



SAVING  
LIVES  
CHANGING  
LIVES

# Evidence from WFP's Integrated Resilience Programme in the Sahel

## Equipping Communities to Withstand Food Crises

In a context of recurrent shocks, persistent stressors and structural vulnerabilities, WFP is committed to seizing opportunities to **build the resilience of individuals, communities, and systems** and address the root causes of vulnerability. Transformational long-term programmes are crucial to **prevent and mitigate crises, reduce humanitarian needs over time, and pave the way**

**towards sustainable solutions to hunger and malnutrition.** In the Sahel, the Integrated Resilience Programme is one of **WFP's strongest tools** to do that, as demonstrated by the evidence presented below. Sustaining investments in the programme is key to **tackling the 2022 food security and nutrition crisis** in the Sahel.

March 2022



## 8 Positive Outcomes of the Integrated Resilience Programme in the Sahel

### 1. BENEFICIARIES ARE BETTER EQUIPPED TO WITHSTAND SEASONAL SHOCKS AND STRESSORS AND ARE THUS LIKELY TO BE LESS AFFECTED BY THE 2022 FOOD CRISIS IN THE SAHEL

Data from our monitoring systems and evidence collected in the field suggests that households and communities that participate in the integrated resilience programme are **less affected by seasonal variations in food security**. For instance, survey data collected from resilience beneficiaries shows that food consumption indicators such as the **Food Consumption Score (FCS) have remained stable or improved between the post-harvest period and the lean season** in most years and countries. Usually, a seasonal deterioration of food security outcomes would be expected by the time the lean season approaches and food stocks begin to dwindle – this is also confirmed by the Cadre Harmonisé results, which indicate that in all WFP intervention areas, the number of food insecure people among the wider population increased significantly during the lean season over the past 3 seasons (2018/19 to 2020/21). It thus appears that, **compared to the general population, WFP beneficiaries have an increased capacity to withstand seasonal shocks and stressors**.

### 2. ASSISTED COMMUNITIES HAVE AN IMPROVED ACCESS TO KEY NATURAL RESOURCES AS WELL AS INCREASED AGRICULTURAL AND/OR PASTORAL PRODUCTIVITY

Resilience beneficiaries, who often have limited or no access to productive land, report that **WFP's asset creation activities have significantly increased their agricultural and/or pastoral production**. For instance, on a site in Mauritania, communities report that the **coverage of their food stocks has increased from 3-4 months to over 7 months**. This is corroborated by data collected through WFP's monitoring systems: **on average, households were able to cover at least one more month of food consumption in 2020 compared to 2019**, and more than three quarters of households stated that the assets created have improved the production potential through improved water management and soil fertility.

*Photo: Aerial view of a dam at the site of Djerbe, Chad. Through Food Assistance for Assets (FFA) activities, WFP supported the community in building a dam. Finalized in 2021, it enables 700 households to grow rice and vegetables, provides water for livestock, and recharges the water table downstream. Credit: WFP/Evelyn Fey*



“I had never seen such production in my life: before the introduction of the zai, our fields were completely degraded, and we could hardly produce. Before we harvested 100 to 200 kg per hectare. Now we are able to harvest up to 1 ton per hectare. The results were so impressive that even other community members, who had not participated in FFA, saw the benefits and started to replicate zai pits in their own fields as well as composting, asking us to teach them the techniques.”

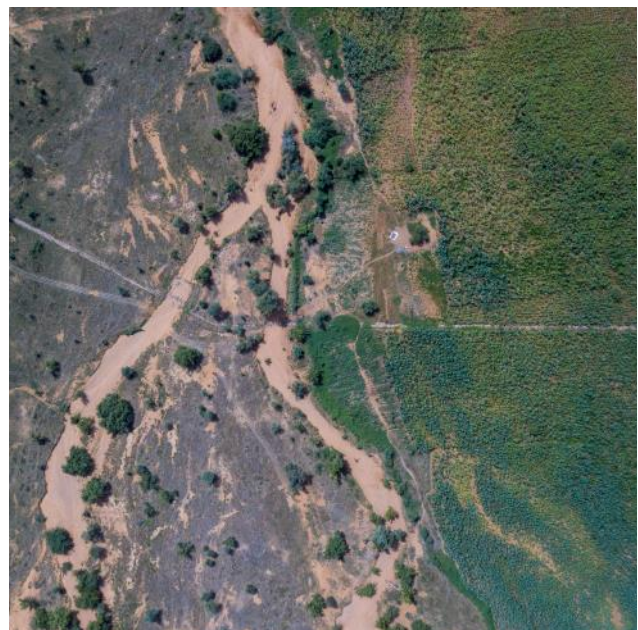
— Moussa Abdoulaye, a 28-year-old father of three children from the Maradi region in Niger

### 3. BENEFICIARIES AND THEIR LIVELIHOODS ARE BETTER PROTECTED AGAINST NATURAL DISASTERS AND THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE, AND BENEFIT FROM NATURAL REGENERATION

Between **75-80% of beneficiary households found that the assets created or rehabilitated in their communities contribute to the protection of their household**, their belongings, and their production capacities (fields, equipment, etc.) against the impacts of floods and/or droughts, and **over 70% of households**

**indicated improvements in their natural environment** thanks to the improvement of soil fertility and its effects. These findings are also confirmed by **satellite-based analyses conducted in collaboration with USAID and NASA**, which show how on 18 intervention sites in Niger satellite-derived **vegetation indices post-intervention were 55% higher as compared to previous years, and 25% higher than in nearby non-intervened areas**. WFP’s support might thus have helped **mitigate the poor performance of the 2021 rainy season** in its intervention areas, and **limited crop losses for assisted communities**. **Rehabilitated lands also serve as carbon sinks**: together with the Aghrymet Regional Center, a specialized institute of CILSS, WFP in Niger has measured the carbon sequestration potential of land rehabilitation activities implemented as part of the integrated resilience approach and found that on average, each hectare of rehabilitated land sequestered 6 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per year. The **190,000 hectare rehabilitated by WFP Niger** between 2014 and 2021 plus the estimated additional land which will be rehabilitated until 2030 **amounts to over 20 million tons CO<sub>2</sub>** sequestered over the period 2014-2030, **representing over 60% of Niger’s greenhouse gas emissions reduction target by 2030**.

Photos: Before (left) and after (right) from Bougherba, Mauritania. Before interventions, the soil was degraded and barren. Through FFA activities the community recuperated 51 ha of land by using a combination of dike, soil bunds and half-moon techniques. This has allowed them to grow sorghum, beans, cowpeas, millet, groundnuts, okra to improve and diversify their meals. Credit left photo: En haut! for Grdr, 2020; Right photo: WFP/Bechir Maloum.



## 4. THE QUALITY OF BENEFICIARIES' DIETS HAS IMPROVED SIGNIFICANTLY

The increases in agricultural production discussed before materialise not only in terms of the quantity of production, but also in its quality. For instance, in Niger, WFP monitoring systems show that the **size of plots used for the cultivation of fruits and vegetables increased by nearly 20%** between 2019 and 2020. Similar trends can be observed in other countries and, combined with other **activities that aim to improve access, availability, affordability as well as the demand of nutritious foods such as community-based learning and rehabilitation centres**, might explain why the quality of the diets of WFP beneficiaries has improved significantly over time. In Niger, household **food consumption has become increasingly diversified, regular and of good quality** since the start of the programme. The proportion of **households that consumed more than 4 (out of 8) food groups per week increased from 83% in 2018 at baseline to 92% in 2020**. Overall, the quality of diets has also improved with better nutrient adequacy: **the proportion of households consuming Vitamin A rich, and protein rich food reached respectively 82% and 55% in 2020 compared to 69% and 28% in December 2019 and 65% and 20% in December 2018**, while the consumption of hem iron rich food decreased slightly in 2020 (33%) compared to previous years (38% in 2020 and 35% in 2019). Similarly, in Chad, **the dietary diversity of women aged 15-49 years has improved over time**, from 19% of women with an acceptable diet in 2019 to 80% in 2020. In the context of rising malnutrition rates in the Sahel, improving diets and access to nutritious food remains critical.

## 5. SCHOOL FEEDING IS A STRONG INCENTIVE TO KEEP CHILDREN AT SCHOOL AND PROVIDES A SAFETY NET FOR FAMILIES

The school feeding programme has contributed to the **improvement of children's overall health and nutrition and allowed them to learn and perform better at school**. School feeding has also led to **girls' empowerment** by dissuading parents from marrying them off early and acting as an **incentive for families to enrol and keep their children in school**. In Niger, for example, the proportion of beneficiary households with school-aged children benefitting from school canteens is 61% compared to 48% last year. In addition, 64% of these households stated the school canteen encourages punctual school attendance and 55% of households indicated it reduces children's hunger. In Chad, 65% of beneficiary households with children at school benefit

from school canteens compared to 60% in 2019. In Burkina Faso, 85% of households have children who benefit from school canteens, 90% of which stated that the school canteen motivates children to be punctual at school and 85% indicated that it relieves children's hunger. **In light of the expected crisis, school meals are an essential safety net and a significant saving for families**, while safeguarding education and learning especially for girls.

## 6. THE RESILIENCE PROGRAMME PROTECTS AND STRENGTHENS THE LIVELIHOODS OF BENEFICIARIES AND REDUCES DISTRESS MIGRATION

It **prevents the use of negative coping mechanisms (such as the sale of productive assets, withdrawing children from school, or the accumulation of debts)** that would otherwise lead to a depletion of essential assets and have a long-term effect on people's livelihoods and socio-economic wellbeing. Data from household surveys indicates that over time, the use of crisis and emergency coping strategies has decreased in most countries. For instance, **in Mauritania, the use of crisis and emergency coping strategies reduced from nearly 30% in 2018 to 5% in 2020**, in favour of less harmful (or no) strategies. Another trend that has been observed is the capacity of beneficiaries to reduce the reliance on negative coping strategies after a shock or stressor – for instance, in both Burkina Faso and Niger, the use of negative coping strategies increased during in early to mid-2020, in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, households were able to bounce back from this shock, and reduce the reliance on harmful coping mechanisms by late 2020. **Evidence from Niger also shows how in communities participating in the resilience programme, distress migration – for instance to urban centres, where vulnerable populations engage in begging and other negative coping mechanisms – has reduced significantly**. Over 40% of households report that distress migration has decreased, partly due to the improvements in their food security situation and increased economic opportunities. **Reduced distress migration is observed in many resilience sites across the region**. For instance, in the site of Babirka, in Burkina Faso, many young men would migrate to Cote d'Ivoire or to gold mining sites in other parts of the country after the rainy season. Thanks to the integrated resilience interventions such as reclaiming degraded land for fodder production, **participants of the programme were able to meet their food needs without the need to migrate** – instead they chose to stay in their villages to carry out resilience activities that would benefit the entire community.





Photo (top): School children in Rafa, Niger. An integrated package of activities centred around the school plays a catalytic role for the resilience of the community – reinforcing food production, nutrition practices, and education. WFP and its partners supported the set-up of a 0.25-ha school-garden, equipped with a borehole and a solar-powered pump. Garden produce complements the daily school meals with fresh and nutritious foods and contributes to the school's income. In addition,

each student is in charge of a plant in the garden and brings in organic manure from home to amend the soil. Photo (bottom): This woman in Doungoulou, Chad, started to work as a farmer only when participating in WFP's resilience programme. Thanks to improved water-harvesting, including a dam and weir implemented as part of WFP's FFA activities, her community's field is green. The peanut harvest will serve to generate extra income. Credit of both: WFP/Evelyn Fey



## 7. RESILIENCE ACTIVITIES HELP TO REDUCE THE HARDSHIP OF DAILY CHORES AND IMPROVE ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES

According to survey data, **more than three quarters of households stated that the assets created have reduced day-to-day hardships** and saved time for their family members (including women and children), and **77% of households indicated that they had an improved ability to access markets and basic services** (water, sanitation, health, education, etc).



For instance, in the site of Goreijma in Mauritania, **beneficiaries invested the cash received from their participation in land rehabilitation activities and from the sale of the harvest in carts and community wells, greatly reducing the time and hardship for household chores such as fetching water and firewood or bringing children to school.** In Pissigia, in Burkina Faso, **a crossing structure build through asset creation activities has enabled to reach the nearby health center** – something that was close to impossible due to gully formation, one of the most severe forms of land degradation, and heavy flooding during the rainy season, causing distress particularly for pregnant women.



## 8. RESILIENCE INTERVENTIONS SERVE AS A BUFFER TO INSTABILITY BY STRENGTHENING SOCIAL COHESION, CREATING SOCIAL SAFETY NETS, KEEPING LANDS PRODUCTIVE AND OFFERING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

WFP is developing and rolling out new tools and approaches to better understand the contributions of its resilience interventions to reducing tensions between communities and building social cohesion. **Initial research and data collected in some countries including Niger suggest that the vast majority of beneficiaries perceives that WFP's assistance has a positive effect on social cohesion within assisted communities.** For instance, respondents reported that the contributed to **strengthening exchanges with neighbouring communities** and strengthened the social cohesion across villages through the shared access to some parts of the integrated package, such as school meals. **Partnering with IFPRI, WFP is currently conducting a qualitative study in Burkina Faso and Niger to explore linkages between its resilience interventions, increased availability of and access to natural resources, and social cohesion.**

**Photo (right): In Louda, Burkina Faso, IDPs and members of the host community work side by side to grow vegetables for household consumption and selling. Credit: WFP/Evelyn Fey**  
**Photo (left): Moustapha from Goreijma in Mauritania. "Where I live, having a chart, it changes everything," he says after investing the cash from FFA activities. He and his family use the chart to fetch water and firewood and to travel longer distances. Credit: WFP/Bechir Malum**



# Seizing the momentum to scale-up

The region is experiencing a **multifaceted crisis**, characterized by escalating conflicts, increasing extreme poverty due to COVID-19, rising food prices and crop failure due to drought. **The humanitarian situation in the region has deteriorated sharply in 2021 and the outlook for 2022 is worrying.** More than 10.5 million people in the G5 Sahel countries are at risk of going without food by the next lean season – an **increase of 21%** compared to last year and marking the peak of a steady increase over the last five years.

**Efforts to tackle hunger at its source to complement and, over time, reduce the need for humanitarian response are more important than ever.** The dimension and multifaceted nature of the challenge indicates we need an equally commensurate and multisectoral response. This requires **simultaneous investments** in land rehabilitation, but also in education, health and nutrition, job opportunities particularly for youth, social cohesion, and governance.

**The Integrated Resilience Programme is already showing remarkable momentum:** evidence across the integrated resilience sites shows that **in terms of food security, beneficiary households were able to cope better despite the multiple crises affecting the region.** Positive changes were achieved in terms of regeneration of natural resources, economic empowerment, access to basic social services, and social cohesion – all of which help to break the cycle of hunger and pave the way for concrete transformational change at community and household level.

**WFP wants to seize upon this momentum and continue serving the same vulnerable communities throughout the Sahel,** consolidate the integration of activities and expand where possible to neighbouring areas.

- **Delivering on these results requires flexible, multi-year funding aligned to the scale of needs.** First and foremost, **sustained investments** are needed to build and maintain trust with communities, deliver on the commitment to support them over at least five years, as well as develop the **necessary partnerships to implement multi-sectoral packages and institutionalize resilience tools.**
- Secondly, the **programme cycle of the Integrated Resilience Programme is heavily affected by seasonality and cuts across calendar years.**

The main implementation for asset creation activities is between the harvest and the lean season (approximately December to May), followed by lean season assistance to safeguard resilience gains. Similarly, school feeding activities are aligned with the academic year (usually September/October to June/July), and nutrition activities are crucial throughout the year.

- Thirdly, an **adequate planning horizon is required to deliver quality interventions.** For instance, for asset creation and livelihood activities, adequate time for planning and preparation is crucial to secure land agreements, conduct participatory planning exercises with communities, coordinate with government partners, prepare Field-Level-Agreements with cooperating partners, and assess the environmental and social feasibility of infrastructure projects. Similarly, quality and efficiency of smallholder agricultural market support, nutrition interventions and school feeding benefit from longer planning horizons.

## More to read:

[Integrated Resilience in the Sahel on wfp.org](https://wfp.org)  
[Greening the Sahel Factsheet](#)

## More to watch:

[Restoring Soil to fight hunger in the Sahel](#)  
[Climate Change in the Sahel "Water is the most precious thing we have."](#)

## More to ask:

[Resilience & Livelihood Unit / Dakar](#)

World Food Programme  
Regional Bureau for Western Africa  
10 Avenue Pasteur  
BP 6288 Dakar, Senegal