



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



SOCIAL PROTECTION IN THE SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA

**Strengthening
resilience
for food security
and nutrition**



Reaching the most vulnerable

The Sahel and West Africa is one of the world's poorest, least developed and most food insecure regions, with the fastest growing population. On average, an estimated 20 million people face food insecurity every year during the lean season.

Malnutrition rates are among the highest in the world, with 5.9 million children under the age of five acutely malnourished in 2016, and one-third of the world's under-five mortality due to undernutrition.

Most people in the region rely on agriculture and pastoralism for their livelihoods, yet these activities are threatened by a number of systemic and local risks and challenges, including:

- widespread poverty and lack of access to basic social and productive services;
- high climate variability and the impacts of climate change, including increased shocks and stresses (drought and floods, rising temperatures and changes in rainfall patterns);
- displacement, loss of assets and livelihood disruptions due to conflict and violence; and
- long-term social and economic impacts due to the highest population growth rates in the world.

Conflicts in Mali, the Lake Chad Basin and the Sudan have forced millions of people from their homes in recent years, increasing the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance. The situation has exacerbated existing economic and social vulnerabilities of the poorest, threatening to reverse development gains.

This situation calls for **social protection systems that are long-term, predictable, regular, flexible, risk-informed and shock-responsive**. Such systems can bridge the gap between humanitarian and development interventions, helping to reduce poverty, hunger and food insecurity, while strengthening people's resilience to disasters and crises. They enable the poor and marginalized **to protect their assets and engage in productive activities**.



THE NIGER

Herders deplacing their animals in search of water during the dry season.
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Social protection is central to governments', regional institutions' and international partners' commitment to support the resilience of vulnerable populations through the **Global Alliance for Resilience (AGIR) in the Sahel and West Africa**. Under this framework, 17 countries in the region are formulating five-year country resilience priorities, based on four mutually reinforcing pillars: i) social protection to secure livelihoods; ii) nutrition; iii) food security, incomes and access to food; and iv) governance of food and nutrition security.

In this context, FAO has developed a **comprehensive multidisciplinary approach to social protection for resilience, food security and nutrition in the region**. Heeding the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) call to "leave no one behind", FAO is focusing on the most vulnerable people who depend on agricultural-based

livelihoods (including livestock, forestry, fisheries and other renewable natural resources), recognizing that **the poor** and politically marginalized are **disproportionally affected by threats and crises**.

Indeed, evidence has shown the positive impacts of social protection on food security, nutrition and human development. Social protection reduces the risk of relying on negative coping mechanisms, and its impacts enhance the economic and productive capacity of the poorest and most marginalized communities. In addition to alleviating poverty, the **combination of social and economic impacts strengthens the resilience of poor households** by enhancing their capacities to cope with, respond to and withstand natural disasters and man-made crises.

Responding to challenges in the region

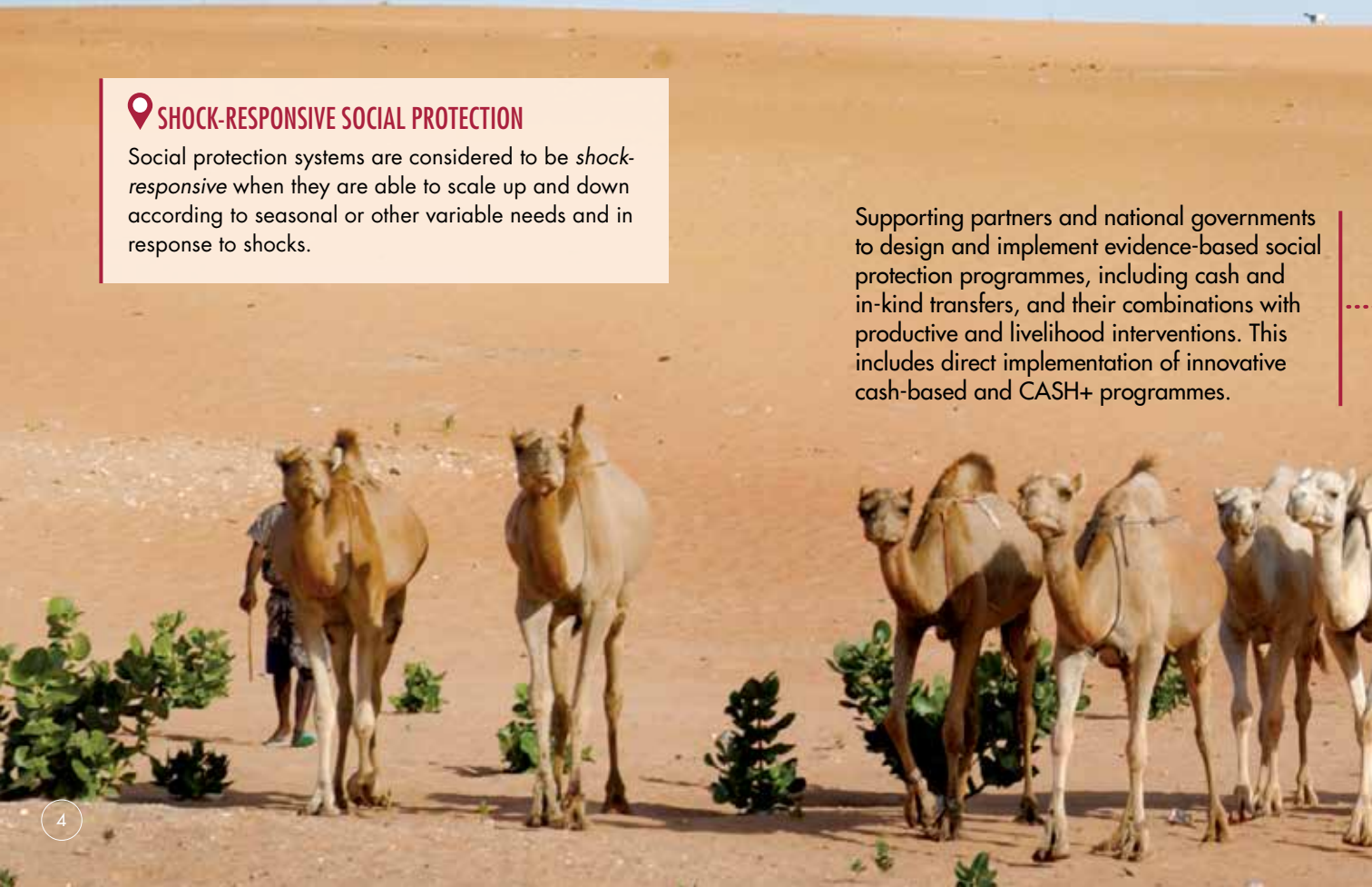
Bringing together FAO's different areas of expertise

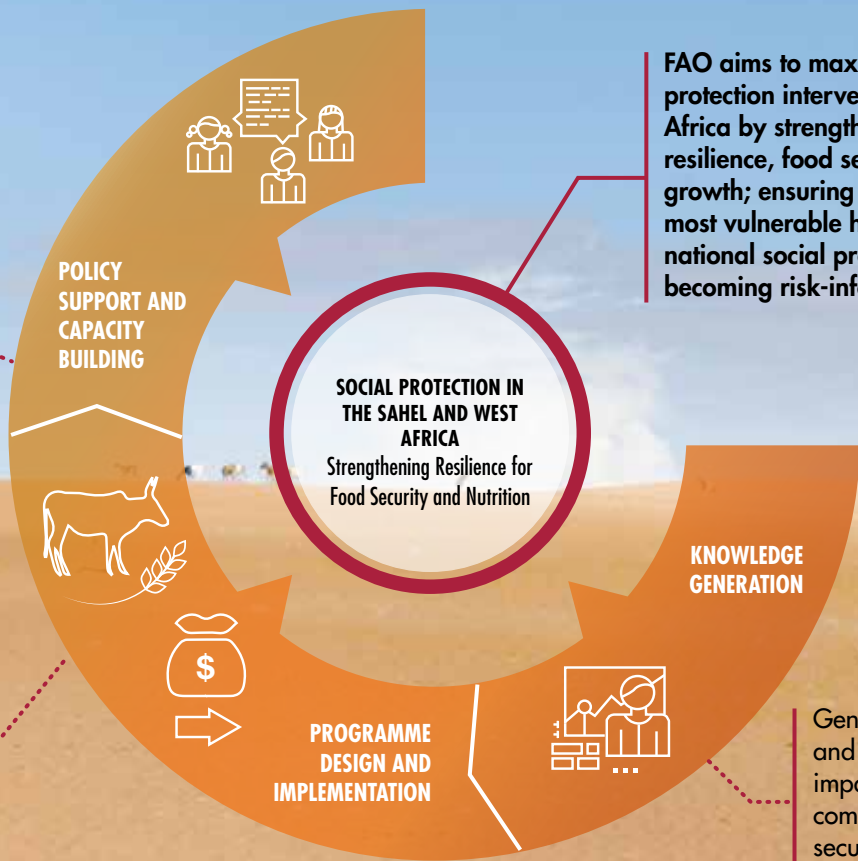
Providing policy support to governments, and facilitating intersectoral, multilevel and multistakeholder policy dialogue to enhance coherence between social protection, agriculture, resilience, food security and nutrition.

SHOCK-RESPONSIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION

Social protection systems are considered to be *shock-responsive* when they are able to scale up and down according to seasonal or other variable needs and in response to shocks.

Supporting partners and national governments to design and implement evidence-based social protection programmes, including cash and in-kind transfers, and their combinations with productive and livelihood interventions. This includes direct implementation of innovative cash-based and CASH+ programmes.





FAO aims to maximize the impacts of social protection interventions in the Sahel and West Africa by strengthening linkages with resilience, food security, nutrition and economic growth; ensuring these initiatives reach the most vulnerable households; and supporting national social protection programmes in becoming risk-informed and shock-responsive.

Generating knowledge, including qualitative and quantitative impact evaluations to assess the impacts of social protection programmes (or combination of interventions) on resilience, food security and nutrition, and productive and economic activities of vulnerable populations.



MAURITANIA

Camels being shepherded.
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KNOWLEDGE GENERATION



In the last few years FAO, together with UNICEF, research institutions and national governments, has produced strong evidence on the **economic and productive impact of national cash transfer programmes in sub-Saharan Africa** through the “From Protection to Production (PtoP)” initiative. Quantitative and qualitative analyses and simulations (LEWIE model) carried out in various countries show how cash transfers, in addition to social impacts such as improving nutrition-related aspects and access to education and healthcare, **can help poor and marginalized families build assets, empower themselves and carry out economic and productive activities.**

Impacts **at household level** include:

- greater ownership of assets, including livestock and agricultural inputs and tools, leading to increased production and, in some cases, market participation;

- a shift from casual wage labour to on-farm and productive activities, and increased participation in non-farm family enterprises;
- improved access to financial services and income-generating activities, leading to enhanced labour status and autonomy in economic decision-making for rural women; and
- better risk management, from reducing negative coping strategies and strengthening informal safety nets of reciprocity to cutting down debt and increasing savings.

At community and local economy levels, cash increases the purchasing power of beneficiary households, with impacts spreading to other areas, triggering income multiplier effects both inside and outside their communities.



📍 CASH TRANSFER IMPACTS

- The Local Economy Wide Impact Evaluation Model (LEWIE) is a tool to measure the local income multiplier of social cash transfers. For more information: www.fao.org/docrep/018/aq661e/aq661e.pdf
- PtoP impact evaluations have been done in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In Senegal, FAO is currently carrying out a qualitative evaluation of the cash transfer programme – *Programme National de Bourses de Sécurité Familiale*, in partnership with the *Institut de recherches et d'applications des méthodes de développement*, to understand its impact on the livelihoods of rural households.

MALI

Woman beneficiary –
FAO cash+ programme
in the Sahel.
©FAO/Sonia Nguyen



CHAD

Women selling mangoes
along the roadside
between N'Djamena and
Moundou.
©FAO/Sia Kambou

FAO has also conducted impact evaluations of CASH+ interventions. In Lesotho, for instance, an impact evaluation revealed that cash transfers (child grants), along with the provision of vegetable seeds and training on homestead gardening, had a greater impact on productive capacities, especially among labour constrained households than cash transfers alone.

To better understand the root causes of vulnerabilities and the drivers of resilience in rural areas, FAO has developed the Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis (RIMA) tool. This

innovative quantitative approach helps explain why and how some households cope with shocks and stressors better than others. The tool aims to advise decision-makers on improving the design of policies, investments and programmes to strengthen resilience at household and community levels. RIMA has been used in the Horn of Africa (Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, the Sudan and South Sudan), the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger and Senegal), Lesotho and the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

KEY FOCUS AREAS

Research topics for further investigation in the Sahel and West Africa include:

- Analysis of flexible shock-responsive social protection systems and programmes, including how to maximise linkages with Early Warning/Early Action System (EWEA) and management information systems for greater disaster preparedness and response;
- Assessment of potential specific interventions to strengthen resilience and reduce poverty, including cash transfers, CASH+, cash-for-work, vouchers, in-kind distribution, home gardens, school feeding, etc.;
- Mixed method evaluation of the impacts of social protection programmes, and their combination with livelihood support, on resilience, food security, nutrition and productive and economic aspects;
- Analysis of specific social protection programme features, such as transfer size, livelihood profile-based targeting mechanisms and programme flexibility to respond to shocks;
- Analysis of the synergies and trade-offs between different climate risk management policy options (i.e. social protection, climate smart agriculture, weather-index insurance, EWEA); and
- Quantitative analysis of the interactions between resilience and malnutrition, resilience and social protection, and resilience and climatic shocks.



PROGRAMME DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION



CASH+

CASH+ interventions consist of complementing cash transfers with productive assets, activities, inputs and/or technical training and extension services.

To date, FAO has implemented **cash transfer and voucher-based programmes** to address hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity in over 40 countries, reaching about 2.5 million households. FAO's cash-based programmes use the most appropriate and cost-effective modalities, including cash transfers, vouchers and combinations of cash and in-kind assistance (CASH+), depending on the context. They draw on FAO's expertise in agricultural production, needs assessment, seed security, land management, climate change adaptation and rural development.

FAO develops **CASH+ programmes** that combine cash transfers with productive assets, activities, and inputs, and/or technical training and extension services to boost the livelihoods and productive capacities of poor and vulnerable households. The cash transfer component addresses basic household needs and protects assets from being depleted or lost, while the productive assistance helps kick-start a virtuous cycle of income generation, leading to economic empowerment, increased incomes, asset ownership

and savings, food security and dietary diversity.

FAO's expertise is key in identifying the right mix of complementary interventions (the "plus"), and accompanying transfers with robust technical training and rigorous assessment of the impact of various combinations to inform future programmes. FAO has recently implemented CASH+ programmes for both development and recovery contexts in Burkina Faso, Lesotho, the Niger, Mali and Mauritania. In Burkina Faso, beneficiary households were able to recover quickly thanks to increased revenue, savings and asset ownership and improved food security and dietary diversity.



THE NIGER

A woman watering a vegetable garden.
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KEY FOCUS AREAS

- Support the design of cash-based social protection programmes, taking into account any pre-existing systems and mechanisms, and their combination with complementary rural livelihood support interventions;
- Support the convergence of development and humanitarian programmes to facilitate the design of flexible, risk-informed and shock-responsive social protection systems; and
- Implement cash-based and CASH+ interventions to address food insecurity and undernutrition, and support productive activities in rural areas.

POLICY SUPPORT AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT



📍 SDG TARGET 1.3

Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.

In building the economic case for social protection, FAO has contributed to country-level policy processes and actions in a number of sub-Saharan countries, including Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Zambia, Mali, Senegal, the Niger and Burkina Faso, for developing social protection systems, expanding their coverage and allocating increased domestic resources for expansion. FAO has provided technical support to the elaboration and review of relevant policy tools to support multisector dialogue and system design, such as the Framework for Analysis and Action and the Diagnostic Tool to strengthen coherence between agriculture and social protection to combat poverty and hunger in Africa.

With regard to resilience strengthening initiatives, FAO has provided technical and policy assistance to several countries (including the Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau and Chad) in formulating their country resilience priorities, in the

framework of the AGIR initiative, and will continue to support implementation of and learning from policies and programmes contributing to resilience at country and regional levels. In particular, FAO is working with the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) to strengthen country technical capacities in resilience measurement and analysis, using RIMA to better inform and enhance the impacts of resilience initiatives in the region. FAO is assisting in the establishment of a technical regional platform for the analysis and measurement of resilience (PT-AMR) at CILSS level.

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Women grinding and winnowing millet seeds.
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KEY FOCUS AREAS

- Provide technical and strategic assistance to policy processes at country and regional level to improve the linkages between social protection, resilience, food security and nutrition, and enhance the overall impacts of related policies and programmes; and
- Support policy dialogue among countries in the region through South-South Cooperation.

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Resources

- FAO social protection – Web site: www.fao.org/social-protection/en/
- FAO resilience – Web site: www.fao.org/resilience/home/en/
- PtoP project – Web site: www.fao.org/economic/ptop/home/en/
- RIMA project – Web site: www.fao.org/resilience/background/tools/rima/en/
- Shock-Responsive Social Protection Systems project – Web site: www.opml.co.uk/projects/shock-responsive-social-protection-systems
- AGIR – Web site: www.oecd.org/site/rpca/agir/

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THE NIGER

Farmers charging their carts to transport hay to Tera weekly market.
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Contact information

In order to achieve these ambitious objectives, FAO is seeking to enlarge its network of partners in the Sahel and West Africa – including governments, universities, research institutes, non-governmental organizations and other technical and financial institutions.

For more information on partnering with FAO on social protection and resilience in the region, please contact:

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SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS

Today, member states face an increasing myriad of demands and challenges in agricultural development. To support them, FAO has identified five key priorities on which it is best placed to intervene. These priorities or Strategic Objectives represent the main areas of our work to achieve a world without hunger, malnutrition and poverty and do so in a sustainable manner – contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

To help accomplish our Strategic Objectives, FAO works through five Strategic Programmes, incorporating gender, governance, nutrition and climate change impacts in all aspects of our work.



**HELP ELIMINATE HUNGER,
FOOD INSECURITY AND MALNUTRITION**



**MAKE AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES
MORE PRODUCTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE**



REDUCE RURAL POVERTY



**ENABLE INCLUSIVE AND EFFICIENT
AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD SYSTEMS**



**INCREASE THE RESILIENCE OF LIVELIHOODS
TO THREATS AND CRISES**

The FAO initiative 'Social Protection in the Sahel and West Africa: Strengthening Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition', presented in this publication, specifically contributes to our work to **reduce rural poverty** and **increase the resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises**.