



RURAL SYNERGIES



MALI

*Building bridges between social and
productive inclusion policies*



In collaboration with government agencies,
extension services and local partners

Complementing cash with productive inputs to improve food security and resilience among the extreme poor in Mali

KEY MESSAGES

Neither agriculture nor social protection alone can address all the constraints faced by poor rural households. Combined interventions are shown to have greater impacts than stand-alone interventions in assisting vulnerable populations to combat poverty and providing them with productive means to sustainably move out of poverty. The complementarity can also contribute to increasing the resilience of households in the face of external shocks or crises, an argument that is particularly relevant in contexts such as the one we are currently facing as a result of COVID-19. Experience from the FAO's Cash+ project in the Nioro Circle in Mali demonstrates that the combination of cash transfer and agricultural productive inputs exerted stronger positive impacts on food security and household production than cash alone. However, the successful implementation of social and agricultural interventions requires a great deal of collaboration between relevant stakeholders of the two sectors.



The government of Mali expresses strong commitment and political will to develop both the social protection and agricultural sectors. However, there is still a lack of concerted action to achieve greater coherence between them. The policy framework is influenced by types of interaction that favour sectoral reinforcement and predominantly isolated planning and operational approaches. There are large numbers of existing mechanisms for coordinating the two sectors, but they are not sufficiently functional and do not explicitly include the issue of coherence and linkages between agriculture and social protection.

To raise awareness and political commitment on the issue of coherence between agriculture and social protection, stakeholders can make use of existing national food security and nutrition and agricultural policy processes to place coherence on the policy agenda.



The government should mobilize and coordinate actions of all relevant ministerial departments for: (i) managing the design and implementation of agricultural and social protection interventions with the ministries in charge of agriculture and social protection; (ii) financing interventions with the ministries in charge of economy and finance; and (iii) supporting cross-sectoral coordination with national and decentralized steering committees and sector working groups.



Skills training programmes on the issue of coherence between social protection and agriculture should be prepared and proposed to all high-level, regional, subregional and field officials.



Since the conception stage, new social programmes/projects should be systematically designed in order to avoid potential harm, act as a complement to and create synergies with other existing programmes. Since it is national in scope, the Jigisemejiri programme deserves to be considered as a basis for coordination. Coordination must also be developed with decentralised governmental actors and local sector-based services.



IN 2015-2017, FAO'S RESILIENCE, EMERGENCY AND REHABILITATION OFFICE FOR WEST AFRICA IMPLEMENTED THE PROJECT PRODUCTIVE SAFETY NETS AS A TOOL TO REINFORCE THE RESILIENCE IN THE SAHEL (HEREINAFTER REFERRED TO AS THE CASH+ PROJECT) IN MALI AND MAURITANIA. THE PROJECT'S PRIMARY OBJECTIVE WAS TO OFFER A RESPONSE TO THE CRITICAL HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN MANY PARTS OF THE SAHEL, WHERE AROUND FOUR AND A HALF MILLION PEOPLE FACE RECURRENT FOOD AND NUTRITION CRISES. AT THE TIME OF THE PROJECT, THIS SITUATION WAS CAUSED BY THE LATE START OF THE RAINY SEASON, MEAGRE CROP HARVESTS, ARMED CONFLICT, LOW PASTORAL PRODUCTION AND THE RESIDUAL EFFECTS OF THE EBOLA OUTBREAK. IN MALI, THE INTERVENTION WAS CARRIED OUT IN THE NIORO DU SAHEL CIRCLE, IN THE REGION OF KAYES. IT ORIGINATED FROM THE ONGOING QUEST BY THE MALIAN AUTHORITIES FOR GREATER FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY FOR THE POPULATION, IN A COUNTRY THAT OFTEN SUFFERS OF - FROM FOOD SHORTAGES. THE 2015 EARLY HUNGER PERIOD COULD HAVE EXACERBATED THE DETERIORATING LIVELIHOODS OF VERY POOR HOUSEHOLDS IF NO MEASURES HAD BEEN TAKEN. THERE WAS CLEARLY AN URGENT NEED TO HELP VULNERABLE POPULATIONS BETTER ABSORB AND WITHSTAND SHOCKS BY RESPONDING TO EARLY WARNING SIGNALS.

At about the same time (2014), the Jigisemejiri programme – “the tree of hope” – was launched as an emergency operation implemented by the Ministry of Economy and Finance, with funding from the World Bank’s International Development Association. The programme consisted of a three-year cash transfer and accompanying measures such as community- and village-level information sessions to promote good practices on nutrition, health, education and family planning, and a preventive nutrition package to pregnant women and children under five years old. In 2017, Jigisemejiri was renewed for a further three-year period. Two new components were added to the programme: labour-intensive public works and income-generating activities in the areas of small farming, trade, livestock, poultry, agriculture and crafts. The income-generating activities targeted 10 000 households already receiving the cash transfers: more than two thirds have received support for sheep and goat farming and fattening, and one fifth for trading in cereals and condiments. The geographical coverage of the cash transfer component of Jigisemejiri will be gradually expanded to reach the target of 100 000 households in 2022. In fact, the programme could provide the foundation for building a national social protection system in Mali. With the new component on income generation put into effect in 2017, the ministries in charge of the agricultural sectors have become more closely involved in programme implementation, alongside the ministries responsible for social protection. Jigisemejiri, therefore, provides common ground for integrating social and productive interventions targeting the same populations, thereby serving as a concrete example for pushing the promotion of greater coherence across sectors forward in the public policy agenda.

PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

The project implemented in the Nioro du Sahel Circle provided goods and services to 900 poor households under two separate modalities with an identical monetary value: half of the project beneficiaries received only cash, whereas the other half received both cash and productive inputs, in the form of goats, animal feeds and animal health monitoring (Cash+). Regardless of the modality, all the project participants also benefited from training on breeding, nutrition, and hygiene practices.

The selection of project beneficiaries was conducted through targeting at three levels: a selection of communes, of villages and of households. Additionally, the project deliberately focused on communes where it could create synergies with existing initiatives such as Jigisemejiri or the Food Insecurity and Malnutrition Programme (PLIAM). Out of 16 communes in the Nioro Circle, five were chosen: Nioro-Urbaine, Nioro Tougouné Rangabé, Guétéma, Simby and Yérééré, and 36 villages were then selected using poverty criteria or random selection. The final list of 900 beneficiary households was made up of all the vulnerable households considered as “poor” and “very poor” according to the Household Economy Analysis approach.

Regarding its implementation modalities, the Nioro Cash+ project used the following inputs:

- **Unconditional cash:**

The project made two types of transfers to beneficiaries, both unconditional: 450 households selected for the Cash modality received a total of XOF 100,000, equivalent to US\$ ppp 466.18, paid in two XOF 50,000 (US\$ ppp 233.01) instalments three months apart. The other 450 beneficiary households, selected for the Cash+ modality, received a single transfer of XOF 20,000, equivalent



to US\$ ppp 93.24, at the same time as the first instalment paid to the Cash only beneficiaries.

- **Livestock inputs:**
These were only given to participants in the Cash+ group. They consisted of one herd of three goats, two female and one male, and 50 kg of livestock feed. Three rounds of zoo-technical support were provided for the 1 350 goats allocated to the 450 Cash+ beneficiary households.
- **Food and nutritional knowledge:**
450 Cash+ beneficiaries acquired knowledge on breeding practices. The project provided training to all beneficiaries, Cash and Cash+, on essential nutrition actions, infant and young child feeding and hygiene practices. Two beneficiary women per village were trained by nutrition experts from the Ministry of Health and FAO. Two subsequent awareness sessions were conducted per village. The project also provided culinary demonstration kits in all targeted villages. Boxes of soap were distributed to schools, town halls and to project beneficiaries.

PROGRAMME THEORY OF CHANGE

While there is ample evidence about the positive outcomes brought on by cash transfers, the provision of cash alone is not always sufficient to overcome the social and economic constraints, structural and non-financial barriers faced by extremely poor rural households and ensure the achievement of long-term and sustainable impacts.

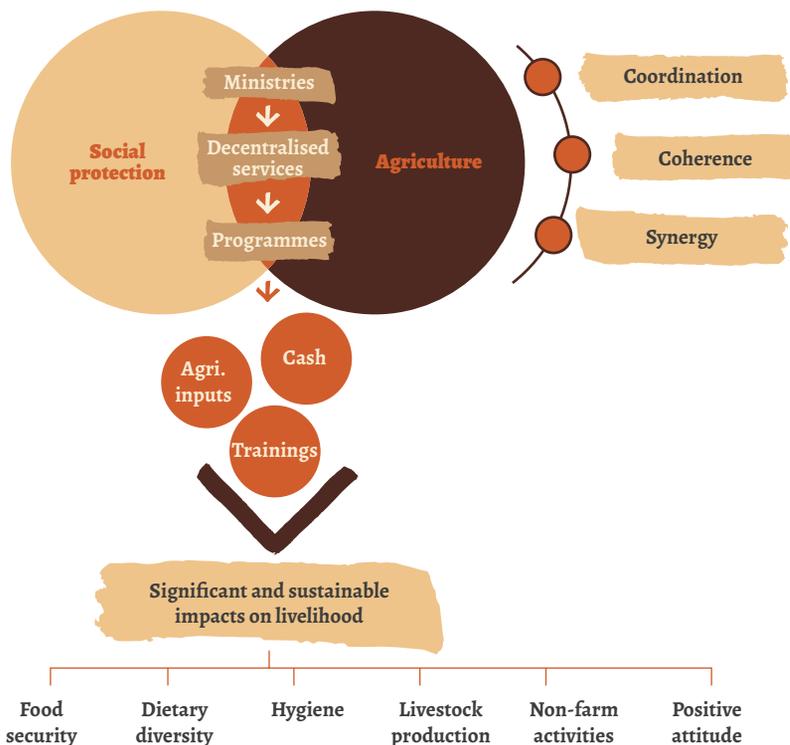
Combining cash transfers with other interventions or services (for example value chain development, market training, providing health insurance cards, or offering productive tools that are not locally available) has the potential to boost impacts beyond the “income effects” of cash transfers alone. In fact, Cash+ programmes seek to augment those effects by complementing cash with additional inputs, components or linkages with external services. Figure 1 illustrates the theory of change of such pro-

grammes, as exemplified by the Nioro Cash+ project in the region of Kayes.

The first component of the Nioro Cash+ project – unconditional cash transfers – was intended to help project participants address immediate basic needs, bridge the food gap often faced before a harvest, protect assets from being sold out of distress, and remove financial barriers to kick-start productive investments. The second component – productive inputs – was meant to enhance agricultural production and improve income generation potential.

The third component – training on nutrition and health practices – aimed to strengthen beneficiaries’ knowledge and productive skills, therefore maximizing the impacts of the cash and productive assistance packages.

Figure 1. Theory of change



Note: This diagram shows how the combination of cash, agricultural inputs and trainings seeks to address the multifaceted constraints that poor rural households face in a way that not only helps them cope with short-term stress caused by income and agricultural production shocks, but also enhances their long-term resilience by building capital and productive assets and improving their nutritional status and health conditions. In the broader context, coherent articulation between social protection and agricultural sectors plays a crucial role in ensuring the effectiveness of those types of interventions.

The project's effectiveness depends on whether it fits in the larger policy environment in ways as to create constructive interactions with other existing policies or initiatives. The quality of the environment is essentially conditioned by the coordination between social protection and agricultural sectors from policy to programmatic levels, and the coherence of their policies and actions.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Impacts of the Nioro Cash+ project on the beneficiaries

The impacts of the Cash+ project were measured across different aspects of livelihood, namely food security, food diet, livestock production, non-farm activities, hygiene, aspirations and expectations for the future.

- **Food security, dietary diversity and hygiene practices**

The quantitative study reveals a significant impact of the Cash+ treatment on its beneficiaries, compared to the situation where they had not been included in the programme. On average, the proportion of households who never had to worry about having enough food increased by 70.5 per cent with Cash+. The Cash+ beneficiaries were also 7.1 per cent less likely to experience any level of food insecurity than if they had received Cash Only. The qualitative evaluation confirmed this finding.

However, the evaluation did not find positive impacts of the programme in diversifying the daily food consumption of children and women in the beneficiary households. Training on nutrition provided by the programme might not have been intensive and expansive enough to change the eating habits of the population.

To improve hygiene practices, boxes of soap were provided to all beneficiary households, whether they received Cash Only or Cash+. Compared to the situation in the control group, the beneficiaries of the programme washed their hands more often with disinfectant than the non-beneficiaries, probably with the distributed soap.

- **Farm and non-farm production**

The assessment observed a significant increase in livestock production among the Cash+ beneficiaries. Cash+ beneficiaries' average gross income from livestock was 68.5 per cent and 88.2 per cent greater than it would if they had been in the control group or received Cash Only, respectively. Households getting Cash+ also had a volume of livestock that was 85.4 per cent higher than if they had received Cash Only. These results indicate that Cash+ households still maintained and developed their livestock, which represents a sort of productive capital, long after the end of the project.

However, the qualitative study reveals that the quantity of livestock feed given to the Cash+ beneficiaries (50 kg) was not enough for the duration of the project and led some people to buy more with their own money. Moreover, project beneficiaries and representatives of district committees also suggested increasing the number of female goats as it would allow for higher breeding efficiency.

The programme did not have any significant impact on the engagement of the beneficiaries in non-farm activities and their related profits. Probably the cash amount was too limited, and since the project was humanitarian, with a focus on agriculture, non-farm activities were not actively promoted.

• Aspirations and expectations

The quantitative study did not find any significant impacts of the programme on the respondents' expectations of better socio-economic conditions in the future. However, the study did observe positive and significant impacts of the programme on the aspirations for children's education. The Cash Only and Cash+ beneficiaries were, respectively, 51.9 and 16.3 per cent more likely to aspire that their children would reach university level compared to non-beneficiaries.

Overall, both quantitative and qualitative studies concluded that in many regards, the impact was more conclusive in the Cash+ modality than in the Cash only modality. In future initiatives of this type, **it is recommended that work should therefore focus on combining cash transfers and productive transfers at the same time.**

Coordination issues in the Cash+ project

The design and implementation of the Cash+ project required the creation of a partnership between FAO and other stakeholders including the local technical services (such as the Local Service for Social Development and the Solidarity Economy, the Local Animal Products and Industries Service, and the Local Veterinary Service), with whom local agreements were signed. However, the institutional assessment revealed some weaknesses in the coordination of the project such as the absence of a formal mechanism involving ministries, their technical departments and their regional services, at national and regional level, and the low level of involvement by the administrative authority in local coordination.

During its implementation, the Cash+ project encountered or was joined on the ground by several initiatives. However, it only developed certain synergies with the Programme to Fight Food Inse-

curity and Malnutrition in the Nara and Nioro Circles in the Sahel (PLIAM) and Jigisemejiri. Coordination with other existing programmes was not originally included in the logical framework of the Cash+ modality and there was no systematic follow-up to monitor the result.

The Cash+ project relied on the same local committees created by Jigisemejiri for targeting and for supporting the implementation of its activities. It acted on statements by the village authorities to exclude from its list of beneficiaries any household already selected by Jigisemejiri. The comments collected among the beneficiaries revealed that the Cash+ project happened to act as a complement to Jigisemejiri, as the latter could not serve all the population in need.

Even though there was no official mechanism established to regulate the coordination between these two interventions, the implementation of the Cash+ project still exhibited some positive features, such as an absence of reported conflict on the ground and its targeting process, which was complementary to other existing initiatives.

• Quality of the enabling environment

The successful implementation of social and agricultural interventions such as the Nioro Cash+ project requires a great deal of collaboration between the social protection and agricultural sectors. The quality of the coordination is strongly affected by the government's political commitment and awareness among civil servants, the ability of coordination mechanisms as well as financial and human resources to promote coherence between the two sectors.



• **Political commitment and awareness**

Despite the high political commitment displayed by the Government of Mali to developing both the social protection and agricultural sectors, as evidenced by the importance given to them in the Strategic Economic Recovery Framework for Sustainable Development that serves as the frame of reference for all sector-based strategies in the country, the will to improve operational coherence between the two sectors exists but at a low level. Missing are a joint vision, shared objectives and common action plans between the two sectors. Each has its own action plans and tends to favour sector-specific, isolated programmes. Consideration of the other sector is rare, partly due to limited awareness among civil servants about the relevance of combining social protection and agriculture. The latter sees its main role as that of promoting production and productivity, while the former lacks specific funding for activities supporting agricultural production. This is the weakest point in the policy environment, which can prevent the creation and promotion of joint social protection and agriculture programmes.

• **Coordination mechanisms**

In Mali, many arrangements already exist for the coordination between and within sectors at central and decentralised levels, including the Orientation, Coordination and Monitoring Committees for Development Actions, and the sector-based coordination mechanisms such as the National Council for the Strategic Orientation of Social Protection, the National Technical Committee for Social Protection, the Higher Council of Agriculture, the National Executive Agriculture Council and the Regional Executive Agriculture Council. However, these coordination

arrangements generally experienced the following problems:

- Some are quite cumbersome due to the many bodies involved at national level;
- Very few, or even none of the statutory meetings are held;
- Cross-representation is not systematically ensured as certain key stakeholders from one sector are not represented in some of the mechanisms of the other sector;
- Little consideration is given to the financing and operation of certain mechanisms.
- There is no reference to the desire for coherence between agriculture and social protection as well as no linkage between the mechanisms in the two sectors.

• **Financial and human resources to support coherence**

Regarding funding mechanisms, the budget lines mentioned in the different documents consulted do not have a clear line dedicated to coordination issues or the sharing of programmes between the social protection and agricultural sectors; and none of the funding arrangements considers the possibility of pooling resources to enhance coherence.

The human resources qualities that are required to support coherence between social protection and agricultural interventions are: the ability to produce and share convincing data with a view to promoting commitment and shedding light on the processes for designing and implementing policies and programmes; the ability to facilitate inter-sectoral alliances and partnerships; and the ability to design, execute, monitor and evaluate coherent policies and programmes. The inquiries into certain national services in the Sikasso and Kayes regions and

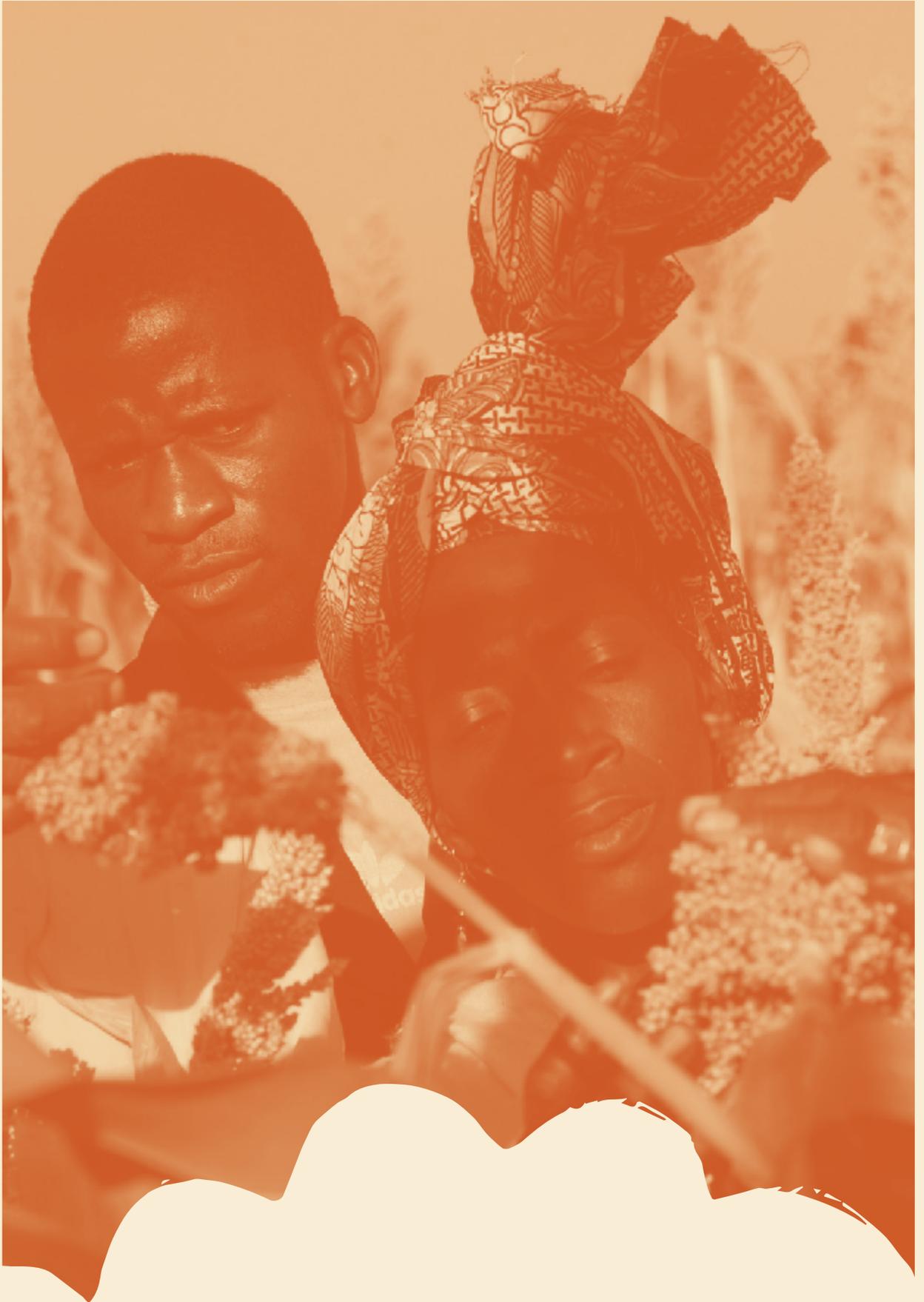
the Koutiala and Nioro circles revealed that, in general, the quality of the personnel in the two sectors did not allow these requirements to be met in full. In both sectors, the analysis documented an insufficient number and quality of employees, which limited the pursuit of coherence between the two sectors and the performance of programmes combining social protection and agricultural interventions.

Jigisemejiri – a common ground to integrate social and agricultural interventions

Despite the challenges documented above, the national safety net programme Jigisemejiri represents a promising arena for supporting programmes combining social protection and agricultural elements. With the new component on Income-Generating Activities put into effect in October 2017, the ministries in charge of agriculture are now involved in the project. For instance, the National Directorate of Agriculture facilitated the trainings of field officers on the techniques of market gardening, trade in agricultural products and agricultural inputs, while the National Direction of Animal Production and Industries delivered the techniques of poultry farming and breeding of sheep and goats. The programme's annual ordinary and extraordinary sessions have been chaired by the Ministry of Economy and Finance and attended by representatives from different ministries, directorates, decentralised units and NGOs, including actors in the social protection and agricultural sector. As such, Jigisemejiri has created an 'ecosystem' for the articulation of national policies on social protection with agriculture, and should be considered as a base for other social protection and agriculture programmes to build on.

Findings on Jigisemejiri and its component on income-generating activities reveal that:

- The income-generating activities have been implemented, but only once the cash transfer phase had ended. Therefore, this type of intervention has the disadvantage of not having the concomitant effects of the two modalities at the same time.
- The agricultural intervention consists purely of trainings. This implies that its effect might not be comparable with interventions providing direct productive agricultural inputs like the FAO Cash+ project. Moreover, training in agriculture may not be an adequate response in an emergency situation.
- Opinions of Jigisemejiri stakeholders collected for the institutional analysis in the districts of M'Pesoba and N'Gountjina confirmed the effectiveness of the programme in improving food availability, health and schooling. Nonetheless, some officials stressed the need for greater and more regular funding, more harmonised targeting methods, improved monitoring and evaluation, and better cross-sectoral coordination between all the relevant ministerial departments.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Raise awareness and political commitment for promoting coherence between social protection and agriculture

- Stakeholders can make use of existing national food security, nutrition and agricultural policy processes to place coherence more centrally on the policy agenda. The process of developing the national social protection floors, the Agricultural Development Policy and the ongoing reflection on the need to strengthen the intersectoral mechanism following the adoption of the National Food Security and Nutrition Policy are possible avenues to initiate high-level discussions on the need for greater coordination between agriculture and social protection.
- Programmes that have successfully created linkages between social protection and agriculture should be encouraged to share their experiences widely in the public policy sphere.

2. Strengthen coordination between stakeholders

- The government should mobilize and coordinate actions of all relevant ministerial departments for: managing the design and implementation of agricultural and social protection policies and programmes with the ministries in charge of agriculture and of social protection; financing interventions with the ministries in charge of economy and finance; and supporting cross-sectoral coordination with national and decentralized steering committees and sector working groups.
- The representativeness of key stakeholders in agencies of two sectors should be improved.
- The Regional, Local and District Orientation, Coordination and Monitoring Committees for Development Actions should explicitly reinforce the articulation and coordination between social protection and agricultural sectors.

3. Improve financial and human resource capacities

- More budget should be allocated to strengthening the coordination arrangements between the social protection and agricultural sectors.
- Skills training programmes on the issue of coherence between social protection and agriculture should be prepared and proposed to all high-level, regional, sub-regional officials and field workers.

4. Create synergy between initiatives

- Since the inception stage, new social programmes or projects should be systematically designed in order to avoid potential harm, act as a complement to and create synergies with other existing initiatives. Coordination must be developed with decentralised governmental actors and local sector-based services.
- Since it is national in scope, the Jigisemejiri programme deserves to be considered as a basis for coordination.

5. Make the national safety system more shock-responsive with agricultural interventions

- The practice of combining transfer of money and agricultural assets in the humanitarian context of the Cash+ project can be capitalised and applied to a larger scale in permanent public programmes such as the Jigisemejiri.
- The Malian Government does express its political commitment to shock-responsive social protection. However, its ability to secure resources is limited and the institutional capacity for shock-responsive social protection is still largely insufficient to deliver effective results. More coordination and coherence should be pursued by a large number of stakeholders with the inclusion of the three main agencies responsible for supporting households affected by shocks: the Ministry in charge of Social Protection, the Ministry of Security and Civil Protection and the Food Security Commission.

TECHNICAL SHEET

The Project

Over the past few years, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), together with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) have been analysing the potential synergistic effects of interventions on rural households that involve social protection programmes and productive rural development projects. IFAD and the Universidad de Los Andes have implemented this project through the “Conditional Cash Transfers and Rural Development in Latin America” grant (www.siner-giasrurales.info/); and FAO through the project entitled “From Protection to Production: The role of Social Cash Transfers in the Promotion of Economic Development” (PtoP) (www.fao.org/economic/ptop). Some evidence of such synergies and complementarities has been identified, but the evidence has also raised new questions. These inquiries are related to the types of synergies and how to take advantage of them, the correct sequencing of programme rollout, the institutional reforms that need to take place and the political economy behind these options, and thus improve the results of the programmes.

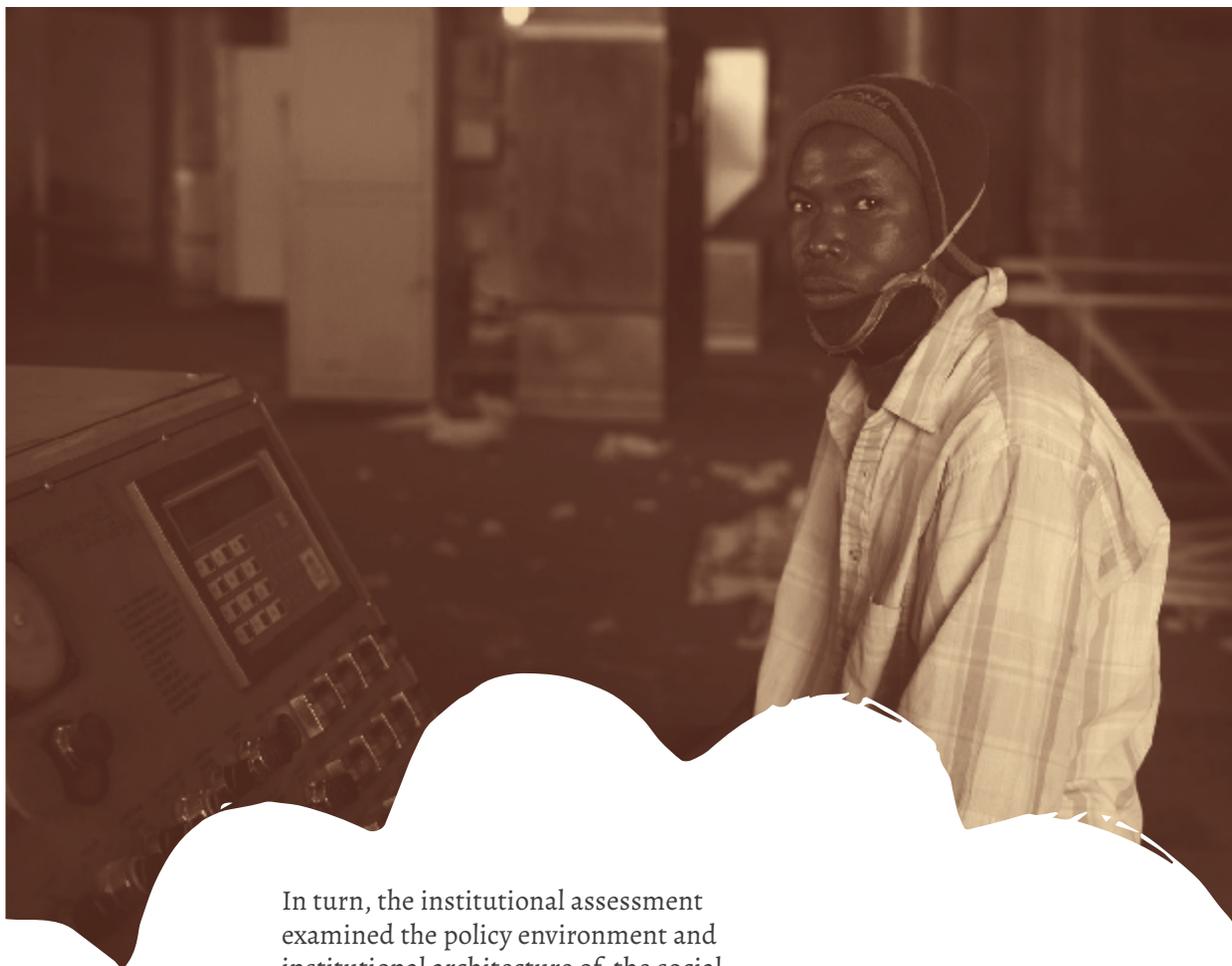
To answer some of these questions, the project entitled “Improving the Coordination between Social Protection and Rural Development Interventions in Developing Countries: Lessons from Latin America and Africa” - which is being developed by Universidad de Los Andes (UNIANDES), through its Centre for Economic Development Studies (CEDE), and financed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) - seeks to gather evidence of the benefits of such coordinated interventions.

The goal of the project is to gather evidence for policymakers and donors of the benefits of the coordinated interventions that could provide inputs regarding the appropriate institutional and operational design, and enable them to use these inputs as a basis for improving anti-poverty interventions targeted at rural households, thus helping small farmers to take a proactive part in rural transformation.

The main objective of the project is to try to influence governmental institutions related to rural development and social protection (anti-poverty) policies, so they can take advantage of identified synergies between social protection and productive initiatives. The project was implemented in seven countries, three in Latin America and four in Africa.

Evaluation Methods

An impact evaluation and an institutional assessment were conducted to analyse the impact of the project in the Niore du Sahel Circle and identify the institutional factors that facilitated or hindered its articulation with social and productive interventions in the same area. The impact evaluation was based on a survey conducted nine months after the project ended in January 2017, which makes it possible to assess the lasting effects of the intervention. The dataset contains 1151 households, split between two groups of beneficiaries of approximately the same size – those who only received cash and those who received cash and productive inputs, respectively — as well as a larger group of comparison households, chosen according to the same criteria for selecting the project’s beneficiaries from neighbouring villages which did not take part in the project.



In turn, the institutional assessment examined the policy environment and institutional architecture of the social protection and agricultural sectors, and the coordination mechanisms between them, at national level, as well as the arrangements and factors that facilitated or impeded the effective delivery of results during the implementation of the Nioro Cash+ project. The assessment consisted of a desk review of key policy and programme documents, and a number of interviews with key national stakeholders from the two sectors, municipal and village authorities, members of village committees and beneficiaries in four selected villages: Madonga and Dianwély-Rangabé in the Municipality of Nioro, and Dialakoro-Maréna and Diadiéla in the Municipality of Simby. Additional interviews were carried out in the villages of Bana and Zandiéla in the rural district of M'Pesoba, and in N'Gountjina and Sanga in the district of N'Gountjina, in order to analyse the strengths and weaknesses in the implementation of the Jigisemejiri programme.

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