



BURKINA FASO IMPROVEMENTS IN THE LIVES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN: PROJECTS FROM THE FIELD

EU Trust Fund: Holistic resilience actions to improve child nutrition in Burkina Faso

Malnutrition in Burkina Faso

Malnutrition levels in Burkina Faso are declining steadily since two decades. Yet, one child out of four is still stunted¹, totalling nearly one million, and due to the strong population growth, the numbers are falling only marginally. Each year the country loses nearly 8% of GDP to child stunting alone². In the most fragile areas of the country, affected by chronic food insecurity and crumbling social cohesion, the prevalence of malnutrition is even higher: in the Sahel region for instance stunting prevalence reaches 43%³. The response to this situation requires a holistic approach supporting the most vulnerable populations in various aspects of their lives, whether social or economic.

EU Resilience Trust Fund in the northern areas of Burkina Faso (2017-2020)

The EUTF Resilience-BF is an EU-funded EUR 31.7 million programme covering 4 regions in northern Burkina Faso, reaching nearly 950 000 beneficiaries. These rural populations are chronically affected by food and nutrition insecurity, and social instability and insecurity issues are growing. The goal is to strengthen the populations' resilience through sustainable and integrated measures. Adopting a holistic approach, the EUTF Resilience-BF specifically aims to:

1. improve populations' access to basic social services (health, nutrition, water and sanitation);
2. restore and strengthen vulnerable livelihoods through interventions in small-scale agriculture and livestock, income generating activities, cash transfers and social cohesion;
3. enhance the cohesion between civil society, vulnerable populations and local authorities for improved governance in food and nutrition security.

This multisector/actor approach triggers synergies and strengthens the capacities of every stakeholder in responding to the challenges. Despite the extremely fragile context, all the interventions are carried out in close collaboration with local communities and decentralised extension services. Building on the interventions, a research protocol has been put in place to identify good practices in resilience strengthening.

Tangible results in the lives of women and children

The EUTF Resilience-BF impact assessment⁴ confirmed a significant improvement after only two years (between 2018 and 2020) in the food security, livelihoods, and nutritional status of children⁵. Spectacular gains in food and nutrition security were reached for those households benefitting from a full intervention package of:

1. monthly cash transfers,
2. productive assets such as vouchers to access sheep and goats and poultries, and/or seeds, support for soil conservation and fertility,
3. nutrition interventions (generally enriched flour for 6-23 months children and pregnant and lactating women, nutrition education).

The combined effect of these interventions for the poorest households made it possible to reduce severe food insecurity by 20% in two years and to significantly prevent stunted growth in children under 5, by 10% for moderate forms and by 33% for severe forms.



Outcomes (Intervention group full package)	Initial rate	+ 1 year	+ 2 years
Stunting	36.7%	29.4%	27.1%
Severe food insecurity ⁶	30.8%	24.7%	17.1%

However, there were no significant changes in the control groups that received only a partial package (cash transfer only and cash transfer coupled with animal transfers). This suggests that to significantly improve the nutrition of children in these highly vulnerable households, it is necessary to implement specific nutrition activities such as distribution of enriched flour to young children and training of mothers, alongside economic support. Households benefiting from the full activity package were also able to increase their land by 13%.

Realising human potential

The negative consequences of malnutrition are long term and undermines the fundamental right of every child to develop in accordance with their full potential. The severe instability and insecurity faced by these Sahel populations further exacerbate poor nutrition as well as gender, social and economic inequalities. The EUTF Resilience-BF shows it is possible, even for the most marginalised populations living in fragile contexts, to gradually escape from a logic of simple survival to one of improving human and economic capital. Furthermore, to contribute to social stability in these areas undergoing massive social and environmental changes, it is essential to reduce inequalities – economic, gender, power balance – and extreme poverty. However, this

requires tailoring of approaches to the context combining social cohesion measures, coaching, organisational support, and so on. For instance, by empowering women to set up village savings and loan groups, EUTF Resilience-BF enabled also the poorest women to add commercial value to their agricultural products, generating jobs and incomes.

Tackling climate and environmental challenges

The Sahel is one of the world's most vulnerable regions to natural disasters and climate change and has in recent years faced repeated emergencies. By partnering effectively with decentralised government services and civil society, the EUTF Resilience-BF set out a good example to improve local governance accountability and civil society participation, thereby showing the value of territorial approaches in local development. In a context where local authorities are affected by lack of resources to effectively implement decentralisation, positive experiences were demonstrated in better and more responsible water management, public works and resource management. Improving the relationship of trust between local authorities and citizens also made it possible to improve the payment of local taxes – in 7 communes, these increased by 20% – making it possible to initiate other local actions.

- 1 Enquête Nutritionnelle Nationale SMART 2020.
- 2 The Cost of Hunger in Africa (COHA) Burkina Faso study 2015.
- 3 Enquête Nutritionnelle Nationale SMART 2020.
- 4 Research carried out through Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA).
- 5 A total of 168 villages were randomly assigned to either the comparison group (receiving community-based nutrition awareness/education only), or to the participation group. Households in the participation villages were then randomly assigned to one of 3 intervention components: 1) cash grant; 2) cash grant + asset (livestock voucher); 3) cash grant+ asset + nutrition (fortified food).
- 6 In IPA research, food insecurity is measured through CARI indicators, food security index and dietary diversity.

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Photo: Awa Guingawe Bantango, 25, sifts flour, which will be used to bake biscuits to sell in local markets in Garango, Burkina Faso.
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