"Strengthening the resilience of agricultural systems and food security in the Sahel"

Panel and multimedia display to present results & perspectives of Integrated Resilience Programmes in the Sahel

Panel: Date/Time/Venue: 29 January 2024 from 3:00PM – 4:30PM (EST),
Venue: UN Headquarters, Conference Room 5 - Livestream on UN WebTV

Exhibition: “How Sahelian communities boost their resilience – evidence from the ground and sky”
Venue: UNHQ, ‘curved wall’ space
Dates: From 24 January to 2 February 2024

Context
The Sahel region, while holding significant potential, grapples with formidable challenges hindering its journey to food and nutrition security, sustainable employment, income opportunities, and environmental preservation. Escalating violence, conflict, and the presence of extremist groups, compounded by instability, poverty, and political crises, have exacerbated the region’s difficulties. The subregion anticipates temperature increases 1.5 times higher than the global average, intensifying land degradation and desertification. These factors, coupled with rapid population growth, contribute to rising food insecurity, malnutrition, and displacement. The Sahel faces a worsening food and nutrition crisis, with over 5 million people experiencing acute food insecurity. Recent political crises and sanctions in Niger have further strained the humanitarian situation, disrupting supplies and increasing commodity prices. While emergency aid responses aim to address immediate needs, they prove insufficient for sustainable solutions.

National governments, as well as regional organizations like the African Union and ECOWAS, have been playing a vital role in supporting agricultural sectors, humanitarian actions, and food systems through analysis, technical assistance, and resource mobilization.

Since 2018, WFP, with the fundamental support of Germany, joined forces with governments and partners to implement an integrated resilience programme across the Sahelian countries of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. Since 2019, the WFP resilience programme has been cooperating closely with a complementary UNICEF approach – a fruitful cooperation that will be further expanded in the future.

The programme aims to strengthen resilience of vulnerable people and local structures through a multi-sectorial approach, to create more opportunities for people and systems to cope with crises, to prepare
themselves for recurring shocks and stressors to mitigate the negative effects of crises and gradually overcome them permanently through structural changes. The programme promotes a Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus approach to respond to the Sahel crisis. This requires strengthening the coherence and connections between large-scale capacities for humanitarian action and longer-term actions for development and resilience.

The approach combines a variety of land rehabilitation and livelihood activities, school feeding, nutrition interventions, support to smallholder farmers, and institutional capacity strengthening.

Sustainable land and natural resource management is at the center of the approach, working to counteract land degradation, restore ecosystems and enable sustainable access to water. The programme has important co-benefits for ecosystems restoration, climate action, and biodiversity. Some of the integrated resilience activities in the Sahel are making major contributions to the climate mitigation agenda by restoring soil functions and services of previously degraded land. Rehabilitating lands contributes to the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, as well as the prevention and reversal of biodiversity loss.

Five years into implementation, the programme has demonstrated positive outcomes in terms of food security and nutrition, as well as in decreasing pastoralist-farmer conflicts, offering sustainable solutions for displaced populations, natural land regeneration, access to social services and education and women's empowerment. Evidence from several countries shows that the assets constructed by and for communities are cost efficient over time. Evidence from social protection and resilience building interventions demonstrates their ability to contribute to reducing humanitarian needs.

It is paramount to further scale-up these interventions, leveraging partnerships and coordination with key stakeholders. Building upon the achievements made and lessons learned so far, thanks to the renewed support of Germany, WFP, together with Unicef, and GIZ, and other key partners, will form a strategic Resilience Partnership in the Sahel, jointly developing a second phase of the programme to be implemented over the next five years.

The way forward aims to: i) consolidate resilience gains and evolve support packages in existing sites; ii) expand activities to new sites; iii) further programme integration by leveraging linkages with social protection; and iv) reinforce complementarity with operational partners, particularly on social cohesion, energy, and water.

Objectives

A panel discussion aims to foster dialogue among essential stakeholders, including experts and representatives from national governments. The goal is to share evidence, insights and ideas that can enhance the resilience of agricultural and food systems in a region grappling with political crises, conflicts, and acute food insecurity. The discussion will particularly focus on how innovative and integrated approaches, can contribute to building a more resilient and impactful agricultural system for the benefit of the population, showcasing WFP Integrated Resilience Programme, as a key investment of Germany.

The panel discussion will be accompanied by a multi-media exhibition, that will make the results achieved so far accessible through high-quality photo and video material telling captivating personal stories, drone shots and satellite imagery showing large-scale land transformation, and WFP's latest virtual reality production allowing participants of the event to step into a WFP resilience site. Together,
the exhibition will tell the story of WFP’s resilience work in areas that are difficult to access and are largely underreported. More specifically, the event aims to:

- Reflect on the need for longer-term programmes to complement and over time reduce the need for humanitarian assistance, in a context of multidimensional crisis and unprecedented needs.
- Deepen the understanding of WFP’s resilience-building approach and initiatives by showcasing one of the organization’s flagship programmes, supported.
- Take stock of the challenges, achievements and lessons learned since the scale-up of resilience programming in the Sahel.
- Present the next phase of the Integrated Resilience Programme (2024-28)
- Call for other partners to join the new Sahel Resilience Partnership effort in the Sahel.

**Proposed Agenda**

1. **Welcome and introductions** (3 minutes)
   Moderator

2. **Resilience in times of unprecedented needs: how to safeguard development achievements and bring down humanitarian needs** (5 minutes)
   - WFP West Africa Regional Director a.i. (Margot Van Der Velden)

3. **Coordinated and sequenced Resilience Programming to scale-up development response in the Sahel** (10 minutes)
   - Mr. Mar Dieye, Special Coordinator for development in the Sahel – UNISS
   - Uta Boellhoff, Deputy Director Partnerships - UNICEF

4. **Providing what Sahelian communities need** (10 minutes)
   Chad, Mme. Sainta Ndem Ngoidi - Secretary of State for Economic Affairs and Cooperation
   Burkina Faso, Dr. Son - Executive Secretariat of the National Food Security Council (SE-CNSA)

5. **Long-term partnerships for long-term solutions** (5 minutes)
   - Mr. Thomas Zahneisen, DPR of Germany

6. **Evidence on resilience programme’s contribution to reducing humanitarian needs in West Africa** (5 mn).
   - WFP West Africa Research, Assessment and Monitoring Division (Federico Doehnert)

7. **Q&A** (15 minutes)
8. **Outlook for the future and closing** (5 minutes)
   - WFP West Africa Regional Director a.i. (Margot Van Der Velden)

9. **Tour of the exhibition:** “How Sahelian communities boost their resilience – evidence from the ground and sky” (25 min)