

# ROSA Newsletter



OPERATIONAL FOOD SECURITY NETWORK

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**SUMMARY:** Building resilience for food and nutrition security in Sub-Saharan Africa  
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## IEWS ON CURRENT ISSUES



## Building resilience for food and nutrition security in Sub-Saharan Africa

In recent years, recurrent and chronic food crises in particular in the Sahel and Horn of Africa have put resilience high on the political agenda<sup>1</sup>. There is a broad consensus on the need to integrate short-term emergency responses with long-term, comprehensive strategies in order to overcome the structural causes of the food and nutrition crises. Nevertheless, a key challenge remains developing practical guidance in promoting resilience.

In this interview, Peter Gubbels of Groundswell International points out that despite some progress, efforts to build resilience are highly fragmented, dysfunctional and ineffective. Based on a recent report<sup>2</sup> prepared on behalf of Save the Children and World Vision, both members of the Sahel Working Group, he argues that beyond the rhetoric, many actors are mostly carrying on “business as usual”. Few have yet made institutional changes or developed new ways of preventing future crises. He proposes several recommendations for national governments, regional structures, UN agencies, donors, international organisations and civil society to overcome the “resilience deficit”.

● **Over the last two years, there has been a surge in the use of the concept of resilience by major humanitarian and development actors working in the Sahel. Is resilience a new buzz word?**

This concept reflects a consensus on the need to better integrate humanitarian and development efforts, both to address the current crisis and to minimise the scale of similar crises in the future. UN agencies, some donors and international NGOs have made strong public pronouncements, organised workshops and prepared conceptual frameworks and planning documents on resilience. The embrace of this agenda is positive. However, the unfolding Sahel crisis of 2012 indicates limited practical progress in strengthening the resilience of communities and vulnerable populations. This is in part simply because it takes time. However, the deeper reason is that resilience requires a comprehensive, multi-sectoral, coordinated and long term approach that combines different pathways to overcome the structural causes.

<sup>1</sup> The need to develop a common and comprehensive framework to build resilience to food insecurity has been discussed in several forums, including the [High level expert forum on food insecurity in protracted crises](#) (13-14 September 2012). On the results of the HLEF, the [October 2012 Session](#) of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) will consider recommendations for the elaboration of an Agenda for Action.

<sup>2</sup> Launched in July 2012 at the ECOSOC side event, the report “Ending the everyday emergency: Resilience and children in the Sahel” was commissioned by World Vision and Save the Children, members of the Sahel Working Group.

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The various elements of resilience are interdependent. They need to work in mutually reinforcing ways. No single structure can address all aspects of resilience. Initiatives by individual government ministries or departments, supported by single donors, are not adequate to achieve resilience. No matter how well individual agencies within (and outside) government perform, as single elements within a wider system they cannot achieve lasting results in strengthening resilience. Humanitarian and development actors are not yet engaged in a comprehensive approach, in which synergies between different levels and sectors are achieved within an integrated system. Instead, resilience is still being promoted largely through “siloed interventions” within technical sectors or institutional mandates.

- **The report calls for a major paradigm shift in development aid. According to you, why is “business as usual” not longer an option?**

The existing system for promoting resilience has to change. More of the same will not end the everyday emergency nor overcome the growing resilience deficit. Countries in the Sahel are experiencing the paradox of strong economic growth even as

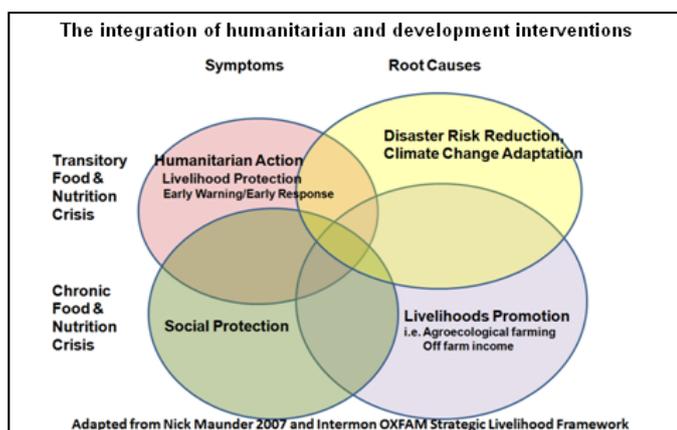
food and nutrition security decreases. Investments in development are succeeding in promoting robust economic growth (often over 5% in the Sahel) but failing to reduce vulnerability and poverty and undernutrition. Indeed, the numbers of highly food and nutrition insecure people are increasing. Their resilience is decreasing. This phenomenon of robust economic growth, coupled with increasing poverty, vulnerability and undernutrition, is a development failure. The neo-liberal paradigm of investing in areas of competitive advantage, in productivity and growth in exports, is not producing a higher tide that lifts all boats in these particular contexts that are highly risk prone to drought and climate change. Business as usual cannot solve the problem. Resilience requires a reallocation of how development work is funded, what is funded, and how development is undertaken.



- **In the Sahel region, urgent attention is given to the need for concerted measures and coordinated mobilisation of resources to address the root causes of recurrent crises. What are the ways forward for improving the existing system?**

I would like to highlight some of the recommendations put forward by the report. First, an effective approach to resilience must be comprehensive and include a range of measures to address both the acute and chronic dimensions of food insecurity. With a holistic approach to resilience, we need to ensure complementarity and a better link between humanitarian assistance, risk reduction, climate adaptation and development interventions. Early and adequate assistance is necessary to prevent irreversible loss of assets and livelihoods. Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation measures are crucial to reduce high levels of vulnerability, but they are not sufficient. Protective initiatives are necessary to protect livelihoods and productive assets.

Furthermore, focus needs to be placed on social protection – public actions taken to provide predictable support for targeted individuals, households or communities to reduce, prevent and manage risks and vulnerabilities. Once such a social protection system is in place to address chronic food insecurity and it is much more economical and effective to expand it to meet the needs of more people temporarily affected by a new shock. Effective support to small-scale agriculture is also essential to ensure sustainability and resilience and not just an increase in production. It requires promotion of sustainable and resilience forms of agriculture accessible to households in ecologically fragile and highly risk prone areas



(agroecological farming techniques that improves soil fertility and organic matter, prevents soil erosion, and regenerate vegetative cover).

Second, the specific needs of chronically food insecure populations must become a long-term priority within integrated humanitarian and development action, not just during crises. Particular attention needs to be paid to child undernutrition which requires coordinated national plans especially prioritising children under two and pregnant women. Chronic child malnutrition is not only a consequence, but also a cause of the resilience deficit-resilience requires strengthening human capacity to adapt livelihood strategies to shocks. Even though resilience is conceptualised differently by actors, there can be no doubt that, in the context of the Sahel, reducing chronic child malnutrition and achieving nutrition security must be central in assessing to what extent resilience has been strengthened.

Last but not the least, strengthening resilience will require a shift in the way different actors work with each other at different levels. The first is to reach a consensus on what a comprehensive and systemic approach to resilience entails, and where and how each organisation can add value and generate synergy. In practical terms, the best way forward would be for a country-led programme involving major actors to agree on key interventions to achieve resilience and developing innovative cross-institutional initiatives in specific geographical areas where vulnerability is greatest. Individual structures and agencies need to change, but more critically, the system needs to change. We need to break down the barriers between development and humanitarian approaches, between “normal” and “crisis” responses. This requires coherent strong leadership and coordination. National governments, UN agencies, donors, international NGOs and civil society need to contribute to reinforce this approach by building political energy and by putting financial and technical resources behind the mutually agreed priorities.

## AGENDA



## Past events

### Upcoming events

**15-20 October:** 39th session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) - Rome (Italy) >>>

**16-17 October:** European Development Days “Supporting inclusive and sustainable growth” - Brussels (Belgium) >>>

**29 October-1 November:** Global Conference on Agricultural Research for Development (GCARD) - Punta del Este (Uruguay) >>>

**6-9 March 2013:** International Congress “Hidden hunger. From assessment to solutions” - Stuttgart (Germany)

- **Official launch of the HLPE news reports (Rome, 12 September 2012) :** The High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) on food security and nutrition presented its two newly released reports on [climate change and food security](#), and on [social protection for food security](#). The event took place at the FAO headquarters in Rome. Following each report presentation, there was a discussion with a question and answer session. These reports, requested by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) will feed policy debates to be held during its 39th session. You could address any queries or requests for additional information to the HLPE Coordinator, [vincenz.gitz@fao.org](mailto:vincenz.gitz@fao.org) or write to the Secretariat at [cfs-hlpe@fao.org](mailto:cfs-hlpe@fao.org)
- **Conference “Improving diet and nutrition: Challenges for global food, agricultural and land use policies” (Sussex, 23-25 April 2012):** This conference is the third in a series on “Global food, agriculture and land use”, organised by Wilton Park in association with the University of Exeter. With a focus on nutrition and health aspects related to food production and agriculture, this conference brought together 60 participants including policy makers, nutrition experts as well as those involved in the food industry from production to retail. It explored a variety of diet and nutrition-related themes, including examples of best practice in tackling under- and malnutrition; the policy implications and challenges of dietary change; how to protect women, children and other vulnerable groups from food and nutritional insecurity; the role of the private sector in boosting nutritional outcomes; and the policies required to address the various forms of under-, over- and mal-nutrition. The conference report is now available. The next conference will focus on the role of science and technology, to be held at Wilton Park from 17-19 October 2012. >>>

## EC's latest news

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**The High level expert forum on food insecurity in protracted crises (13-14 September 2012):** The event, which took place under the auspices of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), was organised by the Rome-based UN Agencies (FAO, IFAD, WFP) and funded by the European Union within the programme "Improved Global Governance for Hunger Reduction". The EU was represented by Philippe Thomas, from EuropeAid, in the panel "The way forward: Elements for an Agenda for action". The Forum provided a space for consultation and policy dialogue to increase understanding and strengthen collaborative efforts among stakeholders. The forum drafted the elements of an Agenda for Action; this Agenda will be presented and discussed at the 39th Session of CFS in October 2012. [>>>](#)

**Strengthening social protection in the EU development cooperation (August 2012):** The Commission presented the first ever Commission Communication on social protection in international development. It outlines how future EU aid should work to help putting in place social protection policies and systems. It includes proposals such as supporting nationally-owned policies; introducing measures to support job creation and employment; bringing in the civil society and the private sector; and tackling the underlying causes of vulnerability – particularly those that affect women – to readdress the balance, but also sharing EU experience in the matter. These proposals have been made after a broad consultation process which over 250 stakeholders and 17 Member states took part in. They will be discussed by EU Development ministers and the European Parliament in the coming months. [Read the communication](#)

### ROSA NEWS



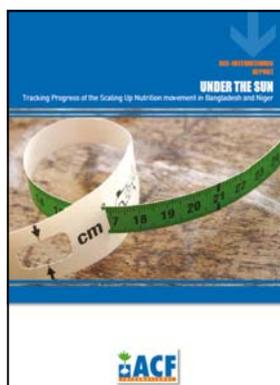
## New online resources

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### Nutrition

- **Aid for nutrition: Using innovative financing to end undernutrition, ACF, IDS – September 2012:** This report builds upon an earlier study (July 2012), which documented low levels of financial investments in nutrition, highlighted major problems with current reporting practices and proposed a series of reforms to address these. Focusing on the 36 high burden countries, the current study examines three different questions. First, it considers how much funding is required to achieve the Scaling up Nutrition (SUN) objectives for direct nutrition-specific interventions over the next ten years. Second, it examines the implications of different ways of allocating this funding between domestic and external sources. Third, the study explores option for how the necessary external funds could be raised. [>>>](#)

- **Under the SUN: Tracking progress of the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement in Bangladesh and Niger, ACF International – September 2012:** This report provides an evaluation on progress made for the SUN implementation in Bangladesh and Niger. The two countries were selected because they are both SUN "early risers" and they are both recognised as countries where significant progress has been achieved in recent years in scaling up nutrition interventions. Drawing lessons from both experiences, this report produces a number of analysis and recommendations which are expected to feed into the September 2012 SUN Movement annual meeting. [>>>](#)



- **Mapping and planned research on agricultural for improved nutrition: A mapping and a gap analysis, DFID – August 2012:** This report examines current and planned research projects on agriculture for improved nutrition and uses a mapping process to identify gaps in research coverage. A conceptual framework has been developed to define and characterises agricultural research for improved nutrition. The study analyses 151 research projects, most of which are part of broader research programmes. A significant majority of projects concern Sub-Saharan Africa, with a particular focus on nutritional impacts on women and children. >>>

## Other themes



- **Food security and climate change, HLPE – June 2012:** This report reviews existing assessments on the effects of climate change on food security and nutrition and analyses the challenges and opportunities of adaptation and mitigation policies and actions for food security and nutrition. >>>

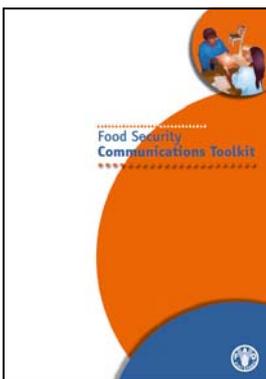
- **Social protection for food security, HLPE – June 2012:** This document aims to review evidence and experience, and proposes recommendations for using social protection more effectively to protect and promote food security. >>>

The two reports prepared by the HLPE of the UN Committee on World Food Security will feed policy debates during the 39th session of the CFS (October 2012).

## External resources and links

- **A new online discussion:** The Global Forum on food security and nutrition launched a new online discussion “Making agriculture work for nutrition: Prioritising country-level action, research and support”. Contributions will be made available at and incorporated into upcoming nutrition and agriculture-related meetings (SUN, CFS, GCARD, CAADP Nutrition Workshop). Visit the [FSN Forum](#) to share practical insights, evidence, and anecdotes from your personal experience researching, implementing, or advocating.

- **Cash Learning Partnership:** The CaLP continues its activities on the basis of a new strategy 2012-2015. Besides the many tools already online and developed during the previous phase (training modules, e-learning, practical guides, case studies), the website is enriched with a home page in French as well as an electronic forum for discussion, debate and technical advice around cash transfer programming in emergencies (D-Group) in French and English. This site was created to facilitate the sharing of tools, best practices, ideas and discussion between practitioners of monetary transfers. <http://www.cashlearning.org/english/home>



- **Food Security Communications Toolkit, FAO - 2012:** This toolkit was prepared in the context of the EC-FAO Programme on “Linking Information and Decision Making to Improve Food Security”. It is geared towards helping food security professionals develop a communication strategy and communicate more effectively with their target audiences. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/014/i2195e/i2195e.pdf>

- **World Bank core course on safety nets “For protection and promotion: The design and implementation of effective social safety nets” (Washington DC, 3-14 December 2012):** This two-week course aims to provide participants with an in-depth understanding of the conceptual and practical issues involved in the development of safety net programmes. It will cover recent practical experience from advanced to middle to low income, to fragile states. >>>

### Contacts:

[EuropeAid-ROSA@ec.europa.eu](mailto:EuropeAid-ROSA@ec.europa.eu)  
[animation@reseau-rosa.eu](mailto:animation@reseau-rosa.eu)

**This bulletin was written by the GRET team in charge of animating ROSA.**

The network is an initiative of EuropeAid (Unit C1 – Rural development, food security and nutrition in collaboration with Unit R7 – Training, knowledge management, internal communication, documentation).

The points expressed do not reflect the official position of the European Commission.

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