

**Programme Evaluation Series**

# **Evaluation of six FAO projects funded by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali and the Niger**

**OSRO/BKF/801/SWE, OSRO/CMR/701/SWE,  
OSRO/CHD/701/SWE, OSRO/MLI/701/SWE,  
OSRO/MLI/804/SWE, OSRO/NER/701/SWE**

**Synthesis report**

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## **Abbreviations and acronyms**

SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
IDP	Internally displaced person



# 1. Introduction

1. The Office of Evaluation (OED) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) was requested by the FAO's Emergency and Resilience Division (PSE) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), to evaluate multi-year resilience projects funded by Sweden in four Sahelian countries, the project, namely Cameroon, Chad, Mali and the Niger, as part of the Strategy for Sweden's humanitarian aid 2017–2020.<sup>1</sup> These projects were implemented by FAO from January 2017 to December 2019, except the period of the two projects in Mali, which ended in December 2020. The evaluation draws its primary sources of evidence from the review of projects in the four countries and is a single evaluation; it does not evaluate each project individually.
2. SIDA also requested OED to conduct a final evaluation of the project "Emergency response and support to improve the resilience of vulnerable populations in at-risk areas of Burkina Faso", a project fully financed by SIDA and also implemented by FAO in Burkina Faso over the period from June 2018 to December 2021 following two deadline extensions. This evaluation is carried out in two phases: the first one has been completed and the second one is underway.
3. These evaluations have a two-fold purpose:
  - i. On the one hand, they aim at providing independent evidence on relevance, results and organisational performance and reporting on main findings achieved to SIDA, FAO, project beneficiaries and other local implementing partners.
  - ii. On the other hand, they aim at drawing lessons and good practices which will serve as a basis for strategic, programmatic and operational learning and improvements for FAO, SIDA and other stakeholders and partners (government counterparts, United Nations [UN] agencies, implementing partners, beneficiary households, communities, groups and institutions at the local level).
4. Beside the usual criteria of relevance, efficiency, sustainability, partnership, and gender, the evaluations focused, at SIDA's request, on the contribution of the multi-year financing approach.
5. The main targets and intended users of these evaluations include:
  - i. staff of FAO country offices in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali and the Niger; FAO decentralised offices in these countries; headquarters divisions involved in projects that could use the evaluation findings in the implementation of future similar projects at national, regional and global levels;
  - ii. the Governments of the five countries and in particular the ministries involved, that may implement the evaluation findings and lessons learned in other similar initiatives in the future;
  - iii. SIDA, PSE, for decision-making on the development and funding of other interventions to improve community resilience; and
  - iv. others implementing partners that will integrate the lessons learned from this experience into their own initiatives.
6. This synthesis report presents the main findings of these evaluations. It is structured as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Sweden, 2017

- i. introduction
- ii. presentation of the projects evaluated
- iii. presentation of the evaluation findings
- iv. lessons learned and key recommendations.

## 2. Presentation of the projects evaluated

7. The six projects were implemented in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali and the Niger as follows:
8. **In Burkina Faso**, the project "Emergency response and support to improve the resilience of vulnerable populations in at-risk areas of Burkina Faso" (OSRO/BKF/801/SWE) was designed to address three concerns: i) the poor access of vulnerable households to food and means of production; ii) the degradation of the agro-sylvo-pastoral production capital of vulnerable households in provinces heavily affected by the crisis in Burkina Faso, and iii) the poor nutritional quality in vulnerable households in provinces heavily affected by the crisis in Burkina Faso. It was initially intended to support 10 000 poor or very poor households in three regions of Burkina Faso based on the assistance needs of food insecure people. It was also initially intended that beneficiaries would receive a variety of cash assistance, but once the project was amended to increase the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host households, the project amounts were increased and activities were refocused on IDPs and host households. In addition, the amendment committed to carry out the following: promote, in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Hydro-Agricultural Development, 500 ha of developed perimeters available to hosts and IDPs; set up a food security alert and analysis system; capitalize on achievements; measure changes in the resilience of the target population; and assess the impact of insecurity on crop production.
9. **In Cameroon**, the Boko Haram crisis in the Far North region has led to a deteriorating food security situation. The project "Strengthening the resilience of food insecure IDPs, returnees and host communities in Cameroon" (OSRO/CMR/701/SWE) aimed at building the resilience of internally displaced persons, returnees, and host communities in severely food insecure districts (or sub-divisions). The project's target districts were Fotokol, Kousseri, Makari, Mora, and Koza which, according to a March 2017 survey of the International Organisation for Migration, received the largest number of IDPs. They are all located in the Far North region of the country. The project was implemented over a three-year period and had three expected outcomes: i) Outcome 1: Improved maize, sorghum and cowpea seeds, fertilizers and sprayers for vulnerable IDPs, returnees and host households; ii) Outcome 2: Practical training through FFS provided to farmer groups; and iii) Outcome 3: Unconditional cash transfer provided to beneficiaries (Year 3 only). This last outcome was not cancelled from the project due to a decision by the government of Cameroon forbidding unconditional cash distribution in the country.
10. **In Mali**, the north of the country has been facing a persistent security crisis since 2012 that affects household livelihoods, already weakened as a result of climate change. Two SIDA-funded projects were both implemented over a two and a half-year period.
  - i. The project "Strengthening the resilience of vulnerable agro-pastoralists' households affected by security crisis in Mali" (OSRO/MLI/701/SWE) had three outcomes: i) Outcome 1: households acquire the goods and services needed to rebuild their capital; ii) Outcome 2: hectares of pastureland have been restored and regenerated through "cash-for-work" and "food-for-work" activities; and iii) Outcome 3: production units have been established and improved.
  - ii. The project, entitled "Strengthening the Resilience of Vulnerable Populations to Climate Variability" (OSRO/MLI/804/SWE), was implemented in the regions of Mopti, Gao and Timbuktu and aimed at complementing the assistance provided by humanitarian stakeholders (including under the first project mentioned), which consisted mainly of input

distribution and training. The targeted beneficiaries were the same households and were expected to receive more developmental interventions (rehabilitation, restoration, income-generating activities, etc.) through this project, to complement the emergency response and build sustainable resilience. This project and its evaluation should contribute to the available documentation on the effects and impacts of interventions with humanitarian and development aspects. The three expected outcomes of the project were: i) Outcome 1: households have improved capacities to cope with climate variability; ii) Outcome 2: incomes of vulnerable households, particularly female-headed, are increased; and iii) Outcome 3: nutrition and social protection of beneficiary communities are improved.

11. **In the Niger**, the project “Emergency assistance to refugees/returnees and IDP victims of Boko Haram crisis and resilience building in the Niger” (OSRO/NER/701/SWE) focused on the Diffa region, which is severely affected by recurrent climatic variations and where hundreds of thousands of refugees and returnees from Nigeria fleeing Boko Haram attacks have settled. The project was implemented over a three-year period and had three expected outcomes: i) Outcome 1: The production capacity of vulnerable households and host families is strengthened for improved nutrition; ii) Outcome 2: Improved income opportunities for refugees/returnees and IDPs to promote diversification of food consumption; and iii) Outcome 3: Strengthened accountability and communication.
12. **In Chad**, the project “Support to agropastoral households affected by the Lake Chad crisis in Chad” (OSRO/CHD/701/SWE) was implemented in the Lake Chad region (bordering the Niger, Nigeria and Cameroon), which is one of the most vulnerable areas of the country in socio-economic terms. Insecurity, the threat of Boko Haram, the closure of the Libyan border, and population movements are negatively affecting the local economy, which is already suffering from isolation, climatic and environmental fragility, and demographic pressure. The project targeted food-insecure agro-pastoral households with nutritional deficits, poor households with recurrent low agricultural production, households with malnourished children, and households affected by the crisis in the Lake Chad region (returnees, IDPs, and host community households). It was implemented over two years, and the following outputs were expected: i) Output 1: Strengthen mechanisms for diversification, processing and conservation of agricultural products; ii) Output 2: Facilitate empowerment of women's groups through savings and credit systems; iii) Output 3: Support household recapitalization through the distribution of small ruminants; iv) Output 4: Diversify household income sources through income-generating activities; and v) Output 5: Strengthen community capacity for disaster risk reduction.



### **3. Presentation of findings**

#### **3.1 Relevance**

13. The projects are aligned with national strategies and programs, priorities identified by the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks<sup>2</sup> and respective Humanitarian Response Plans,<sup>3</sup> FAO country programming frameworks, the SIDA Strategy for Humanitarian Assistance<sup>4</sup> and the Strategy for Sweden's development cooperation with Burkina Faso<sup>5</sup> and Mali.<sup>6</sup>
14. The multi-year financing tool is relevant overall because in the unstable contexts of the different countries under evaluation, it promotes flexibility, adaptive management and a shift from a humanitarian to a development approach (as demonstrated by the experiences in Burkina Faso and Mali).
15. The project design is based on an analysis of the context and the needs of the beneficiaries. The intervention modalities and planned activities are adequate. However, the projects did not provide for an integrated approach to three activities (production, training, income-generating activities) for the benefit of each beneficiary. Whereas, this approach is necessary for building community resilience. Operational and technical partners were barely consulted in the design and did not participate in strategic planning.
16. The targeting processes have been effective in identifying the most vulnerable households that need support, however, the household economy analysis methodology was not always rigorously followed; the time and resource constraints of the partners, most of whom have been working with FAO for several years and are familiar with the household economy analysis targeting methodology, did not allow them to carry out the targeting activity in the best possible way.
17. The projects took into account the principles of accountability, conflict sensitivity and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, although the conflict sensitivity analysis differs from one project to another, due to a lack of capacity on the part of partners (in Cameroon, Chad, Mali and the Niger).
18. The various project extensions in Burkina Faso were relevant; they allowed for the consideration of new needs related to the context, notably by refocusing activities on displaced persons and host populations. This is a flexible type of financing that allows the project to be oriented according to the context evolution.
19. In Mali, some modalities were not very effective, indicating weaknesses in the feasibility analysis: it was difficult to finalize contracts with external companies during conflict periods; and the volume of activities was too high (seven outputs and 50 activities) for a short-term project (13-16 months), but also in the much deteriorated security context in northern Mali.

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<sup>2</sup> The UN System in Burkina Faso, 2017; in Cameroon, 2018; in Chad, 2017; in Mali, 2015; and in the Niger, 2014 and 2019.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2015, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Government of Sweden, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Government of Sweden, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Government of Sweden, 2016.

## 3.2 Effectiveness

20. Effectiveness is rated as average across all six projects, with differences for each project.
21. There was an improvement in agricultural production in general, although the results varied from one project to another. The interventions have allowed the use of quality seeds and varieties that adapt to weather conditions, thus strengthening the means of production and improving yields. Although households are largely satisfied with the quality and quantity of seeds distributed, delays in seed availability and pest attacks, as well as insecurity, have reduced production possibilities at some sites. Finally, technical supervision and training on cultivation techniques are rated as weak.
22. In Burkina Faso, the project made quality inputs available to beneficiaries, with the exception of bags provided for cowpea conservation, which were often not distributed and were of poor quality. The fact that the same beneficiaries were given food seeds successively over two years ensured good production, despite the attacks on cowpeas. However, it was not the case for IDPs, given the poor quality of the land allocated to them. The overall increase in agricultural production remained mixed at the project level in Mali, the Niger and Chad.
23. Thanks to the interventions, there was improved availability of fresh vegetables and a diversification of off-season production in Cameroon and the Niger. In Burkina Faso, support for vegetable production has also enabled beneficiaries to produce and earn substantial income, although they deplore the limited supply of tomato and onion seeds.
24. In Mali and the Niger, interventions related to food consumption have contributed to improved food diversity and good diet knowledge. New foods and cooking recipes have allowed for food and nutritional diversification at the household level. Roots and tubers, fruits and vegetables, energy foods, and vitamin A are henceforth part of the meals prepared by households. Several awareness sessions were conducted on nutrition but without practical sessions.
25. Interventions contributed to an improvement in livestock production. Beneficiaries received cattle feed and animals that generally matched their choices. Some beneficiaries were able to rebuild their herds, despite difficulties encountered during the distribution of small ruminants (quality of the animals, distance to be covered to receive them, etc.). Animals' health status has clearly improved following the interventions and the majority of beneficiaries have recorded births, allowing them to reconstitute their herd.
26. The implementation of a mobile cash payment method proved to be ineffective and poorly managed. In Burkina Faso, where the objective was to improve food access during the lean season, the implementation of the mobile cash payment system was not able to make these resources available to beneficiaries in time. Similarly, in the Niger, cash support for vulnerable families was provided outside of the lean season, making it ineffective; the income-generating activity cash that was supposed to launch activities was delayed, especially for the last batch carried out at the end of the project, where monitoring and support were very limited or non-existent.
27. Mali projects have adopted an integrated approach creating synergy between their humanitarian and development objectives. However, some activities were implemented late or not at all, compromising the achievement of outcomes.
28. The targeted population adopted well the Dimitra Club approach implemented in the Niger, which has helped to strengthen social cohesion through a variety of activities.

29. The effectiveness of multi-year financing was hampered by working with different beneficiaries each year and by signing protocols annually with partners in Cameroon, Chad and Mali.
30. Livelihoods of beneficiary households have slightly changed and the capacity of communities to cope with shocks has remained modest. Despite FAO's support, beneficiary communities have remained less resilient to shocks according to the subjective self-evaluated resilience analysis. Indeed, the average scores of 3.4 (Burkina Faso), 3.3 (Mali) and 3.2 (the Niger) reflect difficulties faced by beneficiaries in coping with shocks (climatic, phytosanitary/pest, conflicts/violence). There is no significant difference according to the type of shock mentioned. Results show that these households are not sufficiently prepared to recover from shocks. They fail to diversify their livelihoods and lack financial reserves. This is due to the weak integration of the three activities (production, training, income-generating activities) for the benefit of each beneficiary in the project design, whereas resilience requires the implementation of different assets and activities in an integrated approach.

### **3.3 Efficiency**

31. The efficiency of the interventions is low. Indeed, results were not always obtained in a timely manner. At several levels, the interventions experienced delays in implementing activities in all the projects evaluated (supply of inputs, signing of protocols, payment of memorandum of understanding (MOU) instalments, payment of cash, etc.) with repercussions on the strategy and on the results. In Mali, delays in the availability of fonio and cram-cram seeds reduced the expected biomass production, despite the implementation of initiatives to ensure production. Cash support for vulnerable families was provided outside food shortage periods.
32. The main reasons that contributed to the delays in implementing the interventions are related to:
  - i. the poor mastery of the mobile cash payment process;
  - ii. FAO's internal procedures (lengthy procedures that require a certain familiarity and specific skills);
  - iii. the weak capacity of operational implementation partners; and
  - iv. weak coordination between stakeholders.
33. FAO has used all the resources at its disposal to ensure the proper implementation of the interventions, but the monitoring and evaluation systems has deficiencies that do not allow for adaptive management of interventions, except in Burkina Faso where the project's monitoring and evaluation system made good use of data to ensure adaptive management.
34. Finally, FAO in all countries made a significant contribution to the implementation of projects, but could have added more value by implementing, for example, *Caisses de résilience* to strengthen the sustainability of the achievements.

### **3.4 Coordination and partnership**

35. In general, the mechanism put in place by FAO is relevant for providing the expected support to beneficiaries (sub-offices and antennas, MOUs with technical partners and non-governmental organisations). The selection process of partner non-governmental organisations followed a well-defined procedure and the partnership is appreciated. A functional mechanism is put in place by FAO to evaluate and monitor technical and operational partners. Nevertheless, the signing and payment of MOUs takes time and coordination has remained weak.

36. In Burkina Faso, MOUs are not sufficiently shared internally at the level of the technical services and all the partners did not sufficiently assimilate the implementation approach (Sahel/Namentenga input cooperatives).
37. Synergies and complementarities with other FAO interventions were developed especially in Burkina Faso, Cameroon and the Niger. However, some opportunities could have been further exploited.

### **3.5 Gender**

38. A high proportion of women benefited from the interventions, which contributed to strengthening their access to capital and leadership roles in households. Moreover, they could speak up in their communities, particularly in the Niger through the Dimitra Clubs. However, the projects did not include in their design a gender strategy aimed at gender equality and women's empowerment that would have allowed the identification of activities specifically adapted to their needs.

### **3.6 Sustainability**

39. Several measures put in place by the interventions – especially the involvement and training of local partners, investment in goods and equipment, and the establishment of productive assets – contribute to the sustainability of achievements. However, there are various factors that hinder the sustainability of some of the achievements.
40. In general, the technical capacities of stakeholders (technical services and implementing partner non-governmental organisations) have been strengthened, but their financial and logistical capacities remain limited to continue supporting beneficiary communities.
41. The lack of support for local seed production, the late start of certain important activities, the lack of knowledge about input supply channels, are all detrimental to sustainability.
42. In Burkina Faso, the multi-year financing approach contributed to increase effectiveness and sustainability: i) during the two years of the initial phase, beneficiaries received rainfed seeds and unconditional cash transfers each year (although the cash did not arrive at the right time to help households protect their assets); ii) the project went beyond humanitarian response by supporting activities such as fodder and market garden seed support, small ruminant support, and cash to foster structural change toward development; and iii) the signing of a single MOU with operational and technical partners that took into account the duration of the phase, and the selection of beneficiaries only once for the entire duration of the phase, shows that the project did not consider multi-annuality as a sum of sequential years, but capitalized on sustainability.
43. The project has worked to strengthen social cohesion in Burkina Faso, but a key element such as the non-payment of risk cash is likely to be a source of tension if it persists. This is also the case with the tensions foreseen in the Niger, where negotiated agreements have not been completed.
44. In Cameroon, Chad, Mali and the Niger, despite relevant multi-year financing, FAO's action has remained limited to humanitarian response (new beneficiaries selected each year, annual MOUs with partners, etc.).

## 4. Lessons learned and recommendations

### 4.1 Lessons learned

#### **Lesson learned 1. Multi-year financing is relevant. It promotes flexibility, adaptive management and a shift from a humanitarian to a development approach.**

In Burkina Faso, this financing was used in the same areas and with the same target communities for several years. This allowed the project to learn from these initial implementation mistakes to achieve positive results in the future, particularly in terms of meeting beneficiaries' needs and thus, adaptive management. However, this finding must be qualified by the results of a resilience perception survey conducted in 2021 which does not allow us to conclude that resilience has really improved thanks to the project.

Moreover, again in Burkina Faso, intervention partners have noted that this new type of funding make a real difference. For example, the signing of MOUs with implementing partners for the total duration of the intervention and the support of the same beneficiaries over at least two years are for example important elements. Indeed, they actively participate in the sustainability of the actions undertaken and allow for greater efficiency (fewer contracts to be signed) and improved flexibility in the implementation (since the contracts are longer, they must respond to a situation that evolves over time). The multi-year financing demonstrated flexibility and adaptive management when the context was taken into account to review the target populations. The project favoured a humanitarian approach that included more developmental activities; thus favouring the transition from humanitarian to developmental.

FAO set up a functional monitoring and evaluation system (baseline report, results monitoring, post-distribution monitoring surveys, mid-term evaluation, final evaluation, annual review meetings with the donor) only in Burkina Faso where the data to collected were used to ensure adaptive management. This was not the case with other projects where FAO used all of its resources to ensure the proper implementation of the interventions, but where the monitoring and evaluation system has deficiencies, which did not allow for adaptive management.

In Mali, the two projects – one humanitarian and the other developmental – were implemented sequentially and in a complementary manner, targeting the same geographical areas and beneficiaries (and thus accompanying the populations beyond the annual grant). This approach has allowed for short-term humanitarian needs to be addressed and longer-term livelihood opportunities and coping strategies to be supported. Thus, multi-year funding can also be seen as a key to achieving better results in line with the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach, provided that good planning ensures a good organisation of interventions.

#### **Lesson learned 2. The synergies and complementarities developed with other interventions allow for the sharing of experiences between projects and can bring real added value to the implementation.**

Synergies and complementarities were implemented, but some opportunities could have been further exploited. In the Niger, FAO has succeeded in ensuring the complementarity of its projects implemented in the same area, as in the case of project NER/701/SWE and project NER/804/ITA, which have pooled the supply of inputs (seeds and cattle feed). Similarly, project NER/701/SWE developed synergies with the interventions of other UN agencies (World Food Program, International Organisation of Migration and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) whose beneficiaries received seeds while the FAO's project beneficiaries received food aid or shelter. In Chad, synergy and complementarity of actions were highlighted in certain areas where, in addition to the activities of project CHD/701/SWE, complementary activities (following the example of project CHD/803) were developed to pool the use of equipment or to strengthen capacities through training. There was an obvious opportunity for

complementarity with the two projects implemented in Mali (MLI/701 and MLI/804). However, the delay in project MLI/804 (as for project MLI/701) did not allow the targeted support to be provided in time, which was a missed opportunity for complementarity. In Burkina Faso, the regional technical committee of the National Food Security Council held its sessions three times a year, with FAO in charge of organising these sessions. These also help to report to regional stakeholders as well as technical and financial partners. These sessions allow for the presentation of all the activities implemented by FAO in terms of food security and resilience to all the stakeholders in the region. This allows for synergy of action at the level of the different interventions and alignment with the priorities of the regions. Synergies between SIDA-funded projects in different countries were non-existent.

**Lesson learned 3. The projects evaluated implicitly follow the principles of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.**

These principles are not explicit in the project documents. In terms of peace, the intervention in Burkina Faso created an environment that facilitates the social integration of IDPs and host communities, by providing cash to promote community work to live together; by creating a space for dialogue and promoting living together between host and IDP communities. In the Niger, social cohesion was strengthened through Dimitra Clubs.<sup>7</sup> The Dimitra approach, which the target populations have adopted, has opened up real spaces for dialogue and exchange between men and women. The communities said they are proud and satisfied with the diverse results of the actions they initiated and undertook through these clubs. These clubs have also enabled women to express their point of view in a society where public space is essentially male. As concerns the development-humanitarian aspect, the perfect example is the complementarity between the two projects in Mali. The support to certain perennial activities common to all six projects, such as market gardening, also goes beyond a simple humanitarian intervention.

**Lesson learned 4. Promoting an integrated approach (production, training, income-generating activities) that benefits the same target groups and allows them to engage in productive activities, contributes to strengthening their resilience.**

Experience from previous projects has shown that a weak integration of these three activities (production, training, income-generating activities) for the benefit of each beneficiary is an obstacle to strengthening their resilience. Resilience is built on different elements. Without planning, resilience is not sufficiently supported to be fully developed. Indeed, the evaluation noted that households are generally neither prepared nor able to recover in case of a post-project shock (as confirmed by the analysis of self-perceived resilience). This is due in part to the fact that it is impossible to diversify the sources of income and/or means of subsistence for these beneficiaries, and their lack of financial resources (because they have not developed income-generating activities or do not own a capital), which limits their ability to bounce back from a shock.

**Lesson learned 5. In fragile and emergency contexts, it is important to adapt tools and procedures to be more flexible and accelerate contracting and procurement procedures.**

In project implementation, FAO has not always been able to adapt its tools and procedures to the emergency context, and results have not always been timely. For example, it is obvious that late delivery of agricultural inputs (which the five countries experienced at different levels) has a negative impact on the agricultural calendar. Since agriculture is rainfed, if seeds are not made available to beneficiaries on time, irregular rainfall will affect crop yields. At the level of unconditional cash transfers, these delays are often a disincentive for beneficiaries. At the level of implementing partners, delays in making resources available have a direct effect on the implementation and monitoring of activities on the field.

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<sup>7</sup> Dimitra Clubs are groups of women, men or young people – mixed or not – who decide to organise themselves to act together on their own environment. They meet regularly to discuss about the problems they face in their daily lives, to make decisions and to take action to solve them.

**Lesson learned 6. FAO's proven experience with targeting, if used, can improve it.**

In general, targeting processes have been effective in identifying the most vulnerable population that need support. However, in Burkina Faso, targeting gaps result from the poor application of the household economy analysis methodology, due to time constraints and lack of dedicated resources. In addition, as concerns the identification of IDP beneficiaries, the project often evolved without Effectiveness with social action departments, which could have avoided duplication.

**Lesson learned 7. The Dimitra Club approach has proven to be a key element in strengthening social cohesion, enhancing the role of women in the community, and supporting local livelihoods.**

In the Niger, target communities strongly took ownership of this approach and took action on their own through inclusive participation and community engagement. Moreover, these listening clubs, which are an informal space for discussion and action, have also allowed women to express themselves through real spaces for dialogue and exchange, between women and men separately, but also in plenary sessions later on.

## **4.2 Recommendations**

**Recommendation 1.** Make strategic choices for the implementation of multi-year funding interventions for a better contribution to resilience beyond the strict humanitarian intervention.

This requires the following actions:

- i. promote an integrated approach with the same target groups enabling them to engage in productive activities and sustainable management of natural resources;
- ii. intensify support to beneficiaries, so that the same beneficiary can benefit from all three activities: production, training and income-generating activities; and
- iii. make the processes of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach explicit in project formulation by including them in the project document.

**Recommendation 2.** Improve beneficiary targeting processes.

This requires the following actions:

- i. implement lessons learned in previous targeting practices at the FAO level;
- ii. plan the time needed for the training of stakeholders and take steps to plan the time and resources needed to conduct the process; and
- iii. ensure coordination and consultation with local communities, partners and government institutions to ensure the effective implementation of the chosen targeting methodology.

**Recommendation 3.** Strengthen FAO's internal mechanism for greater effectiveness and efficiency in the implementation of interventions.

This requires the following actions:

- i. strengthen the collaboration/synergy between the programmes and procurement units to limit delays in input supply contracts and in the time needed for contracting partners;
- ii. have a catalogue of technical specifications validated in advance, which can be used over several periods in order to speed up the ordering process;
- iii. speed up the contracting process with partners;

- iv. review the duration of the intervention and the duration of the contract with implementing partners in line with a multi-year financing; and
- v. strengthen the analysis of conflict-sensitive interventions through the development of appropriate tools.

**Recommendation 4.** Use the lessons learned in programming and monitoring practices in the formulation and implementation of future FAO interventions.

This requires the following actions:

- i. develop project logical frameworks according to current standards, including gender-disaggregated outcome and impact indicators; and
- ii. establish a monitoring and evaluation system, plan baselines and endlines, and use the data collected to influence decision-making in the context of adaptive management.

**Recommendation 5.** Strengthen synergy/collaboration between FAO projects and other interventions for experience sharing, in order to improve effectiveness and efficiency in the implementation of interventions.

This requires the following actions:

- i. organise inter-country exchange meetings on SIDA-funded interventions; and
- ii. develop exchanges and sharing of experiences with other FAO projects and other stakeholders.

**Recommendation 6.** In the case of the two projects in Mali, it is recommended to use an integrated local development approach. There was not enough time to determine with certainty whether actions designed in a sequential manner were effective, and to support a transition from humanitarian objectives to development objectives. A new phase would be welcomed to determine the effectiveness and sustainability of results.

**Recommendation 7.** Conduct a thorough gender analysis during the project design stage to understand women's access to resources, their activities, and the constraints they face; and tailor activities according to identified needs.



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