



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE SAHEL INTEGRATED RESILIENCE PROGRAMME & SCALE UP 2023-2028

Context and background

The Sahel region is one of the most structurally vulnerable and food-insecure regions on the continent. In particular, the climate crisis is exacerbating long-standing environmental and ecological crises.

Deforestation, pollution, overcultivation and overgrazing, and unsustainable agricultural practices have led to massive land degradation and desertification, making land and water

resources extremely vulnerable to climate shocks. As soils become poorer and water scarce, and as crops and pastures fail more frequently, landscapes can rapidly slide into a state of environmental and social bankruptcy.

Many people in the Sahel are trapped in a downward spiral of land degradation and poverty, as natural resources dwindle, agricultural productivity declines, economic inequalities deepen, hunger increases, and vulnerability to disasters and conflict risks rises.

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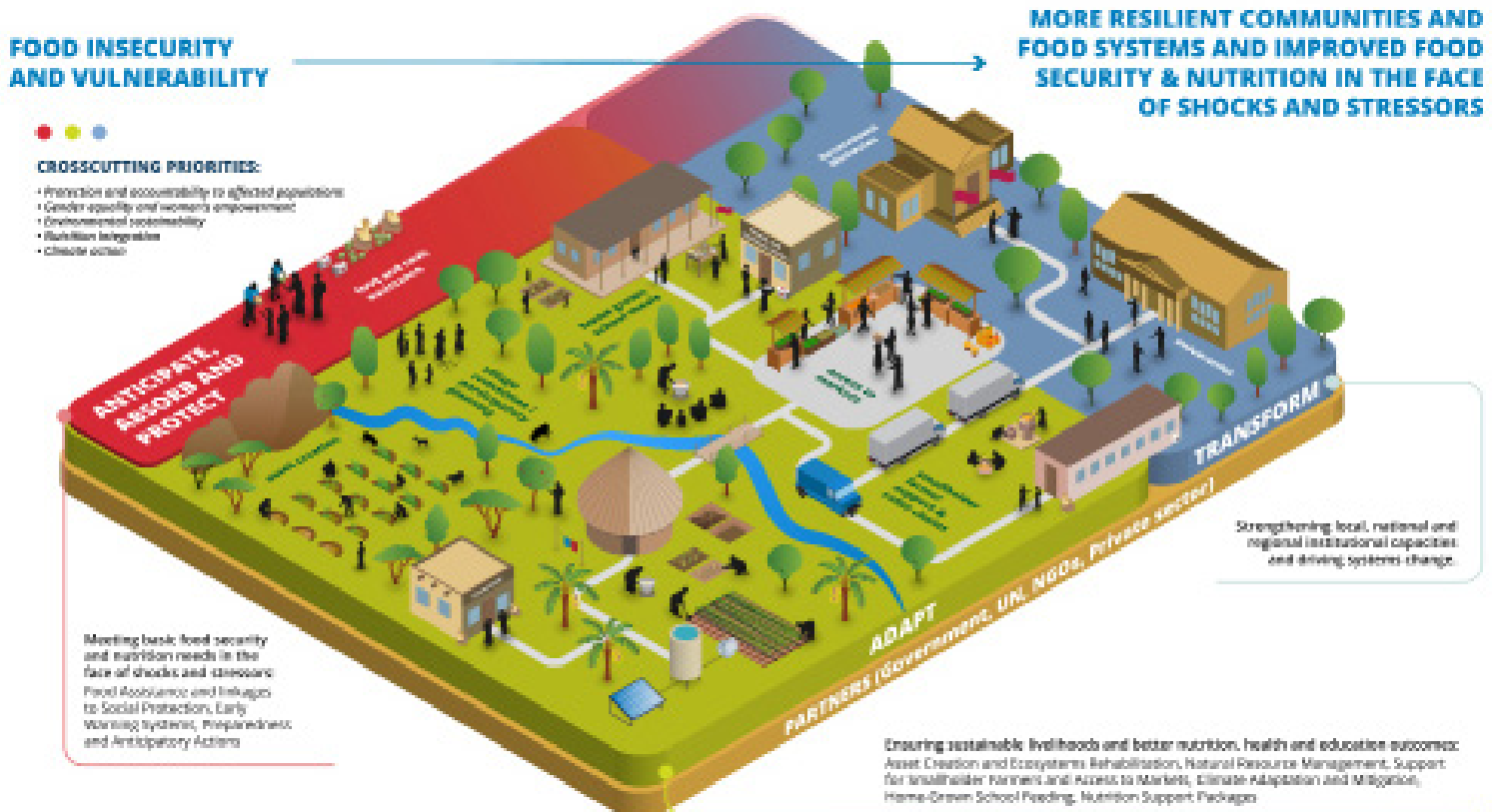
The potentially devastating consequences underscore the urgency of addressing ecosystems degradation and helping communities become more resilient to climate change. The region has great potential for ecosystem restoration, including a wealth of untapped groundwater and renewable energy sources, and the demographic dividends could be enormous if the very young population is given the resources and opportunities to thrive.

In this context, in 2018, WFP and the governments of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger launched the 'Sahel Integrated Resilience Programme', a large-scale, innovative and integrated programme to boost resilience and adaptation of communities to ecosystem degradation, climate change and other vulnerabilities.

The programme combines sustainable land and natural resource management and ecosystem restoration activities, including soil and water conservation measures such as stone and soil bunds, half-moons and zai, water works, sand dune fixation, forestry and agroforestry, smallholder farmers value chain support, market interventions, and nutrition and home-grown school feeding programmes (see Figure 1).

These interventions have the power to increase land productivity and farmer incomes, while building resilience to increasing climate shocks and stressors.

Figure 1: Illustration of the Sahel Integrated Resilience approach



Results of the Sahel Integrated Resilience Programme (2018-2023)

After five years of implementation, [the Sahel Integrated Resilience Programme demonstrates significant results](#):

- Over 3.2 million people have been assisted in some 3,190 villages.
- More than 280,240 hectares of degraded land have been rehabilitated (each hectare of rehabilitated land is estimated to sequester 6 tonnes of CO₂ per year).¹
- Communities have an increased capacity to withstand seasonal shocks and stressors. In 2022, Niger faced its worst food security crisis in a decade. While WFP's resilience intervention areas were among the hardest hit, 80% of WFP's resilience villages located in municipalities classified as extremely vulnerable by the government did not require humanitarian assistance.
- Ecosystem restoration contributed significantly to natural regeneration. [A study conducted by USAID and NASA](#) demonstrated the impact of WFP interventions on vegetation greenness, with an average increase in vegetation indicators of almost 50 percent.²
- Communities reported improved access to land and water, enabling them to increase and diversify crop and/or livestock production, and eat a healthier diet.
- The school feeding programme helped improve children's overall health and nutrition, enabling them to learn and perform better in school. School feeding also empowered girls by encouraging parents to give them the same opportunity to complete their education as boys.
- Households indicated that the assets created had reduced daily hardships - many of which are traditionally borne by women and girls - and reported improved access to markets and basic services such as water, sanitation, health and education.
- Resilience activities facilitated gender dialogue, contributed to women's empowerment, provided opportunities for young people in their villages, and reduced distress migration. [A recent study conducted by the International Food Policy Research Institute \(IFPRI\)](#) found that the programme is reducing stereotypes, suspicion and mistrust and enabling stronger bonds and bridges within and between communities.³



1 Mishra V., A. Limaye, F. Doehnert, R. Policastro, D. Hassan, M. T. Ndiaye, N. Van Abel, K. Johnson, J. Grange, K. Coffey, and A. Rashid. 2023. Assessing impact of agroecological interventions in Niger through remotely sensed changes in vegetation. *Nature Sci Rep* 13, 360.

2 Kaire, M., Ouambama, Z., and Harouna, H. 2021. Rapport bilan carbone sur les sites du PAM dans le cadre du FFA. CILSS/AGRHYMET Regional Center.

3 Pul, Hippolyt; Meinen-Dick, Ruth Suseela; Konde, Bernard B.; Zogho, Donatus; Kuuchille, Emmanuel V.; McCarthy, Nancy; and Marivoet, Wim. 2023. Sahel social cohesion research in Burkina Faso and Niger. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). <https://doi.org/10.2499/p15738coll2.136696>

Scaling up the Sahel Integrated Resilience Programme (2023-2028)

WFP, governments and partners are now embarking on an ambitious second phase of the Sahel Integrated Resilience Programme (2023-2028). As shown in Figure 2, the scale-up plan aims to reach 5 million people in 4,500 villages and rehabilitate 420,000 hectares of land by 2028.

Based on lessons learned so far, the scale-up plan will:

1. Continue to focus on quality implementation, consolidate resilience gains and adapt support packages in existing sites to pave the way for resilient local food systems before phasing-out;
2. Expand activities to new sites, ensuring landscape continuity to restore ecosystems and [contribute to the Great Green Wall initiative](#), and ensuring a deliberate nexus approach in contingent buffer zones;
3. Further strengthen programme integration, in particular insisting on linkages with shock-responsive social protection, value chain programming and disaster risk financing; and
4. Reinforce complementarity with partners to facilitate access to land, enhance investments in local food systems (food processing, transformation, innovative agricultural production technologies, post-harvest losses,

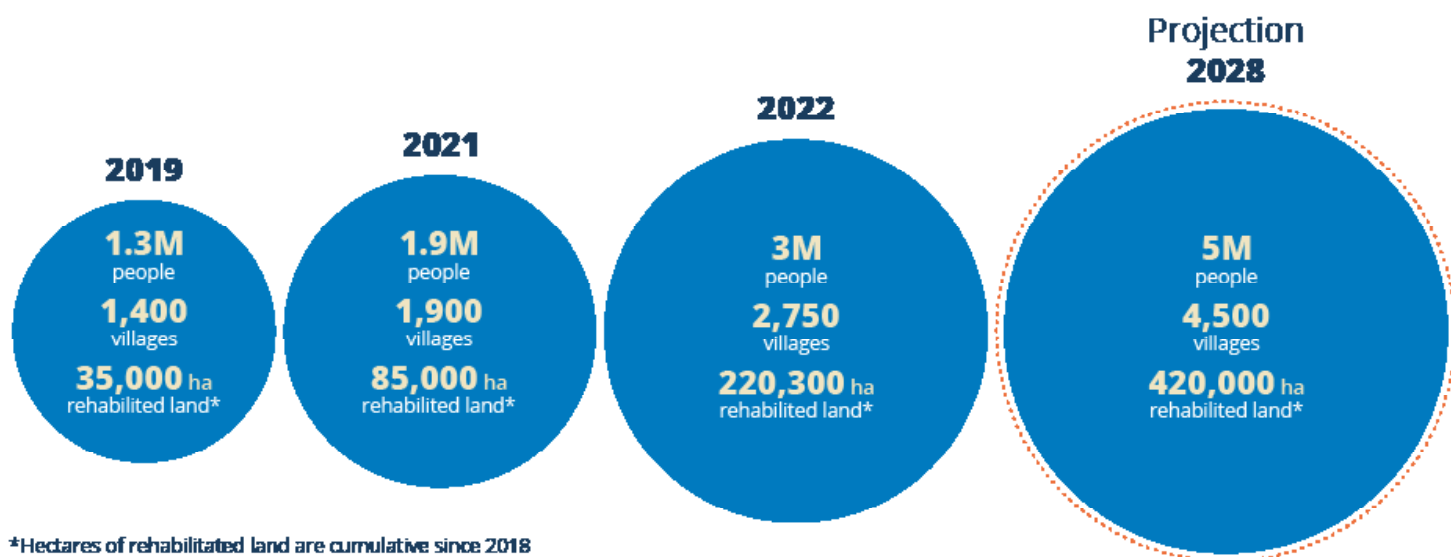
etc.), reinforce linkages with local energy and water investments, and strengthen social cohesion.

Most of the communities that benefited from the integrated resilience package in the first phase will move on to a progression phase. In this progression phase, WFP will gradually reduce conditional transfers, while supporting community- and government-led replication and scale-up through technical advice and capacity building, strengthening economic development and local food systems, promoting home-grown school feeding, and shifting the focus to preventive nutrition activities as needs decrease.

In sites where activities started more recently and/or where resilience gains are not mature enough, WFP will continue to implement the full integrated package with a strong focus on environmental rehabilitation and water harvesting and systematic integration with school feeding, nutrition, and smallholder agriculture and market support.

In addition, WFP aims to further scale up resilience investments to extend support to vulnerable communities currently not covered by the programme, to avoid external pressure on existing sites and to generate multiplier effects in terms of environmental restoration

Figure 2: Scale-up and projection for the Sahel Integrated Resilience Programme (2018-2028)



and economic development.

WFP is committed to further investing in the support to national governments and the capacity of decentralised technical services, particularly in the progression phase. WFP will also deepen the cooperation with regional organisations, in particular the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and the Pan-African Agency of the Great Green Wall.

WFP is investing in game-changing partnerships with the Rome-based agencies, UNICEF, and technical partners such as GIZ to promote complementary support packages, leverage synergies, and ultimately maximize impact and multiplier effects. WFP is building action-oriented coalitions for resilience, including with International Financial Institutions, as well as its links with Member State initiatives and the private sector.

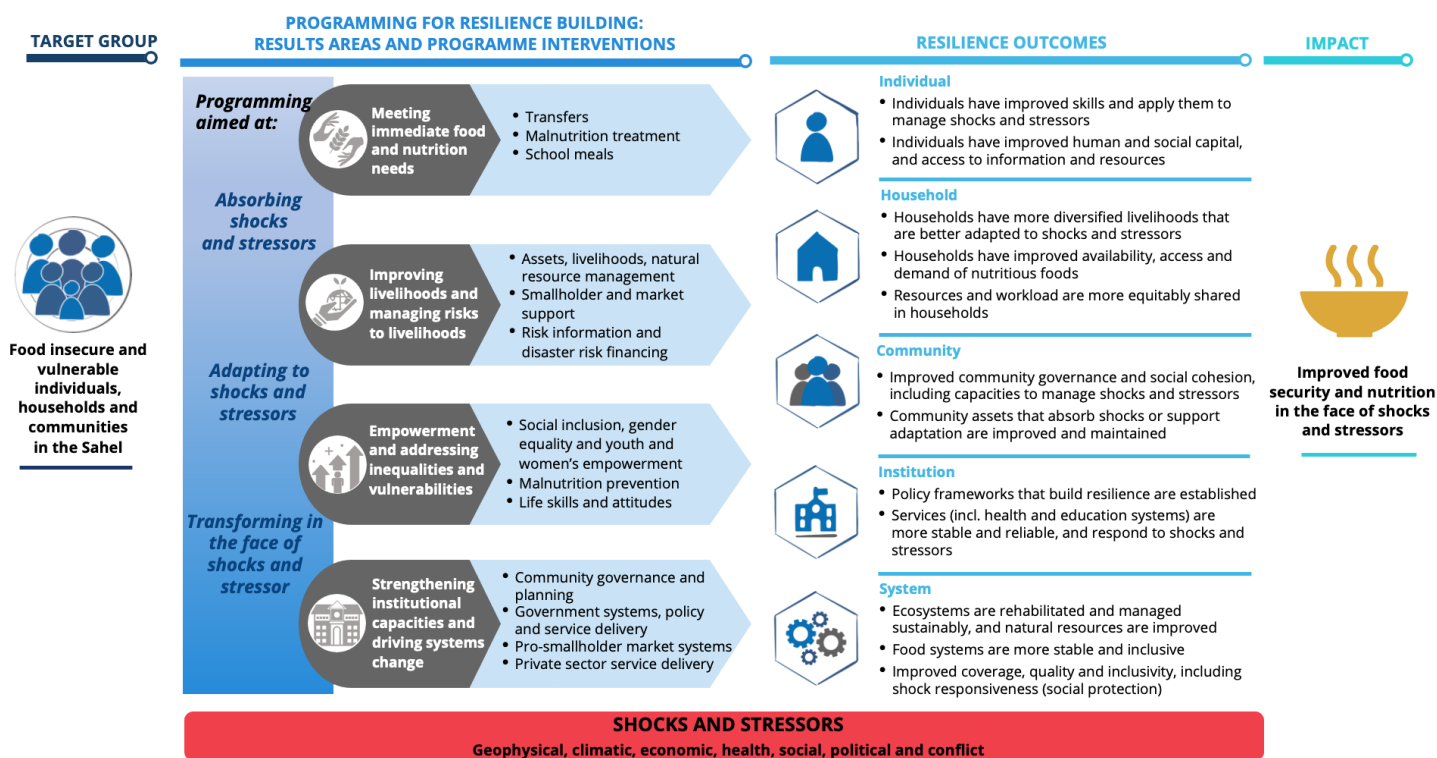
Further, WFP is working with academic partners such as the Sahel University Network for Resilience (REUNIR) and IFPRI to strengthen evidence generation, facilitate knowledge-sharing and help build the next generation of resilience experts.

Above all, WFP will continue to work with communities in the Sahel to empower people in taking ownership of their own transformative journeys. Through inclusive and participatory approaches, the programme fosters dialogue and joint community investment.

A comprehensive Resilience Monitoring and Measurement framework

WFP also benefits from the significant progress made in terms of monitoring, measurement and communicating resilience outcomes during the first phase of the scale-up. Monitoring and measurement of resilience outcomes is at the heart of WFP's work to build a robust evidence base for programming, strategic decision-making, accountability and advocacy. Since 2018, significant progress has been made and WFP has consolidated these experiences and learnings into a [new Resilience Monitoring and Measurement framework](#), linked to a Theory of Change (see Figure 3), which includes regular monitoring surveys with a harmonised set of indicators, vulnerability assessments of the wider population, operational research, satellite-based analysis and various evaluation approaches.

Figure 3: Summary Theory of Change for the Sahel Integrated Resilience Programme



In the short term, the Sahel Integrated Resilience Programme aims to increase land productivity, farmers' incomes and community resilience. In the medium term, the programme aims to go much further and contribute to: mitigating conflict and underlying vulnerabilities and acting as a buffer against instability by strengthening social cohesion, creating social safety nets, keeping land productive and providing economic opportunities; building on its potential to transform food systems, support regional integration and open up new markets; and demonstrating the true meaning and real impact of greening - as a foundation for healthy and prosperous food- and nutrition-secure societies and a green future for today's people and tomorrow's children.

Similarly, communications tools have been expanded to [capture progress and rewrite the narrative from crisis to solutions](#).

Investing in people and ecosystems

Consolidating and scaling up the Sahel Integrated Resilience Programme to build resilient ecosystems and communities, food and nutrition secure societies, and a green future in 4,500 villages in the Sahel will require flexible and multi-year funding resources commensurate with the scale of the needs. WFP will support the governments of the five countries to access additional sources of financial support and will work with all partners to increase investments in the resilience of vulnerable communities.

To meet its commitments to governments and communities, WFP needs to invest USD 1.5 billion over the next five years in building the resilience of 5 million people.



Cover photo and page 3: WFP/En Haut, page 6: WFP/Evelyn Fey

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For more information, please visit www.wfp.org/publications/integrated-resilience-sahel