

## **A ROAD MAP FOR THE FUTURE**

### **MAPPING RURAL LIVELIHOODS TO MANAGE FOOD CRISIS: THE UNIQUE EXPERIENCE OF BURKINA FASO**



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Text and photos by Claudia Delpero.

Cover photo: A family of farmers in Mia village, district of Arbolle, Passoré province of Burkina Faso.

## INTRODUCTION

This report documents the lessons from Burkina Faso in the use in of the Household Economy Approach (HEA), a set of indicators developed by Save the Children to manage food crisis and target aid assistance.

Save the Children operates a regional HEA programme in 7 countries: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. Burkina Faso is the only country to have mapped rural livelihoods across its whole territory using the Household Economy Approach. This was done under the leadership of the government and with broad consensus and support of humanitarian actors, development agencies and donors.

This success story is documented to serve as an example of good practice and an advocacy tool for other countries involved in the project. The aim is to highlight key lessons that could be adopted elsewhere in the Sahel region. It is not an evaluation of the approach and as such does not critically examine the tool or go into detail regarding its use.

The information in this report was collected through interviews carried out in Burkina Faso

during a one-week field visit between July and August 2013. Twelve interviews were carried out with a cross section of informants including the major Household Economy Approach experts in the country, various levels of government representatives as well as aid beneficiaries. Interviewees were reached directly in Ouagadougou and in the Mia village or on Skype.

Transcripts of the interviews are available in the Annex.

### Acknowledgements

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*A village in Passoré province, Burkina Faso.*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The rain is late this year in Mia village and its 2,300 inhabitants are anxious for the harvest and the food supplies. With an agriculture system dependent on the rainy season and with increasingly erratic rains compounded by soil deterioration and population growth, Mia village is at permanent risk of food shortages.

Mia is one of 46 villages forming the district of Arbolé, 85km north of Ouagadougou, in the Passoré province of Burkina Faso.

Following the drought that hit the country in 2011, the village was identified as one in need of assistance and cash aid was delivered by humanitarian organisations to 180 households out of 250.

The 2011 drought did not affect all in the same way; even with limited incomes, some households were able to cope. Others, however, were more at risk and without aid assistance could have entered into a deadly cycle of poverty. Understanding which households are exposed to food insecurity is crucial for the government and humanitarian organisations to plan and target assistance.

How was Mia identified as a vulnerable village and who decided which households were to receive support?

In a country with the third highest mortality rate in the world for children under 5 and 80% of 17 million inhabitants reliant on subsistence farming, the poor yields of 2011 signalled an impending food emergency. No one, however, could estimate how many people would be affected, so the government adopted the Household Economy Approach to find the answer.

The Household Economy Approach (HEA) was developed by Save the Children in the early 1990s. The tool was based on theories by Nobel Prize winner, Amartya Sen, who suggested that famines occur not from an absolute lack of food, but from systematic inequalities that limit access to food for some people.

In 2007 Save the Children started piloting the Household Economy Approach in the Sahel. The first studies on the links between people and food supplies were developed in Niger in an attempt to understand why the highest rates of child malnutrition were in agricultural grain baskets – a common trend in the Sahel.

Recognising the need for more analysis and capacity in the region, in 2009 Save the Children sought support from the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) to train 40 experts in Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Chad, Niger and Burkina Faso. Partnerships were established in each country and Oxfam was selected as focal point in Burkina Faso.

Between 2010 and 2011, 6 practitioners were trained and 2 studies using the Household Economy Approach were carried out in Burkina Faso. It was in December 2011, however, that the approach became systematically used, in response to the impending food crisis.

Baseline studies funded by the government were developed for the entire country under the leadership of the Early Warning System office at the Ministry of Agriculture. The studies revealed that 2.8 million people – about 20% of the country population – would potentially suffer food shortages in 2012. A response plan worth 112 billion CFA (over 170 million euros) was developed and implemented by government departments at national and local level, with support from international organisations and NGOs.

This marked a turning point in the development of a national mechanism to predict and manage the impacts of food crisis.

Today, data and procedures to address the needs of the poorest are in place and have been tested. All food security operators in the country accept the Household Economy Approach.

At the centre of the process is the Early Warning System, which collects and analyses data prompting response plans by the National Council for Food Security (the body coordinating all organisations working on food security, including some 10 ministries). On the ground, more than 14 NGOs use the Household Economy Approach to target their interventions. At least 200 people have been trained and can manage the tool.

Burkina Faso is the only country in the Sahel to have carried out a mapping of rural livelihoods across the whole country. This is a unique story in a region where, in 2013, 10.3 million people face food shortages and 4.5 million children under 5 are at high risk of acute malnutrition.

Burkina Faso’s success can be attributed to the factors presented in the table below. These represent good practices and lessons for other countries in the region.

Burkina Faso has developed a mechanism that can now be taken to a new level by refining and deepening the analysis. It will then be

possible to understand the structural reasons behind food insecurity and poverty, and design policies to address them. From this perspective, the Household Economy Approach can become an effective tool for development and poverty reduction.

**Key features of the Household Economy Approach implementation in Burkina Faso.**

<b>GOVERNMENT</b>	<b>PARTNERS</b>	<b>COMMUNITIES</b>	<b>CAPACITY</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTATION</b>
Motivation towards most vulnerable populations (stability).	Most influential NGO, with strong links with leading ministry, chosen as focal point.	Network reaching out to villages – by lead ministry and NGOs.	Training of people in key positions.	Cooperation of government and partners.
Buy-in: direct funding of the studies.	Ability of lead NGO to operate both at government and community level.	Active role in the process (identification of socio-economic groups).	Contractual arrangements to ensure further dissemination and training.	Ability to meet urgency: 9 baseline studies (one per each livelihood zone) and 3 scenarios analysis produced in less than 6 months.
Powerful economic ministry in the lead (agriculture).	Ability to shadow government action.	Communications mechanisms.	Retention strategies to keep experts in key positions.	Access to information: building on existing official databases.
Decision-making, financial resources, technical skills and network of local operators within the leading ministry.	Mandate to train other organisations..	Empowerment through independent decisions.	Networking and teamwork.	Use of existing networks in villages.
Early Warning System at the centre of the process and within the remit of the leading ministry.	Delegation of ownership.	Transparency and feedback schemes.	Institutional structure for knowledge dissemination from central to local level.	Combination of rapidity and good quality standards.
Willingness to reform Early Warning System.	Inclusiveness.	Monitoring of survey quality.	100% local expertise.	Reasonable costs.
Best expertise built within the Early Warning System.			Personal commitment.	Consensus among all organisations facilitated by the government.
Inclusive platform on food security (National Council for Food Security).			Investment and pressure from donors.	Monitoring and feedback mechanisms.
Cross-ministerial participation.				Pragmatism: perfect is the enemy of good.

## 1. WAITING FOR THE RAIN IN THE MIA VILLAGE

The rain is late this year in Mia village and its 2,300 inhabitants are anxious for the harvest and the food supplies. With an agricultural system dependent on the rainy season and with increasingly erratic rains due to climate change compounded by soil deterioration and population growth, Mia village is at permanent risk of food shortages. Past one crisis, it is a struggle to recover before the next.

Following the drought of 2011, which put in danger some 20% of Burkina Faso's population, Mia was identified as one of the villages in need of assistance. Through a local development partner, ATAD (*Alliance Technique d'Assistance au Développement*), Oxfam provided cash aid to 180 households out of 250. Each household received 50,000 CFA (75 EUR) to make it through the season.

In 2013, 205 households will receive aid, not because of modest harvests, but because the poorest still fight to recover. *"We fear another bad season. At this time of the year corn should be more mature. Rains started two months late, hopefully the rainy season will last longer and we will catch up,"* says one of the villagers.

Mia is one of the 46 villages forming the district of Arbollé, in the Passoré province of Burkina Faso. In the map of livelihoods zones, the town belongs to the Centre-north.

The Centre-north has over 500,000 households with a population of 3.3 million (53% are women). Only 12% live in urban areas. Agriculture and livestock are the main activities, with production of millet, sorghum, rice, beans and a unique type of yam called "gnion". Cash crops, produced mainly for trade, are cotton, peanut, sesame, cowpea, groundnut and potato.

Mossi people, the biggest ethnic group of the country, have been living in the village for decades, they own the land they work and the houses where they live. But the common trends of the region – unpredictable rains, soil deterioration and population increase – are hitting the local economy.

The erratic rainfall means that agriculture as a means of livelihood is a risky business: *"Agriculture has become a very risky activity and young people prefer to move to cities seeking also to fulfil new needs,"* people say.

For the poorest households in Mia, subsistence production typically lasts 8-9 months. Food then has to be bought on the market. In difficult years, when the supply is low and the demand is high, prices increase dramatically and the poorest may not be able to afford them. In addition, opportunities to find work in agriculture are minimal, limiting potential sources of income.

Table 1 – Livelihoods by socio-economic group in the Centre-north zone of Burkina Faso.

Socio-economic group	Proportion (% households)	Relative proportion (% population)	Household size	Total cultivated area (ha)	Subsistence production (ha)	Cash production (ha)
Very poor	34%	23%	7	2	1.5	0.5
Poor	35%	34%	10	3	2	1
Middle	20%	25%	13	4	3	1
Better-off	11%	18%	17	6	4.5	1.5

Socio-economic group	Livestock	Other productive assets	Other assets
Very poor	0 sheep, 2 goats, 7 poultry	1 donkey	
Poor	0 cattle, 5 sheep, 6 goats, 15 poultry	1 donkey, 1 plough	
Middle	7 cattle, 12 sheep, 13 goats, 25 poultry	2 draft cattle, 1 donkey, 1 plough, 1 cart	1 motorbike
Better-off	25 cattle, 35 sheep, 27 goats, 35 poultry	4 draft cattle, 2 donkeys, 2 ploughs, 2 carts	2 motorbikes

Translated and adapted from « *Analyse de l'économie des ménages de la zone de moyens d'existence Plateau central céréales et maraîchage : ZOME 5* », Février 2012. Source : DGPER/DPSAA, 2012.

When crisis hits, the poorest may have to rely on other sources of income, including remittances from family members, loans, or selling poultry to get cash for food. A difficult period may just be the beginning of a downward spiral leading to the need to re-pay debts, re-purchase livestock and, because of insufficient nutrition, being exposed to illnesses and having less energy to work.

*“In 2011, with no yield, we borrowed money to buy food and sometimes ate wild leaves,”* says a very poor head of household of Mia. *“Food was available on the market, so we sold animals to buy it,”* adds another one.

The 2011 crisis did not affect all households in the same way: even with limited incomes, some had enough to make it through the lean season. Others, however, were more at risk at without aid assistance could have entered into a deadly cycle of poverty. Understanding which households are at risk is therefore crucial for the government and humanitarian organisations to plan and target the assistance.

A survey carried out by Oxfam and ATAD in Mia shows that 11% of the households are doing

fine (the “better-off” or “nantis”), 20% are in a “middle level”, 35% are poor and 34% very poor. This is a typical pattern for the area (see Table 1).

How was Mia identified as a vulnerable village and who decided which households were to receive support? And what exactly was needed, when and for how long? The answer lies in what is considered by many a remarkable achievement. Through adopting the Household Economy Approach, a set of indicators to predict food crisis and target aid, the Government of Burkina Faso was able to get insights into the livelihood strategies people pursue in different contexts and their ability to cope with external shocks. This allows managing food crisis with targeted response plans at national level.

Burkina Faso is the only country in the Sahel having mapped rural livelihoods in the entire territory. This is a unique story, which is worth exploring to understand how such a result was achieved so that other countries in the region can be inspired and follow suit.

## 2. THE HOUSEHOLD ECONOMY APPROACH

The Household Economy Approach (HEA) was developed by Save the Children in the early 1990s based on the principle that *“An analysis of local livelihoods is essential for a proper understanding of the impact – at household level – of hazards such as drought, conflict or market dislocation.”*<sup>1</sup>

The tool was based on theories by Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen, who suggested that famines occur not from an absolute lack of food, but from systematic inequalities that limit access to food for some people. Whereas earlier methodologies focused only on production, price and rainfall, the Household Economy Approach recognises that rural households in poor countries do not depend solely on their own production for survival, but employ a range of strategies to get the food and cash they need (remittances, loans, sale of livestock or other measures). The key was therefore to map the links between people and food supplies.

This was a revolution in thinking as it decoupled for the first time the concepts of agriculture and food crisis.

The Household Economy Approach divides households into 4 socio-economic groups – very poor, poor, middle and better-off – analysing their economy, their interactions with external factors (markets, the environment, as well as social and political events) and coping strategies at adversity times.

Baselines studies define the typical household economy in a given area – livelihood zones. Outcome analysis are then developed on a periodical basis to investigate how access to food and income are changing as a result of positive or negative events (e.g. beneficial price policies or droughts). Thus, analyses determine the level of vulnerability to food insecurity of each socio-economic group. With this information, scenarios can be made on the magnitude of a shock and interventions can be planned for areas and population groups most at risk, at the most relevant time and in the most appropriate form (food, cash, market policies etc.).

<sup>1</sup> Seaman J., Clarke P., Boudreau T., Holt J. (2000) *“The Household Economy Approach”*. Save the Children UK.

Assistance is planned using two hazard thresholds. The Survival Threshold represents the income required to cover minimum food energy needs (2100 kilocalories per person per day), the costs of food preparation and consumption (salt, soap, kerosene or firewood for cooking and basic lighting) and any expenditure on water for human consumption. Below this line, interventions are required to save lives.

The Livelihoods Protection Threshold represents the total income required to sustain

livelihoods. In addition to basic survival (Survival Threshold), it includes access to basic services such as medical and schooling expenses, sustainability of livelihoods in the medium to long term (e.g. purchases of seeds, fertilizer, veterinary drugs etc.), plus a minimum locally acceptable standard of living (e.g. purchase of basic clothing, coffee or tea, etc.). Below this line, interventions are needed to maintain existing livelihood assets and strategies.

### 3. A PARADOX TO BE EXPLAINED

The Sahel region suffers from recurrent droughts – the worst during 1973-1974, 1984-1985, 2010-2011 – and from chronic food insecurity and malnutrition. With population increasing by 3-4% per year (3 times the world's average), the pressure keeps growing on agriculture and land. Traditional livelihood systems are no longer sufficient for the growing demand on the natural environment.

In 2013 it is estimated that 10.3 million people face food shortages across 9 countries: Senegal, Gambia, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria<sup>2</sup>. The most vulnerable households are still struggling to recover from the crisis that affected 18 million people in 2012 and the situation is exacerbated by the political crisis in Mali.

With chronic challenges faced by the most vulnerable, especially women and children, Save the Children in 2007 started piloting the Household Economy Approach in the Sahel. The first studies on the links between people and food supplies were developed in Niger. The goal was to understand why the highest rates of child malnutrition were in agricultural grain baskets.

*“We acknowledged the paradox that the most important areas of agriculture production were the ones suffering the highest rates of malnutrition,”* says Dr. Seidou Bakari, Member of Parliament in Niger and former Regional Advisor for Save the Children West Africa. *“This is what interested us in the first baseline studies: explaining the incoherence. Who was producing and benefiting from the production?”*

In 2009, Save the Children submitted a funding proposal to the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) to deploy the Household Economy Approach for the first time in a consistent manner across the region. Partnerships were established in each country and Oxfam was selected as focal point in Burkina Faso. According to Dr. Bakari: *“If we wanted the approach to be owned and to grow at regional level, we had to build the local capacity”*. The project involved training 40 experts who could manage and disseminate the tool in Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Chad, Niger and Burkina Faso, thus increasing the ability to manage and prevent food crisis in the long term.

Between May 2010 and September 2011, 34 practitioners were trained. They included personnel from the national early warning systems, academic institutions and NGOs. Six came from Burkina Faso: 2 from the government's Early Warning System, 2 from non-profit organisations (Oxfam and Action Against Hunger), one from the academic sector and one from a consultancy.

During the training 9 baseline studies applying the Household Economy Approach were carried out in 4 countries, 2 of them in Burkina Faso. But it was in December 2011 that the use of the tool was used systematically across the whole country. With strong support from the government, Burkina Faso took the lead and in few months became the only country in the Sahel to completely map its rural households and have the necessary data at hand to predict and manage food crisis.

<sup>2</sup> European Commission – ECHO Factsheet, “Sahel Food & Nutrition Crisis”, June 2013.



## 4. ALARM BELLS RINGING IN BURKINA FASO

In a country with the third highest mortality rate in the world for children under 5 and 80% of 17 million inhabitants reliant on subsistence farming, the severe drought of 2011 signalled an impending food emergency.

*“Having seen the poor yields, the government feared a huge gap in food supplies but could not predict how many people would be affected,”* recalls Eric Pitois, Head of ECHO in Burkina Faso.

The introduction of new indicators derived from the livelihoods mapping exercise found fertile ground. A study in 2008 on the functioning of the Early Warning System, set up under the Ministry of Agriculture, highlighted a number of issues and discussions on its reform were on-going. The National Council for Food Security Executive Secretariat (*Secrétariat Exécutif du Conseil National de Sécurité Alimentaire*, SE-CNSA), the highest food security body in the country, was also advocating for an effective response plan within the Ministry of Agriculture.

*“All food security operators were confronted with the same question: how to estimate the amount of people that would be impacted and identify the most vulnerable groups for the delivery of aid?”* explains Hien Sitégné, Head of Service at the Early Warning System. *“There was no other tool than the Household Economy Approach to provide the answers.”*

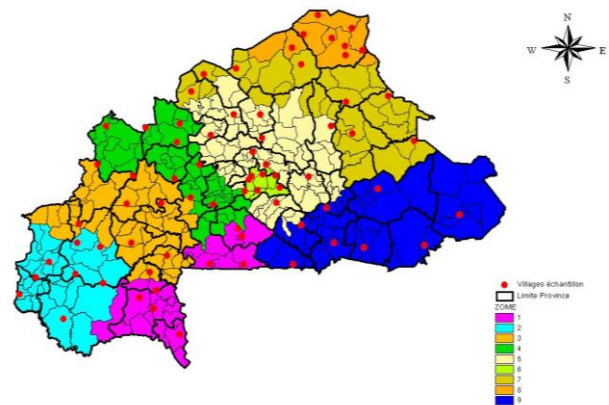
*“In order to estimate the impacts of the crisis, a simulation was made using the studies already available. However, these were not representative of the country and the government felt uncomfortable about that. This is when the government decided to develop baseline studies for the entire country,”* says Pitois.

The government invested 50 million CFA in carrying out studies across the whole country. Oxfam and the World Food Programme provided additional support with 12 and 20 million respectively.

With a network of experts in place (all Burkinabé) thanks to the initial training provided by Save the Children and 75-80% of the statistical data already gathered in databases of the Ministry of Agriculture, the studies were developed in a record time. All were completed between January and February 2012 and within another month they were validated by FEG Consulting, a consultancy specialising in food security.

The country was divided into 9 livelihood zones, each zone based on its main economic features. For each livelihood zone, 8 sample villages – the “typical villages” – were selected for surveys to be carried out. Villages were chosen from the permanent agriculture survey at the Direction of Agriculture Statistics, a census involving 700 villages and 4000 households.

**Figure 1 – The 9 livelihood zones of Burkina Faso and, in red, the sample villages used for the baseline studies.**



Source: Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET)

The Early Warning System agency, who led the exercise, benefited from the network of 700 Ministry of Agriculture operators already present in each village to disseminate information to farmers. These operators were trained to dispense the Household Economy Approach questionnaires in the 72 sample villages, while 6 national experts monitored the quality of the exercise and data produced.

Using the questionnaires, villages had to ascribe each household to the respective socio-economic group (“better-off”, middle, poor and very poor). The profiles of livelihood zones were developed using this data.

The Early Warning System could then analyse the coping capacity of different households and develop scenarios on impacts, which in turn determined the response plan by the National Council for Food Security.

Based on the worst scenario, it was predicted that 2.8 million people – about 20% of the country population – would suffer a survival or livelihood deficit during the lean season. To face

the emergency, a response plan, worth 112 billion CFA (over 170 million euros) was put in place. This included the distribution of 105,000 tons of food and supplies to benefit 415,000 children aged 6-23 months. 56% of the assistance was ensured by international partners and NGOs.

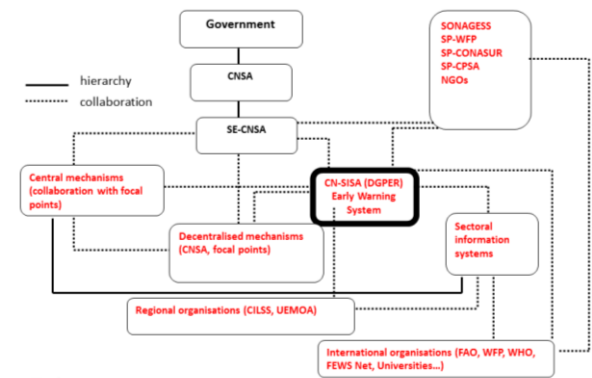
The plan was rolled out by the Ministry of Social Affairs through the National Council on Emergency Rescue and Rehabilitation (*Conseil National de Secours d'Urgence et Rehabilitation – CONASUR*), grouping social services at local level (“*action sociale*”).

The distribution of food, including a transfer of cereals from provinces with overproduction, was coordinated through the National Society for Food Security Stock Management (*Société Nationale de Gestion du Stocks de Sécurité Alimentaire – SONAGESS*), under the Ministry of Agriculture and in cooperation with international partners and NGOs. On their part, NGOs also provided cash aid – money delivered to households to cope with higher food prices during the lean season or to buy small animals to build longer term resilience.

Once again, in each village, local operators were trained and villagers had to identify the socio-economic groups in need of assistance based on the Household Economy Approach. Through this process, communities became an active part in targeting and distributing aid. “Some communities even translated the socio-economic categories in a language closer to their reality. In the north, for example, the “*nantis*” are called “*bubu*”, the middle “*shirts*”, the poor “*panties*” and the very poor “*naked*”. In the east, categories have been translated into “*standing*”, “*poorly seated*”, “*seated*” and “*lying*”, says Eric Pitois.

Now data and procedures are in place to manage food emergencies focused on the most vulnerable groups. Overall, the Household Economy Approach is accepted by all operators and informs the monthly meetings of the National Council for Food Security Technical Committee (the body coordinating all organisations working on food security, including some 10 ministries). At the centre of the process is the Early Warning System, which collects and analyses data prompting response plans. All these bodies work under the Ministry of Agriculture, a powerful ministry given that 34% of the country’s GDP (Gross Domestic Product) comes from the agriculture sector.

Figure 2 – The national food security mechanism in Burkina Faso.



Source: Presentation by Hien Sitégné, Head of Service at the Early Warning System, August 2013.

On the ground, more than 14 NGOs<sup>3</sup> use the Household Economy Approach to target their interventions, as well as the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the World Food Programme and the Red Cross. At least 200 people in the country have been trained in the country and can manage the Household Economy Approach.

More importantly, the information collected has begun to unveil local economic patterns and structural problems that can be addressed with specific programmes that respond to populations needs. “In certain areas there are groups with revenues above average and also trading products and yet, they are poor. This information came out using the Household Economy Approach and did not exist before,” says Hien Sitégné.

Of course the system is not perfect and there are still areas for improvement. Analysis should become more regular even in years with no specific difficulties. In time with more detailed data, scenarios could be more frequent and reliable.

In 2013, approximately 450,000 people will be targeted as they have not recovered yet from last year’s shock. In Mia village, however, the number of households receiving assistance will increase from 180 to 205. “We have to find the reasons for the variances. It may be that some people have been excluded in 2012 and that others are returning after the crisis, but we need to know more,” says Papa Sosthène Konaté, Head of Oxfam Humanitarian Programmes in Burkina Faso.

<sup>3</sup> Action Against Hunger, Christian Aid, Help, HOPE'87, Ocades Caritas, Oxfam, GVC Onlus Italia, Plan, Save the Children, SOS Sahel International and Welthungerhilfe.

Deepening the analysis will also support agencies to better understand the impacts on children and the level of revenues associated to children (child labour, artisanal mining or illegal activities), which are not considered in the Household Economy Approach at present.

At government level, communications and knowledge should be disseminated at different levels, as most officials trained on the Household Economy Approach work in the capital while local authorities are not necessarily familiar with

the tool. “Now that the foundations are built, it is our priority to continue funding a large number of organisations in order to expand the network of technical experts,” says Pitois.

2013-2017 will be devoted to developing baseline studies for cities, starting from the capital Ouagadougou, and plans are in place to completely review the livelihood zones in 2014 in consideration of new patterns and changes to local economies.

### **ALMOST 1800 HOUSEHOLDS SUPPORTED BY SAVE THE CHILDREN IN 2012**

*Working in Burkina Faso since 1982, Save the Children is among the organisations distributing cash aid to help households overcome food crisis. In 2012, almost 1800 households were supported in the province of Kaya, in the Centre-north livelihood zone. 1257 households in Dablo and 542 in Pissila received 98,000 CFA each, for a total effort of 176,302,000 CFA. Considering the logistical difficulties in reaching remote or inaccessible areas and the security concerns associated with carrying cash, in 2013 the aid to 4755 vulnerable households financed by CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) will be delivered through Cananday, a micro-finance organisation, and where possible through phone payments.*

*Save the Children uses the Household Economy Approach to identify the most vulnerable groups within each village. “We had some initial difficulties because people were focusing on individuals rather than on households. For example, if there was a chronically ill person, the expectation was that the household receive assistance, even though there may be enough means,” explains Parfait Douamba, Nutrition Coordinator. “So we put in place a communication mechanism to promote accountability. In every village we appointed a contact who could be called upon for issues related to classification, aid distribution or any other complaint. After each distribution, we also carried out monitoring surveys. All these feedback mechanisms provided an incentive to implement the system correctly.”*



*Family in Mia village, district of Arbolle, Passoré province of Burkina Faso.*

## 5. BEHIND SUCCESS

A number of factors can be attributed to Burkina Faso's success in applying the Household Economy Approach. These are useful lessons for other countries in the region:

### Government

- Whether for social purposes or stability, there was a strong motivation by the government to manage the impacts of food crisis on the most vulnerable populations; this is proven by the speed of action on the face of an impending crisis.
- The government fully bought in to the Household Economy Approach and was prepared to make a financial investment to produce the baseline studies.
- The decision-making power, the financial resources, the technical skills and a widespread network of local operators were within the remit of one responsible ministry – the Ministry of Agriculture; this is a leading economic ministry that is also in charge of the Early Warning System.
- The approach was timely. Discussions on reforms of the Early Warning System started in 2008 so there was a willingness to explore new tools.
- An inclusive platform was in place – the National Council for Food Security – facilitating decisions and overall consensus among food security operators; with 10 ministries represented, the Council also ensured that the Household Economy Approach was understood and used in different parts of the government.
- Expertise was built within the Early Warning System, the body at the centre of the process.

### Partners

- The focal point was the most influential NGO on food security in the country; working on agricultural issues in Burkina Faso since 1997, Oxfam was the strongest organisation in terms of contacts with the Ministry of Agriculture, contacts with local partners and presence on the ground.
- NGOs in charge of the programme (whether Save the Children at regional level or Oxfam

at national level) ensured a cooperative approach including all other players; Oxfam in particular could work behind the scenes shadowing government actions.

### Local communities

- A network of operators from the Ministry of Agriculture and NGOs was in place to build awareness within existing contacts and structures.
- Whether for baseline studies or for aid distribution, villages played an active part in attributing households to each socio-economic group.
- Participation was facilitated by communications mechanisms.
- Transparency and feedback schemes were put in place to ensure buy-in and survey quality.

### Capacity

- The first trainings on the Household Economy Approach targeted staff in key positions, especially in the Early Warning System and in NGOs.
- For some practitioners, participation in the training was conditional to contributing to the dissemination of the concept based on the principle of “training the trainers”.
- Retention strategies were in place to keep technical expertise in key positions, e.g. salary contributions and contractual conditions.
- Good relations and networking opportunities across organisations were key to exchange best practices and disseminate knowledge.
- The connection of institutional structures from central to local governments (e.g. CONESUR, COPASUR, social services etc.) allowed filtering capacity down to the ground, although this is still in process and requires time.
- The pressure of a donor (ECHO) with a strong capacity building agenda promoted the dissemination of best practices and lessons learnt.
- All experts were Burkinabe, with knowledge of the country's geography and culture.

- Personal commitments of some key staff was essential to go beyond initial challenges.

### Implementation

- The joint action of government and partners allowed to meet the urgency of the crisis: 9 baseline studies and 3 scenarios analysis were produced in less than 6 months.
- Baseline studies were built mostly on existing databases of the Ministry of Agriculture.

- Existing local networks (presence in villages of Ministry of Agriculture operators and NGOs), allowed delivery with relatively high quality standards and within reasonable costs.
- Platforms for dialogue, especially the National Council for Food Security, allowed a rapid consensus on the data.
- Monitoring and feedback mechanisms were established by some NGOs.

**Table 1: Key features of the Household Economy Approach implementation in Burkina Faso.**

GOVERNMENT	PARTNERS	COMMUNITIES	CAPACITY	IMPLEMENTATION
Motivation towards most vulnerable populations (stability).	Most influential NGO, with strong links with leading ministry, chosen as focal point.	Network reaching out to villages – by lead ministry and NGOs.	Training of people in key positions.	Cooperation of government and partners.
Buy-in: direct funding of the studies.	Ability of lead NGO to operate both at government and community level.	Active role in the process (identification of socio-economic groups).	Contractual arrangements to ensure further dissemination and training.	Ability to meet urgency: 9 baseline studies (one per each livelihood zone) and 3 scenarios analysis produced in less than 6 months.
Powerful economic ministry in the lead (agriculture).	Ability to shadow government action.	Communications mechanisms.	Retention strategies to keep experts in key positions.	Access to information: building on existing official databases.
Decision-making, financial resources, technical skills and network of local operators within the leading ministry.	Mandate to train other organisations..	Empowerment through independent decisions.	Networking and teamwork.	Use of existing networks in villages.
Early Warning System at the centre of the process and within the remit of the leading ministry.	Delegation of ownership.	Transparency and feedback schemes.	Institutional structure for knowledge dissemination from central to local level.	Combination of rapidity and good quality standards.
Willingness to reform Early Warning System.	Inclusiveness.	Monitoring of survey quality.	100% local expertise.	Reasonable costs.
Best expertise built within the Early Warning System.			Personal commitment.	Consensus among all organisations facilitated by the government.
Inclusive platform on food security (National Council for Food Security).			Investment and pressure from donors.	Monitoring and feedback mechanisms.
Cross-ministerial participation.				Pragmatism: perfect is the enemy of good.

## 6. MOVING FORWARD

Back to Mia village: people look beyond the emergency to plan their future. *“There should be investments in other sectors. With increasing droughts, agriculture has become more risky so we need to develop revenues not depending on it, for example having access to credit for livestock and small commercial activities,”* villagers say.

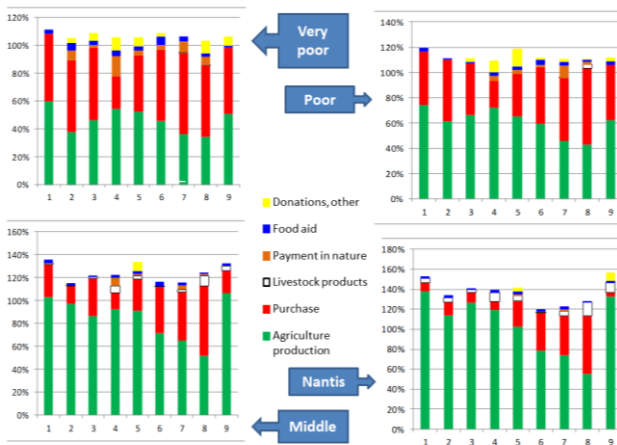
Besides nutrition, the village faces major challenges such as access to drinking water and population increase that is putting ecosystems under further pressure.

These patterns were identified in the Centre-north baseline study: all socio-economic groups seek development opportunities and improvement of living conditions through better development of lowlands, increase of drinking water supplies, provision of agriculture equipment and technical progress.

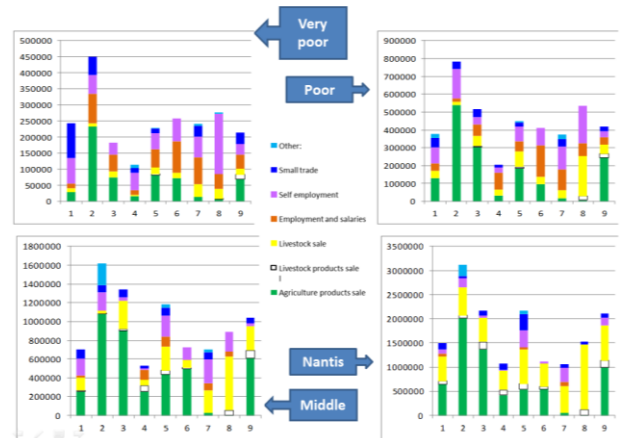
Besides short term management of food crisis, the Household Economy Approach has an important role to play in understanding structural strengths and problems affecting people livelihoods.

The studies of Burkina Faso, for example, revealed that 8.7 million people are “poor” or “very poor”. In some areas the poorest are the most exposed to price fluctuations because they are reliant on the market for their food supplies. In other areas the better-off are also vulnerable to markets because their main activity is livestock. *“Causes of food insecurity can be structural or situational, we need to act at both levels,”* says Papa Sosthène Konaté. *“The surveys also showed that food security is related to education: the better educated, the easier it is to adopt new coping strategies”.*

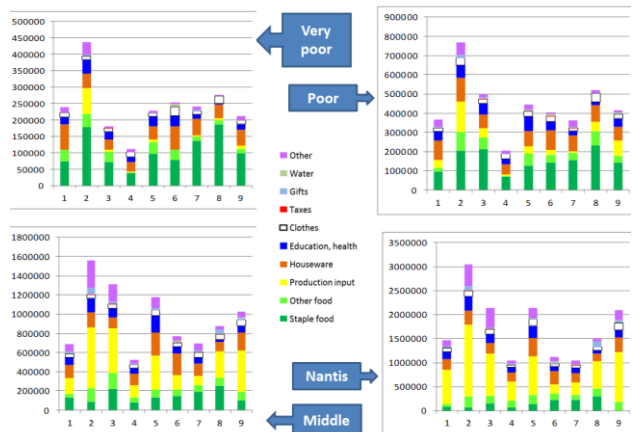
**Figure 3 – Sources of food by population group in the 9 livelihood zones of Burkina Faso.**



**Figure 4 – Sources of income by population group in the 9 livelihood zones of Burkina Faso.**



**Figure 5 – Expenditure by population group in the 9 livelihood zones of Burkina Faso.**



Source: All figures translated and adapted from Presentation by Hien Sitégné, Head of Service at the Early Warning System, 2012.

Burkina Faso has been pragmatic in applying the Household Economy Approach and now can take the tool to a new level by refining and deepening the analysis.

*“This is an incredible tool, but now it is time to take a pause and analyse major trends and structural economic aspects emerging from the studies we have. With these, we can understand the changes needed for the development of the region and create the most suitable policies to address them,”* says Dr. Bakari.

From this perspective, the Household Economy Approach can become an effective tool for development and poverty reduction. For analysis and policies at regional level, however, a complete mapping of the livelihoods is necessary in each country, following the example of Burkina Faso.

## 7. RESOURCES

### Web

- ✓ Household Economy Approach in the Sahel: [www.hea-sahel.org](http://www.hea-sahel.org)
- ✓ Oxfam in Burkina Faso  
<http://www.oxfam.org/en/burkina-faso>
- ✓ Alliance Technique d'Assistance au Développement (ATAD): <http://www.atad-bf.net/>
- ✓ Système d'Information sur la Sécurité Alimentaire (SISA): [www.sisa.bf](http://www.sisa.bf)
- ✓ Société Nationale de Gestion du Stocks de Sécurité Alimentaire (SONAGESS):  
<http://www.sonagess.bf/>
- ✓ Secrétariat Permanent de Coordination des Politiques Agricoles: [www.spcpsa.gov.bf](http://www.spcpsa.gov.bf)
- ✓ Permanent Interstates Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel:  
<http://www.cilss.bf/>
- ✓ European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO) in Burkina Faso:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/echo/aid/sub\\_saharian/burkina-faso\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/aid/sub_saharian/burkina-faso_en.htm)

### Publications

- ✓ RHVP (Regional Hunger Vulnerability Programme, The Food Economy Group, Save the Children. *The Practitioners' Guide to HEA*.
- ✓ Ministère de l'Agriculture et de l'Hydraulique. Février 2012. *Analyse de l'économie des ménages de la zone de moyens d'existence « Plateau central céréales et maraîchage »* : ZOME 5. Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.
- ✓ *Crise Alimentaire au Burkina Faso*, Les Editions Le Pays, N°5152 du mercredi 11 juillet 2012. Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.
- ✓ *La faim au Sahel: une urgence permanente ?* 15 December 2010. Oxfam International. Oxford, UK.
- ✓ European Commission – Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection. June 2013. “*Sahel Food and Nutrition Crisis – Echo factsheet*”.
- ✓ Projet Régional HEA Sahel. 20-21 février 2013. *Rapport de la Première Réunion du Comité Technique de Concertation*. Dakar, Sénégal.
- ✓ Projet Régional HEA Sahel. 15-16 mai 2013. *Deuxième Réunion du Comité Technique de Coordination, Rapport final*. Dakar, Sénégal.

**A.1. “Building on existing databases” – Hien Sitégné, Head of Service at the Early Warning System (*Système d’Alerte Précoce – SAP*)**

**Ouagadougou, 27-30 July 2013 – When was the Early Warning System set up in Burkina Faso and when did it start to employ the Household Economy Approach?**

The Early Warning System (SAP) was created when the Permanent Interstates Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) started its operations following the food crisis of 1973-74.

For a long time the SAP only accounted for food production: where needs were higher than availability, the assumption was that communities were vulnerable. But this method did not take into account many other aspects, such as specific features of different zones or access to food. Already in 2006 we knew that we had to introduce nutritional aspects to the analysis and in 2008 a study was undertaken to look into possible reforms of the Early Warning System.

The Household Economy Approach was introduced in 2011. Faced with droughts and a major food crisis, we needed a modelling tool to identify households’ vulnerability in order to target aid interventions.

Today, the Early Warning System, responsible for data collection and analysis, fully integrates the Household Economy Approach in its assessments. Now that the mapping of rural areas have been completed, in 2013-2017 we plan to analyse cities vulnerability, starting from Ouagadougou.

**Which other institutions and organisations are involved in the management of food crisis?**

Based on the information provided by the Early Warning System, the National Council for Food Security Executive Secretariat (SE-CNSA) formulates a response plan. Both the Early Warning System and the National Council for Food Security are under the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture.

The Technical Committee of the National Council for Food Security (*Comité Technique du Conseil National de Sécurité Alimentaire*) coordinates

ten ministries and includes all organisations working on food security. It holds monthly meetings to keep abreast of the situation and decide interventions.

The response plan is implemented by the National Council on Emergency Rescue and Rehabilitation (Conseil National de Secours d’Urgence et Réhabilitation – CONASUR). This groups all social services (*Action Sociale*) at local level, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs. The social services are responsible for interventions on behalf of the State but only staff at national level have been trained on the Household Economy Approach, so the criteria to target aid are disseminated from the national level.

Food aid is channelled through the National Society for Food Security Stock Management (*Société Nationale de Gestion de Stocks de Sécurité Alimentaire – SONAGESS*), under the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture and in cooperation with partners and NGOs.

**What was the trigger for Burkina Faso to adopt the Household Economy Approach?**

In 2007-2008 the government commissioned a study to reform the Early Warning System and improve the tools to address food security. This provided the opportunity to start a discussion on the Household Economy Approach indicators. For the Ministry of Agriculture it was relatively easy to collect households’ information because 75-80% of the data were already available and the cooperation among services and organisations involved was good, without too many formalities.

In other countries the services managing the data do not necessarily have the capacity to analyse them or are at high political level and far from concrete implementation.

**How were the baseline studies produced?**

Burkina Faso was divided in 9 livelihood zones, each with its own economic features. For every livelihood zone, we selected 8 sample



villages – or “typical villages” – which responded to the normal criteria for the reference year, that is, they were not suffering from any particular shock.

To select the sample villages, we used the permanent agriculture survey by the Directorate General for the Promotion of the Rural Economy, under the Direction of Agriculture Statistics which we are also part of. The survey involves 700 out of 8,000 villages in the country. Using information on these 700 villages, we created a definition of the typical village in each zone and went to the ground to collect the details on households livelihoods. With such data, we were able to produce the baseline for each zone.

### **Which data do you use to develop the baseline studies?**

Several indicators from different sources feed into the database, for example agriculture and livestock production, demography, agriculture salaries, market prices, inflation, revenue sources etc. These data are used to find out how households supply for their own needs – whether it is by their own production, the purchase of food and other products or through donations and other sources of revenues.

As regards market prices, we compare the monthly average with the data in the baseline to see if prices are increasing or decreasing, using the market information system which has its own agents on the ground.

### **What type of information can you derive from the baseline studies?**

When we identify the features of each zone in terms of revenues and food sources, disparities become apparent. In certain zones, for example, the poor can only cover 60% of their livelihood with own production, in other zones even the better-off do not reach 60% because the main activity is livestock. In terms of revenues, in certain areas there are groups with revenues above average and also trading products and yet, they are poor.

This information came from the Household Economy Approach and did not exist before.

### **As there are 8,000 villages in the country, is the sample used for the baseline studies representative enough?**

The representation is related to the description of the typical village. As livelihood zones are quite big, we sampled villages from different areas within the same zone. If during the survey one of the villages did not respond to the established criteria, we replaced it with another one because the baseline has to reflect a normal situation. The extrapolation is correct.

### **Have you ever experienced a situation in which data did not look correct?**

In some cases the sample village did not respond to the normal criteria because it was experiencing some sort of shock. For example, we had a village with a problem with yam seeds affecting production, so we had to change village. In the baseline studies we look at the global trend and in the follow up analysis we look at shocks. The latter are shown by data that do not match the baseline.

### **Is population increase also taken into account?**

The baseline studies include population and their land possession. The periodical analysis record major changes compared to the normal situation. In case of migrations associated with refugees or meteorological events, they will be captured.

### **How were the surveys carried out in villages?**

Agents of the Ministry of Agriculture are in almost every village to disseminate information to farmers and producers, so we benefited from a network of on-the-ground operators. As additional competencies were required to manage the Household Economy Approach questionnaires and move beyond a quantitative analysis of the data, we reinforced their skills.

Villages had then to fill in forms responding to questions based on the household descriptions we provided. Six experts who attended the first training in 2010 coordinated this work and monitored the quality of surveys during the data collection period.

### **Who are these experts?**

Two of them are from the Early Warning System, 2 from NGOs (Oxfam and Action Against Hunger), one from the academic sector and one from a consultancy.

### **How many people can manage the Household Economy Approach today?**

In total, we trained one agent in each area where villages were surveyed (72) using the Household Economy Approach, 2 directors per livelihood zone at national level (18) and one director in each administrative region (13). All members of the National Council for Food Security are also trained. Considering all sectors, there must be at least 200 people who can manage the Household Economy Approach in Burkina Faso, even more if we count those who have been briefed. The number is still small and we keep training people.

### **Do you have enough staff to do this work?**

With few staff and high turnover, the know-how is always in jeopardy. At the Early Warning System we have 12 staff – 5 managers and 7 technical functions. Only 2 are responsible for the Household Economy Approach data and another 3 could help if needed.

More staff is also necessary if we want to capture the anomalies at a more detailed level. To improve the process there should be a team in each region working on the analysis.

### **How do you keep the data up-to-date in situations that continue changing?**

In October each year, when we receive the provisional data on harvests, we elaborate a scenario on the likely trend of the year, considering projected market prices and impacts. The scenario is updated in February with the final production data. This year we will produce a third scenario in August because the forecast price increase by 25-30% did not occur, so we have to update the operational plan accordingly.

On a general basis, every 3 months data are updated and scenarios re-assessed. Once the information is available and we have a response plan, we know exactly where to intervene and how much food is needed.

### **What are the costs of this operation?**

The investment for the baselines studies was 82 million CFA to send people on the ground, collect the data and produce the reports. All the studies were funded by the Ministry of Agriculture. Oxfam, the World Food Programme and ECHO supported. Now the database is there so the annual costs are not high, mostly for updates and meetings.

### **While having been produced in 2011, baseline studies rely on older data. Are there any plans to update them?**

The livelihood zones are valid for 5 years, so they will be reviewed in 2014. At that point everything will be reconsidered because the livelihood patterns may have changed and new situations may have appeared. For example in areas like the Centre-north gold digging is becoming a very important activity and is completely transforming the local economy. New livelihood zones may be identified. The definition of sample villages will also be reviewed and new villages will be chosen for the surveys.

### **What is the role of NGOs and of local authorities in this process?**

NGOs provided agents on the ground to collect data for the baseline studies. Otherwise they use the Household Economy Approach to target aid at a later stage.

With regard to local authorities, 31 directors at regional level have been trained, know the database and how to dispense the surveys. Now we are asking them to train other local officers. On their part, mayors and prefects contribute to disseminate the information and facilitate collaboration, without knowing the Household Economy Approach in details.

### **Who proposed the Household Economy Approach in Burkina Faso in the first place and was it easy to reach a consensus on this tool?**

The Household Economy Approach was initially proposed by ECHO, Oxfam, the World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organisation, as they were the core partners of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Faced with the food crisis of 2011-2012, all food security operators were confronted with the same question: how to estimate the amount of people that would be impacted and identify the most vulnerable groups for the delivery of aid? There was no other tool than the Household Economy Approach to provide the answers, so the alignment was easy.

### **How could this tool develop in the future, for example at policy level?**

Although at the moment we only focus on situational vulnerability, there are high level talks to produce, through the Household Economy Approach, a list of households structurally vulnerable. This analysis will identify poverty patterns and inspire the elaboration of

development policies. Geographical aspects like access to water could also be integrated.

Policies and recommendations could be delivered within the Harmonised Framework, the analysis of food and nutritional vulnerability in the Sahel region developed by the CILSS (Permanent Interstates Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel). At present the picture provided by such global analysis is too general, but if it integrated structurally vulnerable households, we could observe poverty trends and take subsequent action to manage food crisis.

The current level of analysis is sufficient for the Early Warning Systems to manage food crisis. At the moment, the Household Economy Approach does not have any competitors in the analysis and explanation of vulnerability.

## **A.2. “We urgently needed data to plan the interventions” – Tinga Ramde, Executive Secretary of the National Council for Food Security (*Secrétariat Exécutif du Conseil National de Sécurité Sociale – SE-CNSA*), Ministry of Agriculture**

### **Ouagadougou, 29 July 2013 - When was the National Council for Food Security created and how did it take the Household Economy Approach on board?**

The National Council for Food Security was created between 2003 and 2004, but it really started to work in 2006 when we appointed all members and started to organise General Assemblies. Members are all the institutions of the State involved in food security issues, e.g. ministries responsible for agriculture, health, social affairs, as well as technical partners, civil society organisations and donors. The Council includes about 50 members that meet every month; it is a well-developed platform to address food security based on the technical information provided by the Early Warning System (SAP).

Our approach has always been based on inclusion and consensus, so discussing and inviting members to adopt the Household Economy Approach was easy, almost a formality.

### **What motivated the choice of the Household Economy Approach?**

The Household Economy Approach was already used by FEWSNET (Famine Early

Warning Systems Network) and other organisations. Some baseline studies had been done in Burkina Faso and we knew the approach delivered results in terms of targeting the most vulnerable people. Being in a situation that required intervention, we needed to know whom to target and the Household Economy Approach gave us this possibility. The Harmonised Framework, which collects data at regional level, did not provide the level of information required to plan the interventions.

### **Who funded the realisation of the baseline studies?**

It was mostly the government, together with Oxfam and the World Food Programme. Everyone contributed with its own part.

### **How could the studies be completed so quickly covering the entire country?**

We urgently needed data to plan the interventions, so the action had to be quick. While NGOs operated in their usual areas with food and cash aid, the State also had to deploy assistance, which usually involves providing cereals at social price and, to a lesser extent, distributing food.

In 2012, 80,000 tonnes of cereals were sold at a social price or distributed for free. As we do not have enough trucks, we used a private transport company and this doubled the costs so now we have an issue with the Finance Ministry.

### **Did you use the Household Economy Approach in 2013?**

2013 is not a year of crisis, but in Burkina we always have pockets experiencing difficulties, either because of droughts or floods. Based on the yields in 2012, we identified 19 towns in need of assistance – approximately 450,000 people who have not recovered from last crisis yet. Compared to last year, this is fairly easy to manage.

### **Who has the pivoting role in the Household Economy Approach?**

The Early Warning System (SAP) is the technical structure specialised in collecting the data and driving the surveys.

### **Could the information collected via the Household Economy Approach be used for other purposes than food security, for example for agriculture and health policies?**

Why not? The Household Economy Approach gives us the proportion of people livelihoods and these data could also be used at policy level. We should carry out the surveys again to see if the data we have are still correct. Why invest in surveys if you do not use the results?

## **TOUGH DECISIONS FOR THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR FOOD SECURITY**



*Ouagadougou, 31 July 2013 – Participants in the monthly meeting of the National Council for Food Security Technical Committee discuss the level of assistance for 2013. The scenario prepared by the Early Warning System in February forecast a price increase of 25-30% for staple food, but this has not occurred so fewer households need support. What do to? Keeping or reducing the assistance provided to communities in cash and food aid? At the meeting it was decided to intervene anyway because too many household have not fully recovered from the 2012 crisis. Approximately 50 people attended the meeting from government ministries, donors, international partners and NGOs. The meeting was chaired by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Agriculture and a representative of the French Embassy on behalf of partners.*

### **A.3. “When women have money, the households are safe!” – Mia Village**

Arbollé, 30 July 2013 – With about 2,300 inhabitants, Mia is one of the 46 villages of the Arbollé district, Passoré Province, north of Ouagadougou. Following poor yields, in 2012 180 out of 250 households of the village received cash aid from ATAD (*Alliance Technique d’Assistance au Développement*), a development organisation partnering with Oxfam. In 2013 the households receiving help are 205. Those in need were identified using the Household Economy Approach.

As 200 heads of households gathered on 30 July 2013, interviews were held with the Village Development Committee and two groups representing poor and very poor households. They split into self-organised groups and answers were given by consensus. The conversation was possible thanks to the interpretation of ATAD local agents, who translated to and from Mooré, the language of Mossi, the largest ethnical group of the country.

#### **A.3.1. Village Development Committee**

##### **How is the village organised and what are its main economic activities?**

Nine neighbourhoods form the village under a Chief. Each neighbourhood has a representative in the committee and we also have groups by activity sectors. Our economy is based on agriculture and livestock, we grow peanuts, sesame, sorghum, millet and beans. Women and men are employed in similar activities.

##### **Have you always lived in this area or have you moved from elsewhere?**

We were initially based in Ouagadougou, then moved to the Ramesoum village before coming here. This was a long time ago, before the colonisation, and we always worked in agriculture and livestock.

##### **When was the most difficult time in terms of food shortages and how did you cope?**

1985, 1990 and 2011 were the most difficult years, in each of these we had poor harvests due

to lack of rain. In 1985 we received cereals for free and wealthier people – mostly traders from elsewhere – supported the population. In 1990 we received aid from traders, and the State provided cereals at reduced price. We also received money from family members working in Ivory Coast, and some of us were employed by the wealthier receiving food as payment. Some women went back to their original families in nearby villages to get meals, leaving children here. In 2011, we benefited for the first time of a programme for food security and some of us received cash aid from ATAD. It was the first time of Oxfam in this village. Only some of us, though, benefited.

##### **How many people benefited of aid and how was it distributed?**

180 households received 50,000 CFA each. Although all neighbourhoods were affected, the distribution was not equal and each neighbourhood identified those most in need. First, we held a general assembly, during which everyone was informed and selection criteria were explained. As everyone agreed on the approach, we went on to identify in each neighbourhood the households. These were usually widowed, households family members who could not work or with no livestock.

##### **How is this year compared to 2012?**

This year is better, but 2011 was very difficult: many people borrowed money to buy food so this year debts have to be reimbursed and interest paid. Some of us are still in trouble because of that. Every second year we face some sort of deficit, there is never really time to recover. Some of us had to sell draft animals and now their productivity has diminished, but where to find money to purchase animals again?

##### **Do you think the current system of aid distribution is fair or should it be improved?**

Everyone appreciates the work that has been done and decisions are made in a transparent way [*a requirement of ADAC*]. There is an accountability system in the selection committee.

**Are your needs now fully covered? [Heated debate]**

What we received covered 50-75% of our needs and protected us from a number of risks. Some of us would have been forced to sell the chickens to cope with the situation, but this aid allowed them to keep the animals. Some would have had to work for others to get cereals as payment, but aid allowed them to continue working for themselves. Basically we did not fall into extreme poverty, although we suffer from recurring droughts so we are never really safe. The need is always there.

Besides nutritional aspects, the village also faces challenges such as access to drinking water and population increase. These issues are not seen as part of food security.

***A.3.2. Two groups representing the “very poor” (VP) and “poor” (P).***

**What are your main activities and do they cover your survival needs?**

VP: We grow beans in our own fields, we have chickens and small ruminants. This year we do not know yet if the seasons will be good.

P: We have chickens and goats and we work our own land. We do not trade animals but we can usually cover our needs.

**How many people are your households made of?**

VP: There can be 2, 9, 14 members in the enlarged family. Women have about 7 children, men 10. Children usually work with adults in the fields, under the control of the family head. When they grow up, they usually try find work in the cities as mechanics, tailors or drivers. Because of this, only children remain in the village and help parents in agriculture, even though they are not strong or knowledgeable enough.

P: Families can have 4, 9, 7 children, usually not more than 12. The majority of children go to school. When they marry, they either continue agriculture work on the land of fathers, get their own fields or go away.

**How did you cope with the food crisis last year?**

VP: In 2011, with no yield, we borrowed money to buy food and sometimes ate wild leaves.

P: We have difficult seasons every 3 or 4 years and in some cases we resorted to eat leaves. Last year food was available on the market so we sold animals to buy it and get through the crisis. Thanks to the cash aid we received, we did not eat leaves. We also received small ruminants as part of aid, some people donated food in good will and the government also intervened.

**Is this year any better?**

P: We fear another bad season. At this time of the year corn should be more mature. Rains started two months late, hopefully the rainy season will last longer and we will catch up. Usually it takes 3-4 months between seeding and harvesting and at the third month we have a clear picture of how the season is going to be. This year it is hard to predict.

**Are there any weather forecasts that can help you make predictions?**

P: There is a weather service for the region based in Niger but data are not reliable.

**When do you realise it is a difficult year, where do you seek help?**

VP: We ask for money from other family members, whether nearby or working in Ivory Coast. The first call is always within the family. A credit may cover the period until aid is delivered. There isn't a specific place where to go and ask for help in the village.

**Are the committee decisions fair?**

VP: There is no problem with that.

P: We participate in the decision-making, we are consulted by the committee and decisions are made in the general assembly.

**Do you think your situation is improving or worsening?**

VP and P: With technical improvements, one person can now work three times the area of the past. However, harvests are more uncertain because rains are less predictable. Agriculture has become a very risky activity and young people prefer to move to cities seeking also to fulfil new needs. Ouagadougou is not far.

### **Is there anything you would like to add?**

VP: As population grows, there is more pressure on land. If there are no sons and daughters get married, old people are left alone, no one takes care of their subsistence at an age they cannot work anymore.

P: There should be investments in other sectors. With increasing droughts, agriculture has become more risky so we need to develop revenues not depending on it, for example having access to credit for livestock and small commercial activities.

### **Do you discuss these issues in the general assembly?**

P: We do discuss in the general assembly, and we see the door ahead of us but we do not have the key yet.

### ***A.3.3. Ms. Tiao Leocadi, Prefect of Arbolle***

#### **What is the Prefectures' role in food security?**

Prefectures are part of a structure called CODESUR (*Conseil Départemental de Secours d'Urgence et Réhabilitation*) which is responsible for food security and rehabilitation at district level. At the provincial level, there is the COPROSUR, at regional level the CORESUR and at national level the CONASUR.

An example of how this works: 2011 was a difficult year because of bad harvests, but we also lost many houses due to floods so people started to come and seek help. We sent the social services and the police to check the situation and transmitted a report to the provincial level, which pushed it at regional and national level in order to send support to cover basic needs – blankets, mosquito nets, soaps and food.

We also received support from ATAD. This had a major impact, because ATAD requested an

identification document to those receiving aid so old people, who had never registered before, came to record their data. “Why do you want this document now?” I asked, and the response was always: “Because we want ATAD’s cash”.

Within my remit, I pay special attention to women: when women have money, households are safe! If only men have money, the system does not work. I cannot accept to see men at the restaurant while women are preparing dinner at home!

I also try to raise awareness on the fact that what is given for free come from people’s donations so a good use should be made of it.

### **What are the forecasts for this year?**

Last year the harvest was good, in the first trimester of 2013 cereals were available everywhere and prices had dropped. But this season is of concern. People still seed these days although this is not the right period.

Our role at the prefecture is also to explain people that with climate change we have to adopt new techniques. Some farmers refuse enhanced seeds provided by the government because they want to keep the tradition of their ancestors without considering that rain patterns have changed. A Mossi proverb says: “When the river turns, the crocodile turns as well”. This awareness is our job.

### **How do you cooperate with the mayor?**

We identify vulnerable people in the villages involving the social services and the mayor. We have to cooperate, because we are responsible for the same territory. The prefect is in charge of a district and the mayor of a town, but the towns were created recently and sometimes mayors do not have experience in the administration. In addition, prefectures maintained technical competencies in agriculture, environment and livestock.

### ***A.3.4. Mr. Bila Ouedraogo, Mayor of Arbolle***

#### **How is Arbolle’s population evolving?**

Arbolle includes 46 villages. When the town was created in 2006 (before it was a prefecture) 45,848 people were recorded in the population

registries: 25,213 women and 20,535 men. At present the population is over 50,000 people.

### **What is the role of the mayor in matters related to food security?**

We manage public shops where staple food is sold at a “social price”. Last year, for example, a sack of cereals sold on the market at 25,000CFA was available in public shops at 12,000CFA. Occasionally we also give out little supplies for free and we manage a small budget.

### **How do mayor and prefecture share information for intervention?**

The information collected from the village committees and the technical services goes to the prefecture. We inform villages on latest developments via notices, so they know from their counsellors how much they will receive.

## **A.4. “A better comprehension of development policies” – Dr. Seidou Bakari, Member of Parliament in Niger and former Regional Advisor for Save the Children West Africa**

### **On Skype, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2013 - How did you bring the Household Economy Approach to West Africa?**

In 2009 we developed a project, seeking financial support from ECHO, to deepen the understanding of food deficit in Mauritania. A baseline study had been developed by FEG and supported by Save the Children in Mauritania and another one in Niger, after the crisis of 2005.

We engaged on these studies because we acknowledged the paradox that the most important areas of agriculture production were the ones suffering the highest rates of malnutrition. This is what interested us in the first baseline studies: explaining the incoherence. Who was producing and benefiting from the production? The studies inspired a reflection at regional level, so we sought support to extend them to Mali, which was experiencing a similar paradox.

Based on these first studies, we elaborated a note on food security challenges showing that even under good conditions, a certain category of households would not be able to produce

### **Do you have any measures in place to prevent food crisis?**

We rely on the technical services of the prefecture to get the latest information and if we know the situation will not be good, we prepare to take action. This year, we have set aside a small amount to help people because we expected a poor harvest.

### **Do you also work towards longer term policies?**

From this year we have to produce a community development plan covering the next 5 years. This will provide an opportunity to coordinate with NGOs. At the moment this is not happening at this level although NGOs are consulted at provincial level.

enough to survive and this issue affected some 10% of the Sahel population. This brought a new perspective in to the debate. Previously, all data produced and managed by the early warning systems were based on agriculture production, while the Household Economy Approach disaggregates information based on social status and shows that not everyone is affected by a crisis in the same way.

If we wanted the approach to be owned and to grow at regional level, we had to build the local capacity. This is why we submitted the project to ECHO: we wanted to train 40 experts on the Household Economy Approach in Mauritania, Senegal, Mali, Chad, Niger and Burkina Faso.

Three targets were set for capacity building: the governmental bodies in charge of food security, especially the early warning systems; the training schools in agronomy and the non-governmental organisations. With an objective to train the future trainers, we invited all governments and organisations to propose candidates. The programme was spread across almost one year. An expert from Save the Children in London led the training in Mali, a



combination of theory and practice: the group split in two, one team worked on a baseline study in Mali, the other went to develop a study in Burkina Faso, in the area of Dori. Then they met again to debrief, while in parallel other external participants had been recruited so they got trained by the experienced ones.

### **Who created the regional Household Economy Approach programme?**

I was the only person in charge at the time, with the support of a food security expert based in London. Among my tasks were finding the partners in each country. When the project was approved – for a total 700,000 EUR – I went to each country to explain the concept and encourage participation by NGOs, governments and training institutes.

### **How did you choose the partners?**

In every country the main partner was the government, and the early warning system in particular. It was up to them to designate participants in the training. As regards NGOs, it was mostly Oxfam, Action Against Hunger and Care International. The European Union delegation also proposed some participants, for example a private consultancy in Niger. We included all those who responded, no one excluded.

### **Why wasn't Save the Children part of the training programme in Burkina Faso?**

At that time Save the Children Canada was active in Burkina Faso, but they were not running a food security programme.

### **Why such a success in Burkina Faso?**

I believe it is about the quality of the people trained. In Burkina Faso there were very competent participants, and Hien Sitégné did not miss any single session. From the first training we knew that two countries had the biggest potential: Burkina Faso and Mali, both with competent and motivated staff in the early warning systems. Our goal was to train people who could spread knowledge so that the Household Economy Approach studies could be replicated in all livelihood zones. Burkina Faso

has achieved this objective. In addition, in Burkina Faso the capacity was created in the right institutional body. In Niger there are also great experts, but the best ones are in the academic sector, at the Faculty of Agronomy.

Interestingly, many people wondered why a humanitarian organisation like ECHO was injecting money in training individuals who may leave. Despite some departures, there has not been a brain drain and while in 2007 we had 5 baseline studies in the Sahel, today we have more than 50, all made by local experts who know the territory, not by external consultants. The goal to create local capacity has been achieved and these days, the demand of training is so high that we cannot even fulfil it.

### **Who proposed the Household Economy Approach in the first place?**

Save the Children owned the approach, together with FEG. The Household Economy Approach was already used in central and eastern African countries and we were keen to extend the model to the Sahel.

### **Is there any potential to develop the Household Economy Approach beyond the short term management of food crisis?**

This is an incredible tool, but now it is time to take a pause and analyse major trends and structural economic aspects emerging from the studies we have. With these, we can understand the changes needed for the development of the region and create the most suitable policies to address them. It is clear that for some population groups agriculture is not the answer, they have to get added values in other ways. I am already working to make legislative proposals on this.

### **How to scale up the approach at regional level?**

Now that we have the competencies, the experts in each country have to connect formally. The approach needs to be owned by CILSS (Permanent Interstates Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel) in the elaboration of the Harmonised Framework. However this is not working at the moment, so advocacy efforts are needed. We need spokespeople to push the approach forward and these are the experts.

## **A.5. “Difficult consensus if working only from an NGO perspective” – Papa Sosthène Konaté, Head of Oxfam Humanitarian Programmes in Burkina Faso**

**Ouagadougou, 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2013 - The Household Economy Approach is used at central level to produce baseline studies and situation analysis, as well as at local level to target assistance. Where is the connecting point?**

At central level, the sampling of villages in 2011 was used to extrapolate the features of each livelihood zone, produce the baseline studies and create the database. Twice a year, new parameters associated with production, price of cereals and livestock, cost of manpower, migrations etc. are input in to the database to understand the change of context. This analysis delivers key information at national level such as affected areas, periods of intervention, amount of food needed, number of people affected and criteria to identify them, but it does not say which households need assistance.

NGOs use the results to find the households in need based on criteria provided by the national analysis, for example: “very poor household with some poultry and no cattle, their production covers 3 months and they have few children.” With this snapshot, NGOs begin a dialogue with villages. This is the on-the-ground operational level.

Livelihood zones can be very large (like zone 5 of Mia village), so the criteria cannot just be applied blindly, they need to be discussed with the village development committees and adjusted or complemented by additional criteria. The villagers know their reality so the definition of who is affected occurs together.

It is important that this exercise is consistent with the national data: provision of the right amount of cash in the right period. If less is provided, households will not have enough to go through the season, but if more is given market imbalances like inflation may be generated. This is how the national and local levels are connected.

**Aren't livelihood zones too large to understand the reality in details?**

We need more in-depth analysis and I think in 2014, when all the livelihood zones will be

reviewed, some will be broken down in smaller ones. This will be an important debate to have, now that the capacity is in place.

**How is the assistance coordination ensured?**

The Food Security Group led by the World Food Programme is the coordination point of the NGOs and the UN system: who operates where and on what. The information is then communicated to the Technical Committee of the National Council for Food Security.

As the food security sector involves both humanitarian and development organisations, we created a specific working group to coordinate and share good practices on cash transfers. Information is provided every month to the Technical Committee and twice a year to the General Assembly of the National Council for Food Security. This also allows the development of advocacy tools for the government to define policies and for donors to determine the level of aid.

**What is Oxfam's role as focal point on the Household Economy Approach in Burkina Faso?**

We contribute to the coordination of the leading organisations in the Food Security Group, which is the World Food Programme, and in the Household Economy Approach, which is the Early Warning System. We also contribute to sharing knowledge and capacity as focal point for a project funded by ECHO to document and share best practices on targeting households, transferring cash and distributing flour for children aged 5-24 months.

Oxfam also acts as a shadow focal point, supporting the Early Warning System planning and bridging with the donors. We push to maintain the agenda. As documents come directly from the Early Warning System – the government – the largest buy-in is ensured

In addition, we are the focal point for training. NGOs using the Household Economy Approach in Burkina Faso benefit from the training material provided by Oxfam through funding from Save the Children.

It was visionary from Save the Children to work with different organisations in each country based on their experience. This created full ownership at multiple levels as the Household Economy Approach was not perceived as the tool of one specific organisation.

**Do you think the process could be leaner, especially as regards the coordination of the numerous organisations involved?**

There are still several issues related to communications and coordination. This is why in 2010 the European Union, which was funding several organisations separately, supported a common follow up framework and provided consultants for monitoring and evaluation and sharing of good practices. Thanks to this mechanism, for the first time the Household Economy Approach started to be coordinated at the operational level.

**Weren't operations coordinated before?**

In 2009 baseline studies were already available and the training programme by Save the Children was in preparation, but no one else was using those studies and the Early Warning System did not have the databases.

**What motivated the adoption of the Household Economy Approach at national level?**

Between September and December 2011, Oxfam received funds from ECHO to train the Food Security Group on the Household Economy Approach. Save the Children was involving the Early Warning System in the training programme and, in parallel, ECHO Burkina Faso was working to establish a consortium to reinforce NGOs capacity.

When, in December 2011, the difficult situation was recognised by the authorities and all other operators, the government decided to put in place a response plan. Information on affected households, regions impacted and size of assistance was missing, so Oxfam and ECHO told the then Minister of Agriculture and the Director General of the Early Warning System that there was a tool to get this information – the Household Economy Approach.

At that time there were only 4 baselines: 2 produced during the regional training – for the provinces of Dori and Kaya – and 2 by Action Against Hunger. Working with the Early Warning System, we worked with these to make a projection for the country. But when we looked at the results, we realised it would be better to produce studies for all areas in order to make more reliable projections. With the support of the Early Warning System, the Ministry of Agriculture accepted to finance the studies for the entire country and the World Food Programme contributed.

We put together the baselines available within each organisation – by Action Against Hunger, Oxfam and from the regional training – and added the missing ones. Within the framework of the Save the Children's regional programme, the FEG group supported the creation of the databases at the Early Warning System and the analysis, highlighting inaccuracies and correcting errors. The outcomes were presented to the CEPESA (the Committee for Food Crisis Prevention) to validate the data.

Based on the worst scenario, 2.8 million people would be affected by the crisis – about 20% of the country population. The first scenario was for January to March 2012, the second from April to June and the third from July to September. In June we realised that we did not hit the worst scenario and 2.6 million were affected. This was due to earlier interventions, because in December and January some NGOs started their assistance programme to mitigate the impact of the crisis.

The World Food Programme, while contributing to the Household Economy Approach, carried out separate analysis revealing 500,000 more people at risk of food deficit. However the studies, produced in February, were not published until April. The Household Economy Approach allows acting faster. And the advantage today is that all data are within the Early Warning System.

**With NGOs categorising households in each village, it seems that much more information is available compared to what is included in the database.**

Data from NGOs on the ground is more refined and we are trying to put in place mechanisms to share it. We have established a

post-distribution monitoring, which takes into consideration the entire food assistance process, from preparation of the project to targeting, intervention, methodology, household satisfaction, markets and households response. The discussion is just at the beginning and we aim at having all organisations involved in this process in 2013.

### **What is the next evolution in the use of the Household Economy Approach?**

We want to understand who was included or excluded by the assistance, if the work on the ground matches the criteria provided by the national analysis and, if there are differences, what is the reason. How many potential beneficiaries were excluded and how many that should have been excluded have benefited from assistance programmes? We have established a 10% threshold of error, with the aim to progressively take it to zero. The other aspect is: were all needs covered on time?

We have to refine the tool and this includes reviewing the zoning. With refined data, the Household Economy Approach can measure the level of resilience to food crisis and identify structural poverty issues. This means moving from humanitarian emergencies – early warnings and responses – to development policies. Which policies are needed to make certain social groups more resilient to food crisis?

In 2-3 years, we could take the Household Economy Approach to the individual level, I-HEA.

### **What is I-HEA?**

I-HEA is about collecting information on individuals using the Household Economy Approach. Now the approach analyses groups of households, gathering information by focus groups. The next level consists in analysing the information at household level, gathering information about individuals. This, however, requires time, money, staff on the ground and software upgrades.

### **How can the tool be scaled up in other countries of the Sahel?**

As a start, there is still a lot to do in Burkina Faso, we work at the national level in

Ouagadougou, but in the regions the knowledge is still lacking. The next phase of the project is about deepening the dissemination of the tool in the regions so that everyone knows what the Household Economy Approach is for.

At regional level, we have to ensure that the Household Economy Approach data contribute to the regional analysis by the CILSS (Permanent Interstates Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel) and that there is consensus around them. This is already the case within Burkina Faso, where all organisations agree on the data provided by the government based on national statistics. In other countries the situation may be different: if staff in key positions are not trained and data are not collected correctly, it is impossible to achieve a national consensus.

At present the Household Economy Approach is among the indicators used by the Harmonised Framework but the data from the field is incomplete or old, which makes it difficult to make it accepted. For example, Burkina Faso contributes with data from all its livelihood zones, while for other countries the coverage is limited. All countries should have all their territory mapped and analysed, but this is an economic challenge, especially for big and troubled countries like Mali.

### **What was the success factor in Burkina Faso?**

The advantage of Burkina Faso is having the lead both on food security and on the Household Economy Approach within the Early Warning System, which can advocate internally within the Ministry of Agriculture. In addition, the Early Warning System is the national focal point for the regional framework, and is led by one of the major experts in the field. The contribution of Save the Children regional programme to this post has been key to ensure motivation and to retain the capacity; in Niger and Mali, for example, the experts within the Early Warning System left to join NGOs.

The role of Oxfam as a shadow focal point is also positive. The Ministry, which holds the front seat, is essential to involve the UN system and all other actors. It would be difficult to reach consensus only working from an NGO perspective.

## **What led Oxfam towards the Household Economy Approach?**

In 2007-2008 we were looking at ways to target interventions in communities and submitted a project to ECHO. A colleague told me about this tool, so we included it in the proposal. In parallel, Save the Children was negotiating the regional training programme with ECHO, and this is how I got to know about it. A colleague from Oxfam Great Britain put me in contact with Dr. Bakari, who advised to apply for the training through the Early Warning System. There was full support from Oxfam and my participation in the training was approved on the condition that I would stay at least 3 years

and train on the Household Economy Approach Oxfam staff within and outside of the region.

## **What is the role of the Household Economy Approach in Oxfam's strategic plan?**

The Household Economy Approach is a cross-cutting tool to target interventions and, increasingly, to promote resilience. We are observing strategies put in place by the poorest to get food and revenues along the year. We want to understand which strategy to support and bring the positive impacts to scale. The Household Economy Approach is a central tool for all our programmes.

## **A.6. "Aid recipients selected by the villages" – Dr. Mathurin Bonzi, Country Director, Tene Kinda, Director of Programmes, Parfait Douamba, Nutrition Coordinator at Save the Children Burkina Faso**

### **Ouagadougou, 29 July – 1 August 2013 - How is Save the Children supporting the Household Economy Approach at national level?**

While Oxfam has been involved in the preparation of the baseline studies, Save the Children used the Household Economy Approach to target assistance. The approach has been employed since 2008, initially through Save the Children UK, a prelude of the regional programme funded by ECHO.

### **Where is Save the Children delivering assistance?**

The survey carried out during the food crisis of 2011-2012, revealed 18 vulnerable communities in the Centre-north livelihood zone. We decided to focus on 10 villages in Dablo and 4 in Pissila supporting in total 1799 households. Each received 98,000 CFA to buy food or small ruminants. The total assistance amounted to 176,302,000 CFA for which we applied for ECHO's support.

These communities are some 90 km from Kaya, in one of the most vulnerable areas of the country, and this year we have expanded the outreach with funds from CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency).

### **How do you target the assistance?**

We use the Household Economy Approach to determine the households at risk within the communities identified by the State. In 2012 we sent experts to discuss with communities and explain the criteria via the Village Development Committees (Comités Villageois de Développement – CVD). Once we received the lists of the most vulnerable households, we selected some villages for a verification survey.

We had some initial difficulties in Dablo, because people were focusing on individuals rather than on households. For example, if there was a chronically ill person, the expectation was that the household receive assistance, even though there may be enough means. So we put in place a communication mechanism to promote accountability. In every village we appointed a contact who could be called upon for issues related to classification, aid distribution or any other complaint. After each distribution, we also carried out monitoring surveys. All these feedback mechanisms provided an incentive to implement the system correctly.

### **What are the most significant benefits of the Household Economy Approach?**

The Household Economy Approach identifies those most in need ensuring the

assistance is targeted. Not only that, aid recipients are selected by the village itself, so the community becomes an actor in aid distribution.

With the identification of vulnerable areas at national level, the approach allows better coordination among NGOs and links between regional and provincial services. For example in 2012, the government determined the areas where an intervention was necessary and the NGOs deployed and targeted their aid together with the local services.

### **What made the approach successful in Burkina Faso?**

The Ministry of Agriculture, the most important player in food security, has the best capacity: with their competence and level of responsibility, they could put the system in place. The government has taken ownership of the approach and imposed it to all partners. Also NGOs became partner of the State while being close to the communities.

Today the Household Economy Approach is the only tool agreed by all players and this is crucial because the methodology is not questioned, not even by communities.

### **The Household Economy Approach is applied at government and village level. Where are the links between the two?**

There are a number of platforms for exchange and coordination, including the

monthly meetings of the National Council for Food Security and the Technical and Financial Partnership involving NGOs and humanitarian organisations.

### **What is the role of the Household Economy Approach in Save the Children Burkina Faso strategic plan?**

We are currently working on the new strategic plan, with a stronger focus on food security. In 2008-2009 we were looking for ways to better target households, but our engagement was not that structured yet, now we can build on the experience of these years.

We also need a reflection on the role of the Household Economy Approach at regional level, and if improvements are needed make sure that these are on the agenda.

### **How can this approach be improved?**

The Early Warning System was created for a specific situation but things have changed and new challenges have to be addressed. Now we need more refined tools and increase the communities' involvement in the alert system.

Save the Children is working in 4 regions to map all shocks, as well as solutions put in place directly by the communities. We will support the most appropriate strategies and evaluate the place children occupy in this scheme.

## **A.7. “Team work and networking, the success factors” – Eric Pitois, Head of ECHO (European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office) in Burkina Faso**

### **Ouagadougou, 26 July 2013 – What is the history of the Household Economy Approach (HEA) in Burkina Faso?**

There had been attempts to introduce the Household Economy Approach in Burkina Faso in 2007 but the tool was perceived as an external imposition and was rejected. In 2008, Save the Children began a project to promote the Household Economy Approach in West Africa. Thanks to Save the Children, Oxfam and Action Against Hunger in Burkina Faso the first two baseline studies were produced in 2010 and

subsequently validated by FEG, a consultancy specialising in food security.

At the end of 2011, there was a general feeling that a major food crisis was about to hit the country. Having seen the poor yields, the government feared a huge gap in food supplies but could not predict how many people would be affected although an early warning system was in place – the SAP (Système d'Alerte Précoce).

We told the government that with a response plan in place, donors would help. The National Council for Food Security Executive Secretariat (Secrétariat Exécutif du Conseil National de Sécurité Sociale, SE-CNSA) also came on board

and persuaded the Ministry of Agriculture to prepare a response plan.

In order to estimate the impacts of the crisis, a simulation was made using the studies already available. However, these were not representative of the country and the government felt uncomfortable about that. This is when the government decided to develop baseline studies for the entire country. The government invested some 50 million CFA, Oxfam 12 million and the World Food Programme about 20 million – for a total of 82 million CFA or 120 million euros. All profiles were completed between January and February 2012 and within another month they were validated by FEG.

### **How could the profiles be completed in such a short time?**

There was a strong government commitment and resources – all Burkinabé – were in place. The success of the Household Economy Approach in Burkina Faso lies in the technical network created within the country and in the connection of experts.

### **What has been ECHO's role in the promotion of this approach in the country?**

In the past, the expertise on the ground was low for the government and high for NGOs such as Oxfam and Action Against Hunger. ECHO supported the creation of an NGO consortium imposing the use of the Household Economy Approach and promoting the sharing of experience under the leadership of Oxfam and the World Food Programme.

In January 2013, a workshop brought together all organisations working on food security, as well as the government and the National Council for Food Security. The Household Economy Approach is now accepted by everyone and organisations such as Oxfam have already gone further, organising training for local authorities on the ground.

At ECHO, now that the foundations are built, it is our priority to continue funding a large number of organisations in order to expand the network of technical experts and to target each and every single household. This year we are also investing 3 million euros to support the

government integrate the tool in all national policies.

### **Who has the pivoting role in the use of this approach?**

The leadership is with the Early Warning System (Système d'Alerte Précoce – SAP). However this is a technical body and many decisions are made at the political level. The lead should be with the Ministry of Agriculture, with support from the Early Warning System and the National Council for Food Security.

### **What worked well in Burkina Faso compared to other countries?**

The excellent interconnection of experts in the government and in civil society, and especially the good human resources at the Ministry of Agriculture: it is them who made it happen. The human factor has played an enormous role. In addition, the tool is based on data available within the Ministry of Agriculture. This Ministry is the closest to marginalised populations as it has a network reaching out to villages and, being an economic ministry, it has power – more than the Ministry of Social Affairs – to make this operational.

In other countries the priority is still creating capacity and training people. In Chad, for example, we are supporting the revision of agronomy courses. This is a long term engagement, as it takes at least 7 years to modify the curriculums and for students to complete the studies and mature the experience, but in the long run it will pay off.

### **Is the Household Economy Approach accepted by local communities?**

Communities are asked to validate the criteria identifying which households belong to each socio-economic category: better-off (the “nantis”), middle, poor and very poor. Once criteria are explained, the system seems to work well. Some communities even translated the socio-economic categories in a language closer to their reality. In the north, for example, the “nantis” are called “bubu”, the middle “shirts”, the poor “panties” and the very poor “naked”. In the east, categories have been translated into “standing”, “poorly seated”, “seated” and “lying.

This is very different than the traditional categories of “single”, “widowed”, “handicapped” and so on.

### **What is the role of local authorities?**

At the moment government agents carry out the surveys in cooperation with the village committees, but local authorities are not really involved and there is a lack of control and monitoring by NGOs. This will improve with time.

### **After the crisis of 2011-2012, how was the Household Economy Approach used in 2013?**

2013 is not a year of major crisis. Unfortunately the response plan this year did not make good use of the Household Economy Approach, as the analysis did not consider people’s vulnerability. Overall, the baseline studies in Burkina Faso are good, but the periodical analysis (the dynamic level) needs to improve.

### **What is ECHO’s level of investment in Burkina Faso?**

ECHO invests every year about 6 million euros in Burkina Faso; 4 million are cash aid for

communities. ECHO funds the Household Economy Approach in West Africa through Save the Children’s regional programme. In addition, we fund Oxfam for training and lessons sharing in order to reinforce capacity at national level. Once the baseline studies are completed, the basic work is done and it is about carrying out regular analysis, so the tool is not expensive for what it delivers.

### **How can the implementation of the Household Economy Approach improve?**

At the moment the Household Economy Approach provides the snapshot of a situation at a specific time. Its dynamic potential is not fully exploited. This is why we are making funds available to expand the technical expertise.

### **What is the long term vision?**

The government is aware of the poverty levels in the country and that this can lead to social tensions, so there is a willingness to put in place national social policies. In order to do this, data are needed to target the poorest beyond food security. Basically, at every emergency, the databases could be used to know who is affected and ensure a fast and targeted response.