

Food and nutrition response to the 2012 Sahel crisis

Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and The Gambia

Overview

- To date, **harvest has started in most locations**, and overall, crop prospects are favorable. Nevertheless, communities remain weakened after months of hardship during a lean season that was longer and more difficult than usual. The drought that affected the Sahel this year had **exacerbated an already difficult situation** among communities that had little time to recover from the past crises in 2009/2010 and 2005.
- Even though through the crisis response, **nutrition and food security indicators may have improved** (following initial analysis) in certain areas, **they remain at unacceptably high levels**.
- Therefore, concerted and multi-sectoral action is needed **to address the root causes of food and nutrition insecurity** to strengthen communities' **resilience** to future shocks.
- **During the lean season when needs were greatest, WFP supported between five and six million people** each month. These activities were in addition to mitigation activities carried out prior to the lean season. In **September alone, 6.1 million** people were reached.
- To date, **activities are gradually shifting** to longer term interventions.
- **Crop assessments will be conducted in all Sahel countries by CILSS/FAO/WFP/FEWSNET** by the end of October.



Nutrition screening in health centre, Niger.
WFP/Anne Poulsen

Mali crisis:

- The Mali crisis has triggered **additional and complex needs** among displaced and host populations in Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, where communities were already weakened by this year's drought. The operational context in Northern Mali remains challenging, and is increasingly becoming so in the neighbouring countries.
- Over **200,000 people are displaced in Mali**, and some **200,000 fled** to Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger
- **WFP support so far:** In response to these additional needs, WFP has so far supported over **200,000 refugees, 74,000 IDPs and 182,000 non-displaced conflict affected people** in Northern Mali.
- **The Regional EMOP** (assistance to IDPs and Malian refugees) initially planned to support up to 555,000 people in Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, and is currently being reviewed for extension into 2013; figures will be revised in view of the current situation and scenarios for the next months.
- **Funding:** Critical funding gaps remain for the Regional Emergency Operation to provide urgent food and nutrition assistance to displaced people (shortfalls until December amount 25 percent or US\$19.5 million). In view of the upcoming extension, requirements will further increase.
- **The risk of locust invasion** continues to be monitored and control operations are being carried out mainly in Niger and Chad. Swarms are expected to migrate further north and north-west with the end of the rainy season.

Overviews

Lean season activities - unconditional targeted food and cash/voucher distributions as well as blanket supplementary feeding programmes – are about to come to an end in most areas as focus is shifting to longer term activities addressing root causes, strengthening people’s resilience to future crisis.

In September, WFP has supported 6.1 million people through food and nutrition activities. Throughout the lean season, **WFP has supported each month between five and six million people through its nutrition and food security activities¹**. This was the period when needs were greatest and the risk for vulnerable groups (including children under 5 years and pregnant women and nursing mothers) to fall into acute malnutrition were highest. Under the activities aiming at preventing and treating moderate acute malnutrition, **WFP saw between one and 1.5 million children and women attend health centres and distributions sites** for their nutritious food rations each month. Through **targeted food/cash based assistance, five million people** were supported in September alone. **90,000 people were supported through food for work**; this activity will be further scaled up in the coming months as unconditional assistance is phasing down.

Although communities are just starting to recover from this year’s crisis and remain weakened - harvest has begun in most areas - a positive impact of these activities has already been noted in some areas, and surveys being finalized have confirmed that in Niger for example, GAM rates have overall improved in areas where the preventive programmes were implemented (with localized exceptions). Undoubtedly, early preparedness and action among concerned actors have been positively contributing to these results.

Nevertheless, despite the above improvement, malnutrition rates remain unacceptably high, generally classified as ‘serious’ in most regions of the Sahel. Therefore, in order to achieve a durable reduction in these rates and to observe a positive impact on these children’s livelihoods in the long-term, **continued and concerted efforts are needed by all actors beyond this crisis response to support nutrition and food security activities in the Sahel - alongside efforts contributing to resilience to future shocks.**

Assessments to determine levels of food insecurity and nutrition are being conducted in all Sahel countries in the coming weeks in close collaboration with governments and partners, in order to shape the upcoming phase of the response after the harvest. **CILLS/FAO/WFP and FEWSNET are conducting crop assessments in all 17 countries of the region**; joint missions in the Sahel countries will be carried out end of October/early November, and results will be presented at the PREGEC meeting on 19 – 21 November.

Concurrently, post-distribution monitoring surveys (PDM) are being conducted/finalized to evaluate activities implemented so far. A series of SMART surveys are being carried out/were carried out to contribute to the understanding of the nutrition situation.

Food security

In September, food security activities were in their final stages of implementation while preparing for the transition from typical lean season activities to longer term food-for-work activities. WFP food security activities are seasonally timed, aligned with communities’ agricultural calendars and tailored to specific livelihood zones and groups.

- **Under unconditional activities**, critical during the lean season when it is most difficult for families to ensure an adequate quantity and quality of meals for all household members, **WFP supported three million people through targeted food distributions**; in addition, 1.8 million people were provided with cash/voucher transfers in areas where markets were functional. Furthermore, over 200,000 people displaced following the Mali crisis (internally displaced people in Mali and refugees in Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) were supported with vital food and nutrition support.
- Alongside these activities, **90,000 people participated in food-for-work activities in Senegal, Chad and Mali**. These activities will be further scaled up in the coming weeks, when rural communities’ involvement in agricultural activities is decreasing.

¹ People may participate in one or more activities over several months, so numbers should not be added up. The total of 8 million mentioned here is the consolidated total excluding double-counting.

- **Heavy rains across the region led to the growth of crops and pasture**, but also resulted in localised flooding, causing the destruction of homes and the inundation of fields. In Burkina Faso, Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Senegal, this situation has most affected WFP operations. WFP has provided assistance to affected populations as possible and needed.

Nutrition

In the Sahel where malnutrition rates are above emergency levels even in non-crisis periods, the hardship during the lean season puts the lives of many children at risk. Therefore, preventive nutrition assistance through blanket supplementary feeding, as well as treatment for those already suffering from moderate acute malnutrition was vital for millions of children and pregnant women and nursing mothers.

- In September, WFP provided 1.1 million people with such assistance; during the previous months of the lean season, 1.5 million beneficiaries were supported each month.
- More specifically, nearly 900,000 children and pregnant women and nursing mothers in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger and The Gambia received nutritious foods through the blanket supplementary feeding programme to prevent acute malnutrition.
- Alongside this programme, over 500,000 children and pregnant women and nursing mothers were provided with nutritious products to treat moderate acute malnutrition under the targeted supplementary feeding programme, implemented all year round, but scaled-up during the lean season in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal.
- While preliminary indications confirm that GAM rates have improved in some locations where preventive nutrition activities were implemented, they still remain high. In Niger for example, post distribution monitoring (PDM) revealed that Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rates observed among beneficiaries of the blanket supplementary feeding programme indicate a significant improvement in their nutritional status, decreasing from 20.8% in June to 14.0% at the time of the second PDM exercise in August. For the assisted children, rates no longer surpass the WHO emergency threshold of 15%. The regions of Maradi and Zinder remain of concern, reporting rates of 16.4% and 19.8% respectively.
- As these rates still remain unacceptably high despite the above improvement, continued nutrition support and multisectorial efforts are needed to address the persistently high malnutrition rates in the Sahel. Eventually, improved nutrition among children is expected to contribute positively to their livelihoods and health when they are adults, hence rendering them more resilient to shocks.



MUAC screening under blanket supplementary feeding programme in Kayes region, Mali. WFP/Margit Bach.

Operational highlights of food and nutrition assistance in October

Nutrition

Burkina Faso:

- Over the past two weeks, WFP provided nutritional support to 48,157 children with blanket feeding and 16,477 children and 5,052 nursing mothers through targeted supplementary feeding activities. Due to poor road conditions, the blanket feeding delivery and distribution was delayed in certain districts.

Cameroon:

- The rising water levels of the Logone River continue to have a severe effect on the residents of surrounding villages and neighborhoods. Initial estimations assert that as many as 8,238 people are affected by these increasing water levels in the Kousseri district.

- Over the last week, WFP and its distribution partners have provided food assistance to 5,306 men and 5,200 women (1,472 households). Thus far in October, WFP has provided targeted supplementary feeding to 1,406 children, 666 women, and blanket supplementary feeding to 8,565 children and 4,582 women.

Mali:

- In the South of the country, the last round of blanket supplementary feeding to drought affected populations was completed in September for 104,700 children aged 6 to 23 months and 37,700 pregnant and lactating women.
- In the North, blanket supplementary feeding continues for children aged 6 to 59 months as well as pregnant and lactating women. The increased child age group (from 6-23 months to 6-59 months) has been decided based on the fact that full functionality of the health centers cannot be assured. This will allow for protection of the most vulnerable against acute malnutrition. During the month of September, in the occupied North, 22,600 children aged 6-59 months have been assisted as well as 9,700 pregnant and lactating women.

Niger:

- WFP is reviewing its performance of the nutrition activities in 2012 to integrate lessons learned into future programmes, a meeting for this purpose was held in Zinder. Preparations for the targeted supplementary feeding programme in 2013 were launched, and partners for these activities are being selected.
- The preliminary results of the BSF coverage survey were presented on Friday 19 October internally, and will be shared with partners after integration of the final inputs.

Food security

Burkina Faso:

- Nearly 180,000 beneficiaries were supported with cash transfers and 450,000 people with food rations in the past two weeks. However, the delivery of food in Komondjari, in the East of Burkina Faso, was delayed over due to impassable roads to the distributions sites resulting from heavy rains. At the height of the rainy season, SO Fada used local motorbikes to overcome the inaccessibility in the same district.

Mali

- With the opening of the 2012/2013 school year, Emergency School Feeding is about to start in 290 schools in southern Mali, in communes identified by the Early Warning System as food insecure and hosting displaced populations.
- Resilience building activities such as food for assets continue throughout the five southern regions with more than 100,000 participants.



Mauritania:

- The Country Office has successfully tested a new system for the collection of data using Smart Phones. This system will be used for the next operations conducted by the country office.
- A meeting with the African Risk Capacity (ARC) of the African Union was held this week in the presence of Ambassadors and the Mauritanian government to identify how index insurance and contingency financing can better contribute to the management of drought crises in Mauritania and the Sahel. This could inform a future disaster management policy in the country.

Niger

- WFP Niger participated in events organized for the World Food Day in Tillaberi.
- UNHAS Niger has organized a first special flight to Arlit on Thursday 11th October for the EU delegation in Niamey, for the opening of the project of rehabilitation of the new hospital of Arlit (funded by the European Fund for Development). Arlit, located in the extreme north of Niger, is not part of the UNHAS Niger regular schedule and it was the first time that one of our aircraft had to land to this remote locality.
- UNHAS Niger maintain its' monthly flight to Dirkou. This month, UNHAS Niger has supported the NGO Helen Keller International to transport and deliver 3 mt of medicine to this oasis located at 400 km from the Libyan border.

Resourcing

Under the Sahel response (Regional Response Framework for the Sahel), US\$703 million have been resourced of the total requirements of US\$888 million. Current shortfalls amount to US\$186.4 million (21%); in view of upcoming budget revisions of most projects included under this response, the needs are however expected to increase.

WFP is grateful for the critical support provided to the Sahel region by multilateral donors, as well as of African Union, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, the European Commission, Finland, France, Gambia, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Republic of Korea, Romania, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) and the United States.

- Critical funding gaps remain for the Regional Emergency Operation 200438 covering Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Niger to enable WFP to provide urgent food and nutrition assistance to the Malian IDPs and refugees fleeing the conflict in Northern Mali. The operation is funded at 75 percent (US\$59 million), requiring an additional US\$19.5 million (US\$ 78.9 million total requirements) through December 2012. However, in view of the upcoming extension, requirements will further increase.
- Special logistics operations are instrumental to procure and dispatch large volumes of humanitarian assistance to people. WFP calls on its partners to strengthen their support as Sahel logistics operations require some US\$9 million until the end of the year.
- Following on the lean season, in Niger, WFP is transitioning from life-saving relief under EMOP 200398 (April-September 2012), to livelihood recovery and nutrition treatment activities under PRRO 200051. WFP will gradually scale-up post-harvest cash and food-for-work activities for very poor households and expand ongoing targeted supplementary feeding activities for children with moderate acute malnutrition and for malnourished pregnant women and nursing mothers. Pipeline shortfalls till June 2013 amount to some US\$180 million.

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