redefinition of roles and responsibilities within households. The 2012 food crisis has revealed that women have taken on increasing responsibilities from a number of standpoints. Their contribution to maintaining their households in times of crisis is tacitly expected, even though this increased responsibility within the household is not always reflected in increased power within the community. In the eyes of the community, women remain under the guardianship of their husbands or, if they are not married, that of their brothers or their eldest sons. The social perception of the role and place of women in these communities has influenced general attitudes regarding access to factors of production. Indeed, because they have only a subsidiary role in relation to household responsibilities and are relegated to the sidelines when it comes to community-based management in general, women continue to have limited access to factors of production. This should limit their ability to increase the support they provide for their households in times of crisis. However, it appears many are able to make a substantial contribution to household members' survival through low-return opportunities that are safe and cautious.

Women's participation has low social visibility, and this has repercussions on social development strategies implemented to support or assist vulnerable households. When such efforts are directed toward the head of the household, female heads of households appear to be a significant focus of this attention, as a result of their perceived level of vulnerability. However, within households, women who are 'responsible for their households', despite being under the influence and supposed protection of a spouse, lack visibility, and it is still difficult to gain direct access to this category of women.

In most of the zones targeted by our survey, women ensured household resilience by regularly taking responsibility during the hungry season. They contribute to familial nutrition in conjunction with the contribution of production by the family or the man, and sometimes assume responsibility for their own production or, when this is not possible, with revenue from small, daily income-generating activities (IGAs). Resilience is inconceivable without rural women.

Households in which women have greater participation in decision making regarding food are more resilient. Indeed, women's involvement in supplying cereals and processing food helps enable food diversification and preparation of dishes that are better suited to the budgets of rural households.

Women's ability to negotiate or influence decision making within their households enhances household food security, in particular through:

- diversification of food stocks with the introduction of numerous foods that are not necessarily produced locally;
- longer-term availability of food stocks, through frugal management of the millet produced (and choice of methods of preparation);
- better organization and planning of supplies, since joint decisions and joint financing of spending are unusual.

Participation or consultation around the management of food security is more difficult to achieve in polygamous households, where the tendency of consumption sub-units to emerge around the different wives constitutes a daily threat to family cohesion. This tendency is even stronger when the relationships between wives are strained and the head of the household is away for extended periods of time, particularly periods longer than the lifetime of the food stock set up for his wives prior to his departure.

The men and women surveyed recognized that monogamous households with a limited number of children were more resilient and better equipped to seize new opportunities in terms of mobility and education. The more children the women have, the more they are in charge and the more vulnerable they become within their households. In this regard, the analysis shows that women's family

responsibilities are increasing, even when they are not household heads, nor even recognized as having responsibility for their households. The place and role of women in Sahelian communities has evolved over years of food insecurity, gradually leading to their exclusion from access to natural resources. Despite of this, and in response to the growing need to generate useful resources to sustain their households in times of crisis, women continue their involvement in agricultural and pastoral production, while simultaneously becoming experts in diversification of IGAs.

Most women involved in IGAs ensure a relative well-being for their households, even in times of crisis, and *ipso facto* earn greater consideration within their households and communities. Despite their limited resources, these women become important actors in household food security and prove to be skilled managers of endemic shortages.

The perception of the role of women in Sahelian society is evolving, with the concept of an ideal woman as one who has a greater involvement in taking care of household needs.

'The ideal woman is an energetic woman who carries out economic activities and has financial income and property' (Hausa Women Focus Group Banibangou, Niger).

The image of the woman who expects her husband to provide for everything seems to be increasingly a thing of the past. A clear understanding of the dynamics underlying the management of family assets can help to develop more appropriate support for household resilience.

Targeting the consumption's sub-units, or more specifically the heads of households or responsible persons of their households, would therefore be a more appropriate approach for support in cases of food crises, since it would enable efforts to be directly targeted to improve the organization and consumption of food resources. By taking account of household realities, it should be possible to reach all of the most vulnerable family units.

In 2012, food aid was delivered to the rural communities surveyed in a timely manner, in relatively sufficient quantities, and in a variety of forms.

Several organizations came to the assistance of vulnerable households, and each one developed approaches and tools to ensure that they effectively reached those households most in need. Direct food aid was cited by the people interviewed as being the most effective form of aid in a food crisis. Methods that involved intermediaries between the organizations and beneficiaries were deemed less effective, due to risks of speculation in light of the beneficiaries' pressing need. Some of those methods, such as coupons to be exchanged for goods with local merchants, were considered to be less effective for beneficiaries, even though it was recognized that they made a positive contribution to strengthening the local economy. These methods need to be appropriately monitored to ensure that the beneficiaries receive the goods without having to pay an additional cost for the transaction.

A good combination of local strategies and humanitarian aid has allowed directly and indirectly targeted households to survive through the protracted crisis. Other development actions have also helped to build more sustainable strategies within households, thereby reinforcing their resilience.

1 INTRODUCTION

For many years, West Africa, and particularly the Sahel region, has experienced chronic food insecurity aggravated by increasingly frequent food crises, which most often occur following poor harvests, chiefly caused by droughts.

Crops are essentially rain-fed, and are subject to recurrent risks of drought or flooding in an environment where irrigation and agricultural land management remain underdeveloped. Production in pastoral communities also suffers when watering holes dry up and pastures shrink. In 2012, the Sahel experienced its fourth food crisis in the space of eight years, after a 26 per cent drop in cereal production since 2010.

The United Nations estimated that 18.7 million people in the Sahel region of West Africa were affected by the 2012 food and nutritional crisis caused by drought, scarce rainfall, scanty harvests, spiralling staple food prices, and displaced populations. The countries most seriously affected by the Sahel crisis of 2012 were Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, and, to a lesser extent, Senegal, Gambia, and northern Cameroon.

The most seriously affected populations were women, small-scale herders, poor households with limited access to means of production, and households that habitually depended on seasonal emigration, as well as communities in areas marked by insecurity.

In 2012, the humanitarian situation in the region was aggravated by the conflict in northern Mali, which 'caused significant population movements both within Mali and towards neighbouring countries such as Mauritania, Burkina Faso and Niger. These countries were already affected by the food crisis, which was aggravated by the influx of refugees in certain areas' (Oxfam 2012a). Humanitarian access to people in need was limited and delivery was difficult. 'In this fragile context, the impact of climate shocks is increasingly felt and the population's capacity for resilience is affected. The communities are still struggling to recover from the previous crisis, but their capacities are increasingly weakened. For instance, it takes three to five years for a family to make up for lost cattle' (Oxfam 2012b).

The recurring crises in the Sahel have raised numerous questions within the humanitarian and development organization community, concerned with seeking new forms of support for local communities in order to break the cycle of hunger. Thus, in order to build community resilience, Oxfam has focused efforts in consideration and exploration of the gendered aspects of the management of food insecurity.

1.1 Objectives: a better grasp of the gender dimension for appropriate resilience building

A preliminary documentary review, conducted in the summer of 2012, revealed that the availability of data disaggregated by gender and age was very uneven, from early warning documents (autumn 2011) to humanitarian response documents presenting the communities targeted by the various organizations mobilized by the Sahel crisis in 2012. This study was useful in that it re-emphasized the importance of disaggregated data (broken down by gender, age, ethnic background, or any other variable that is relevant in the social context) in order to assess the differentiated impacts and effects of food and nutrition vulnerability, with a view to better targeting emergency responses.

Furthermore, the preliminary study confirmed the need for qualitative analysis based on the Sahel crisis of 2012 that could lead to more structured reflection by the different stakeholders on the gender dimension of the food crisis.

The present research report was designed to analyse the links between food crisis vulnerability and existing inequalities in men's and women's access to, management, and ownership of tangible

resources (such as land, labour, and capital) or intangible resources (decision making, leadership positions, time, social networks, status, etc.) within their households and communities.

Based on specific case studies and qualitative data collection in selected areas in three countries (Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger), the aim of our research is to highlight both short-term and long-term interventions that deal with gender-based vulnerabilities and reinforce girls' and women's resilience, particularly through improved access to resources, decision-making bodies, and leadership. Accordingly, this paper deals with power relationships within families and communities, but also in the implementation of humanitarian programmes; it also addresses the methods whereby such programmes are assessed and developed, as well as needs evaluation. Finally, it analyses how those parameters contribute, or otherwise, to understandings of women's issues and women's rights.

Oxfam hopes that this research will provide its humanitarian teams and programmes, but also all of the organizations that are involved in these recurring crises, with tools to improve their short-term intervention tools and long-term response approaches, in both programmes and advocacy work. Oxfam also hopes that this research will serve as a reference for regional activities focusing on reinforcing resilience, preventing crises, and reducing risks of disaster, and thereby make gender-sensitive approaches possible in programmes, campaigns, and humanitarian activities.

1.2 Conceptual framework guiding the research and definitions

To establish a framework for this sort of research, the key concepts must be defined in order to facilitate a better understanding of the scope of and issues involved in gender, food security, food crises, vulnerability, and resilience.

The Sahelian environment is characterized by a structural food production deficit that reinforces the risk of **food crisis** as a result of several, often cumulative, factors, such as:

- climatic events in arid or semi-arid zones;
- the imbalance between needs and resources, heightened by – or leading to – soil deterioration;
- the lack of crop diversification, such that it is impossible to deal with a collapse in cash crop prices, cattle diseases, or crop pests; and
- armed conflicts and tensions linked to resource control.

In recent decades, food availability linked to production has not always been the most important **food security** factor in the Sahel. In addition to crises of 'availability' due to drought, crises linked to affordability have affected millions of poor people without sufficient resources to feed themselves. The food crisis of 2008, primarily caused by soaring international food prices, exemplifies this phenomenon. The market increasingly plays a key role in the food supplies of thousands of households. Thus, food crises due to decreased production are only the most visible manifestation of chronic food insecurity in West Africa. Increased agricultural production does not necessarily mean reduced household vulnerability and food insecurity, as explained by the Sahel Working Group (2011).

In the Sahel, the severity of food insecurity is exacerbated by the population's significant **vulnerability** and poverty, two concepts which are strongly correlated and often used in conjunction with each other in development thinking. Oxfam's definition of vulnerability refers to characteristics intrinsic to a community or a system, or to particular circumstances affecting them that make them likely to suffer real damage from a risk. The nature of vulnerability may be economic, physical, cultural, social, institutional, political, or environmental. The inability of communities and households to develop effective survival strategies to deal with the risks they are exposed to plunges them into poverty. It is then said that the communities lack the **resilience** to cope with various shocks, which are often numerous and complex. Oxfam defines resilience as the ability of women, men, and children to realise their rights and improve their well-being despite shocks, stresses, and uncertainty. The very low resilience of Sahelian communities exacerbates food insecurity. Indeed, poor and non-resilient

households face a constant risk of being exploited in daily survival jobs, which do not allow them secure their living conditions.

In the Sahelian context, vulnerability to food insecurity and food crises have a significant **gender** dimension, because women are among the most vulnerable groups, owing to their limited social and economic power. Their limited access to means of production such as land, credit, and technology, and their low level of participation in decision making, effectively make them more vulnerable, reducing their ability to show resilience to external shocks. In this regard, it should be recalled that women represent only 8 per cent of landowners and access only 10 per cent of the credit available in West Africa, although they provide at least 50 per cent of agricultural labour.¹ Gender inequalities in West Africa heighten women’s vulnerability, which needs to be described in greater depth in order to better mainstream their needs in humanitarian and development programmes.

Many organizations, including a certain number of international organizations, report on the strategies implemented by women with consideration to their social status and assess their economic situations in terms of resources and potential to cope with food insecurity as mothers, spouses, etc.²

To overcome challenges to achieving food security, gender imbalances that exist in the communities must be analysed with respect to resources, capacity for action, and outcomes, in order to build resilience, which will in turn improve food security.

How do household members deal with food crises and, beyond that, how do women and men in rural households in these countries maintain or ensure food security? This research focuses on a recognition of the contribution of women to establishing food security. What roles and responsibilities does society attribute to women in relation to the provision of food? What issues are at stake? Could humanitarian aid responses be improved by a more critical analysis of the roles and responsibilities attributed to women and by greater recognition of women’s rights to access the programmes designed to enhance food security for individuals, households, and communities?

1.3 Research hypotheses and themes

To attempt to respond to this research question, three hypotheses were developed by the team, based on three specific research objectives defined in the terms of reference. The three hypotheses were tested during the survey work in the field (Table 1).

Table 1: Research objectives, hypotheses and expected results

Research objectives (as per the terms of reference)	Hypotheses	Expected research outputs
Specific objective 1: Record and analyse gender-linked vulnerability	Hypothesis 1: In the face of social change, women are increasingly responsible for supplying their households with food. At the same time, they paradoxically have less access to factors of production (such as land, agricultural inputs, livestock, etc.).	<p>H11. Typology of family units (by level of vulnerability)</p> <p>H12. Trends in household food security management</p> <p>H13. Trends in access to factors of production</p>
Specific objective 2: Understand how gender-specific norms and roles interact with other factors to increase vulnerability to food insecurity in men and women of all ages.	Hypothesis 2: Vulnerability to food insecurity is not only linked to natural or physical factors, but also depends on gender-differentiated relations within households (pastoral/sedentary, monogamous/polygamous, or Muslim/Christian/animist), in terms of greater women’s participation in decision making linked to food security (food production, management, etc.).	<p>H21. The factors determining decision making in farm management</p> <p>H22. The bias in the logic of subsistence: the growing trend of non-food uses for produce (grain drain). New forms of such uses</p> <p>H23. Successful female role models in terms of participation in decision making</p>

<p>Specific objective 3: Identify short-term and long-term responses that could help reduce gender-based vulnerability and enhance resilience (absorption/adaptation/transformation) of women and girls, through better access to resources, decision-making bodies, and leadership.</p> <p>What interventions reinforce each of these dimensions?</p>	<p>Hypothesis 3: Humanitarian responses are increasingly better adapted to household social realities; in 2012, they reached both sexes equitably across the different ethnic groups in the three countries studied.</p>	<p>H31. Inventories and types of emergency responses</p> <p>H32. Inventory and types of responses to food insecurity. How are they anchored in families?</p> <p>H33. Economically successful women role models (women heads of households and women who are not heads of households) in terms of accumulation and resilience</p>
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1.4 Methodology

In accordance with the terms of reference, the research methodology was structured around three phases:

1. A theoretical and practical documentary review and secondary data collection;
2. Primary data collection, based on quantitative and qualitative research methodologies adapted to gender studies (focus groups, life stories, testimonials) in target areas selected in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, with cross-cutting themes on gender, ethnicity, cultural factors, and other variables that are relevant to the analysis;
3. A cross-cutting analysis of the information and data collected in all three countries, complemented by experiences gathered from emergency response actors, particularly testimonials and stories from beneficiaries, humanitarian staff, and other actors and stakeholders.

1.4.1 Selecting target areas for case studies in all three countries

The sites were chosen in collaboration with Oxfam teams in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. The target communities were chosen, on the one hand, because they were affected by the 2012 food crisis and received humanitarian aid and, on the other hand, because they had hosted food security projects for the past few years. These two criteria allowed the research team to concretely address all the issues pertaining to the 2012 crisis, particularly its impacts, and also to explore avenues of resilience based on actual community experiences. Furthermore, the sites were selected to enable participation by sedentary farming communities as well as nomadic herders (Table 2).

Table 2: Communities chosen by country

Countries	Communities studied (ethnic groups)
<i>Niger</i>	Commune of Banibangou, with four communities: Banibangou Zarma Banibangou Hausa Wadabangou (Fula) Baga (Tuareg)
<i>Burkina Faso</i>	Commune of Kaya, with five communities: Tiffou Dahisma Sogod Boulsin Pana
<i>Mali</i>	Commune of Kayes, with four communities: Koussane (Fula) Bangassi (Sarakole)

1.4.2 Methodological approaches used to collect data in the field

The methodological approach adopted for all three missions (Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger) comprised the following steps:

Analysis of the existing documentation. The analysis was carried out before the mission began, and focused on a body of basic documentation that helped to establish a general understanding of the context.

Training for all team members. Three days of training were provided for all team members (researchers and research assistants, according to their particular job specifications) on the tools to ensure a common, shared understanding of the objectives and expectations of the research project, its guides and questionnaires.

Data collection extended to all stakeholders: men, women, customary authorities, administrative authorities, various actors in food security, structured groups, etc.

A mixed approach to data collection was adopted, including the use of guides and questionnaires, to respectively ensure qualitative and quantitative data collection. To optimize data collection, the team decided that its members would specialize in one tool at a time; this approach meant that the data collected by the different members of the team needed to be pooled.

A series of feedback meetings were held at various levels on the findings, conclusions, and recommendations:

- daily, in the field, between team members;
- at the end of data collection on each site two feedback meetings were held with women and another with men to validate both the data collected and certain analyses;
- at the end of data collection a one-day feedback and analysis session was held to prepare for the feedback workshop;
- at the country level, a day of feedback and further exploration was organized with a group of key actors and resource persons.

The Oxfam teams in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger provided logistical support for the organization of field missions, working sessions with targeted actors (community-based groups, partner organizations, and other resource persons), data entry, and end-of-mission feedback. Feedback on case studies enabled the country syntheses to be improved and the research to be enriched by providing additional information and perspectives on important points.

1.4.3 Selecting respondents

Individuals were chosen within the target communities according to their ability to provide information on the issues at stake; this fundamental concern necessitated the production of questionnaires and guides tailored to each group of actors. Group dynamics were a decisive factor in selection; the most dynamic structured groups were chosen for interviews. Individuals, men, women, and youth from the communities, were selected according to their availability.

The groups included:

- commune and community authorities;
- structured or non-structured groups of women (older women, for instance);
- young women and girls;
- structured groups of young men;

- young men and boys;
- individuals (farmers, herders, etc.);
- actors or active players in charge of responses (humanitarian and development agency staff, UN).

1.4.4 Collection tools

The data collection tools are shown in the Annex. They include the following documents:

- individual questionnaires for men and women. They were conducted with 20 individuals per day; 40 per community and 160 per country;
- a household questionnaire, completed for 10 households per day, or 80 questionnaires in total per country;
- a qualitative interview guide for four groups of women and four groups of men, or eight groups per community and 32 groups per country;
- a qualitative interview guide centring on crises and responses: four per community or 16 per country;
- an interview guide for the authorities and actors in the response, to gain a better understanding of what is being done in terms of humanitarian aid in the study area.

1.5 Research constraints and limitations

The time devoted to research was limited, which precluded the investigation of certain questions or subjects at any great depth. However, corrections made by various Oxfam offices made it possible to improve the quality of the information reported here.

The administration of the questionnaires was beset with difficulties as a result of the large number of questions: the quantitative and qualitative interviews with women respectively took 70 and 180 minutes to conduct; however, the majority of our respondents did agree to the interviews and participated fully, thanks to the explanations provided ahead of time by the assistant.

In light of the themes addressed during the discussions, which were directly linked with crises and resilience, certain people who were not surveyed expressed frustration that they were not selected: 'Only future beneficiaries of humanitarian aid are targeted for interviews and their names are already written down'. Consequently, the interviews were repeatedly interrupted by those additional community members who insisted that we add their names to the list.

As a result of the variety of profiles of the consultants used for the country studies, the collection guidelines were not adhered to uniformly in accordance with the analytical approach. Thus, some of the data was not reported in all countries, and Niger gave a definite impression that it had more information. Furthermore, the target zones in Burkina Faso and Mali also included ethnic and religious diversity (i.e. Christians in Burkina Faso) that was not subjected to a comparative qualitative analysis. The studies in Burkina Faso and Mali also reported other types of information that were no less important. Readers should not expect to see a balance in the qualitative thematic data reported across all countries.

The work was conducted over too long a period, due to the multiple steps involved in the study, the apparent discontinuity of the work, and the unavailability of certain consultants at crucial times (drafting of the scoping report, drafting of the synthesis, drafting of the final report). The research would have been of better quality and more efficiently carried out if all the consultants had worked together, over a shorter period of time, corresponding to the actual number of working days allocated.

2 ANALYSIS OF FARMERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE CRISES

Until the year 2000, the crises affecting the study zone were inventoried by groups of men and women using a fairly simple method. Since then, the high frequency of such crises has made their identification and description more complex; certain groups of local actors have even suggested highlighting and describing good years, which were actually in the minority over the period studied.

Perceptions vary according to ethnic groups and gender, which are also identified through socio-professional activities, mainly dominated by agriculture and animal husbandry.

Nomadic herders perceive and describe three sorts of crises: (i) crises affecting humans, when food is lacking; (ii) crises affecting cattle, when there are no pastures; and (iii) crises affecting humans and livestock, which combine the characteristics of both types of crises and create greater hardship for the communities.

Women measure the severity of a crisis according to its implications for migration: 'That year, the men left very early before the harvest, or all the men left'.

Box 1: Statement from Focus Group with Fula men, Niger

It is a good year when, as soon as the rainy season begins, the weather office forecasts an even distribution of rain from Nguigmi to Tillabéry.

However, if it only rains in Niamey and Maradi, with sprinkles here and there, we prepare our young men to leave the country; and those of us who stay sow millet just so we won't sit idle, with nothing to do.

Generally speaking, everyone perceived the consecutive droughts as the sign of a decisive change that would not be reversed, but was getting worse. The communities surveyed recognized two categories of drought according to their frequency. In addition to cyclical droughts (approximately every 10 years) which *hit hard*, other more localized crises were repeated over a shorter term of two to three years, so that it was easier to count good years than bad (see Table 3).

In the view of the population, the reasons for these crises or shortages were linked:

- to poor distribution of rainfall over space and time, leading to rainfall deficits in certain places and floods in others;
- to attacks by crop pests (borers, locusts, etc.) which devastate whole fields, and whose appearance is linked to insufficient or interrupted rainfall; these attacks spread very quickly;
- to certain disasters such as infestations of 'processionary caterpillars' which kill livestock when they browse on leaves.

The causes of each crisis are unique, but they all share the same consequences for households, which are left unable to produce or obtain sufficient food.

The people surveyed attributed the succession of crises to God's will. They also all agreed that, over time, they had learned survival strategies that allowed them to mitigate the impact of the shocks. Although, on the one hand, they recognized a divine hand at work in the crises, they were also aware of their own vital responsibility to identify and implement the means to mitigate their effects. As a woman from Diguadian, Mali, so aptly summed it up: 'as long as your time has not come, you will not die; but in times of illness, you are responsible for finding your own medicine to ease your pain.'

The arrival of Malian refugees in Banibangou, Niger, seems to have been handled well. It was not cited as a factor that aggravated the crisis, but rather as a factor that redirected part of the food aid intended for the local population. Due to its timely delivery, food aid helped to ensure adequate support for the population, which did not suffer from food insecurity. This considerably facilitated the acceptance of the refugees. Their arrival was not perceived as a burden on the community or as competition for aid, but rather as an opportunity that could generate additional food aid.

Table 3: Description of the crises that took place from 2001 to 2012

<p><i>The crisis of 2001 in Niger</i></p>	<p>In Niger, this was a year of abundant rainfall. The rain led to expectations of good harvests, but the crops were ravaged by locusts. No losses of livestock or spectacular population movements were recorded. The crisis, known as '<i>Dowa guirey</i>' – meaning the year of the locusts – was relatively localized.</p>
<p><i>The crisis of 2005 in Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali</i></p>	<p>In Niger, this crisis was characterized by a serious rainfall deficit, no harvests, loss of livestock, and the arrival of swarms of desert locusts; livestock was sold at very low prices in the crisis zone: 1500 CFA francs for sheep and goats, and 35,000 CFA francs for bovines and camelids. This crisis was called '<i>Kailou Badjeyzé sorizékoy</i>', or Kailou, son of Bagué, who carries a whip... and runs after people. During the year, people resorted to using millet from termite mounds, and huge numbers of young people migrated towards major cities. Some also called it '<i>Ni bon ka tibi</i>', which means 'fend for yourself'. Since then, according to both men and women, women's contribution to food security has become more significant and more permanent.</p> <p>In 2005, Burkina Faso suffered the consequences of the locust invasion that destroyed the harvests in 2004. This disaster caused a price hike in basic foodstuffs, particularly during the hungry seasons of 2005. Millet, maize, and sorghum from other regions and countries could be found in the markets, but were unaffordable since people lacked cash to pay for them. People who owned livestock sold it to purchase small amounts of food, whereas, as one Fula remarked, it used to be that you could feed your whole family by selling one ox, without even farming. The crisis of 2005 was also perceived as a year of diet change in rural areas in the Centre-Nord Region. Because rice was cheaper than millet (the traditional staple), its consumption spread. The population refers to this period as '<i>Mouignan Youmd Kom</i>' (we only had rice to eat).</p> <p>In Mali, that same year, widespread locust invasion also caused considerable damage to crops. The government carried out a spraying programme, but the locusts seemed to be particularly numerous and resistant. Almost all the fields were infested, whether or not the crops were ripe. Households were obliged to cut their millet, sorghum, and maize when the ears were just forming. Since the crops had not ripened yet, the harvests were poor. The amounts harvested were not enough to feed everyone, the taste was unpleasant because the cereals were not ripe, and storage was impossible due to the poor quality of the harvest.</p>
<p><i>The crisis of 2008 in Burkina Faso and Mali</i></p>	<p>In Burkina Faso, in addition to the ecological damage sustained, the crisis of 2008 was marked by a household food shortage so serious that women, girls, and children went into the bush to gather wild plants such as <i>sögdö</i>, which was widely cited in all of the villages. However, in comparison to previous crises, according to the communities surveyed, cattle was available at good prices at the time and food staples (maize, rice, and oil) were sold at social prices. Despite mitigation efforts, the crisis of 2008 was perceived as severe by the communities, mainly due to the repeated weakening of the agricultural and pastoral production systems, and the high frequency of natural disasters.</p> <p>In Mali, households were unable to produce enough food due to the poor distribution of rainfalls the previous year. Furthermore, owing to the drought of 2005, families had consumed much of the cereals they had kept in storage which were initially intended for sowing. These factors considerably weakened production capacity in 2008. Furthermore, a food price hike occurred during the same period as a result of years of drought in the major rice- and wheat-growing countries. Because it was impossible to produce enough food and people lacked cash to purchase agricultural produce sold at higher and higher prices, riots broke out to demand government-imposed price cuts, in vain.</p>
<p><i>2007, 2008, and 2009 in Burkina Faso</i></p>	<p>In 2009, the study zone experienced abundant rainfall that brought new hope. Unfortunately, the rains intensified, and eventually flooded low-lying land and washed out the soil of the dunes, causing huge agricultural production losses. Crops drowned and perished, while men and women who had invested all their time and energy in their little plots of land in hopes that they could feed their families well that year could only stand by helplessly and watch. The crisis of 2009 was caused by repeated floods since 2007 and 2008, and thus a succession of very poor agricultural yields. As the price of foodstuffs rose considerably, poor farmers once again resolved to sell everything they could to generate income and scrape together enough money to feed themselves.</p>

<p><i>The 2009 crisis in Niger</i></p>	<p>This crisis was marked by a rainfall deficit accompanied by loss of livestock: 'that year, even the camels died of thirst'. The drought was called Karkara, after the name of the NGO whose targeted response, which, according to the population, was successful, consisted of buying tired livestock and redistributing their dried meat free of charge. The activity, known as livestock destocking, allowed the owners of the animals to receive money to purchase food.</p>
<p><i>2010 and 2011 in Mali</i></p>	<p>These were very bad years due to erratic rainfall. In addition to their irregularity, the rains were insufficient, leading to a serious drought. At harvest time, producers only obtained the equivalent of one-third of the yield they would have in a normal year (which was already considered a 50% shortfall).</p> <p>The food shortage piled up and grew in 2012, and several aid organizations went to work to prevent a famine and certain deaths.</p>
<p><i>The crisis of 2012 in Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso</i></p>	<p>In Niger, this year of food crisis was marked by a failed harvest but abundant pastures. The rains got off to a good start but stopped suddenly, following which farmers suffered from an invasion of desert locusts. This crisis was named '<i>taimako</i>' which means 'help'; in this case, food aid. It was a year in which households were quite effectively supported by food aid.</p> <p>In Burkina Faso, as in Niger, the 2012 crisis was perceived as an unprecedented ecological disaster, at a time when households were already weakened by a series of global economic and social shocks. As the price of cereals was spiralling, the same survival practices were used to cope with the situation, namely, gathering of wild food, sale of livestock for those who still had some left, and even gold panning by women in Burkina, which used to be considered strictly men's work. Governments and NGOs provided various forms of support, including selling cereals at reduced prices, cash for work, food distribution, etc.</p> <p>In Mali, the great food crisis of 2012 was a direct consequence of the succession of years of drought that took place over the decade. In 2012, the granaries were already empty. Due to the significant production deficit of the previous two years, families could no longer hold out for more than two months in a row. Several development organizations as well as the government set to work to help households, notably by distributing food or transferring money, conditionally or not. The population also tried to implement several survival strategies to deal with the impact of this widespread crisis.</p>

2.1 Socio-economic dynamics generated by the crises and food security management

Hypothesis 1

In the face of social change, women are increasingly responsible for supplying households with food, whereas, paradoxically, they have less access to factors of production (such as land, agricultural inputs, livestock, etc.).

To better grasp the context of food security and food crisis management, as well as practices adopted in response to local crises, households must be analysed as family units.

Ultimately, external humanitarian aid responses are always conducted on the household scale to reach individuals affected by hunger. This anchoring at household level, often based on vulnerability, reflects the fact that households are viewed as the only units of consumption.

2.2 Family units: from the extended family to the nuclear household

Up until the 1980s, the extended family constituted the dominant model of family units. It was defined as a set of several households sharing a production, housing and consumption unit in the agricultural production system.

The breakdown of the extended family, born of the need to pool risks, began with the most vulnerable farms, in which the authority of the head of the family or the head of the farm was challenged due to a recognized inability to fulfil his or her duties to the family members. For their part, the family members continued to provide the same amount of farm work and also provided migrant labour to guarantee a substantial income for the family. This culminated in an initial imbalance in which the people who ensured their family's survival through non-agricultural contributions had no decision making power over social and economic matters that concerned them directly. The breakdown of the extended family gave rise to the empowerment of member households and the emergence of a multitude of nuclear families comprising a father, a mother and their children (sometimes including adopted children) as well as fractioning of farmlands.

From these extended families emerged smaller family units or households, which are more viable due to their reduced economic burden and social empowerment which promotes the emergence of individual initiative.³

The household is defined as 'a domestic unit of people who live together most of the time, with collective responsibilities in the areas of production, housing, consumption and use of revenue'.⁴ This definition emphasizes the sharing of responsibilities between family members; from this, we can extrapolate that responsibilities for production and consumption of food in particular are shared, as are the responsibilities to develop complementary food security strategies. In the communities studied, the definition of the household is always specified, which foregrounds the importance of family relationships and the recognition of a single household head, such as the head of the farm, even though this figure may not have the same prerogatives or the same ability to bear the burdens of their households in different households.

2.3 Household characteristics

The different types of households that emerged from the extended families we identified in the communities during our research can be categorized according to their structure:

- **monogamous households**, which are increasingly common, composed of a couple (a husband and only one wife) with or without children;
- **polygamous households**, which are growing in number in the Muslim communities of Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso, in sedentary and sedentarized nomad milieus;
- **large, extended families, a relic of the traditional system**, which include the households of the sons of the family, constituting a consumption and housing unit, with each household independent in terms of agricultural production;
- **female-headed households**, ran by older women, who have generally reached menopause (widows, divorcées) and live with their children. Younger widowed or divorced women generally return to live with their parents.

No households led by male widowers alone were encountered in the field, probably because it is easier for men to remarry than women. Furthermore, in the societies that were visited, unmarried men were perceived as having a lower social rank than married men, incentivizing them to remarry quickly in the event of a divorce or the death of their spouse. There were also no households headed by orphans, as orphaned children are taken in by host families, generally those of brothers or sisters of their late parents.

2.3.1 Monogamous and polygamous households: dimensions of vulnerability

Monogamous households still make up the majority of households in Mali (48.6%), Burkina Faso (41.0%), and Niger (52.8%). The high number of monogamous couples in Niger is due to the significant presence of Tuaregs in the sample (19%), who are just starting to practice polygamy, and in Burkina, due to the presence of Christians in the sample (12%).

The women and men we met with in the focus groups confirmed that monogamous households were the least vulnerable households due to the smaller number of members comprising them and their ability to move more easily to seek out new opportunities.

Polygamous households in Mali (23%) and Niger (22.4%) represented less than one-quarter of the households surveyed, whereas they made up more than half (58%) of all households in Burkina Faso. The sites visited were Muslim in majority. With a maximum number of four wives per household, the practice of polygamy has long been considered beneficial and seen as a means of withstanding economic shocks, notably because it affords a greater supply of agricultural labour in an extensive production system.

Significantly, polygamy was called into question by the men's and women's focus groups, which identified that the current fractioning and depletion of farmland was carried out as a result of inheritance practices associated with polygamous communities. Indeed, while the socio-economic practice is designed for agriculture, the latter 'no longer keeps food on the table in the Sahel region'. Yet in reality, polygamy is a growing trend, although the total number of wives is decreasing:

- In Burkina Faso, 39 per cent of the men surveyed were polygamous with two wives, 11.4 per cent were polygamous with three wives and 7.6 per cent polygamous with four wives;
- In Niger, where the Fula are concerned, although the majority of households were polygamous, they included two wives or three at most;
- In Mali, 23 per cent of the men surveyed were polygamous, with two to three wives in most cases.

Paradoxically, the phenomenon is spreading in rural areas, particularly among young people. Vulnerable men marry several women 'because they have not been successful, and so that the Almighty may grant them His grace by providing for their needs, through the blessing of the new wife or one of her children' (Banibangou Niger Focus Group). In this case, polygamy retains a strategic value aimed at increasing the opportunities and survival resources of the household.

The qualitative data, however, proved the contrary, and focus group participants of both sexes declared that monogamous households were more resilient than polygamous households. The low number of dependents and the goodwill prevailing among members of smaller households effectively facilitate exchanges and decision making, compared with larger polygamous households or larger family farms (which can reach 20 to 25 people). However, this awareness has yet to result in a change of behaviour in the rural population.

Although, in the past, large farms were a powerful factor of development for large families, notably due to the free agricultural labour they provide, the emergence of smaller households is perceived as beneficial under current conditions. The average number of people per household is 11.64 in households headed by men and 10.39 in households headed by women in Burkina Faso; in Niger, there is an average of 14.8 people in polygamous households and 8.95 people in monogamous households. This denotes that the households originating from the original large families grow quickly as a result of polygamy, despite the fact that there are no large farms able to employ a large family workforce. The economic and social function of polygamy faces real issues and is no longer able to adapt to the current ecological context and production systems, despite the trend towards a lower number of wives in polygamous households.

Apparently, households have yet to adhere to the idea of controlling their fertility, as the number of children they want continues to grow. Demographic growth in Niger increases regularly, as observed during the last three population censuses:

- 1988: 3.1 per thousand
- 2001: 3.3 per thousand
- 2012: 3.9 per thousand (preliminary results of the 2012 general population census)

In Mali, the population grew from 10,600,000 inhabitants in 2000 to 15,494,470 inhabitants in 2012.⁵ Overall, a trend towards larger households and consumption sub-units was observed.

In polygamous households, the burden of providing for the family is increasingly shared with the wives. The head of the household alone can no longer support all of the members of the household. Women's increased participation has implications for the management of polygamous families, which behave more like family sub-units revolving around each wife; because aid between wives may not be continuous, each wife develops her own strategies to complement her husband's contribution.

Monogamous households react better than polygamous ones to the norms governing the couple in terms of collaboration, consultation, exchanges, and mutual aid. Thus, monogamous households and smaller family units are recognized by all as being more resilient, as they are able to ensure their food security over the longer term. They cope better with crises, through small-scale production and better, more concerted organization.

2.3.2 Households living in large families: current models or relics of the past?

The transformation of the land tenure system, reflected in the dividing up of land rather than the sharing of rights of access among beneficiaries, has precipitated the break-up of large families, bringing about the end of the production and consumption unit in Niger.

Certain Zarma households that farm separately in Banibangou, Niger, still consume and live as a unit.

Large families still exist formally, and most of them but only on record books, especially in Fula and Tuareg communities whose way of life is dependent on mobility. Young people, even when they are married, are still recorded in their father's family record book (*livret de famille*), as a consequence of their practice of transhumance with the family herd, as are sedentary youths, due to their frequent seasonal migrations. The record book is formal proof of their existence as family members and citizens who contribute to the development of their community by paying taxes.

The importance of the family record book resides in the fact that it certifies people's belonging to a group and provides a right of access to all public services and, naturally, food aid. Several heads of families agree to pay taxes on behalf of their absent children because, in return, they also receive rather substantial shares of the humanitarian aid intended for their children, thereby amply compensating for the parents' fiscal sacrifice.

This type of family unit no longer corresponds to a tangible social reality in Niger. Large family households, which are found in Mali and Burkina Faso, and more rarely in Niger, organize consumption through equitable food contributions. They live in a system of solidarity in which smaller households contribute more. Similarly, food aid is managed collectively and entirely consumed together.

2.3.3 Women household heads: a low-visibility reality

Households headed by women were socially recognized by all as particularly vulnerable due to their limited resources. Women's recognition as household heads is socially accepted when they are aged widows or divorcées who are old enough to be able to live alone with their children, who, in general, are adult. The vulnerability of widows is due to the division or rather excessive fractioning of the inheritance among the heirs (the children, but also the father and mother of the late husband, co-wives, etc.), and their shares are not equal. The widow receives very small shares of the estate: half a share of the livestock and rarely any farmland or houses, which will not provide her with a living, but just barely enable her to survive.

Box 2: Statement from Women's focus group in Banibangou Hausa, Niger

The presence of a man in a household, however, is always perceived as a sign of hope, even if his ability to support the household is in decline, as well as his effective contribution to household expenses ... But a man is like a *gao* (*Acacia albida*) who loses his leaves but grows them back at the right time.

Divorced women, for their part, generally lose all the productive assets they receive from their husbands (land given or loaned to them) when they divorce. They go back to their original families empty-handed, with their children under the age of seven, while the older ones stay with their father and his other wife or wives. In some communities, brother must give a share of land to their sister.

In Burkina Faso, 10.4 per cent of women who have reached the age of menopause stay in their husband's home, but as *koudmtoré* (women who farm for themselves) who must support themselves entirely. They are excluded from the household and become full-fledged household heads, with all of the attendant responsibilities. Their status is similar to that of divorced women, as they also constitute a sub-household and must develop strategies to feed and care for themselves and possibly partially support their children and ensure their education.

Generally speaking, women heads of households do not automatically enjoy the same rights as male household heads within their communities. For instance, it is rare for them to participate in village meetings where men gather and important decisions are taken. With that status, they continue to frequent the group of the village women, virtually all of whom are under the authority of a husband. However, during extremely important meetings, they can either be represented by their eldest son or another male member of their family. Tuareg communities constitute an exception in this part of Africa in terms of the opportunity they afford women household heads to participate in the community: 'In our community, women heads of households and women whose husband is invalid or absent who become household heads and replace him ably, are invited to all community meetings of heads of households'.

2.4 Unequal participation and emergence of a new social order in household food supply

The actual number of households headed by women (heads or responsible) is much higher than the number declared, which only includes households headed by older widows or divorcées.

- In Mali, the percentage of female-headed households is 29 per cent, of whom 21 per cent are widows and 8 per cent are divorcées.
- In Burkina Faso, the percentage of households in which women are identified as heads is 23.5 per cent, including 3.6 per cent headed by menopausal women.
- In Niger, 48.3 per cent of households are headed by women (older widows and divorcées).

Age is a decisive variable in women's social empowerment, since widowhood or divorce alone are not sufficient to ensure access to the status of household head. In Burkina Faso, however, age alone allows menopausal women to acquire the status of *koudmtoré*, which is similar to that of a household head.

Other women, young or old, who are greatly active in the role of household head in terms of providing food (*inter alia*) for household members, are perceived differently: 'they are just women taking care of household needs,⁶ women with household responsibilities, and that does not grant them the status of women heads of households'. The same also applies to women whose husbands are physically incapacitated or have migrated for the long term.

Interviews with women revealed several categories of women responsible for households:

- Unmarried women, who may be young widows or divorcées who support their children within their families of origin, or older women and *koudmtoré*;
- Married women: (i) wives of old men who can no longer support the burden of their households; (ii) wives of physically handicapped or sickly men; (iii) wives of migrant men; and (iv) married women with large numbers of children (more than five). This final criterion tends to broaden the category of 'responsible' women, given the large number of women to whom this category applies, given that the national average is of at least seven children per woman in the three countries concerned.

These married women participate in the provision of food for their families, not only in terms of processing food and delivering water, but also as providers of food (grains and livestock).

In the traditional consumption management system, a contribution is expected from all married women during the hungry season, whether they participate in a pastoral or agricultural production system. This means that women have a social responsibility to manage food shortages. Although, according to social norms, food security is the man's responsibility as household head, the ability of the production system to adapt to or absorb disruptions generated by crises depends on the contributions of the women, chiefly, as well as the younger men of the household (granary and ruminants), while the older men are not expected to contribute at all.

The exhaustion of men's resources marks the beginning of the hungry season, when family security is ensured by women or by women's property. The drastic drop in family production due to the series of crises in recent years has caused a reduction in agricultural food coverage and a prolonged hungry season; it has also disrupted and weakened the traditional food crisis management method or mechanism.

In Fula and Tuareg communities, women's herds or other property enters into consumption after men's resources are exhausted. 'If your wife is sensitive and she notices that you only have a few goats left, then she will say: "keep your core breeding herd and take a few of my goats to buy seeds"', said one Targui man.

Within households, men's and women's responsibilities in relation to food are evolving. One change in the distribution of responsibilities for food began in the aftermath of the ecological imbalances caused by the droughts of 1984 and 2005. The droughts that followed perpetuated and accentuated the processes of change that was already underway.

Today, women and men are **jointly** responsible for managing food security, which has become a primary objective in the management of household living conditions. Thus, there has been a transition from full responsibility entrusted in the man of the family throughout the year, with support from women and youths in times of crisis, to shared responsibility, with almost full responsibility for managing annual hungry seasons falling on the shoulders of women. And, from the standpoint of all the people surveyed, women who fulfil that role are today's model women.

Box 3: Statement from a Hausa woman of Banibangou, Niger

We are fully responsible for purchasing shoes and clothing for our children, school costs (school supplies, but also recess), as well as all of their other needs, since they never take their requests to their fathers.

As soon as the millet harvest has been consumed, we women start seeking ways to feed our children. We cannot stand to hear them cry ... The children cannot understand or imagine that there may not be 'something to eat' in the house.

These women not only handle food security, but also health care, education, and clothing needs, etc. Household expenses are now shared effectively between men and women. According to the women interviewed, certain expenses that are viewed as less important than food expenses had already been transferred to them, but they now also share the burden of food expenses, at least equally with men, if not more, given the extension of the hungry season, which is far longer than six months.

Furthermore, in response to the crises, male migration has developed into a survival strategy, with women left alone to handle the long hungry season. Food coverage (food availability to cover needs over a year) for most households has been reduced to around three or four months per year for the past few years. 'We can count the good years, which are rare, but we can no longer count the bad years since the crisis of 2005', the Fula told us.

This analysis shows that women's family responsibilities are growing, even when they are not heads of households, or even recognized as being responsible for their households.

The transformation of society's vision of the ideal woman has led to greater women's involvement in supporting their households: 'The ideal woman is an energetic woman who carries out economic activities and has her own financial income and property'. The model of the woman who depends on her husband and expects him to provide for everything seems to be in decline.

2.5 Trends in access to means of production

In the Muslim milieu, household resources are not pooled, due to actual or potential polygamy. However, each spouse contributes with his or her property to the satisfaction of their own individual needs and the collective needs of the family. This sharing of household responsibilities and expenses no longer follows any specific social rule, but depends on whether the man or the woman has a greater capacity for developing appropriate strategies.

Addressing the issue of women's and men's resources means dealing not only with accessing the means of production, but also with the living and survival strategies used by either gender.

2.5.1 Access to means of agricultural production

The growing practice of polygamy reduces joint management of property, both among sedentary and nomad populations (although the phenomenon is not very significant among the Tuareg).

Men's property mainly includes real estate and productive assets (house, land, and animals, particularly large ruminants).

Surveys in selected communities in three countries revealed that the land belonged to men, who passed it on to their sons by inheritance. The Islamization of nomad communities and the recent phenomenon of their sedentarization have generated relatively standardized behaviours and practices governing the transfer of property. In both communities, women do not inherit land or houses, although this practice is not dictated by Islam, but rather by changing traditions. Indeed, nomad herders have borrowed agricultural practices from sedentary populations, including the rules governing land tenure, which led to increased pressure on farmlands.

Box 4: Statement from Men's Focus Group, Burkina Faso

The religions practised in Sogdin do not forbid land ownership by women. It is only customary practice that discriminates against women

In Burkina Faso, people who do not own land go through the *tingsoba* (land chief), who negotiates with landowners to find them a plot to farm. In Mali and Niger, on the other hand, this role is played by the village chief, who has the privilege of lending land to men, women, and people from outside the community. However, the practice has become much less common in Niger due to the increasing scarcity of available land.

Women generally gain access to land through their husbands, who are required to make a portion of their agricultural plots available to their wife or wives. These women's plots have a mixed status, between a gift and a loan. In some cases, they become the property of the women, particularly on the death of their husbands or on their own death, since their children inherit these plots; in other cases, the plot is ploughed back into the bulk of the inheritance to be shared on the death of the husband, or it reverts back to the husband in the event of the wife's passing.

Generally speaking, land access, use, and ownership are extremely difficult for women, because these processes are strategically controlled by men. However, it is a more common practice for land to be lent to women, as they return it without difficulty; men more often gain access to land by pledging property. The communities studied did not mention the sale of land, except in Banibangou, where women cited a few rare cases of land purchased by women civil servants (teachers) who were natives of the area, for the purposes of building. They also felt that any woman with her own financial resources undoubtedly should be able to buy farmlands, while the men said that 'farmlands are not sold to women'.

Box 5: Men's Focus Group in Banibangou, Niger

We can feel that demands are tacitly welling up in our sisters, since they feel free to help themselves to the harvest in our fields, and our feeling is that if we talk about it, they will demand their share of the land. So we stand by and wait to see what happens...

Generally speaking, women's assets are mobile: utensils, but also small ruminants, although all women also aspire to owning large ruminants, which are economic success symbols. Their growing responsibility for food security motivates them to gain access to farmlands through rental (women not native from a village A), or by borrowing land (women native from a village A) from their brothers. But the impact of these forms of tenure on food security is enormous. One illustrative questionnaire respondent in Burkina Faso said: 'Because we are not the owners, we avoid fertilising borrowed fields due to the risk they will be taken back by their owners; because when the fields become fertile and productive, we can no longer have access to them for the next crop season'. Thus, the strategy of women and men who borrow land is to keep their fields in a state of average to mediocre productivity, in order to continue to use the borrowed lands for as long as possible and perhaps be able to transfer this mode of access, as a social inheritance, to their children.

Rural Nigerien women borrow land (with or without a security) to grow millet, but also cowpeas, sesame, gumbo, and sorrel for family consumption. Zarma and Tuareg women (in Niger) increasingly participate in the harvests on land belonging to their brothers, who are obliged to give them a few sheaves at the end, in light of their ownership rights over the family land. In Niger, widows manage the land on behalf of their young sons.

In Burkina Faso, widows go through a male intermediary to borrow land, which is a relatively easy form of access for women, due to the trust placed in them to return the land when they are asked. This was expressed in the following terms: 'Unlike men, women do not argue with landowners when the latter decide to take their land back.'

Means of production such as ploughs and donkeys are used only by men, which also explains why their yields are better in terms of quantity and quality.

Small farming equipment usually belongs to the household and is used without restriction by different household members, although the family farm has priority. The *daba* or *hilaire* hoes are the only production tools used by the women of these communities. The social norms that restrict women to the use of such rudimentary implements prevent them from realizing their potential in the fight against food insecurity. Malian women, however, can hire ploughs to work their fields.

In relation to the projects studied, the women pointed to the fact that the majority of agricultural extension workers were men, who went to see the village chief and his court on their arrival in the village. The women felt that there was little consideration for their interests in improving the productivity of their little plots.

2.5.2 Access to pastoral productive assets

Among the Fula people, where pastoral resources are concerned, herds are constituted very early, as soon as a child is born, on the occasion of the baptism. The practice of '*souké*', i.e., gifts of livestock, is still common. Cows if possible, or goats, are given to the newborn by the father, the aunts, the paternal uncles, and also the maternal uncles. Among the Tuareg, similar gifts are expected from paternal relatives. From the age of 10 onwards, boys distinguish their own animals from the rest of the family herd and take special care of them.

Girls also receive animals as their dowry, among the Fula this is usually a heifer; among the Tuareg, a she-camel and goats. The bride is free to leave them with her family or take them with her to her marital domicile. Girls receive livestock from their fathers prior to their weddings. Generally, women ask their fathers for their livestock (from family gifts and their dowry) and take them to their marital homes after they have had their first child.

Mothers often prefer not to give their children gifts at the time of their birth; they wait until they grow up. Maternal uncles may also wait until later to present their gifts. They sometimes say to their nephews, 'I offer you my daughter's hand in lieu of the "*souké*" (gift) that I have yet to give you'. If the nephew is not interested by the offer, he answers 'I would rather you gave me a cow'. A nephew may also speak up before his uncle and say 'I would like you to grant me the hand of your daughter in lieu of the "*souké*" you have yet to give me'.

Herding is also practised among sedentary peoples: men raise both large and small ruminants, and women mainly raise small ruminants (most often goats). They keep their livestock in their homes and/or entrust it every morning to shepherds, who take it out to pasture for the day.

In these two contexts, which can be described as agro-pastoral, the level of household vulnerability is strongly correlated with households' ability to hold assets of farmlands and herds (including a healthy breeding core for each species).

According to the communities surveyed, agricultural production is more vulnerable to food crises; thanks to livestock's mobility, pastoral production is better able to adapt to crises. The animal husbandry strategy, based on moving livestock to more favourable areas, while keeping a small herd at home for household needs, is also adopted by farmers. In both cases, herders' and farmers' strategies are built on diversification of production systems, and increasingly tend towards agro-pastoralism. Continuous practice of both activities, i.e. farming and herding, differs depending on whether the practitioner is a herder or a farmer, both in terms of social perception and actual reality.

Furthermore, women, like men, are increasingly diversifying their non-agricultural and non-pastoral economic activities. Men specialize in migration to carry out a wide range of activities in the major cities of the sub-region, while women diversify their activities on site to minimize the risks linked to a single activity and earn a small but regular income, which is used to contribute to household consumption. Evidently, women develop and focus on strategies that yield low returns but that are low-risk, safe, and viable in terms of their fit with the local economy – strategies that can support their families on a day-to-day basis.

The social structure of Sahelian communities has changed considerably over the years. This change can be seen mainly in the redefinition of roles and responsibilities within households. The 2012 food crisis revealed that, from several standpoints, women are taking on an increasing share of responsibilities. Their contribution to supporting the household in times of crisis is tacitly expected, even though this increased responsibility within their households is not always reflected by increased power within the community. In the eyes of their communities, they remain under the authority of their husbands, or, if they have no husband, under that of their brothers or eldest sons. The social perception of the role and place of women in these communities has influenced the attitudes of community members regarding access to factors of production. Since women only hold a subsidiary role in terms of household responsibilities and are relegated to the sidelines when it comes to community-based management in general, they continue to have limited access to factors of production (lending, rental, etc.). *A priori*, this should limit their ability to increase their contributions to supporting their households in times of crisis. However, it appears that by developing low-return opportunities that are safe and prudent, they are able to make a substantial contribution to household members' survival.

3 ENERGY AND LIMITED INVOLVEMENT, A MIXED PICTURE FOR WOMEN

Hypothesis 2

Vulnerability to food insecurity is not only linked to natural or physical factors, but also depends on gender-differentiated relations within households (pastoral/sedentary, monogamous/polygamous, or Muslim/Christian/animist), in terms of greater women's participation in decision making linked to food security (food production, management, etc.).

Management of agricultural and pastoral production involves numerous decisions that may promote or, on the contrary, disrupt household food security. For instance, the distribution of farmlands, the distribution of working time in various fields, the use of fertilisers, the management of pastoral production (watering, grazing, food supplementation, and veterinary care for livestock), and the sale or purchase of livestock within the household are important decisions which contribute directly to determining the level of household production.

3.1 Women and household decision making: identifying the most decisive factors

Decision making on farm management presupposes the distribution of family farmlands by household heads. Few female household heads have input: 'Women are rarely consulted in such matters, as the land generally "belongs" to the men of the family' (Kayes, Mali).

Table 4: Gender distribution of the use of soil fertilisers

Responses	Male	Female
Yes	16	25
No	25	35
Total	41	60

Women are more inclined than men to use organic or mineral fertilisers, in relation to the size of their plots. This is illustrated in Table 4: more women responded positively to the question of whether they had used fertiliser in their fields during the previous growing season.

As for the management of foodstuffs destined to feed the family, the women of Banibangou said that their participation was evolving quite positively. Everywhere, women living in monogamous households have much more input in decision making. However, in polygamous households, it is usually the 'head wife', the first one to enter the household, who is consulted or at least informed of the decisions the husband wishes to take in relation to food security.

In the agricultural milieu, men decide how the harvests are distributed. They give shares to certain family members and to destitute neighbours towards whom they feel a duty of solidarity. A few sheaves are also allocated to the women of the consumption unit. They are traditionally viewed as 'braid money'; however, women are free to decide how they are allocated and may give them as gifts in turn (usually to their mothers).

Since they are responsible for preparing meals, women must inform men what daily rations are required and warn them if the amounts available are insufficient. When stocks run out, men decide what supplies are to be purchased, even when the purchase is to be made using women's resources (income from the sale of ruminants). Women only speak if their opinion is asked.

This behaviour on the part of women seems to be motivated by: (i) their concern with respecting their partners' dignity (to avoid frustrating or humiliating them by showing them up for 'their inability to feed the household'); (ii) their fear of their husbands' response (insults; anger; refusing to eat the family meal, an act interpreted and/or experienced as a humiliation). 'He would have to be famous for his irresponsibility for a woman to decide to go buy cereals herself for fear he would misuse the money', according to a group of women from Banibangou Zarma.

Although women's contribution to food security is rarely called upon openly, it is often necessary when: (i) the resources of the head of the household are unavailable; (ii) the woman's resources are more available; or (iii) the presence of children requires her to increase her capacity to mobilize resources to fulfil her nurturing role. Among the Hausa, the man is always '*may guida*', the owner of the house, while the woman is '*ouwar guida*', the mother of the house, who is above all a nurturing mother. In order to fulfil this role, in addition to the sauce they provide thanks to their agricultural production (millet, cowpeas, gumbo, sesame, groundnut, vouandzou, and sorrel, whose seeds are processed to make *soumbala*), women practise animal husbandry, petty trade, market gardening, cash for work, as well as all sorts of emergency activities that tend to be mobilized permanently as adaptation strategies.

Women's participation in food decisions depends, among other factors, on their capacity for resource mobilization, their effective participation in supporting their family, the sharing of family responsibilities, and possibly by the number of children they have. As a Hausa woman from Banibangou said: 'In order to have the right to participate in decision making, women have to act like household heads, the way men do. This means making their property available to the family and being able to make a contribution in case of food shortages ... but they still need to be obedient'.

Box 6: A woman from Banibangou Zarma

'If I had more financial resources, I would have greater independence and sovereignty, I would know how to choose the right things to feed the family better, more sustainably... Women who have been able to realize their potential, who are rich, decide what foods to buy and participate in various decisions; and they are usually right in everything they do'.

A woman from Banibangou Zarma

Women defined their decision-making power in relation to food security as the possibility of having 'a say' in a given decision affecting food security, such as choosing the type of cereal to be sown in a field or deciding to set up a stock of food. This type of consultation is, in itself, a form of participation in the household decision-making process. Women felt that such a position was achieved through a capacity for negotiation, which was founded on a woman's docility towards her husband. Women needed to know when and how to talk to their husbands. 'Standing up to him won't get you anywhere, quite the contrary'.

Women's ability to negotiate or influence decision making within their households improves household food security, thanks to:

- diversification of food stocks, with the introduction of numerous foods that are not necessarily locally produced;

- longer availability of food stocks, through frugal management of the millet produced (methods of preparation);
- better organization in terms of planning and supplies, since joint decisions and joint financing of expenditures are unusual.

This participation or consultation around food security management is more difficult to establish in polygamous households, where the tendency of consumption sub-units to emerge around the different wives constitutes a daily threat to family cohesion. This tendency is even stronger when the co-wives do not get along well and/or when the head of the household is away for extended periods of time, longer than the lifetime of the food stock established prior to his departure.

Where pastoral production is concerned, women, men, and youths (girls and boys) participate to varying extents in caring for their family herds. Pasturing, watering, and range management, including pasture management, vary according to gender, age, and ethnicity. For instance, Mossi men, who are sedentary farmers, usually breed livestock in pens, while the Fula practise an extensive, transhumant type of pastoralism.

In terms of gender specificities, Fula girls and women lead their herds to pasture and water them at the well, while range management during movements is strictly a male preserve and is highly structured among the Fula, through *Rougga* and *Garso*.

On the other hand, sedentary women have little involvement in livestock grazing and watering. This is due to a number of cultural factors linked to customary law, which grants primacy to men, particularly in terms of decision making regarding animal husbandry and the sale of animals; access to the cattle market is often forbidden to women. Caring for livestock is often thought of as men's work. In the Bambara, Dogon, Malinke, Kasounke, Sarakole, and Moorish ethnic groups, leading herds to pasture is often a task entrusted to men, especially young boys, leaving housekeeping tasks and field work to women and girls. The veterinary care of the herd is the preserve of men alone in all ethnic groups, with the exception of the Fula and the Tuareg, who entrust this task to women.

The sale of household livestock is generally the men's responsibility. In all of the ethnic groups surveyed, the men decided whether or not to sell. Even when selling their own cattle, women consult their husbands first. Only among the Bambara is the choice entirely in the hands of women. Although livestock is a form of savings and also an asset, male heads of households need only inform their wives to sell it. Among the Fula, the purchase of livestock for the family is also a male purview; women have little involvement in such transactions and even need their husbands' approval to buy or sell cattle.

In a normal year, livestock is only sold to satisfy pressing needs such as weddings, baptisms, and other rituals, or during the hungry season, to meet family food needs. 'Women are consulted on sales and even on purchases. However, men have the final word. They buy and sell livestock in their wives' names, since women do not go to cattle markets to conduct commercial transactions such as buying or selling livestock' (focus group in Banibangou, Niger).

3.2 Women are mobilized to supply their households with food

For women, the model of economic success implies a significant capacity for accumulating assets and enhancing household resilience.

Women's accumulation of assets is influenced by their husbands' ability to cover their own expenses. The female role model described in Box 3.1 was able to enrich herself by accumulating ruminants, which are particularly important livestock in terms of last-resort food security management, after the harvest has been exhausted and the profits from IGAs have been consumed. She received loans in

kind before selling the ruminants. Her literacy training and her social status (as wife of the chief) were decisive factors in her accession to the position of group president.

Box 7: A Fula female role model

Mariama Abdoulahi is 57 years old and is married to the village chief. She has seven children, including two with the current chief of Weidibangou. She is known for the aid she provides within the community, to both men and women. Her actions have included donations of livestock such as goats, sheep, and even cows. She owns several head of goats, sheep, cattle, and camelids.

Her herd originated in her wedding dowry made up of heifers, which allowed her to build up a core herd; subsequently, she purchased sheep and goats that allowed her to diversify her herd.

She recognizes that she has benefitted from favourable conditions that have protected her herd. Her marital status provided her with sufficient food and clothing to protect her livestock from sale, particularly since she lives with her two children (at the home of the chief, her second husband) and all of the chief's adult children already have their own consumption units.

Every year, she sells five or six goats to buy household equipment for herself and her daughters.

A member of AREN, a Nigerien herders' association, and president of the women's group of her village, she received a credit of 20,000 CFA Francs from the aforementioned association for sheep fattening. She also received a credit of 50,000 CFA Francs from the *Programme Spécial du Président* which was not reimbursed, as no request was ever made for its reimbursement.

She has participated in literacy sessions in *Fulfulde* and training in animal husbandry and care. She has participated in a *Cash for work* programme which paid her 24,000 CFA Francs every two weeks and invested her income in breeding of small ruminants. She acts as a public spokesperson for the village women.

A Fula woman from Weidi bangou

A strong grasp of the dynamics underlying the management of family assets can help provide appropriate support for household resilience.

An approach focused on consumption sub-units, and more specifically household heads and people responsible for households, would be a more appropriate means of support in cases of food crisis. This would make it possible to directly target the levels at which consumption is organized. By taking account of household realities, it should be possible to reach the most vulnerable family units.

3.3 Grain management, a means of women's control in households

Millet and maize production is essentially carried out and controlled by men; social standards forbid Zarma women from producing millet and restrict them to producing gumbo and sesame.

On the other hand, both men and women participate in production of cowpeas, sorghum, and groundnuts, as well as market garden production of tomatoes, onions, and aubergine.

Millet remains the staple crop, directly allotted to household consumption. Millet is a staple food in Niger, although its sale by producers has experienced a downward trend in recent years. All men and women say that millet is primarily produced for family consumption. Income from the sale of other agricultural products is ploughed back into family expenses and the purchase of millet, rice, condiments, etc.

Women do not control family food production, since, in certain cases, men produce, store, and remove sheaves of millet from the granary. Among the Fula of Burkina Faso, the men's discussion group were unequivocal that women did not manage agricultural products: 'the granary and cash should not be

placed at the disposal of women, because that would amount to granting them power'. Men attempt to justify the exclusion of women from control over production by claiming that there is a high risk that women would be 'capable of selling' grain to satisfy other needs, which they feel are not priorities.

With regard to the control of cereal crops, Hausa women who produce millet do not participate in the harvesting of their own fields, because, in the words of the survey respondents, 'they haven't mastered the technique, they don't know how to use a sickle'. Women are therefore obliged to accept the quantity of millet declared by their husbands, but expressed confidence in this process, saying that 'husbands always tell the truth in the matter'. These women apparently do not have control over the ears of millet, even after they are taken to their granaries, since once again it is men who remove the ears from their wives' granaries.

However, even when supplies are provided in the form of grains (a sack of millet, sorghum, maize, rice, etc.), the stock is divided up among consumption sub-units, and the women each manage their own share. Indeed, management of ears of cereals is different from management of grains; the latter are stored and managed by women inside the family concession.

- In nomad communities, grains are shared equitably among co-wives, who take turns providing the family meal. In the best case, the women take their meals together.
- Among the Zarma, sheaves are formed and stored in a granary in the family field, before the head of the household progressively moves them to the house where the stock is kept, either in the home of his mother (when she is a household member), or that of his first wife. The other wives visit her in turn to take the amount they need for the family meal. When the supply is in grain form, the stock is distributed equitably among the wives. The grain may also be stored in the home of the first wife and the other co-wives help themselves when it is their turn to prepare the meal.

These cases show that these rural households operate, on the whole, like a single consumption unit, with the rare exceptions of the few residential units (parents and married sons) that still exist, which cohabit as consumption sub-units. Households with two or three brothers may share the same meals (prepared in turn), but these are produced from independent and separate stocks. When meals are shared, the men of the different households gather on one side and the women on another; however, children are grouped by household to eat.

Similarly, in polygamous Hausa households, each wife does her cooking separately and constitutes a consumption sub-unit, particularly in households where the head is older and the wives have become *de facto* 'responsible for their households', feeding and supporting their children. Separate management of assets is observed within the couple, and this gives women a certain independence of decision making over their assets and their contribution to food security, which is increasingly expected or even required by the emerging social standards.

3.4 Women's empowerment in the management of milk and milk by-products

Fresh milk, curdled milk, fresh butter, aged butter, and cheese are distributed differently to household members according to ethnicity. In Burkina Faso and Niger, beyond the supply used for family consumption, products such as milk and milk derivatives (curdled milk, fresh butter, clarified butter, and cheese) belong solely to women, who sell them.

However, in certain cases (among the Fula, Sarakole, Soninke, Kassounke, Bambara, Kakolo, and Dogon), fresh milk and curdled milk belong to couples, who decide together how it will be used. Among the Moors, on the other hand, fresh milk and curdled milk belong to men. In sedentary peoples, where the herds are small in number, these products are reserved for family consumption.

In conclusion, regarding the distribution of resources between men and women, our study shows that women have fewer assets at their disposal, even though they are increasingly responsible for more of

the household expenses. Indeed, they have little access to productive assets, over which they have minimal control. On the other hand, women seize more opportunities, invariably in response to the multiple demands of their households.

Non-agricultural and non-pastoral activities are increasingly practised by less vulnerable women, who are generally older or unmarried, and therefore have easy access to markets. Savings are used to purchase productive assets (generally small ruminants and rarely land) and utensils for their daughters' trousseaus. However, when crises occur, many women are hit hard. Their vulnerability can be attributed to the fact that they are restricted to agricultural (agriculture, processing of agricultural produces) and low-profit trade activities. Furthermore, women's small ruminants are the first assets to be traded to purchase grain supplies when times are hard.

3.5 Bias in the logic of subsistence

'We sell cattle to satisfy our needs' (Men's Focus Group in Mali, May 2013). The survey indicated that the main measure taken to manage food security was to sell cash crops (such as cowpeas or groundnuts). The majority of the income from their sale was used to purchase ruminants and agricultural inputs, while the rest was ploughed back into household consumption. However, a higher proportion of the income generated by such sales was allocated to grain consumption (80%).

For more than three years, the communities stopped selling their cereal crops because their grain supplies were not sufficient for family consumption. On the other hand, livestock is sold whenever a pressing need is felt within a household. Thus, the Fula cope better with food insecurity, especially when it occurs repeatedly within a relatively short period of two to three years. On the other hand, after farmers have sold their small and even their large ruminants, they are obliged to develop another logic of subsistence when the hungry season strikes.

The trend in non-food uses for agricultural and pastoral production (grain and cattle drain) was assessed by women and men, who declared that during wedding, baptism, and funeral ceremonies, expenses were covered by selling surplus agricultural production and through family and social networks of mutual aid and solidarity.

Today, as a result of the virtual disappearance of agricultural surpluses and forms of solidarity due to the different crises, most of the expenses relating to these ceremonies are covered solely by the family concerned. This also leads to non-food use of resources produced by various strategies mobilized for food security.

According to women, while baptisms and weddings are predictable events and very often planned in advance, deaths are the events that most disrupt the family food stock, owing to their sudden and unpredictable nature. Very vulnerable families simply offer water to the people who come to provide them with moral support. These families develop their social network by providing services (doing domestic work during the baptisms and weddings of the children of relatives, friends, and acquaintances) in lieu of offering gifts.

On the whole, the nature of the gifts given during baptism and wedding ceremonies has changed, and gifts in kind have been replaced with smaller gifts in cash. Gifts of grain have disappeared.

Furthermore, the analysis revealed no contrary behaviours to saving the grains. Polygamous marriages are perceived by men to be an opportunity to multiply living and survival strategies. The contribution of several women to household expenses is seen as a strategy to help cover living expenses, but the arrival of numerous children ends up causing a disproportionate increase in expenses and risks.

The place and role of women in Sahelian communities have changed over the years of food insecurity, gradually leading to their exclusion from access to natural resources. Aware of the great need to

generate resources to support their households in times of crisis, women have continued to rely on agricultural and pastoral production and diversification of IGAs. Most of the women who continue to practise IGAs ensure a relative well-being for their household, even in times of crisis, and therefore earn greater consideration within their households and their communities. Despite their limited resources, these women become important players in household food security and genuinely responsible for handling shortages.

The greater the responsibility that women assume for household expenses, the more they are perceived as female role models and manage to impose themselves in the area of family decision making, and even community decision making in certain cases. It remains the case that, according to social norms, the model woman, who must make an economic contribution to food security in her household, shouldn't take decisions and should remain submissive within the household. At the community level, however, the facts are different.

4 EMERGENCY RESPONSES FROM A GENDER STANDPOINT

Hypothesis 3

Humanitarian responses are increasingly better adapted to household social realities; in 2012, they reached both sexes equitably across the different ethnic groups in the three countries studied.

Responses to food insecurity have essentially targeted vulnerable households. Efforts are made to target women heads of households according to the responses gathered in the field by the humanitarian assistants : widows, divorced, and women whose husbands have left the land, women who are excluded because they have reached menopause, and handicapped women.

Generally speaking, the results show a certain gender equity. Efforts were also made in terms of targeting communities, since ethnic equity was also respected. As such, the Fula and the Tuareg groups were equally as involved as the Mossi, the Bambara, and the Hausa groups. This was undoubtedly due to the targeting of the activities proposed by NGOs. Group interviews focusing on the 2012 crisis identified the following categories of crisis response:

- livestock fattening by providing the beneficiaries with start up free livestock or through financial loans (for instance, distribution of four she-goats and one billy-goat to older women in Banibangou, and livestock fattening loans for younger women);
- free distribution of foodstuffs (rice, millet, sorghum, cowpeas, oil, millet flour, wheat flour, sugar, salt, beans, peas, etc.);
- *cash transfers*: Alliance Technique d'Assistance au Développement (Technical alliance for development assistance, ATAD) donated 25,000 CFA Francs per household, twice a year, and Plan International also donated 12,000 CFA Francs, also twice during the year;
- *food for work*: water and soil rehabilitation work (construction of anti-erosion structures, sanitation, labour in public interest construction work);
- *cash for work*: money, tickets, coupons;
- distribution of cereal seeds;
- women's organization and training in community organizations, the creation of savings and loan groups;
- training in market gardening, preparation of seedbeds and nurseries, introduction to market gardening, grants of inputs (fertilisers, seeds);
- other forms of aid: grants of farming equipment, hygiene kits (soap, bleach), development of road infrastructure and construction of a dam to allow additional land development;
- sale at reduced prices: sacks of millet or maize sold at 6,000 CFA Francs.

In addition, according to the people surveyed, Action sociale, which is a government organization, and a private Burkinabè organization distributed foodstuffs free of charge.

All forms of aid were highly appreciated by the populations. However, in times of crisis, the people greatly preferred free distribution of foodstuffs. Everyone deplored the consequences of indirect distribution through exchange coupons; namely, relative price hikes and delivery of poor-quality merchandise by the suppliers involved.

Cash for work was found to be far more transparent. This activity mobilizes everyone, since it is not perceived as humanitarian aid but as a job opportunity: ‘Even the chief’s wife participates and invests her income in the purchase of ruminants’. This declaration implies that *food for work* is not intended as a form of aid for the least vulnerable, but for the most vulnerable, those who do not have the means to feed themselves.

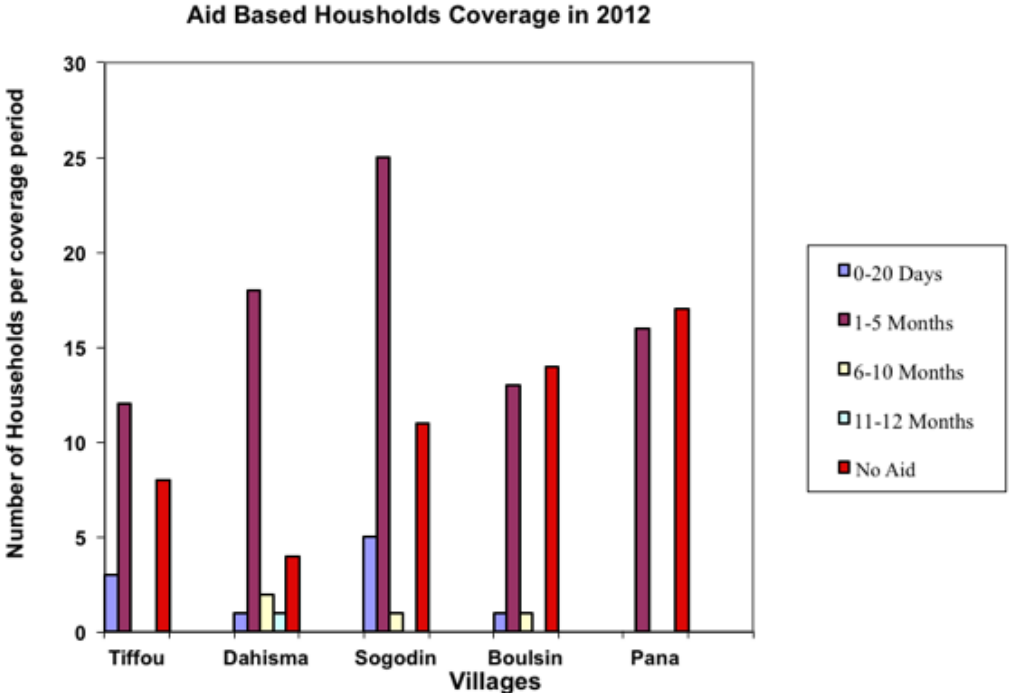
Table 4: Number of months of coverage provided by humanitarian aid (example: Banibangou Zarma)

Aid organizations	Feb.	March	Apr.	May	June	Jul.	Aug.	Sept.	No.s
Care	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		300
ABC Ecologie					■	■	■		70
ACTED			■	■	■	■			300
Samaritan P		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	172
Total number of households in the village									766

Furthermore, aid organizations rarely covered all of the vulnerable households in a community; not even in Banibangou Zarma, where the total number of households in the village exceeds the number of households reached by various forms of aid; the village chief confirmed: ‘Not all vulnerable households in this village have received aid. Some have not had the opportunity to receive any aid at all. I truly deplore this situation which creates latent conflicts between me and my unhappy villagers’.

During our field work, a *food for work* operation (construction of a dirt road) revealed irregularities in the distribution of foodstuffs, with some women reporting that they had not been remunerated as expected. It transpired that a portion of the foodstuffs had been diverted at their expense; apparently, nearly half of the stock of oil had also been misappropriated. A woman belonging to a group told us: ‘Distribution of food supplies is centralized by the village chief and is not transparent; we would like to be remunerated more fairly, directly through our women leaders’.

Figure 1: Aid Based Households Coverage



In Burkina Faso, the government, non-government organizations, and other institutions (mayor's office, ATAD, Plan International, Action Sociale, World Food Programme [WFP]) implemented responses, mobilizing 81 households of the 153 surveyed in cash for work operations; seven households received cash, 10 households received cereals, and 55 did not receive anything.

4.1 2012 crisis in the Sahel: living and survival strategies adopted by the people

Despite its impact on the harvests, the impact of the 2012 food crisis on the lives of the people and on household food security was not as severe as that of the previous crises. Even the most vulnerable deployed their habitual living strategies, rather than adopting new survival strategies.

Vulnerable women enacted strategies based on free extraction of natural resources.

- They gathered dry wood and cut green wood to earn money for additional food: 'I sell a donkey load of wood for 1,000 CFA Francs twice a week in Gossou' (a Tuareg woman from Baga, Niger).
- Women gathered wild food products (fruits, leaves), *Boscia senegalensis*, *Maerua crassifolia*, *Cadaba farinosa*, *Brachiaria xantholeuca*, often known as famine plants, which also provided regular sources of income for the most vulnerable; sale of these products on the market in Banibangou is a recent phenomenon that began less than 10 years ago. The nutritional effects of these products, which enable people to 'fill their bellies' more cheaply, are as yet unknown. These 'famine plants' are becoming widely used food plants that are present on the market, the sale of which is gradually becoming a living strategy.

Another living strategy adopted by vulnerable women is the sale of their labour in the fields of wealthier people, or domestic work. Pounding grain, selling water, and doing domestic work are among the activities carried out by the most vulnerable women in households that are not particularly vulnerable (civil servants, merchants) and constitute economic activities for these women, who have no working capital.

Box 8: Fula Women's Focus Group

Currently, a woman household head has gone all the way to Niamey to braid hair, leaving her children with one of her brothers-in-law. She did it last year and came back after a three-month absence with two bags of rice.

Fula Women's Focus Group

Indeed, a significant proportion of the women surveyed had done labour in neighbouring villages; others had done housework (washing clothes, ironing, cooking, millet grinding) for women civil servants.

Migration of female heads of households is a new strategy, observed since 2009. This practice began in 1984 in polygamous households headed by older men, where one of the wives left home to work as a domestic worker to support the family on a daily basis (sending leftover food, sending medicine in case of need, a little money, old clothes given as gifts, etc.), while the others stayed behind to carry out the housework and care for the household.

The only survival strategies that the surveys revealed were looking for grain in anthills, threshing *Cenchrus bifflorus*, and recovering grains of millet in winnowing areas, strategies that were last implemented in 2005.

Very few households resorted to those strategies in 2012, a fact that was accounted for by the people surveyed by the timely arrival of food aid that targeted them directly.

Several survival strategies practised by women have become living strategies, as a result of population growth and the high demand for products such as firewood and *Boscia senegalensis* seeds, a very low-cost food.

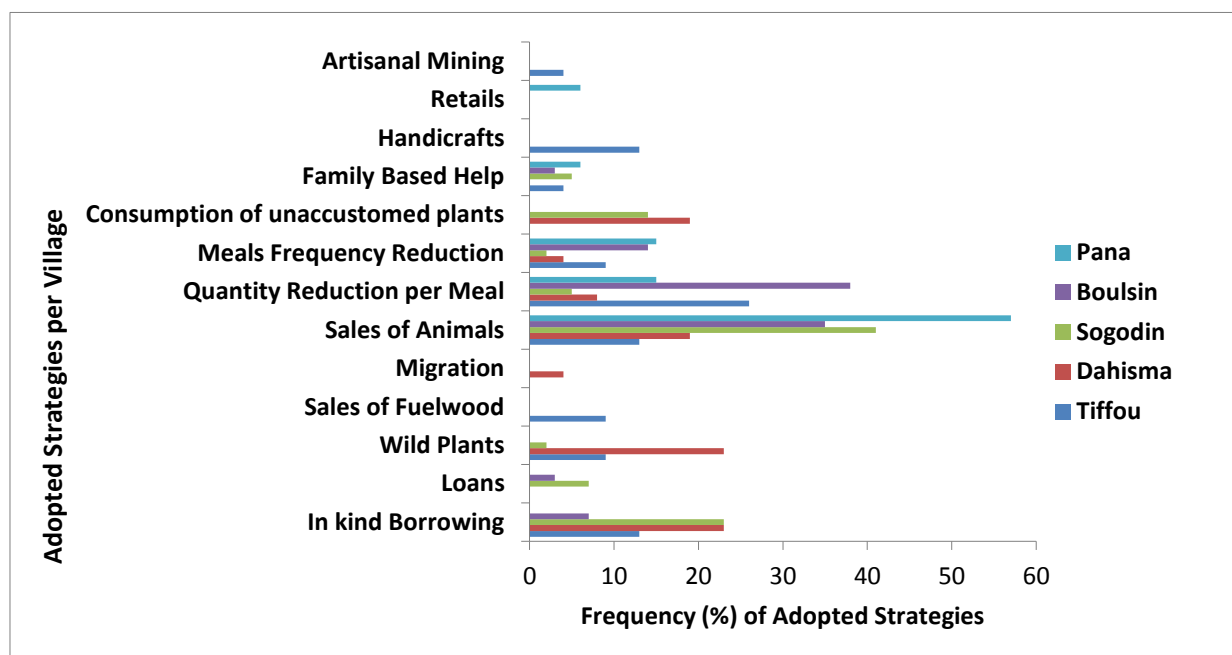
Similarly, changes have been observed in the meals of sedentary peoples. Consumption of *tuwo* (millet porridge) in sauce is in decline. Among the Hausa, porridge, which requires little millet flour for its preparation, is taking the place of *fura* (millet balls) for breakfast and lunch. Zarma women revealed innovations such as the consumption of new products like *gari* (manioc semolina), salad, and only one cooked meal for dinner.

Among the Fula and the Tuareg, no reduction in meals was observed: a ball [of thick millet porridge] at noon, a meal in the evening, and reheated leftovers for breakfast.

The changes observed have no relationship with the average size of the household (Zarma: 10.89 people, Hausa: 9.33, Fula: 9.82, and Tuareg: 9.52), but are linked to the combined efficiency and viability of local strategies.

The Mossi and the Fula do not have quite the same strategies, nor do married and single people. Young, unmarried Mossi pan for gold, practise market gardening, or migrate to major urban centres (Kaya and Ouagadougou, or further afield to Côte d'Ivoire). Young couples forming monogamous households commonly use exodus as a strategy, which is possible as a result of the greater adaptability of young people and the ease of moving a small family (as a couple, leaving the children in the village or a father accompanied by one son).

Figure 2: Local survival strategies observed in Burkina Faso



Households headed by Fula men adopted the same, long-standing strategy of selling livestock to purchase food. As for the Mossi, whose production system is essentially agricultural, their first reflex is to turn to easily accessible natural resources such as wood and fodder, which they sell to buy food.

The Mossi also use other strategies, including loans in kind, youth exodus, panning for gold, consumption of wild plants gathered by women, building work, and general labour. These households also participated in water and soil conservation work, including *zai*, for money.

4.2 Aid granting process and beneficiaries' viewpoints

Before aid is granted, a census is taken of vulnerable individuals. In the end, the people leading the response select the most vulnerable people to support and, in most cases, this is done through a list provided by the villages Chiefs in accordance with the community. In the opinion of several village chiefs, this leads to discontent and causes them problems, because they can be accused of favouritism: 'To resolve these issues, women and men think it would be preferable to include all of the vulnerable people identified. This difficulty could also be overcome through local coordination of the responses, to make sure that vulnerable people who were not reached by previous responses are served by subsequent operations, instead of some households being served several times and others not at all'.

Regarding free distribution of foodstuffs, village chiefs are always the focus of suspicion from some community members who may rightly or wrongly think that their names have been moved down from the list as to delay them from receiving the aid. In this regard, one of the solutions proposed was to create a distribution committee under the responsibility of the aid organizations. With a view to promoting a culture of trust and transparency, women survey respondents asked for representatives of women's groups to be involved in the identification of vulnerable people, to ensure that certain women who were responsible for their households and who had previously been excluded, would be given a voice.

Furthermore, changing the sphere of targeting of vulnerable people from the Villages Chiefs (political sphere) to the civil society or associative sphere, would make it possible to take account of another group of women, specifically those whose families come from another village, whose husbands do not pay taxes to the chief of the village in which they live. They are not included in the census of inhabitants and consequently, are not covered by the aid granted to the village, thereby suffering exclusion as a result of their 'faithfulness' to their village of origin.

Redistribution of the grain received from aid organizations between men and women is a fairly common practice and can help mitigate the issues faced by those excluded from aid. The following statement is often heard from both women and men: 'I benefited from aid because, even though I did not receive any directly, such and such a relative and such and such a friend or neighbour, who received aid, gave me some'.

4.3 Mixed perceptions and uses of aid

Certain people view the aid they receive as a means of consolidating family ties. Thus, women have been able to contribute to household food expenses, repay their debts, purchase livestock, and carry out other activities: 'With aid, there is no more travelling and that helps prevent begging in the cities. The coupon helped us for six months and the cash transfer allows us to eat the food of our choice, since with the money we can buy what we need for ourselves' (Seybat village Focus Group, May 2013).

Paid work for money is viewed as an opportunity to establish working capital to start up IGAs; women state that this provides them with an opportunity to become more independent and resilient.

4.3.1 Women's perceptions

Women are happy with the aid they have received and are satisfied with the distribution criteria, as illustrated in the following comment: 'I have organized clean-up operations with other village women. Everyone contributed 25 CFA Francs each to purchase brooms. Thanks to that, WFP has helped us to build a road, and that has been very encouraging for us. To ensure food security, I have convinced the women to cultivate a collective field' (D.K., president of the women of the village of Diguadian Fula, May 2013).

D.K., who is heavily involved in the activities of her village, makes the point that, as a result of womens' initiatives, they benefitted from road infrastructure financing. This was highly appreciated by the community, which was experiencing transportation issues.

Women, particularly married women, who are involved in artisanal gold mining activities are disapproved of by the majority of men, because gold mining sites are perceived as dens of debauchery. This strategy has unfortunately contributed to deterioration in the cohesion of certain households.

Certain women also expressed the view that undertaking paid work is not advisable, since this strategy provides an opportunity for men to remarry, increasing the number of mouths to feed. Furthermore, some young people use the money generated to abuse alcohol and drugs.

Women recounted that they do not see the benefits of cash transfers to the head of the household, who does not necessarily use them to buy food. Women greatly prefer to receive cereals, which are entirely destined for family consumption. When the cereals (distributed for free or sold at reduced prices) were produced in the area, they follow the same local grain management dynamic. Cereals from external traders or from Food Aid were often either placed on the market or given directly to women, without going through family stores.

4.3.2 Men's perceptions

According to the majority of men, food aid is beneficial and its purpose is to regulate an area that increasingly escapes them. Aid distribution compensates for their 'social handicap' in terms of food security; participation in cash for work brings less discredit on them, since they work to earn the money they spend to feed their families. Cash for work mobilizes both vulnerable and less vulnerable community members (association leaders, social leaders, etc.). This action had the greatest impact in terms of reducing rural exodus. Cash transfers chiefly facilitated repayment of debts and allowed grain to be saved, since it kept several households from selling off their grain cheaply on the market.

In the view of most men, food for work was food insurance for the household. They felt that, 'even when we are not there and when we do not have anything to send to our wives and children back in the village ... with food for work, we know they will be able to feed themselves'. Food for work is a form of action that effectively attracts vulnerable categories, but the work options available were found to be discriminatory, particularly since certain tasks were only possible for strong and healthy people.

Cash transfers are a practice that offers greater choice in food spending (ruminants, millet, rice, condiments, etc.), and the money may also be used to pay creditors, for example, or for other non-food expenditures. In the view of many, this justifies a preference for free distribution of food supplies.

4.4 Impact of aid

Sahelian states and humanitarian aid workers developed several types of strategies to minimize the impact of the 2012 crisis. Food aid provided in the communities by various organizations (WFP, Government through the communes, OXFAM, CARE, SARIMATAN PURSE, KARKARA NGO, ACTED, ILAF NGO, Stop Sahel, Croix rouge, ADR, ATAD, Plan International, Action Sociale etc.) has created positive changes, both within households and at community level, such as:

- reconstitution of capital to resume petty trading activities;
- reduced recourse to moneylenders;
- enhanced social cohesion within certain households due to availability of financial resources, even short-lived;
- rebuilding of the herd and decreased sale of livestock;
- less wood harvesting, and revitalization and development of degraded land;
- reduced youth exodus;

- increased access to food through food for work;
- enhanced social cohesion between households and on land reclamation work sites;
- better use of women's time, which they would otherwise have spent in the bush looking for wild plants; and
- reduced school dropouts.

4.5 Consequences for gender relations

The crisis of 2012 brought about a wide range of responses in the zones surveyed. The emergency responses were appreciated by the populations, particularly in terms of the rations allocated per person and/or per household, the duration of the supplies, and their phasing over time. Food aid began relatively early, in February, early enough for the most vulnerable households, whose food coverage does not extend beyond three months.

Food remained available in the households over periods of up to six or seven months; this helped to make the households secure and consolidate relationships of solidarity within and between households.

Women told interviewers that aid enabled them to enhance and diversify their IGAs, and to allocate income earned through those activities to food and non-food expenditures (clothing, health care, education, ceremonies, etc.). Some women said: 'Our husbands trust us more and inform us about everything they plan to do. That was not the case before'. Exchanges and confidences concerning cash for work activities, for instance, and using earnings to buy small ruminants, became more open for shared decision-making within the households.

Aid also helped to keep men at home, a fact that was also apparent among Fula and Tuareg households, since young men and women succeeded in finding work close to home.

Since around the time of the crisis of 2005, women adopted a new strategy of growing rainfed rice in ponds that had previously been used as watering holes for cattle. This seems to have led to inter-community conflicts between herders (like the Fula of Weidibangou) and sedentary peoples (the Zarma of Banibangou) over pond use. The conflict was handled by the commune which reserved certain ponds for pastoral activities in the presence of the different stakeholders.

It should be noted that certain ancestral forms of solidarity, such as those that consist of helping relatives in difficulty without them having to ask, or the sharing of belongings of direct relatives or relatives by marriage without having to obtain authorization, have disappeared. Today, such acts are socially sanctioned, since they are considered theft. The social norm governing community food security has been replaced by restricted household-level regulation. Indeed, preservation of food security within the household, or rather, prevention of successive incidences of food insecurity, motivates people to focus on 'individualistic' strategies and ignore the precarious situations of the people around them.

With the development of humanitarian aid, new forms of solidarity arose, based on sharing of visible assets:

- Sharing of food aid in kind (millet, rice, sorghum, etc.) with friends and relatives who did not receive aid.
- Sharing of workload between registered workers and those on the waiting list, enabled those who were not registered to be scheduled for work on their turns and gain food. People who are registered on the list (especially women) donate every other week of work to another person so that they can benefit from a week's rations.

This sort of mutual aid linked to food sharing is doubtless made necessary by the public nature of aid distribution. It can also be accounted for by expectations of reciprocity, whereby donations are made in the hope of a future return (in the logic of gift and counter-gift). Sharing of food or work is a practical measure that works well given the current realities, and sees all parties reap benefits. One of the major outcomes of this practice is a considerable reduction of hidden or visible mendacity.

Food aid has considerably reduced the flow of rural exodus among women and curbed mendacity. It has also made women more independent in their choices and in purchases, and thereby increased their involvement in decision making regarding food security.

As to the other advantages of aid, a man from Kayes spoke in the following terms: 'Everyone benefitted! For us, aid has improved the way we use inputs in the fields and allowed us to considerably increase cultivation; it has also allowed us to develop women's crafts and gardening' (H.B., Kayes, May 2013).

4.6 Female role models

The opinions of women who contribute to household expenditures are taken into account on an advisory basis when decisions are made within the household. Their level of training is an important factor influencing their access to the decision-making space.

Box 9: A woman leader from Banibangou Hausa

Our neighbourhood chief did not organize the distribution well. Women lined up with malnourished children and he proceeded with the distribution without checking whether or not they really came from our neighbourhood. I spoke up to stop the distribution, but nobody listened to me and I went to complain at the mayor's office, telling them that a good many of the women of our neighbourhood had not received food. Another redistribution took place, and it was much better organized and effectively covered all of the mothers concerned.

A woman leader from Banibangou Hausa

The appreciative inquiries carried out revealed that educated women are often leaders in women's associations; they effectively hold important positions in decision-making bodies. The extent to which they participated in community decision-making over food security was primarily determined by their level of education and leadership abilities, rather than the level of their contributions to household expenditures. Access to community decision-making spaces is therefore more available to women than access to the domestic decision-making space.

Women have contributed to food crisis management in a variety of ways. In a general sense, they participated directly in food provision by gathering food in the wild and through the sale of their property (clothing, livestock, and by-products). They also participated in cash for work activities, which enabled them to obtain cash and thereby gain access to food. It should be recalled that women are more involved in market garden production; it is also women who are responsible for improving the nutritional quality of meals and, indirectly, the health of their household. As described in the Section 4.1 women have demonstrated good management skills by regulating meal frequency and quantities, in order to ensure economical control over food.

In response to the 2012 food crisis, several organizations came to the aid of affected vulnerable households. Each of these organizations developed approaches and tools to provide aid for households. The people surveyed cited direct food aid as being most effective in cases of food crisis. Methods involving intermediaries between organizations and beneficiaries were deemed less effective, due to the risks of speculation in light of the beneficiaries' pressing need. Some of these methods, such as coupons to be exchanged for goods with local merchants, were included in aid responses even though they were recognized as making a positive contribution to strengthening the local economy. This type of method should therefore be appropriately monitored to ensure that the beneficiaries receive the goods without having to pay an additional cost for the transaction.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The approaches implemented in the framework of food aid have been progressively improved, making it possible to better reach the most vulnerable members of the population and more fairly target the households and communities concerned.

However, these approaches do not take account of the social changes taking place within households, which accompany the destabilization of rural production systems. The household no longer constitutes the unit of production and consumption, with rules that grant the sole responsibility for feeding the family to household heads alone.

The approaches used remain focused on identifying vulnerable households, as seen through the prism of old-fashioned social logic. Instead, modern approaches should systematically identify the individual responsible for food supplies within their households – generally women responsible for their households and women heads of households – and support them in their day-to-day efforts, at the risk of threatening their capacity for resilience. Women responsible for their households paradoxically have less access to natural resources and more responsibilities in their households. For instance, one of their principal responsibilities is to feed their households during the hungry season, which is becoming longer and extending beyond the rainy season (May to August), and sometimes even until the beginning of the dry, hot season (February, for the most vulnerable households).

The discrimination in the targeting of consumption sub-units is a result of the predominance of these social norms that continue to ignore this significant contribution by women, and the newly emergent norms that demand greater economic participation from good wives, particularly in terms of providing food. The persistent failure to reflect these new realities in food aid initiatives can be attributed to the fact that women are not involved in the decision-making bodies (village committees, in particular) that help to identify which women should be beneficiaries. How can women who are responsible for their households be more effectively targeted, without unduly disrupting cultural factors that can constitute social constraints?

This study offers elements for consideration that address women's reintegration into production systems, through:

- access to and, especially, control of factors of production (land and cattle);
- reinforcement of non-agricultural and non-pastoral activities to reduce dependence on the vagaries of the weather;
- reinforcement of social networks, which have always made a substantial contribution (in terms of self help groups, small scale microfinance) for women, who are viewed as a vulnerable segment of society.

Differentiation of approaches to food security is necessary in order to distinguish, community support that aims to attenuate the impact of food crises and that which aims to reinforce resilience, although this should not detract from a holistic approach. In addition, women should be full-fledged actors and participate in every stage of an inclusive approach to the targeting and support of food security.

Two cardinal principles for the implementation of the gender-sensitive approach are:

- accounting for transitional vulnerability and differential vulnerability between population groups;
- active participation of women leaders in activity design, planning, management, and evaluation.

5.1 Elements to be considered for gender-sensitive support in food crises

Where food crises are concerned, gender-sensitive support is a process that can be broken down into six distinct steps:

1. Designing activities for community implementation;
2. Selection of vulnerability criteria;
3. Targeting of vulnerable people;
4. Activity organization, planning, and implementation;
5. Crisis or emergency support;
6. Participatory evaluation of the process.

1. Designing activities for community implementation

This step requires a briefing meeting, prepared for in advance, during which the actors inform the population about their activities and gender-sensitive approach. The meeting must be attended by both women and men: leaders of associations, religious leaders, village chiefs, neighbourhood chiefs, or representatives, etc.

2. Selection of vulnerability criteria

Vulnerability is said to be transitional when it is short-lived (in times of crisis). It affects all households the same way. The majority of households have food coverage for fewer than three months. 'And when two or three crises occur in a row, who is not vulnerable? ... Should the less vulnerable people sell their belongings or go deeper into debt?', asked one neighbourhood chief. This situation may explain the misappropriation of foodstuffs by community leaders placed in charge of their free distribution.

The following are some examples of local practices intended to address common transitional vulnerability:

1. When he is excluded from distribution, a chief asks all the vulnerable people to gather up the shares they have received to redistribute the aid equally amongst all households, since all are presumed to be in need;
2. Certain people may give 'turns at work' to others at food for work or cash for work sites;
3. People who have received food spontaneously redistribute it to other people who have not received food. Such situations depend on an understanding of universal vulnerability at a specific moment in time. If nothing is done, repeated crises cumulatively generate a negative change in categories of vulnerability by increasing the percentage of vulnerable people in the population.

A food crisis can lead to widespread vulnerability. To avoid such a situation, differentiated support should be provided on a number of different levels, to ensure that people of varying vulnerability can cope with the crisis. A combination of actions such as sale of foods at reduced prices, food for work, and free distribution can respectively reach the 'transitionally' vulnerable, able-bodied vulnerable people, and vulnerable invalids destined for mendicity, for instance.

3. Targeting of vulnerable people

Because the household is a rather indistinct unit in relation to food security, targeting of consumption sub-units within households should be the priority approach used in order to reach family units and the real providers of grain in consumption sub-units. Preliminary work should be undertaken beforehand with the men and women of the communities concerned to identify the terms used to describe women who are responsible for their households, but whom are not recognized as heads of households (in Zarma: *Weyboro kanga windi djéré*, which means 'a woman who takes care of the household').

4. Activity organization, planning, and implementation

This phase involves the setting up of organization and management committees for women's and men's support. These may take the form of a women's committee composed of women chosen from among association leaders, women *ulemas*, or women role models from different neighbourhoods; the same applies to men's representation. In certain zones where Islam is highly prevalent, women's committees should be established and meeting spaces should be in keeping with socio-religious standards, to ensure that they are functional and operational.

Tasks of the committee: Organizing and planning activities, followed by implementation.

5. Crisis or emergency support

Two types of activities can be considered:

- a) Free distribution to all vulnerable consumption sub-units (one share = xx) and to those that are less vulnerable but also subject to the shock of the crisis (one half share = $xx/2$, for instance), during a period to be determined (CT). This makes it possible to maintain the existing system of gifts and counter-gifts; otherwise, the most vulnerable redistribute aid to those who ordinarily support them, and rapidly fall back into a food deficit situation. Indeed, they feel socially obliged to give back to the people who give to them on a regular basis and who have also had little or no harvests.
- b) Food for work, which may coincide with free distribution. This activity may concern all of the workers, while free distribution is oriented towards invalids (the handicapped, the elderly, women with more than five small children, etc.). Food for work seems to be a selective activity for the most vulnerable, and when vulnerable people are not recruited, it is often observed that others give them 'turns at work'. A system of regulation underlies this activity, which is perceived as a solid survival strategy.

Nota bene: it is essential to design separate activities for men (water and soil conservation/soil protection and restoration, road construction, etc.) and for women, with the latter focusing on production of seedlings in nurseries, planting and monitoring of seedlings, compost production, hygiene, and protection of seedlings. It is a good idea to organize contests to promote the most innovative experiences and those most likely to produce sustainable change.

6. Participatory evaluation of the process

This step involves the creation of several ad hoc evaluation committees for each activity (comprising civil servants, teachers, and other male and female local leaders, who are not members of the organization and planning committee, including chiefs or their representatives).

The principal tasks are:

- capitalizing on lessons learned, to be able to apply them during a future operation of the same kind;
- identifying inconsistencies in terms of non-compliance with the rules (favouritism, discrimination, etc.) and understanding the underlying reasons;
- acting locally to avoid errors (define local qualitative indicators to be achieved in humanitarian action).

In terms of approach, better gender mainstreaming by humanitarian aid actors is required. Indeed, omitting the gender dimension in humanitarian responses can perpetuate or even exacerbate existing disparities and increase food insecurity.

To improve the efficiency and positive impact of humanitarian action, it is necessary to involve women in the process of targeting vulnerable women and men, in choosing vulnerability criteria (for women and men), and in activity planning and organization.

Gender mainstreaming, and fighting economic poverty at the grassroots level, will help meet standards of gender inclusiveness in humanitarian response. In this regard, humanitarian organizations need to make specific, operational commitments to meet minimum standards of gender inclusion in emergency responses. This gender dimension will be mainstreamed in all programmes.

In order to better target emergency responses, baseline data should be systematically disaggregated by age, gender, and ethnicity, to enable a more nuanced appreciation of the differentiated effects and impacts of food and nutrition vulnerability. This will also make it possible to plan coaching and assistance activities to deal with specific concerns and risks pertaining to women and men of all ages and all origins.

5.2 Elements to be considered for gender-sensitive reinforcement of resilience

In order to address the underlying causes of food insecurity in these zones, it is important to ensure that men and women have equal access to production resources, means, and profits (credit, technical support for agricultural and pastoral production, sustainable access to land). In light of the migration of a high proportion of men, the workload and responsibilities devolving on women have grown significantly. Furthermore, women's already limited access to and control over land, water, and herds reduces their potential to help ensure their family's survival during the hungry season. Women's group representatives assert that, 'free distribution of food is certainly important in emergency situations, but with the growing trend towards chronic food deficit faced by the community, other self-sufficiency strategies should be envisaged to reinforce women's resilience'.

Support for sustainable agriculture

- Appropriate female facilitation (female staff) to master techniques that promote increased agricultural productivity (early sowing, compost, irrigated cultivation of cereals, rice, sorghum, maize, wheat, etc. and sowing of market gardens) in diminishing areas of arable land;
- Development of advocacy for the implementation of individual women's access to land in zones where possible (based on laws and customary or religious norms);
- Promotion of women's collective access to land (small groups of five to 10 women per plot, to make the activity profitable).

Support for livestock production

- Female facilitators;
- Dissemination of the most suitable races of small ruminants;
- Training of female para-veterinarians in caring for livestock, with access to a minimum stock of veterinary products;
- Production of food supplements based on available products.

Support for regeneration of the environment (food for work)

- Assisted natural regeneration and reforestation on housing sites and shared common areas;
- Sowing for quality pastures.

Support for sustainable local access to credit

- Improved tontines (MMD, a village savings and loan system based on tontines, or Village Savings and Loan Association) for women's groups based on equity to finance expenses linked to agricultural and pastoral production (purchasing of agricultural inputs, veterinary medicines, etc.), but also to promote IGAs, support social activities, and develop, within those spaces, a variety of women's empowerment actions (members or non-members, according to the terms defined by the groups).

Women's inclusion in village committees

Women's involvement in food supply issues will depend on the inclusion of women leaders – elected or appointed by women – in decision-making bodies, particularly village committees.

Capacity building for women (trainer training)

Capacity building for women should also be conducted through technical training activities to enable women to optimize their activities. Training of women trainers from the communities will guarantee a certain sustainability in terms of learning and application of knowledge.

These strategies for building resilience need to be accompanied by **research and development activities**, particularly on:

- control of certain predators such as processionary caterpillars and borers;
- biological control of *Sida cordifolia*, or any other species that destroys pastures;
- sowing of quality pastures suited to the environment;
- apprenticeships and a viable combination of IGAs that complement each other in terms of production, income availability, and sustainability (agricultural, pastoral, non-agricultural, and non-pastoral IGAs);
- initiation of new cereal banks to support women's living strategies after the granaries are empty in the dry season, which generally occurs early, long before the rainy season;
- selection of the seeds best suited to the rainfalls for market-garden and rainfed crops to promote high added-value crop production.

These activities should be appropriately implemented by local men and women, to be identified using a participatory approach. Coordinated strategies with exit routes to enable women to be self-sufficient as soon as support is ended are necessary additional measures. Capacity building for women and women's representation in decision-making bodies are also crucial measures to ensure their empowerment and to enable them to take charge of their own destiny.

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ANNEX: DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

Women's group: Historical profiles

Inventory and analysis of the perception of crises since 1984 if possible (indicate whether the perceptions were those of younger or older women).

Describe food crises

1. What important events have marked village life?
2. What different food crises have taken place in the past?
3. What do you remember about them (most important characteristics)?
4. How did people feel about them?
5. How were they different from each other?
6. How did you cope with them?
7. Which ones were particularly difficult to cope with (name three). Why?
8. What did you think about the external support received?
9. Which kinds were most appropriate (name three). Why?

Inventory and types of emergency responses

10. Did you receive aid following the crises?
11. From what sources?
12. What did it include?
13. How was it distributed (men/women)? by community? by village?
14. Who received aid? Who did not receive aid? How can aid best be provided (nature of aid and its management)?

Inventory of types of responses to food insecurity

15. What programmes and services are provided by national technical departments and civil society in terms of food security?
16. How have the programmes implemented by these entities taken account of the gender-differentiated impact of the crisis?
17. How have these programmes used women's decision-making capacities to reduce the impact of the crisis? (actions to increase access to land, inputs, water, etc.)
18. What strategies have been used to ensure equitable access to available resources for men and women?

Venn diagram

Factors determining decision making in farm management:

19. What modes of decision making are used in the households and in the study zones in general?
20. To what extent and under what conditions do the different social groups (men, women, girls, boys, young people, the elderly, etc.) participate in decision making and farm management?

21. Describe the types of relationships that exist between women and men in the household, and relations between households (and even between communities) with a view to achieving food security.
22. What is women's decision-making capacity in terms of production, income generation, and asset management and control?
23. What capacity do women have for decisions regarding and control over production, and more particularly food (production, sale of cattle, water...)
24. What decision-making capacity do women have regarding the management and control of factors of production (land, inputs, credit, information, technology...)
25. What is the impact of that capacity on their economic, familial, and social autonomy?
26. How can women's decision-making capacity be enhanced in terms of production, management, and control of household assets and food in particular?
27. What has been the impact of the food crisis on the principal social structures?
28. How has this impact affected the role, status, and responsibilities of men and women?

Appreciative inquiry/success

1. With women who have been successful in terms of participation in decision-making spaces
2. With women who have been successful in economic and food security terms

Women's focus group interview guide

I. Typology of family units

1. What types of family units exist in this community?
2. What are the socio-economic characteristics of the households in the research zones, taking care to distinguish between female-headed households and male-headed households (size, degree of vulnerability, etc.).
3. What are women's and men's roles and responsibilities (according to their age, ethnicity, religion, etc.) within these different units in terms of food security?
4. To what extent do women and men have access to (and control over) appropriate resources to fulfil these roles and responsibilities? What inequalities exist in this regard?
5. What are the specificities of the different units in terms of food vulnerability? (food vulnerability ranking as seen by women)

II. Household food security management trends

6. How was food security managed? (What measures were taken to ensure food security)? Who was in charge of managing food security?
7. What positive or negative changes have recently taken place in current food security management? (Who is in charge of managing food security?) What new measures are being taken to ensure effective management of food security?
8. What positive or negative changes have affected roles and responsibilities in the past?
9. What changes are currently taking place, for women and men?

III. Trends in access to factors of production

10. What types of production are there in the zone? What do men/women produce?
11. What are the productive resources mobilized by men/women?
12. What are the modes of access to land for men/women?
13. What are the quantitative and qualitative trends in production by men/women?

14. What changes have taken place in terms of women's and men's access to and control over land and essential production resources?

IV. New opportunities: survival and living strategies

15. What survival and living strategies were adopted by the different social groups (men, women, girls, boys, households) in the past to deal with food crises?
16. Do these strategies also vary according to the type of household (male household head or female household head, rich household or poor household)?
17. What new survival and living strategies have been developed by the different social groups (men, women, girls, boys, households) in reaction to the recent crises (notably 2012)?
18. How have these strategies affected the role, status, and responsibilities of men and women?
19. What have been the consequences of these strategies for the households in their day-to-day lives?
20. What impact has the food crisis had on the principal social structures outside of households?
21. What has been the difference (in terms of impact) between women heads of households and women living with their husbands?

V. Social consequences of new strategies

22. What positive or negative sociocultural changes have food crises generated at household and community levels?
23. What changes are desired (or dreaded) by women and by men?
24. What changes have taken place over the past 10 years in terms of management and control of assets (food) by women? What caused these changes?
25. What are the impacts of women's capacities in terms of production and management of household and community assets?
26. What is the role of women opinion leaders in decisions over community assets (food aid)?
27. What interpretation and application has been made of religious and/or traditional laws in the management of land and other productive assets? And in the management of foods produced or purchased?

VI. Bias in the logic of subsistence

28. How has the income from the sale of production (men/women) been used over the last three years?
29. What proportions of production are allocated to sale as opposed to consumption?
30. To what extent is that income ploughed back into food security (or not)?
31. Have persistent food crises and successive food deficits had an impact on the nature of living and survival strategies, or on their effectiveness?

VII. Successful women role models in terms of participation in decision making

32. Who are they (socio-demographic characteristics: age, social status, training, experience)?
33. What factors of success worked in favour of these women?
34. What constraints were encountered?
35. What changes have been observed in their social safety nets (different forms of solidarity between communities, between families, and within families)?

VIII. Successful women role models (women heads of households and women who are not heads of households) in terms of resilience

36. Who are they (socio-demographic characteristics: age, social status, training, experience)?
37. What factors of success worked in favour of these women?
38. What constraints were encountered?
39. To what extent have public services or actors influenced the capacities of these women?

Men's focus group interview guide

I. Typology of family units

1. What types of family units exist in this community?
2. What are the socio-economic characteristics of households in the research zones, taking care to distinguish between female-headed households and male-headed households (size, degree of vulnerability, etc.)?
3. What are women's and men's roles and responsibilities (according to their age, ethnicity, religion, etc.) within these different units in terms of food security?
4. To what extent do women and men have access to (and control over) appropriate resources to fulfil these roles and responsibilities? What inequalities exist in this regard?
5. What are the specificities of the different groups in terms of food vulnerability? (food vulnerability ranking as seen by men)

II. Household food security management trends

6. How was food security managed? (What measures were taken to ensure food security?) Who was in charge of managing food security?
7. What positive or negative changes have recently taken place in current food security management? (Who is in charge of managing food security?) What new measures are being taken to ensure proper management of food security?
8. What positive or negative changes have affected roles and responsibilities in the past?
9. What changes are currently taking place, for women and men?

III. Trends in access to factors of production

10. What types of production are there in the zone? What do men/women produce?
11. What are the productive resources mobilized by men/women?
12. What are the modes of access to land for men/women?
13. What are the quantitative and qualitative trends in production by men/women?
14. What changes have taken place in terms of women's and men's access to and control over land and essential production resources?

IV. New opportunities: survival and living strategies

15. What survival and living strategies were adopted by the different social groups (men, women, girls, boys, households) in the past to deal with food crises?
16. Do these strategies also vary according to the type of household (male household head or female household head, rich household or poor household)?
17. What new survival and living strategies have been developed by the different social groups (men, women, girls, boys, households) in reaction to the recent crises (notably 2012)?
18. How have these strategies affected the role, status, and responsibilities of men and women?

19. What have been the consequences of these strategies for households in their day-to-day lives?
20. What impact has the food crisis had on the principal social structures outside of households?
21. What has been the difference (in terms of impact) between women heads of households and women living with their husbands?

V. Social consequences of new strategies

22. What positive or negative sociocultural changes have food crises generated at household and community levels?
23. What changes are desired (or dreaded) by women and by men?
24. What changes have taken place over the past 10 years in terms of management and control of assets (food) by women? What caused these changes?
25. What are the impacts of women's capacities in terms of production and management of household and community assets?
26. What is the role of women opinion leaders in decisions over community assets (food aid)?
27. What interpretation and application has been made of religious and/or traditional laws in the management of land and other productive assets, and in the management of foods produced or purchased?

VI. Bias in the logic of subsistence

28. How has the income from the sale of production (men/women) been used over the last three years?
29. What proportions of production are allocated to sale as opposed to consumption?
30. To what extent is that income ploughed back into food security (or not)?
31. Have persistent food crises and successive food deficits had an impact on the nature of living and survival strategies, or on their effectiveness?

VII. Successful male role models in terms of resilience

32. Who are they? (socio-demographic characteristics: age, social status, training, experience)
33. What factors of success worked in favour of these men?
34. What constraints were encountered?
35. To what extent have public services or actors influenced the capacities of these men?

Youth focus group interview guide (girls and boys)

I. Typology of family units

1. What types of family units exist in this community?
2. To what extent do women and men have access to (and control over) appropriate resources to fulfil these roles and responsibilities? What inequalities exist in this regard?
3. What are the specificities of the different units in terms of food vulnerability? (food vulnerability ranking as seen by young people)

II. Household food security management trends

4. How was food security managed? (What measures were taken to ensure food security?) Who was in charge of managing food security?

5. What positive or negative changes have recently taken place in current food security management? (Who is in charge of managing food security?) What new measures are being taken to ensure proper management of food security?
6. What changes are currently taking place, for women and men?

III. Trends in access to factors of production

7. What types of production are there in the zone? What do men/women produce?
8. What are the productive resources mobilized by men/women?
9. What are the modes of access to land for men/women?
10. What are the quantitative and qualitative trends in production by men/women?
11. What changes have taken place in terms of women's and men's access to and control over land and essential production resources?

IV. New opportunities: survival and living strategies

12. What survival and living strategies were adopted by the different social groups (men, women, girls, boys, households) in the past to deal with food crises?
13. Do these strategies also vary according to the type of household (male household head or female household head, rich household or poor household)?
14. What new survival and living strategies have been developed by the different social groups (men, women, girls, boys, households) in reaction to the recent crises (notably 2012)?
15. What have been the consequences of these strategies for households in their day-to-day lives?
16. What impact has the food crisis had on the principal social structures outside of households?

V. Bias in the logic of subsistence

17. How has the income from the sale of production (men/women) been used over the last three years?
18. What proportions of production are allocated to sale as opposed to consumption?
19. To what extent is that income ploughed back into food security (or not)?
20. Have persistent food crises and successive food deficits had an impact on the nature of living and survival strategies, or on their effectiveness?

VI. Successful role models in terms of resilience

21. Who are they (socio-demographic characteristics: age, social status, training, experience)?
22. What factors of success have worked in their favour?
23. To what extent have public services or actors worked in their favour, or not?

Quantitative data collection questionnaires

Women's questionnaire

1. What are men's principal economic activities in this village?
2. What are women's principal economic activities?
3. How is the decision made as to what crops are planted in the fields?
4. What is the division of labour in the fields?
5. How is the harvest distributed?

6. Who makes the final decision as to the use of the harvest?
7. What is the status of land in your village?
8. Can individuals own land or does it belong to the community as a whole?
9. How is arable land distributed in the village?
10. Where is women's land located in relation to men's land?
11. How did you feel about the 2012 food crisis in your village? in your household?
12. What services or aid have you received to cope with the crisis?
13. What was the level of losses in terms of the harvest?
14. What was the impact of the crisis on the role of women in your household? in your village?
15. How did you cope with the crisis?
16. How can we best ensure women's involvement in the response to similar crises in future?

Men's questionnaire

1. What are men's principal economic activities in this village?
2. How is the decision made as to what crops are planted in the fields?
3. What is the division of labour in the fields?
4. How is the harvest distributed?
5. Who makes the final decision as to the use of the harvest?
6. What is the status of land in your village?
7. Can individuals own land or does it belong to the community as a whole?
8. How is arable land distributed in the village?
9. How did you feel about the 2012 food crisis in your village? in your household?
10. What services or aid have you received to cope with the crisis?
11. What was the impact of the crisis on the role of men in your household? in your village?
12. What was the impact of the crisis on the role of women in your household? in your village?
13. How did you cope with the crisis?
14. How can we best ensure women's involvement in the response to similar crises in future?

Household questionnaire

1. Country
2. City
3. Location
4. Name of the head of the household
5. Gender of the head of the household

6. Age of the head of the household
7. Level of education of the head of the household
8. Principal occupation of the head of the household
9. Number of people in the household
10. Coverage of food needs in the household in 2010?
11. Coverage of food needs in the household in 2011?
12. Coverage of food needs in the household in 2012?
13. Do you remember last year's food crisis?
14. What services or aid did you receive in your household to cope with it?
15. What survival strategies were adopted during the food crisis?
 - a) Sale of non-productive assets
 - b) Loans from friends or relatives
 - c) Loans from pawnbrokers
 - d) Migration of family members
 - e) Sale of livestock
 - f) Consumption of seeds
 - g) Taking children out of school
 - h) Reducing meal quantities
 - i) Reducing meal frequency
 - j) Other: specify
16. How long were these strategies implemented?
17. What enabled you to get through the crisis?

Questionnaire for development organization staff

- Country
- Organization
- Zones of intervention
- What programmes and services did you provide in terms of food security?
- How did the programmes you implemented respond in a gender-differentiated manner to the impact of the crisis on women and men?
- How did these programmes take advantage of women's existing capacities to reduce the impact of the crisis?
- What strategies did you use to ensure that men and women had equitable access to available resources?
- What are the principal priority strategic areas to be taken into account in specific programmes, measures, and services in order to help women and men improve household food security?

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