

STUDY ON
THE EFFECTS OF
THE AGIR PROCESS
ON THE GOVERNANCE
OF FOOD AND
NUTRITION SECURITY
IN THE SAHEL AND
WEST AFRICA

EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY

MARCH 2017

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1. BACKGROUND

In light of the recurring crises in the Sahel, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and their partners jointly established the Global Alliance for Resilience (AGIR) - Sahel and West Africa. AGIR's objective is to structurally and sustainably reduce food and nutrition vulnerability in the region as a step towards achieving zero hunger within 20 years. After the AGIR Regional Roadmap was adopted in April 2013, stakeholders agreed to translate their vision into "National Resilience Priorities" (NRPs) based on national inclusive dialogue bringing together all private and public stakeholders.

2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the value added of the AGIR process on the governance of food and nutrition security. It focused on the main political, institutional and financial changes brought about by implementing the Regional Roadmap. The best practices drawn from the analysis will be shared with all Alliance stakeholders.

3. METHODOLOGY

The study consisted of: i) interviewing resource people and other key stakeholders involved in the AGIR process at the national and regional levels: representatives of governments; professional agricultural, civil society and private sector organisations; technical and financial partners; among others and ii) a literature review. The analysis focused on five countries: Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Gambia, Mali and Niger. These countries were selected based on progress made in identifying resilience priorities and in order to have Sahelian and non-Sahelian country representation.

4. RESULTS

The study revealed significant changes in terms of political, institutional and financial commitments and, more generally, improvements in the governance of food and nutrition security. The AGIR process has raised public awareness around hunger, malnutrition and social protection issues and has opened up discussion on the vulnerability of populations, as well as structural and cyclical causes.

POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

Reviewing policies, programmes and projects has enabled these countries to **foster intersectorality** through improved mapping of food and nutrition security interventions targeting vulnerable populations. This helps strengthen synergies and complementarities for more effective and higher impact policies and programmes.

- **Mali**, for example, succeeded in better structuring its collaboration and intervention frameworks by involving some 17 departments and institutions working on resilience.
- **Niger** strengthened its co-ordination mechanism - the High Commission on 3N Initiative (Nigeriens feeding Nigeriens). Support for existing mechanisms was increased at different levels by including ministries' permanent secretaries on committees within their jurisdictions.
- The adoption of the NRP document for **Burkina Faso** by the Ministerial Council as well as monthly briefings on resilience-related initiatives for the President of the Republic of **Niger** has made food and nutrition security issues more visible on the political agenda of these countries.

The following changes highlight the progress made by governments in addressing **resilience issues and their multi-sectorial dimension**:

- The scope of **Cabo Verde's** National Food Security Council has been expanded to include a multi-sector, multi-actor AGIR platform.
- In **Burkina Faso**, organisational improvements have been made, including a strengthened Permanent Secretariat for Agricultural Policy Co-ordination; this involved establishing a national technical team responsible for co-ordinating the formulation of NRPs. This has strengthened the role of the Executive Secretariat of the National Council on Food Security in facilitating dialogue around resilience and food and nutrition security. It has also fostered the involvement and active participation of relevant line ministries in strengthening resilience. The National Council on Food Security has, as a result, been active on a more regular basis.
- In **Chad**, changes have been made to existing frameworks e.g. the Action Committee on Food Security and Crisis Management has been opened up to other sectors in order to strengthen inclusivity and contributions of all resilience related sectors and actors.
- **Niger** has established working groups and a unit dedicated to AGIR within the High Commission on the 3N Initiative in order to improve the intervention framework for actors working in the field of resilience.

FINANCIAL CHANGES

Although it is somewhat early to properly assess the impact of the AGIR process on increasing financial commitments with respect to food and nutrition security and resilience, the process has accelerated the preparation of projects for some technical and financial partners, including the African Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank and the World Bank, in the six Sahelian countries.

- The NRP process has led to **increased awareness in governments of the need to better target funding for resilience issues**. This has resulted in increased budget allocations of domestic resources being earmarked for food and nutrition security in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. In Cabo Verde, one notable change involves the decision to expand its funding for social protection and food assistance beneficiaries through school canteens.
- The AGIR process has also resulted in **improved targeting and traceability of funding**, by channelling more funds to the most vulnerable populations. Agricultural investment plans are being updated to include additional nutrition and social protection components at the regional and national levels.
- In Niger, the new 2016-20 3N Initiative highlights two key AGIR pillars in its action plan - nutrition and social protection - and places special emphasis on the most vulnerable populations. The outlooks and perceptions in the countries indicate that **government budgets are likely to be more sensitive to the resilience of vulnerable populations**.

ACTIONS REQUIRED FOR CONTINUED CHANGE

Some actions are required to ensure the sustainability and duplicability of the positive changes brought about by the AGIR process.

- Key among them is **national leadership** - a prerequisite to enable governments and partners to take better ownership of NRPs by making them true reference frameworks for resilience issues. Political will and commitment at the highest level is crucial to effectively facilitate policy dialogue aimed at aligning all technical, financial partners and stakeholders. Niger's 3N Initiative is an excellent example of such national leadership.
- National inclusive dialogues have underscored the challenge of **streamlining collaboration frameworks** and, in particular, the need for them to be part of an **intersectoral and multi-actor approach**, in order to effectively respond to food and nutrition security and resilience issues. This is at the heart of AGIR's key principles.
- Lastly, more **lobbying and international advocacy** is needed to mobilise policy makers and educate them on the need to keep resilience at the top of the international development agenda – one that is now largely dominated by the resurgence of migration- and security-related challenges. Strengthening the resilience of the most vulnerable, in a sustainable manner, is part of the solution to these same challenges.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study has shed light on some of the positive changes brought about by the AGIR process in the countries concerned. These changes must be shared and, above all, maintained. To accomplish this, it is crucial to:

- Strengthen and sustain multi-sector and multi-actor national platforms so that they become the cornerstones of national leadership on dialogue and alignment as well as consistent and effective national resilience initiatives;
- Continue to improve the process of integrating resilience into food and nutrition security policies and programmes;
- Continue to enhance communications, advocacy and lobbying directed at policy makers at all levels - local, national, regional and international; and
- Bolster the political and technical leadership of ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS.