SUMMARY

# MAJOR CHANGES BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE AGIR PROCESS
IN THE SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA

NOVEMBER 2017

1. INTRODUCTION

Stakeholders, committed to tackling the long-term pervasive, multiple and complex problems in the Sahel and West Africa, agreed on a long-term collaborative effort that gave birth to the Global Alliance for Resilience (AGIR) – Sahel and West Africa. AGIR is a results-based framework that seeks to channel the efforts of stakeholders in the region towards a common understanding of resilience based on a shared definition: "The capacity of vulnerable households, families and communities and systems to face uncertainties and risk of shocks as well as to recover and adapt in a sustainable manner".

In 2013, all 17 countries in the Sahel and West Africa and their partners adopted the AGIR Regional Roadmap and committed to its implementation. Consistent with the Roadmap, countries organised national inclusive dialogues and developed or are in the process of developing their own National Resilience Priorities (NRP-AGIR). Figure 1 shows that ten countries have validated their NRP-AGIR, one country is awaiting validation and the rest of the countries have launched the process of organising their national inclusive dialogue meetings. Through the NRP-AGIR process, countries are fostering the well-being of the most vulnerable populations by strengthening food and nutrition security, social protection and resilience programmes and improving their governance systems. The process is intended to promote better advocacy and strengthen financial commitments on food and nutrition security and resilience.

Figure 1: **National Resilience Priorities (NRP-AGIR)**

NRP-AGIR validated
NRP-AGIR currently under validation
NRP-AGIR process launched
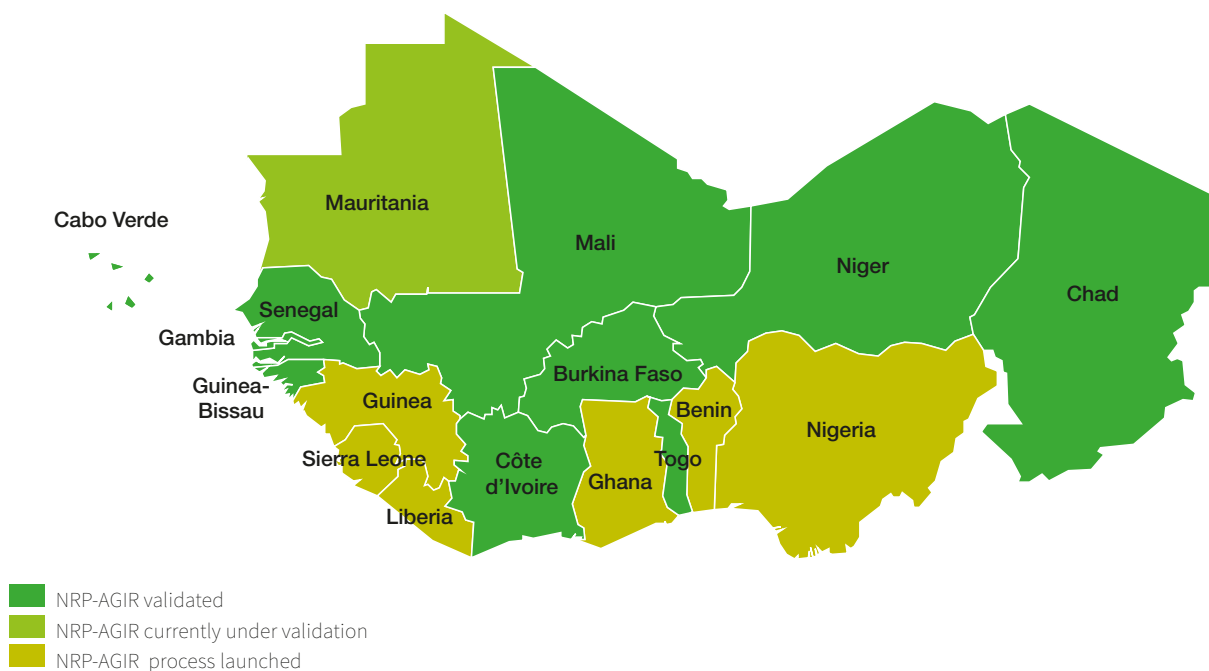
2. EXPECTED ADDED VALUE OF AGIR

AGIR is not a new policy or strategy formulation process in the region. It is an Alliance that seeks to prioritise resilience in existing national policies. AGIR creates an enabling and favourable environment that places resilience at the centre of food security and nutrition policies and related strategies. Through the implementation of the AGIR Regional Roadmap, the resilience agenda is promoted in existing policies and programmes with a focus on the most vulnerable populations. In parallel, the food security governance framework is strengthened to promote better co-ordination and to support advocacy and lobbying for political commitment towards long-term investments in resilience.

Recognising individual and collective actions, AGIR also promotes accountability and the monitoring of performances through the establishment of a multi-stakeholder platform for dialogue and exchange. This platform, as outlined in the Roadmap's implementation, brings together all the major stakeholders working in the areas of food and nutrition security, social protection and resilience. It is expected that the scope of this co-ordination platform will be extended to include the co-ordination and monitoring of the political and financial commitments of governments, and technical and financial partners.

The Sahel and West Africa region has always promoted mutual learning and the exchange of best practices on a number of initiatives, including the first generation of the Regional and National Agricultural Investment Plans (RAIP and NAIPs), the West African Agricultural Productivity Project (WAAPP), the Regional Sahel Pastoralism Support Project (PRAPS) and the Regional Food Security Reserve (RFSR) among others. However, proper documentation to enhance the benefits from mutual learning and best practices in the implementation of these initiatives has not been promoted. AGIR recognises this and seeks to promote the documentation of best practices and share lessons learned and experiences in the areas of food security and nutrition, social protection and resilience.

The implementation of the AGIR Regional Roadmap is consistent with a number of global development initiatives, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Emerging areas, supported by these global development paradigms, such as the encouragement of gender sensitive approaches to governance and policy making emphasising the role of women, have been promoted. Sustainable approaches to food security and nutrition, social protection, resilience and climate smart agriculture, with special focus on women and youth, have been considered in the implementation of the AGIR Regional Roadmap.

3. CHANGES BROUGHT ABOUT BY AGIR

Induced changes outlined in this document are based on an assessment conducted by the Food Crisis Prevention Network (RPCA) in 2016. The assessment, co-ordinated by the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC/OECD) and the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drough Control in the Sahel (CILSS), consisted of interviews with key stakeholders (government representatives, professional farmers, civil society organisations and the private sector, technical and financial partners, etc.) involved in the AGIR implementation process at the national and regional levels. The main objective was to assess the value added by the AGIR process on the overall food and nutrition security governance system and to specifically look at the major political, institutional and financial changes brought about as a result of the implementation of the Regional Roadmap.

A review of literature was carried out and an in-depth analysis conducted in five countries (Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Gambia, Mali and Niger). These countries were chosen based on the progress made in the development of their National Resilience Priorities (NRP-AGIR) and in order to ensure representation of both Sahelian and non-Sahelian countries. To broaden the scope of the analysis, information on the implementation of the AGIR Regional Roadmap was also collected from other countries and analysed in order to validate the findings from the selected countries.

The value added as a result of the implementation of the AGIR Regional Roadmap is obvious but in some instances somehow difficult to capture, especially during these early stages. Furthermore, for some of the changes already identified, it is worth mentioning that the issue of attribution is a problem. However, it is recognised that through the implementation of the AGIR Regional Roadmap, countries are beginning to register some positive results.

3.1 INCLUSIVENESS, ALIGNMENT AND CO-ORDINATION FOR BETTER EFFECTIVENESS OF COLLECTIVE ACTION ON FOOD AND NUTITION SECURITY (FNS) AND RESILIENCE

Through the implementation of AGIR, better co-ordination platforms have been established to promote a good understanding of resilience. These platforms, comprising all the major stakeholders in the respective countries, have broadened the discussions and popularised the debate on hunger, malnutrition and social protection with a focus on vulnerable populations. As a result of the AGIR process, changes have been made possible through a number of mobilising factors. Now than ever before, actors place greater importance on the multisectoral dimension of FNS.

AGIR has promoted the coherence of policies and strategies, and established synergies across sectoral initiatives and policies addressing FNS and resilience. This has led to renewed commitments of States and their partners to incorporate resilience into the planning process. A strong focus on resilience is at the center of recent policy initiatives in the region. Since the Malabo Declaration, resilience has been part of the formulation process of RAIP and NAIPs.

AGIR has helped to streamline the management and consultation mechanisms on resilience and to recognise a co-ordination and governance framework. The institutional arrangements governing food security and nutrition have been built around these frameworks to promote the resilience agenda, especially for the most vulnerable populations. This has led to added value in the co-ordination and governance of food security and nutrition, social protection and resilience. A holistic approach to facilitate the reconciliation and harmonisation of concepts by all actors dealing with food security, nutrition and social protection related issues is one of the most important outputs of the dialogue process.

- **In Gambia**, the establishment of the national inclusive dialogue process and the formulation of the NRP-AGIR benefitted from existing platforms and policy formulation processes and structures for food and nutrition security. There was targeted harmonisation and alignment of the AGIR pillars with components of other initiatives geared towards improving food security, especially at the level of the thematic working groups. These alignments worked well with other policy initiatives such as the Gambian National Nutrition Policy, the Gambian National Agricultural Investment Plan (GNAIP) and the Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment (PAGE), phase 2.

- **In Togo**, the implementation of the AGIR Regional Roadmap and the development of the NRP-AGIR coincided with a new long term vision for agricultural sector transformation. This new agricultural policy development process placed resilience within the context of AGIR as the main focus for a long-term sustainable approach to targeting vulnerability. The resilience priorities outlined within the NRP-AGIR document have formed the basis for addressing the needs of the most vulnerable populations in the NAIP and other policy documents in areas such as social protection, food and nutrition security and climate change.

- **Mali** succeeded in better structuring its collaboration and intervention frameworks by involving some seventeen departments and institutions working on resilience. Also, **Niger** has used the AGIR implementation process to strengthen its co-ordination mechanism - the High Commission on 3N Initiative (Nigerians feeding Nigerians). In these countries, the existing food security governance mechanisms were strengthened and their composition expanded to include high-level government officials like senior directors and permanent secretaries of Ministries.

- **Cabo Verde** : The scope of Cabo Verde's National Food Security Council has been expanded to include a multi-sector and multi-actor platform as a result of the implementation of the AGIR Regional Roadmap. In Burkina Faso, organisational improvements have been made, including a strengthened Permanent Secretariat for Agricultural Policy Co-ordination and the establishment of a national technical team responsible for co-ordinating the formulation of the NRP-AGIR. This has strengthened the role of the Executive Secretariat of the National Council on Food Security in facilitating dialogues around resilience and food and nutrition security. It has also fostered the involvement and active participation of relevant line ministries in building the resilience of the vulnerable populations. As a result of these developments, the National Council on Food Security has been more active and meets regularly, with high attendance and representation at the highest level.

- **In Chad and Niger**, changes have also been made to existing frameworks and platforms. The Committee on Food Security and Crisis Management in Chad has been opened to other sectors in order to strengthen its inclusiveness and the contributions of all resilience related sectors and actors. Niger has established working groups and a unit dedicated to AGIR within the High Commission of the 3N Initiative in order to improve the intervention framework for actors working in the field of resilience.

3.2 AWARENESS AND INCREASED POLITICAL AND FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS

There have been tremendous improvements in the understanding on food and nutrition security, social protection and resilience by Governments in the region. Countries are experiencing widespread awareness of actors involved in various food security issues as well as the harmonisation of the food security and nutrition governance systems in the region. This has led to the promotion of best practices, the building of consensus on tools and the NRP-AGIR instruments for financial governance and the improvement on the traceability of funds with better focus on resilience. In most of these countries, the Ministry of Agriculture led the process and played a pivotal role in ensuring that the necessary reforms at the country level are used to trigger and strengthen the governance of food and nutrition security.

Increased political commitments on issues of food security and nutrition, and resilience have been observed. Governments' endorsement of the process has been seen as a major first step towards long term political commitment. In most countries, since the launch of the process, resilience has become a key element in political speeches.

Although it is somewhat early to properly assess the impact of the AGIR process on amplifying financial commitments with respect to food and nutrition security and resilience, it has however been observed that the process has accelerated preparatory project implementation in some cases. Since the start of the process, some of the technical and financial partners including the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank have strengthened their commitments, especially in the six countries in the Sahel. The adoption of the NRP-AGIR document for Burkina Faso by the Ministerial Council as well as monthly briefings on resilience-related initiatives for the President of Niger has made food and nutrition security issues more visible on these countries' political agendas.

The NRP-AGIR process has led to increased awareness on the part of national governments of the need to better target funding for resilience issues. This has resulted in increased budgetary allocations of domestic resources 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 aid beneficiaries. The AGIR process has also resulted in improved funding and targeting, by channelling more resources to the most vulnerable populations. Funding to programmes at the national and regional levels are being updated to include or strengthen, where necessary, their social protection and resilience components.

The outlooks and perceptions in most of the countries indicate that State budgets reflect policy frameworks on food security and resilience in the region. From Table 1, total commitment to resource mobilisation in the Republic of Niger in 2015-16 exceeds the budgeted amount, especially in the areas of food security and resilience. Going forward, the new 2016-20 3N Initiative Action Plan has also highlighted the possibilities of increasing budgetary allocation for social protection and nutrition programmes with special emphasis on the vulnerable populations. These areas of focus by the 3N Initiative are in line with the first two pillars of the AGIR Regional Roadmap: i) to improve social protection for the most vulnerable communities and households in order to secure their livelihoods; and ii) to strengthen the nutrition of vulnerable households.

Table 1. **Resource allocation and mobilisation of the 3N I-nitiative, Niger, 2015-16**

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	BUDGET (BILLION CFA FRANCS)	MOBILISED AMOUNT (BILLION CFA FRANCS)	MOBILISATION RATE (%)
SO1: Increased agro-pastoral and fishery production	734.44	307.93	41.39
SO2: Supply of rural and urban markets in agricultural and food products	50	141.16	282.32
SO3: Improved resilience of vulnerable groups to climate change and other natural disasters	115	524.32	455.93
SO4: Improved nutrition status of Niger's populations	50	164.78	329.56
SO5: Animation and co-ordination of the 3N Initiative	50.57	56.18	111.09
Total	**1000.01**	**1194.37**	**119.44**

Source: Review of development implementation of the 3N Initiative reports 2011-15

4. **CONCLUSION**

Ensuring the long term sustainability of AGIR is important and should be a major focus for policy makers in the region. Changes brought about as a result of the implementation of AGIR need to be sustained. Countries should be encouraged to document the changes that have occurred and share lessons learned so that others can benefit by adopting some of these sustainable approaches. These changes have helped the justification of programmes and strategies as well as the animation of the political dialogue through multi-sectoral platforms. The necessary institutional arrangements as well as the accompanying support mechanisms should be put in place to ensure sustainability. This will entail the following:

- **Ensuring that the overall leadership and ownership of the processes** are strengthened to continue the animation of implementation process, the sharing of good practices and promotion of dialogues on synergies and co-ordination. In particular, governments should take better ownership of their NRP-AGIR through increased political will and financial commitments. All of these should be within the context of stakeholders aligning themselves under the leadership of the countries and their structures, like the case of the 3N in Niger where excellent national leadership and the alignment of stakeholders, especially the technical and financial partners, have been demonstrated.

- **Continuous lobbying and advocacy at the national, regional and international levels** should be strengthened in order to mobilise all stakeholders and keep reminding them of the importance of resilience in the global and national development agendas. This is especially important at the time when the world is faced with specific challenges, including security and migration, that have increased vulnerability and placed resilience in a pivotal role in confronting these challenges.

- **Institutionalising policy dialogue and co-ordination platforms and structures:** Tremendous changes have taken place within the policy formulation process in the region, especially as it relates to its inclusive and participatory nature as well as with the renewed focus on building the resilience of vulnerable populations. This is evident by the strengthened national inclusive dialogue platforms and the integration of resilience into food and nutrition security and social protection policies and programmes. The countries need to institutionalise these platforms and structures to ensure synergy and complementarity of actions towards sustainable development. Cabo Verde and Niger have aligned resilience interventions within the framework of their respective social and economic development plans. Other countries should learn from these good examples in building synergies and complementarities across different initiatives.