Escaping the Hunger Cycle
Pathways to Resilience in the Sahel
Why this Research and Advocacy Initiative?

What has to change so that each new shock in the Sahel, (which occur with increasing frequency) does not trigger an acute humanitarian crisis?

The study draws from data obtained from:

- a review of literature, reports and documents
- interviews with over 70 key informants (Europe, Sahel)
- participants of workshops in Niamey and N’Djaména
- 60 men and women in areas of Niger and Chad most affected by the 2010 crisis.
What is the Problem?

- **Food crises occur more frequently** in the Sahel (i.e., 2005, 2007-08, 2010).

- Responses often limited to costly and unsustainable emergency relief and food aid.

- “Beyond Any Drought” report (2007) by SWG highlighted the problem of chronic vulnerability

**Question:** How to address the **structural causes of chronic vulnerability**?
A Growing Humanitarian Crisis

Acute Dimension

In 2010, more than 10 million people in the Sahel suffered from an acute food crisis in the Sahel. Main coping mechanisms included:

• Reduction of number of daily meals
• Sales of assets at reduced prices to buy grain
• Migration and Remittances
• Resort to eating wild berries, leaves, and digging out ant hills for grain

Chronic Dimension

• A third of the population of Chad is chronically undernourished
• In Niger, more than 50 % of the population suffer from chronic food insecurity, with 22 % of the population extremely food insecure
Chronic nature of Child Malnutrition

Pathways to Resilience in the Sahel

Survey Data compiled by ECHO indicates that national averages for Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) often exceeds the WHO Emergency threshold of 2% in the Sahel.

National surveys estimate 300,000 children are suffering from SAM in the Sahel yearly.
Progress since 2005:

• Which lessons learnt from 2005 have been applied in longer term development programming and in the humanitarian response of 2009-10?
• What has been learned about how to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable groups?
Agro-ecology and re-greening

- Many documented examples of successful diversified and productive **agro-ecological farming systems** which integrate food production, trees and livestock
- Techniques include **zaï planting pits**, **rock bunds** on the contour, farmer managed natural regeneration (**FMNR**) - **agro-forestry**.

Zaï planting pits  
Rock barriers on contour
Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration/Re-greening

The town of Galma

1975

2003


Source: USGS EROS

Pathways to Resilience in the Sahel
Re-greening by farmers in Zinder (about 1 million ha) dominated by *Faidherbia Albida*
Improved Support for pastoralism

Challenges faced by Pastoralists and their way of life:
Efforts to “modernise” land tenure, privatize pasture land and establish ranches
Programs aimed at settling pastoralists which undermined traditional systems for managing water, pasture and conflict

Evidence of change?
• Pastoral codes protecting rights and livelihoods (Niger, Mali)
• well planned systems for pastoral wells to enable mobility
• disaster risk reduction (DRR) initiatives in pastoral areas
• use of satellite images of pasture and water for EWS (Mali)
Integrating Disaster Risk Reduction

• Since 2005, many international NGOs working in the Sahel made significant changes in *strategy, structure, staffing, policies, funding, advocacy and coordination* to promote DRR.

• Assessments show that *the sustainability of DRR activities* required a longer-term engagement with communities, to build up local assets and local capacity.

• In 2009, DRR was 4% of global humanitarian funding compared to 1% of funding in 2005. But is still greatly underfunded since it falls between relief and development pots of money.
Cash Transfers

- The Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) is a learning network of NGOs that aims to improve the quality of cash and voucher transfer programming across the humanitarian sector.

According to CaLP Niger:
- The total number of families served with cash or vouchers in 2010 exceeded 165,000, or over 1 million people (7% of the population).
- Fifteen different agencies in Niger used cash/ vouchers in response to the food and nutrition crisis of 2010. This was a rapid, exponential increase since 2005.

Social Protection

Based on the experience of several NGOs, the Niger government and World Bank are institutionalising a permanent cash transfer program of 10,000 CFA ($25) a month directly to chronically poor households in order to prevent/overcome food and nutrition insecurity
Prevention of under-nutrition

Global Acute Malnutrition is an emergency issue even when there is no drought. A reactive response means being locked into long-term operations with no clear exit. This has caused the approach to malnutrition to begin changing drastically:

- **Treatment of moderately malnourished children** before they slip into the severely malnourished category with supplementary Ready to Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF)

- **Exemption of user fees for basic healthcare services** for children under five years and lactating and pregnant women (through third party payment) in Burkina and Niger

- **Use of direct cash transfers to prevent malnutrition**

- **Child malnutrition is much higher in very poor households who cannot afford nutritious food**. Key actors providing cash to targeted households to research which underlying causes of malnutrition are amenable to being resolved with cash.

- **A more comprehensive approach to prevent chronic and acute malnutrition** includes improved feeding practices, livelihoods, water, hygiene and sanitation.

According to Jan Egeland, the former UN Humanitarian Coordinator, after early warning in Oct 2004, it would have cost $1 a day per child to prevent acute malnutrition among children. By July 2005, the cost of treatment in an emergency operation was $80.10 per day per child.
Improved analysis for program design

**Household Economy Assessments (HEA)** 20 in depth HEA case studies conducted across Sahel show profound shifts in livelihoods and insights for aid:

- Growing inequality in the same communities: wealthier households generate 9 to 15 times the revenue compared to poorer households.
- Poor households, even in rural areas, **buy most of their food on the local markets**.
- Food crises are more crises of **purchasing power and livelihoods** than availability of food.

**The integrated food security and humanitarian phase classification (IPC)**

- Adapted by CILSS into the Cadre Harmonisé Bonifié;
- CHB upgraded and tested with real data in Niger, Mauritania and Senegal
- FEWS Net has adopted IPC as its global standard

**Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transition (SMART)**

- Increasing use by international agencies in Sahel supported by ECHO
- Makes child nutritional status and mortality rates more central to assessments of food crises.
Challenges to overcome on the Pathways to Resilience in the Sahel

• What was ineffective in the humanitarian response in 2010? Why?
• What challenges limited the effectiveness of development policies and practice since 2006? Why?
• What are the obstacles to change for different actors?
Excerpts: NIGER Food Security Alert: Oct 27, 2009

“After a late start and early dry spells, Niger’s 2009 rainfed cropping season ended early... 50-60 percent yield declines ....

Food assistance needs are expected to be large and to begin earlier than normal.

Yet government procurement plans are insufficient, and the WFP pipeline is limited. To address likely food deficits in 2010, affected areas need immediate assistance...”
But the crisis response in 2010 was too little too late. It failed to protect livelihoods and assets of vulnerable households.
Challenge: Fixing early warning and rapid response

- Multiple EWS by different agencies

- Outdated Model of Prediction: A bias in equating food security with cereal production fails to consider food access, or purchasing power of poor households

- Monitoring of vulnerability often fails to extend below the level of districts.

- Assessing vulnerability for marginalised categories of people on the move

- Little investment in strengthening local capacity for EWS and response at community and decentralised government level

- Insufficient attention to needs of Pastoralists and migrants to urban areas
Challenge: Doing Aid Better

- Reliance on in-kind food assistance: concept of protecting livelihoods assets through cash transfers not yet mainstreamed
- Targeting emergency aid
- Inadequate integration of humanitarian and development work: not responding to acute food needs in the context of chronic and long-term resilience
- Insufficient focus on DRR and nutrition: Neither are being mainstreamed
- Continued focus of development aid for Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS) on neo-liberal principles and still weak in addressing vulnerability of poorest households.
- Small scale farmers living on marginal lands largely neglected, as are sustainable agricultural strategies.

Pathways to Resilience in the Sahel
Improving governance is a key challenge for strengthening resilience.

- The 2010 food crisis in the Sahel illustrated the supreme importance of the crisis being recognised by national authorities to enable a robust, early response that protects livelihoods and productive assets.

- **State fragility:** Analysis of 2009-10 situation in Chad highlighted a host of long term policy failures to prevent or manage a food crisis, linked to governance.

- The institutional capacity and strategies of donor and UN agencies are not sufficiently robust to address the long term, difficult challenge of governance.

- International guidelines of how to engage with fragile states are not being well applied in the Sahel.
HEA data indicated there is a much higher level of malnutrition in poorer, as compared to better off households. Poorer households buy 60% or more of their food on the local markets.
Controlling high prices and volatility (continued)

• Review of the market dimensions of the 2010 food crisis in Chad made clear that highly vulnerable households cannot depend on markets to ensure food availability or prevent extremely high prices.

• Markets respond to demand, not to need.

• As long as no mechanism for market regulation and control of price volatility is in place, the current national systems of prevention and mitigation of food crises in the Sahel will remain undersized and ineffective.

• In face of high prices and market failures, the impact of investments in DRR, and potential use of social protection mechanisms, will also be limited.
What needs to change for strengthened resilience?

Recommendations

Pathways to Resilience in the Sahel
What has to Change for Resilience?

- **Vulnerability context**
  - **Shocks**
    - Droughts
    - Floods
    - Locusts
    - Conflict
  - **Trends**
    - Climate change
    - Population growth
    - Food prices
    - Environment
    - Soil fertility
  - **Seasonality**

- **Changes in livelihood strategies and practices**
  - **Adaptive capacity**
    - Protect or increase household assets
      - Early response to alerts (IPC)
      - Social protection
      - DRR/Early warning
      - Agro-ecology & Pastoralism
      - Multi-sector initiative to fight malnutrition
      - Increased food reserves

- **Increased resources and capacity of state institutions**

- **Adapted approach to aid (Sahel)**
  - Longer term
  - Infrastructures
  - Family planning services
  - Education & literacy

- **Changed institutions, processes and programmes**
  - Strengthen governance & political leadership to address chronic food insecurity
  - Strengthen civil society and associations participation in platforms & advocacy
  - Linkages to social movements
  - Framework for market regulation
What has to Change for Resilience?

• Change the vision of what is “normal” and what is an “emergency crisis” in the Sahel

• Use a more diversified approach (beyond food aid), to ensure more rapid, relevant and appropriate types of support for managing chronic and seasonal food insecurity.

• Better adapt and apply Donor Policies and Practices to the Sahel:
  - “Preventing the significant loss of livelihood assets” (SPHERE)
  - international principles for strengthening governance and working with fragile states.

• Strengthen the capacity of Civil Society, local NGOs, local government and communities for strengthening resilience, and advocate for supportive policies

Pathways to Resilience in the Sahel
What is happening today in the Sahel?

FEWS Net: Outlook from July to December 2011
The english and french reports can be found at

http://community.eldis.org/sahelworkinggroup