



EU approach to resilience: Learning from food crises

FACTSHEET

Facts & Figures

Total EU humanitarian funding to the Horn of Africa since 2011:
Over €1 billion

Total EU humanitarian funding to the Sahel (Sahel and Mali crises) since 2012: €554 million

Resilience Targets

Over the short-, medium- and long-term:

The SHARE initiative in the Horn of Africa has mobilised around €350 million since 2012 until now and will be followed-up by projects under the 11th European Development Fund

The AGIR initiative in West Africa aims to mobilise €1.5 billion for resilience building in the Sahel between 2014 and 2020 (11th European Development Fund)



Women in Burkina Faso who participate in an EU-funded 'cash for work' project receive money for building embankments around fields to better irrigate crops during future dry seasons. Photo credit: Raphael de Bengy

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Key messages

- Chronic humanitarian crises caused by droughts and recurrent food insecurity have affected over 31 million people in the Horn of Africa and Sahel region in recent years.
- The European Commission strives for joint programming of humanitarian and development assistance in actions that boost the resilience of vulnerable communities to future shocks. By ensuring complementarity, short term actions lay down the groundwork for medium and long-term interventions.
- As part of its assistance to Africa, the European Commission promotes initiatives such as AGIR in the Sahel region and SHARE in the Horn of Africa, in the framework of global alliances with other humanitarian and development partners, including donors and the concerned African States. These initiatives aim at breaking the vicious cycles of drought, hunger and poverty by promoting sustained coordination between humanitarian and development assistance.
- Investing in strengthened resilience of the affected populations saves lives, is cost-effective and contributes to poverty reduction, consequently boosting the impact of aid and promoting sustainable development.



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What is Resilience?

Resilience is the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to withstand, adapt, and quickly recover from stresses and shocks such as drought, violence, conflict or natural disaster.

One practical tool to increase resilience, especially to recurrent crises like droughts and floods, is the 'seasonal safety net' programmes. These target the most vulnerable households, aiming to catch them before they fall into a crisis situation, such as after a poor harvest. These safety nets can for example involve cash transfers - either unconditionally or in exchange for work or training - to the most vulnerable people during the period of the year when the reserve of money and food of the most vulnerable is at its lowest.

Another form of building resilience is to focus on prevention and preparedness projects. These projects are then adapted to cyclical risks such as hurricanes and violent storms during the rainy season, or to unpredictable vulnerabilities such as earthquakes. The projects work best when they include and are embraced by local communities.

Developing early warning systems and advancing collaboration with the insurance industry are other areas with the potential for building resilience.

What is the EU doing to build up resilience?

The European Commission's Communication on Resilience (2012) outlines 10 steps to increase the resilience and reduce the vulnerability of the world's most vulnerable people. These steps include support for preparing national resilience strategies, disaster management plans and efficient early-warning systems in disaster-prone countries, as well as designing innovative approaches in risk management through collaboration with the insurance industry, among others.

The communication is based on the European Commission's significant experience in responding to humanitarian crises and dealing with the root causes of weak development. For example, during the drought crisis in the Horn of Africa in 2011, the European Commission focused on both, the immediate crisis response, but also on fostering longer-term food security and on increasing the population's ability to cope with future droughts.

The European Commission's flagship resilience initiatives are the Supporting Horn of African Resilience (SHARE) and l'Alliance Globale pour l'Initiative Résilience (AGIR) in the Sahel and West Africa. The goal of the European Commission's Communication on Resilience is to use the experience gained through these and other initiatives to make sure that the EU helps vulnerable communities not only to survive disasters but also to be better able to cope with disasters and recover successfully.

SHARE initiative for the Horn of Africa

The Horn of Africa is faced with increasingly frequent and intensive droughts. At the same time, population growth, increased pressures on resources, insecurity and prolonged political instability have made it harder for the poorest communities to withstand and recover from the droughts. Each shock sends the communities into deeper vulnerability and further erodes their means to prepare for the next crisis.

In 2011, the Horn of Africa faced one of the worst droughts in 60 years, which led to a large humanitarian crisis affecting over 13 million people in Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somalia. The



situation was so desperate in Somalia that the United Nations declared famine for the first time since 1992.

Following the crisis, the European Commission launched SHARE with the goal of improving the ability of people, communities and countries to face recurrent crises. With allocations of over €270 million in 2012 and 2013, SHARE aims to boost resilience by increasing the opportunities of farming and pastoralist communities to make a living, and also enhance the capacity of public services to respond to crises.

SHARE seeks to improve land resource management as well as the income opportunities for populations dependent on livestock. In the longer term, this means finding lasting remedies for the chronic malnutrition and durable solutions for refugees and uprooted populations in the region.

AGIR initiative for West Africa

In 2012, severe drought and failed harvests left 18 million people across the Sahel region of West Africa in need of food assistance. The underlying cause of this persistent food insecurity is a limited access to staple foods as a result of failed harvests, high food prices and extreme poverty exacerbated by an equally poor access to basic services and a population growth that is among the world's highest.

Around 80% of those requiring emergency humanitarian aid in a crisis come from the 20% of the population who are the poorest of the poor with limited access to land or income-generating activities. While drought is inevitable, the hunger and suffering it causes are not. The European Commission hosted a high-level meeting in June 2012 which brought together West African governments, UN agencies as well as humanitarian and development actors to address these issues through the AGIR initiative.

AGIR joint statement, which sets out basic principles and priorities to achieve 'Zero Hunger' by 2032, was formally adopted in December 2012 in Burkina Faso's capital Ouagadougou. In 2013, AGIR proposed a regional roadmap for a better coordination of humanitarian and development aid in support of governments' plans to reduce hunger and strengthen the resilience of its poorest and most vulnerable populations. Seventeen West African countries are currently in the process of formulating their national resilience priorities and actions which should acquire international support in the years to come. They will present those plans in the course of 2014.

Examples of humanitarian projects contributing to resilience

In West Africa



To reach some of the most vulnerable people affected by the food and nutrition crisis in **Mali**, the European Commission funded an Oxfam project to help 3 500 families rebuild their livelihoods in the Kayes region. Between August 2012 and February 2013, these families received cash grants through local banks and a local microfinance organisation. Most of those who received the money were women, and all who received support also received training on household budget management, nutrition and hygiene. As a result, most of these people have not only been able to feed their families through the leanest months of the year, but also to invest in building livelihoods that will make them more resilient to future shocks. © Oxfam



In **Chad**, the European Commission supports an innovative partnership between the international NGOs ACTED and Alima and the local NGO Alerte Santé. This project is reaching 56 000 people, including several thousand children under five who are suffering from acute malnutrition. The objective is to fight malnutrition by providing appropriate care to severely malnourished children for whom no treatment was available before. In addition to saving numerous lives, another important achievement of the project is the capacity building of local NGOs in order to ensure sustainable results. © EU/ECHO



In **Burkina Faso**, in the remote region of Tapoa, the European Commission 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 the Horn of Africa

In **Somalia**, through SHARE, the European Commission funded a project run by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to improve food security, nutrition and livelihoods for 100 000 people affected by the 2011 drought. Activities included the distribution of seeds and fertilizers, improving vegetable production and increasing the income-generating opportunities. Concerning livestock, their most valuable assets, activities focused on improving animal health, fodder production, prevention of starvation and sale of livestock. This safeguarded the livelihoods of herders and gave them an alternative living. Since 2013, a consortium of three UN agencies (FAO, WFP and UNICEF) has also put resilience at the forefront of its activities in view of enhancing the coping capacities of the communities in a country that was affected by famine only back in 2011. © EU/ECHO



The European Commission has successfully piloted the use of cash instead of in-kind food aid for some 16 000 people in North-Western **Kenya** in 2013. The project, implemented by the World Food Programme (WFP), is substituting maize, sorghum, pulses and cooking oil with cash delivered via mobile money services. So far, families benefitting from this project have said that cash gives them dignity and self-worth, something that people living on hand-outs often lack. Cash is a more cost-effective way of assisting the most vulnerable than distributing food, helps promote local markets and benefits local farming and food supply systems. The next step is the transfer of these WFP beneficiaries to social protection schemes, such as the Hunger Safety Net Programme. © EU/ECHO

In **Ethiopia**, the European Commission has funded innovative resilience building programmes since 2012, bringing together different organisations who work in close collaboration to implement multi-sectoral projects to fight recurrent undernutrition and other disaster shocks. Concern Worldwide, People In Need and International Medical Corps are one example of a collaborative approach, having received €4.6 million from the Commission between 2012 and 2014. They are working together with local authorities and communities in Wolayita, south-eastern Ethiopia, building the resilience of vulnerable families. These receive help in the form of goats, sheep and



oxen, seeds coupled with cooking demonstrations, breast-feeding sessions and informative trainings on the causes of malnutrition. Furthermore, mothers with malnourished children have received fresh food vouchers to strengthen immune systems, and water holes have been rehabilitated to provide access to water for people and livestock. In total, 130 000 people benefitted from this project in 2013 and in 2014, 255 000 people are targeted for assistance. © EU/ECHO

Examples of development projects contributing to resilience

In West Africa



In **Niger**, European aid for food security in 2012 covered nearly one third of the overall needs of the population. It is channelled 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 dramatic situation was avoided and no less than 2 million people have been saved from hunger.

In Burkina Faso, 18 557 tons of improved seeds were produced by farmers that received support from an EU programme. The programme also equipped 13 communities with additional harvesting machinery. Seven storage facilities and seven drying fields were constructed. This was complemented by the training of almost 200 people in areas such as production, harvesting and treatment techniques. Finally, four decentralised laboratories were established to support the analysis of seeds and their certification.

In the Horn of Africa

In **Ethiopia**, the EU has supported the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) with €240 million since 2005. The programme gives 7-11 million people who are threatened by hunger a predictable income in return for their labour in rural infrastructure (e.g. road maintenance, anti-erosion work). The initiative can be expanded if a shock or crisis occurs, and has helped reduce the impact of the 2011 drought in Ethiopia.



In Somalia, the EU helps to rehabilitate canals in agricultural areas: in 2010, about 50 000 farming and households directly benefited from support to irrigation and flood control infrastructure, as well as crop development. Another EU-funded project has helped to improve the health of livestock in Somalia. An estimated 6.7 million sheep and goats were treated and vaccinated to protect them against diseases that limit productivity and trade.

