



AGIR - Building resilience in the Sahel & West Africa

ECHO FACTSHEET

Facts & Figures

Successive food & nutrition crises in 2005, 2008, 2010 and 2012

Permanent needs in the Sahel, with in 2015:

- 1.4 million severely malnourished children
- 20.5 million food insecure people from June
- Around 25 million people living in extreme poverty

The EU aims to mobilise **€1.5 billion** for resilience in the Sahel between 2014 & 2020 (11th European Development Fund)

AGIR targets by 2032:

- Zero Hunger
- Reduce chronic malnutrition by more than half
- Reduce acute malnutrition by more than two-thirds
- Increase the number of people with access to basic services and social transfers such as cash or vouchers



Pastureland and water for livestock are becoming scarce. © WFP/Rein Skullerud

Key messages

- AGIR - the Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative - was launched during the Sahel food and [nutrition](#) crisis of 2012 with the aim of achieving 'Zero Hunger' in the West Africa Sahel region by 2032. The **EU was closely involved in establishing AGIR** and continues to provide support.
- **Emergencies and crises have become a permanent reality** for many people in West Africa. Humanitarian aid provides vital relief but cannot prevent crises. To break the cycle of emergencies, it is **crucial for governments and international aid organisations to build the resilience of the most vulnerable population groups.**
- Building resilience is about **understanding and addressing the root causes of crises and pushing for durable improvements with a specific target on the most vulnerable people.** Making adequate basic services available to mothers and their children and ensuring that aid programmes effectively target the poorest people are essential measures.
- **Successful resilience building requires a joint approach to relief, development and governance.** It is about bridging the gap between humanitarian and development aid. It is also about encouraging governments to take ownership and supporting them to achieve their resilience agenda.
- The momentum created by AGIR has prompted 16 countries in the region to adopt national resilience priorities. They are seeking comprehensive support from the international aid community to translate these priorities into effective action.

Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection

B-1049 Brussels, Belgium

Tel.: (+32 2) 295 44 00

Fax: (+32 2) 295 45 72

email:

echo-info@ec.europa.eu

Website:

<http://ec.europa.eu/echo>



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Situation in the Sahel

Child and maternal mortality rates in West Africa rank among the highest in the world. One in eight children dies before their fifth birthday, most often as a result of preventable diseases and malnutrition. Each year close to one and a half million children become severely malnourished while around 20 million people experience food insecurity. Women in the Sahel run 200 times more risk of dying in childbirth than women in Europe.

Population growth is exponential and ways of living are also changing, adapting to new realities such as limited possibilities to own or cultivate land, dependency on markets and cash to provide for one's family and urbanisation.

The Sahel has seen a quick succession of food and nutrition crises over the last decade. They have highlighted the population's vulnerability to shocks such as droughts, food price rises, floods, epidemics and conflict. Many people face food insecurity and malnutrition on an almost permanent basis, regardless of whether harvests have been good or bad.

As the 2015 'lean season' ends, the humanitarian situation remains precarious in many areas of the Sahel. While harvests have been good to average in some areas, they have been mediocre to very bad in others such as northern Senegal, Mauritania and The Gambia for the third year in a row. Food prices have remained high while conflict, insecurity and population displacement persisted in countries such as [Mali](#) and greatly increased in others as a result of conflict in North [Nigeria](#) and the [Central African Republic](#).

Origins and aims of AGIR

The aim of AGIR is to help build resilience to the recurrent food and nutrition crises that affect the countries and people of the West Africa Sahel region. AGIR starts from the premise that these crises can and should be eradicated. Emergency aid is crucial to save lives but does little to prevent new crises. It is also very costly.

A sustained effort is needed to reduce people's vulnerability to crises and increase their resilience - not least since climate change and population growth are likely to exacerbate their frequency and severity. While emergency needs will not subside immediately and urgent relief remains a necessity, focusing on the root causes of crises will eventually reduce the number of emergencies and their cost, thus providing a 'better return on investment'.

In June 2012, the European Union hosted a high-level meeting where the idea of an alliance bringing together governments of the region, regional bodies, international donors as well as civil society was presented. On 6 December 2012, the AGIR Alliance was officially launched in Ouagadougou with the adoption of a Joint Statement setting out basic principles and priorities.

After developing a Regional Roadmap in 2013, which elaborates principles, priority actions and indicators, five out of 17 West African countries have adopted their national resilience priorities under AGIR and another four others have drafted country resilience priorities. This process is a crucial step to build national ownership of the AGIR agenda and an exercise in adopting proven methods for targeting the poorest and most vulnerable segments of the population. The next step for all West African countries is the budgeting of these priorities to identify if they can be supported by national resources or external funds. At the same time, international partners have to ensure that the respective resilience programmes support the priorities established by the West African nations.

AGIR defines resilience as *"the capacity of vulnerable households, families and systems to face uncertainty and the risk of shocks, to withstand and respond effectively to shocks, and to recover and adapt in a sustainable manner."*



AGIR aims to achieve 'Zero Hunger' within 20 years by focusing on four strategic pillars:

- Pillar 1: Restore, strengthen and secure livelihoods and improve **social protection for the most vulnerable communities** and households.
- Pillar 2: Strengthen **health and nutrition** of vulnerable households.
- Pillar 3: Sustainably strengthen **agricultural and food productivity**, incomes of vulnerable households and **improve their access to food**.
- Pillar 4: Strengthen **governance** for [food](#) and nutritional security including gender and population aspects.

The success of AGIR hinges on the appropriate and accurate targeting of those people in need of support. There needs to be a distinction of groups on the basis of their economic situation and their vulnerability, notably all children under the age of five as well as pregnant and breastfeeding women. In light of their predominant role in food production, income generation, education, health and child nutrition women in general are given special attention.

In order to measure AGIR's success and progress, the Regional Roadmap set indicators which include:

- A significant increase in the proportion of vulnerable people who have access to basic social services such as health, education, water, sanitation and hygiene, and who are able to increase their income.
- A reduction of at least 50% in the number of people in high-risk zones who seek food aid and humanitarian assistance.
- A prevalence of global acute malnutrition among children under five which is less than 5% throughout the year (currently often 15%).
- A child mortality rate of less than 2 deaths per 10 000 children.
- Significant progress on spacing births and increasing the age of first pregnancy.

Milestones and next steps

Since the launch of AGIR in December 2013, the following has been achieved:

- Adoption of the AGIR Regional Road Map at the meeting of the *Réseau de Prévention des Crises Alimentaires* (RPCA) in Paris, on 9 April 2013.
- Announcement of €1.5 billion in EU support for building resilience in West Africa between 2014 and 2020, under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF).
- Commitment by 17 West African countries to draft national resilience priorities under AGIR at the West Africa meeting of the RPCA in Abidjan, on 27 November 2013.
- Commitment by the international backers of AGIR, its Platform of Technical and Financial Partners, to coordinate support for national and regional resilience priorities and assess progress regularly.
- Niger, Togo, Ivory Coast, Mali and Burkina Faso recently finalized the process and validated their Country Resilience Priorities (CRP).

In addition to Niger, Togo, Ivory Coast, Mali and Burkina Faso, which have validated their Country Resilience Priorities (CRP), four other countries (Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal and Chad) are in the CRP validation process. Seven other countries (Benin, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Mauritania, and Nigeria) are carrying out their inclusive national dialogues, the initial step to the formulation of the CRP. Sierra Leone is currently discussing about how to launch the process.

The Technical and Financial Partners have committed to coordinate their support towards a multi-sector approach of all four strategic pillars.



The priority sectors for EU development assistance in the Sahel for 2014-2020 have been finalized and include food and nutrition security as a sector of concentration in the main West Africa Sahel countries.

Examples of humanitarian and development projects



In Mauritania, the European Union and the Department for International Development of the British Government (DFID), support organizations such as Action against Hunger (ACF) to prevent, treat and reduce acute malnutrition. 45,209 children aged 6 to 59 months benefit from adequate follow-up, prevention, screening and treatment in the Guidimakha region, where the population is extremely vulnerable, due to scanty rainfall and large deficits in agricultural production.

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In Timbuktu and Gao regions, northern **Mali**, the European Union funded safety nets for 40 000 households most affected by food insecurity and armed conflict. A total of €10 million was allocated to five NGOs - Handicap International, Action Contre la Faim (ACF), Solidarités, OXFAM and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) - for the implementation of the programme. Depending on the availability of food and basic commodities on the local market and people's preferences, households were either given cash or vouchers.



In **Burkina Faso**, in the remote region of Tapoa, the European Union supports cash transfer and cash-for-work programmes by Action Contre la Faim (ACF). In exchange for cash to buy food, 900 households have helped to build embankments around rice fields in order to better retain rainwater to enhance future crops. In total, each worker received €90 over two months, the equivalent of about three 100kg bags of sorghum. Overall, the EU has enabled ACF to assist 40 000 people in the region. © Raphael de Bengy

In **Niger**, European development aid for food security covers nearly one third of the overall needs of the population. It is channeled exclusively through the national government's food security mechanism, allowing the purchase of grain as well as cash-for-work operations. Thanks to decisive and early action a disaster was avoided in 2012-13. In addition, the European Union food security alliance works actively advocating for the set-up of a national safety net programme that addresses the needs of the most vulnerable people in Niger.



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