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# Analysis of the costs and benefits of the HEA Sahel project

Final Report

Prepared by Key Aid Consulting for Save the Children

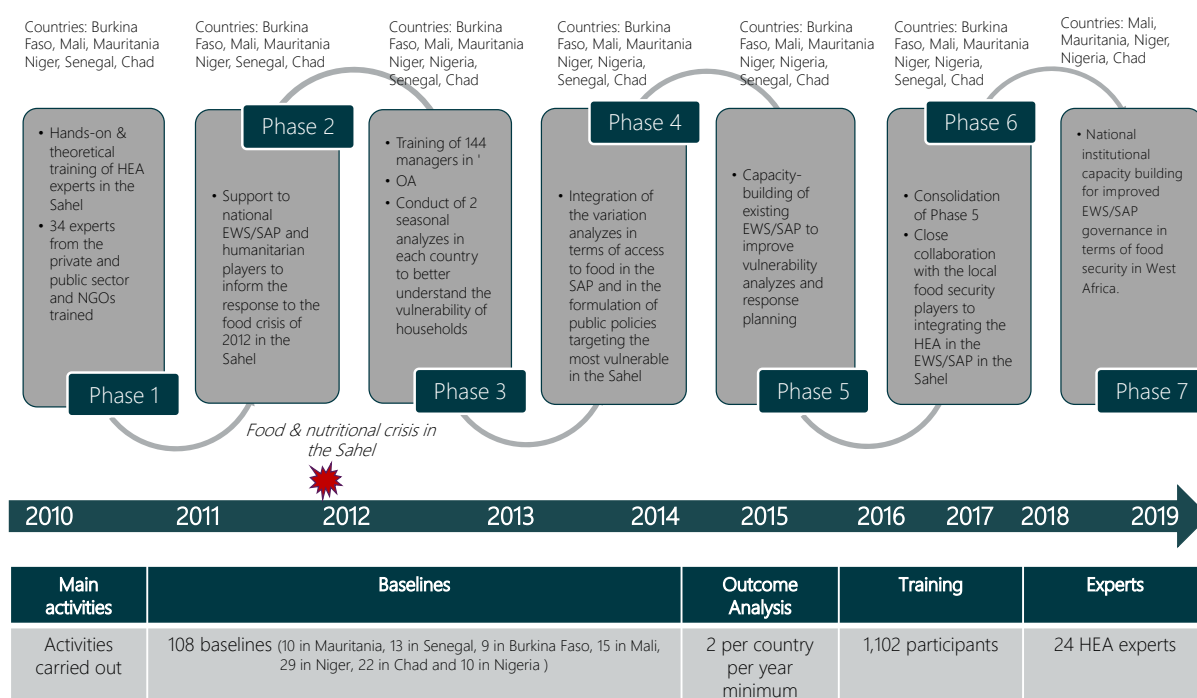
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# Executive Summary

Save the Children and its partners (Action Against Hunger and Oxfam)<sup>1</sup> have, since 2010, been implementing the regional HEA Sahel project in Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Chad, Senegal and Burkina Faso, then from 2012 in Nigeria. Through seven successive phases of implementation, this project has contributed toward developing the HEA approach in the Sahel. In so doing, it has also contributed toward reinforcing the national Early Warning Systems and, more generally, the food security prevention and management systems. The HEA project has allowed implementation of four main activities: production of baselines, production of Outcome Analysis (OA), training of players in HEA and coordination and dissemination of results. The first two activities are an integral part of the HEA methodology and the last two enhance understanding, use and dissemination of the approach in the Sahel.



Before completion of phase VII at the end of July 2019 and strategy and funding plan preparation for phase VIII, Save the Children commissioned this cost-benefit analysis of the HEA Sahel project. The purpose of this study is to identify the uses and benefits of the HEA for players in the Sahel, define the cost structure of the approach to help design national funding plans, and identify the drivers and opportunities for improvement of the HEA's economic model by increasing project efficiency and effectiveness.

This study took place from March to July 2019. Developed around a mixed research methodology, the consultants in charge of the study analysed 66 documents, led 28 interviews and administered an online survey (n=47) via HEA Working Groups.

## The benefits of the HEA approach and project

HEA tools remain an important source of data on food security and livelihoods in Sahel countries. Used several times a year by various types of organizations (international NGOs, United Nations agencies, national NGOs, donors, EWS/SAP, other government agencies) and in the different

<sup>1</sup> The WFP was also one of the projects' partners throughout previous phases.

countries of the area (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Chad), these users are by and large satisfied with the approach. As estimated in this study, 160 organizations consult and use HEA data in the Sahel several times per year (on average three to four times).

The data collected during the study highlight seven main uses of the HEA approach in the Sahel:

1. To update the Cadre Harmonisés and Early Warning
2. To target project beneficiaries
3. To understand the humanitarian situation in the country and in specific areas
4. To define a basket of expenditure for food (survival basket, livelihoods' protection basket)
5. To design social protection programs
6. To calculate the value of cash transfers and/or periodicity.
7. To conduct project monitoring and assessment

According to users, the HEA approach boasts five comparative advantages compared to other methods used in livelihoods and food security. First of all, it maps the different socio-economic groups. It can then accurately predict the state of households' food insecurity. It further includes vulnerable populations in its data collection. Its associated costs are relatively low compared to other methodologies. And finally, it provides a common discussion and analysis framework to food security players.

The data collected shows a strong link of contribution between the HEA Sahel project and the benefits of the HEA approach. The project has indeed made possible the use and present institutionalization of the approach by funding HEA data collection (baselines, Outcome Analysis, collection of key parameters), by ensuring quality control of the collected data, by training the area's various users and experts, and by contributing proposals and implementation ideas of new forms of innovations and uses.

A majority of users agree that discontinuation of the project at this stage would represent a significant risk to the sustainability of investments made thus far (i.e. approximately \$9,447,486, over the past 7 years). Firstly, baseline coverage and number of experts is not sufficient in all countries. Secondly, in both technical and financial terms, the institutionalization and integration scale at national institutions level, even within countries that aren't covered by Phase VII (Senegal and Burkina Faso) is currently insufficient to ensure that these countries continue without support from a regional team. For close to half the users, discontinuation of the project would then be synonymous with additional costs (HR, logistics, consultants) and loss of human time for their organizations.

### The HEA project's economic model

The total budget for phase VII, whose purpose lies in institutionalising the approach, amounts to \$1,457,668, distributed according to four main expenditure items, namely Human Resources (47% of the budget), programme (29%), administrative costs / indirect costs (17%), other costs (per diem, transport, M&E) excluding activities implemented in the field (6%). By integrating part of the HR costs back into the direct implementation of activities, the costs/programme ratio in relation to support costs amounts to 74% of the total budget.

From a geographical standpoint, a country's annual budget for implementation of activities at national level hovers between \$85,000 and \$120,000 (6 to 8% of the budget), whilst the remaining 63% are divided between the regional office (43% of the total budget) and headquarter overheads (20%). Within the Regional Office in particular, the main expense remains human resources. The team indeed includes 10 people: five full-time members and the support functions who are partially

involved in the project. In total, the regional office's human resources budget averages around \$469,719, of which \$331,957 for the programme team involved in implementation of activities, support to the different Early Warning Systems and quality control of the approach. For each of the project's activities (baseline, OA, etc.) this team provides 10 to 50% of its working time to support the various countries.

Considering programme team costs (regional team and focal points in the different countries), the activities' costs per unit are as follow:

Activities	Costs per unit
Baseline	\$30,037
Outcome Analysis	\$15,069
Collection of key parameters	\$1,069
HEA working groups	\$14,505

We have, throughout this analysis, used a financial indicator, namely the unit cost of use of the HEA<sup>2</sup>, in order to study the impact of reducing project costs and increasing the frequency and number of uses. For six uses of the HEA per year per user, the unit cost of use  $C_u$  is of \$1,518.

### Streamlining the economic model

Reducing project costs has been identified as one of the first drivers to decrease running costs for the HEA approach and thus have a positive effect on the use of HEA tools and on the project's economic model. The main source of potential savings at equal objectives is the indirect costs line, which could be written down. Other possible solutions include collecting data remotely and streamlining training costs, particularly via reinforcement of local partnerships (with universities for instance).

The second driver results from an increase in frequency of use. The HEA approach is generally used several times a year and for three types of use on average per user organization. According to users, frequency of use would increase if the regional team developed new and less common uses of the HEA, such as projects monitoring and assessment.

Finally, an increase in number of users has also been identified as a key driver to strengthen the HEA's economic model. To start with, the HEA approach could serve other government services, notably within services in charge of social safety or longer-term resilience projects, and not just with the EWS/SAP. Adoption of the HEA approach, particularly at government level, would then require close communication and outreach activities. An evolution of communication means and processes around the methodology and its results would make this easier.

The data collected from users and with the budget for phase VII attest that it is possible to streamline the project's economic model and to reinforce the expertise and institutionalization transition strategy with the authorities.

The following recommendations are intended to improve frequency and number of uses and to streamline the project's costs structure.

<sup>2</sup> The cost per use (CU) is a theoretical calculation unit used to show the impact of an increase in the number of user organizations (N), in frequency of use (F) and in project costs (CT). Its formula is  $C_u = CT / N * F$  with here  $CT = \$1,457,668$ ,  $F = 6$  and  $N = 160$ .

**Recommendation 1:** Before thinking about increasing its number of users, the project team should implement a monitoring system of the number of HEA users.

**Recommendation 2:** The HEA team need to make the site more interactive, with geographical and temporal data visualization tools, such as maps.

**Recommendation 3:** The HEA Sahel team should highlight the less common uses of the HEA with humanitarian players (monitoring, project assessment, calculation of cash transfers values) and rural and agricultural development players (social protection/social safety nets).

**Recommendation 4:** The HEA Sahel project should promote the benefits of the HEA Sahel approach to other sectors (protection, WaSH), particularly in terms of design and follow-up of their intervention.

**Recommendation 5:** The HEA team should consider circulating an annual survey to these users via the site and the working groups.

**Recommendation 6:** Continuation of the project will require an increase and diversification of the financial partners, chiefly the development partners.

**Recommendation 7:** The programme team should set up a sufficient budgetary follow-up of activity costs to monitor, assess and identify the costs structure of said activities.

**Recommendation 8:** The team should consider collecting data remotely, via SMS or phone and consequently reduce project costs.

**Recommendation 9:** The project should train more experts at university level and try to establish partnerships with universities in all countries covered by the project

**Recommendation 10:** Save the Children should look into systematizing the certification process implemented after the Training of Trainers conducted in 2018.

**Recommendation 11:** The project team should strengthen the funding strategy for the next phases with multi donors funding plans, particularly at national level.

**Recommendation 12:** The project team should objectively define verifiable criteria to determine whether a country is ready, or not, for institutionalization.

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## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronyms	Description
CBA	Cost-Benefit Analysis
CEA	Cost-Efficiency Analysis
CILSS	Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel
CER	Conseil d’Enseignement et de Recherche
CH	Cadre Harmonisé
CRESA	Centre Régional d’Enseignement Spécialisé en Agriculture
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
FEG	Food Economy Group
FSEG	Faculté de Sciences Économiques et de Gestion
GTI	Interdisciplinary Working Group
HEA	Household Economy Analysis
IS	International Staff
LIAS	Livelihood Impact Assessment Spreadsheet
NS	National Staff
OFDA	Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance
OSA	Observatoire de la Sécurité Alimentaire
WFP	World Food Programme
EWS/SAP	Early Warning System
SECNSA	Secrétariat Exécutif du Conseil National de Sécurité Alimentaire
SISAAP	Food Security Information and Early Warning Systems
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
UCAD	University Cheikh Anta Diop

# I. Introduction

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This report presents the results of an economic model analysis of the HEA Sahel project, designed to optimise the latter by highlighting its benefits and costs relating thereto.

## I.1. The Household Economy Analysis (HEA) approach

---

Following the successive famines that deeply affected the Sahel in the 1970s, the World Food Conference encouraged the development of Early Warning Systems (EWS/SAP) to identify precursors to crises and anticipate the impact and extent of these crises on households' food security. Various systems have been implemented in countries of the area, first as an initiative of NGOs and then under the auspices of the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS)<sup>3</sup> to coordinate and align their actions via the Cadre Harmonisé (CH).<sup>4</sup>

Such systems may have an undeniable added value to detect crises, yet they failed to address the root causes of food insecurity. As such, they did not contribute to a clear understanding of the evolution of households' purchasing power over time and according to season. Save the Children developed the HEA logical framework in the early 90s<sup>5</sup> as an internal tool to better predict short-term changes in access to food conditions<sup>6</sup>. It then integrated it gradually in the Sahel to strengthen the existing EWS/SAP and provide a tool for planning, designing and implementing emergency and development responses and/or structural interventions.

Based primarily on participatory data collection methods and community-based information, the HEA logical framework allows characterization of the means by which rural households have access to food and income and how they prioritize spending in terms of food and non-food requirements (water, school, farm inputs, clothing, etc.). This logical framework is based on the generation of a baseline<sup>7</sup> by livelihood area and the seasonal analyses often referred to as Outcome Analysis (OA),<sup>8</sup> and is divided into several stages, as detailed in the figure below:

<sup>3</sup> The CILSS was founded in 1973.

<sup>4</sup> The "Cadre Harmonisé (CH), funded by member countries of the CILSS, the USAID, the European Union, and the AFD, was developed as of 1999 using a research-action approach with players involved in CILSS countries' national schemes, then with those of other countries in the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa from 2012 onwards." Source: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/fr/operations/mali/document/cadre-harmonis%C3%A9-identification-et-analyse-des-zones-%C3%A0-risque-et-desSource>

<sup>5</sup> In collaboration with the FAO's global early warning and information system.

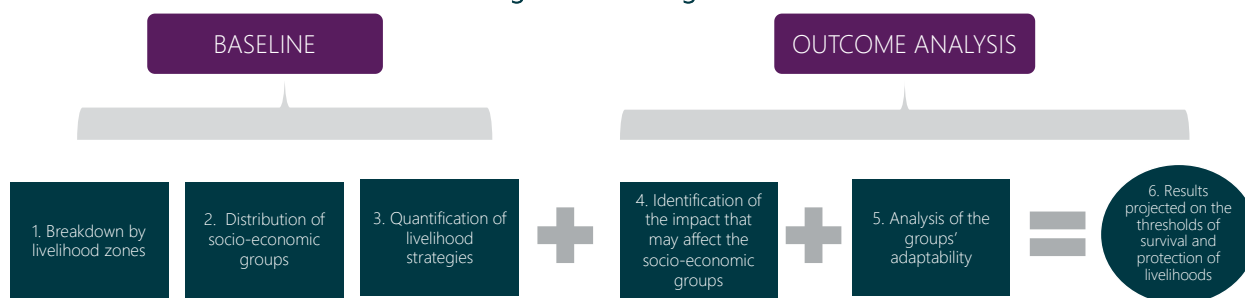
<sup>6</sup> During that period, there was acknowledgment that the poorest rural populations depended not only on their own production for survival but that they also employed a series of market-oriented strategies for access to much needed food and funds. The difficulty lay in taking this access issue into account whereas early warning and information systems are mainly based on availability. The challenge was a matter of not simply being able to identify the problem, but also to quantify it and suggest possible interventions.

<sup>7</sup> Also commonly known as Baseline. The term Baseline has been chosen for the present report.

<sup>8</sup> The term Outcome Analysis will then be used in the report.



Figure 1: HEA Stages<sup>9</sup>



The HEA approach helps to better understand household livelihoods and thus anticipate the impacts of various potential shocks on socio-economic groups (very poor, poor, medium, well-off). It therefore contributes to the design of emergency and development responses; whose purpose is to increase resilience and secure the livelihood of communities and households via identification of their specific vulnerabilities.

## 1.2. The HEA Sahel project

Save the Children and its partners (Action Against Hunger and Oxfam)<sup>10</sup> have been implementing the regional HEA Sahel project in Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Chad, Senegal and Burkina Faso since 2010, then from 2012 in Nigeria. The project aims to develop the HEA approach in the Sahel region, support the national Early Warning Systems (EWS/SAP) and thus ensure sustainable strengthening of food security prevention and management systems.

This project, funded by ECHO (the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations) and the OFDA (Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance),<sup>11</sup> experienced seven successive and interconnected implementation phases. All phases combined, the project was developed around four main activities: training in HEA methodology, production of baselines, production of OA of the results and coordination and dissemination of results to the main stakeholders in crises prevention and management in Sahel countries. In total, over the course of the project's seven phases, 1,012 participants were trained in HEA methodology,<sup>12</sup> 108 baselines were produced (10 in Mauritania, 13 in Senegal, 9 in Burkina Faso, 15 in Mali, 29 in Niger, 22 in Chad and 10 in Nigeria), and at least two OA were carried out per year and country. Moreover, the regional team also provided these countries with technical support throughout the production of baselines (excluding funding of the HEA Sahel project) to guarantee methodological quality and consistency.

In addition, each phase incorporated particular targets and activities and focused on specific countries, as detailed in the figure below:

<sup>9</sup> Chart adapted and translated from Laura Swift, 'Household Economy Analysis', Common Approaches (Save the Children, n.d.).

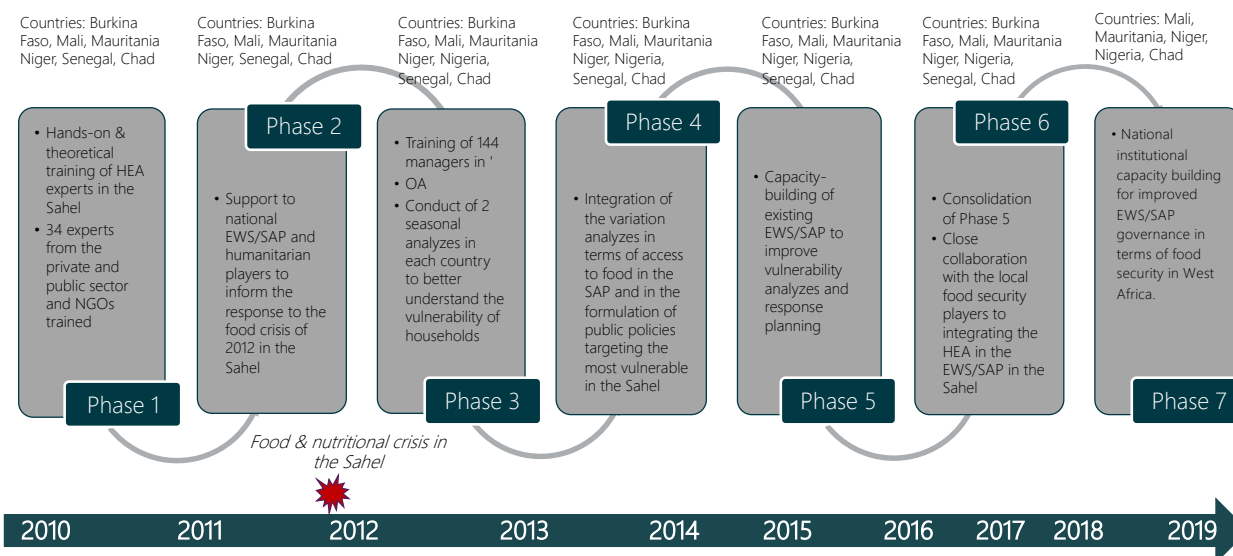
<sup>10</sup> There was the WFP in Senegal when this country was part of the countries covered by the project.

<sup>11</sup> ECHO and OFDA co-financed phases I to VI, whilst phase VII was solely funded by OFDA.

<sup>12</sup> Who received a week of training on baselines or a week of training on OA. It is important to note that persons thus formed on the tools do not have the technical capacities to unroll the HEA without external support.

<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that Save the Children's monitoring system does not allow for identification of the number of individuals.

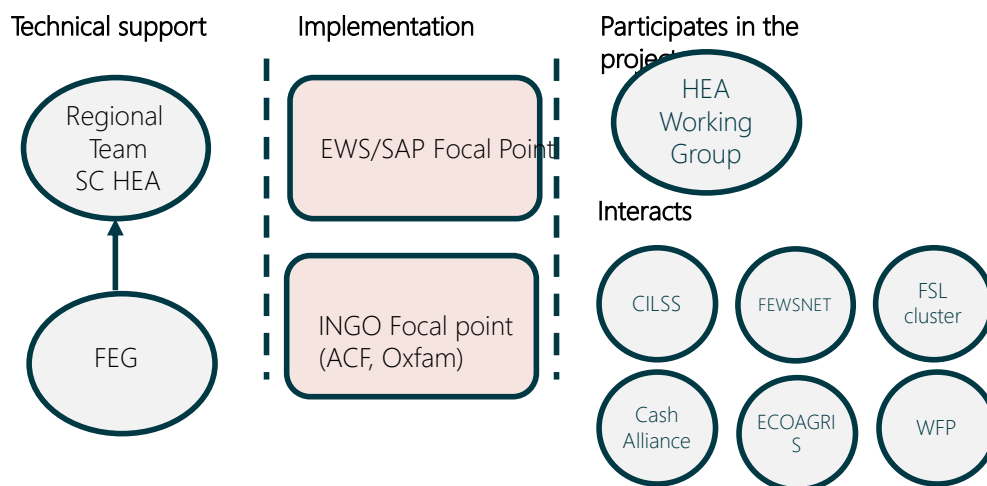
Figure 2 : Presentation of the successive implementation phases of the regional HEA project<sup>14</sup>



The project’s Theory of Change, prepared by the consultants, is presented in Annex VI.1.

In each targeted country, two partners implemented the HEA project, namely a focal point of the EWS/SAP based within the national public institutions<sup>15</sup> and a focal point working for an international Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) (for ex. Oxfam or Action Against Hunger for phase VII) implementing projects in the food security and livelihoods sector). These two focal points are supported by Save the Children’s regional technical cell, itself supported by the Food Economy Group (FEG).<sup>16</sup> They coordinate activities of the HEA Working Group and interact with the project’s stakeholders. The following figure summarises these interactions:

Figure 3: Interactions between the different stakeholders of the HEA project



<sup>14</sup> Source: secondary data, adapted from 'HEA Sahel Regional Project External Evaluation, Final Evaluation Report, Key Aid Consulting, May 2018'.

<sup>15</sup> Mauritania: Observatoire de la Sécurité Alimentaire (OSA), Chad: Food Security Information and Early Warning Systems Mali (SISAAP), Niger: Early Warning System (EWS/SAP), Burkina Faso: Early Warning System (EWS/SAP), Secrétariat Exécutif du Conseil National de Sécurité Alimentaire (SECNSA).

<sup>16</sup> The FEG, which developed the HEA method, provides the regional team with technical support, particularly to ensure implementation of the Excel Livelihood Impact Assessment Spreadsheet (LIAS) tool. Nonetheless, this support incrementally decreased, in line with the different implementation phases.

### 1.3. Background and objectives of the study

The evaluation of the phase VI of the HEA project, carried out by Key Aid Consulting<sup>17</sup> in May 2018, brought to the fore a number of success stories. First and foremost, the HEA approach is considered by a large number of humanitarian players as a relevant tool very widely used to plan and design humanitarian responses. Secondly, the HEA provides data to help deliver food security analysis workshops according to the “cadre harmonisé”, and for the EWS/SAP. Thirdly, it contributes to the analysis of livelihoods and strategies implemented by poor and chronically vulnerable households, and thus to renewing approaches to poverty and food security. In Niger for instance, the HEA approach is used to target beneficiaries of free grain distributions from the State.

However, this evaluation has also highlighted blocking points, particularly in terms of sustainability of the HEA approach in the Sahel. First of all, the various ministries in charge of regional EWS/SAP failed to adequately take ownership of this tool to ensure its sustainability or institutionalisation in the long term. Then, there was the technical dependency of EWS/SAP vis-a-vis the HEA technical unit of Save the Children, Oxfam and ACF. Lastly, the HEA project suffered from a lack of communication and documentation on the potential uses of the method to feed the multi-player political dialog and decision-making process.

In order to build on the previous phases’ successes and remedy these blocking points, Save the Children,<sup>18</sup> Oxfam and ACF are currently implementing phase VII of the project, and Save the Children is developing and searching for funding for phase VIII of the project. The purpose of that phase will be to pursue the institutionalisation process of the HEA within national institutions, whilst reflecting on how to streamline the project’s economic model.

Within this framework, Save the Children has commissioned this study, whose purpose is to produce a comparative analysis of the costs and benefits of the HEA Sahel project. This study will contribute to the analysis of the HEA Sahel project’s return on investment to help with the definition of relevant activities and on potential gains in efficiency and effectiveness for phase VIII. It will also propose concrete recommendations to increase the use and institutionalisation of the HEA approach. More precisely, its objectives are:

1. To identify the uses and benefits of the HEA for players in the Sahel;
2. To determine the cost structure of the HEA approach in the Sahel;
3. To identify the drivers and opportunities for improvement of the HEA’s economic model by increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the project.

The study focused on all of the countries covered by the activities, namely Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Chad, but also Burkina Faso and Senegal, which did not receive funding in this last phase of the project. Although the HEA project lasted for seven consecutive and inter-related phases, this study focuses only on the last phase of the project, namely phase VII.

During the inception phase that preceded this project, Key aid Consulting conducted a framework study to determine whether a Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA),<sup>19</sup> the methodology originally proposed in the Terms of Reference, was feasible. The conclusions of this feasibility study have brought

<sup>17</sup> HEA Sahel Regional Project External Evaluation, Final Evaluation Report, Key Aid Consulting, May 2018.

<sup>18</sup> Save the Children is the project *lead*.

<sup>19</sup> Cost-Benefit Analysis, in English.

forward that it was not possible to perform a CBA,<sup>20</sup> given the methodological difficulties to monetise the intangible benefits of the project.

Moreover, the consultants considered and studied an alternative method, the Cost-Effectiveness Analysis (CEA),<sup>21</sup> which does not require the monetisation of the project's *outcomes* and which is frequently used as an alternative to the CBA. This method was also excluded because:

- It proved impossible to rigorously establish a link of attribution or contribution between the HEA project and the improvement of the resilience of households vulnerable to shocks in the Sahel.
- It also proved extremely difficult, given the resources available<sup>22</sup> for this study and the inherent complexity of the project (multi-phase, multi-year, multi-partner, existence of other data sources, etc.), to establish a link of attribution or contribution between the project and the integration of households' food access analyses in the EWS/SAP and formulation of policies and programs in favour of vulnerable populations of Sahel countries.

For these reasons, Save the Children and Key Aid Consulting redefined the scope of the study and chose to focus on the main project's output, namely the use of HEA information for analysis and decision-making in Sahel countries via humanitarian and development players.

## II. Methodology

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Key Aid Consulting conducted this study from March to June 2019 by implementing a mixed research methodology, based on a literature review, qualitative interviews, an online survey and a financial data analysis.

### II.1. Inception Phase and Literature Review

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During this phase, Key Aid Consulting completed an analysis of the documents pertaining to the HEA project and conducted five interviews with Save the Children employees to define the scope of the study.

Key Aid Consulting and Save the Children initially agreed to analyse the costs of phases IV to VII and to include every country having benefited from funding by the HEA project since 2010.

At the end of this phase, Key Aid Consulting produced a study matrix approved by Save the Children, which can be found in Annex 0.

### II.2. Data collection

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The purpose of data collection was to gather data on the number of users of the HEA, their uses of the HEA approach, the perceived benefits of the project and of the HEA approach. It was also meant to provide information on the project's cost structure.

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<sup>20</sup> The literature review failed to identify a sufficiently comparable approach/methodology with a cost-benefit study providing a basis for comparison. A CBA, would have required assessing the future phase of the project with a hypothetical scenario where this phase would not take place, and thus identifying and comparing the costs and benefits generated by the phase without the corresponding costs and benefits.

<sup>21</sup> Cost-Effectiveness Analysis, in English.

<sup>22</sup> By overlooking the constraint of available resources, the consultants did not study the intrinsic feasibility of a CBA or CEA for the HEA project, as it was not the primary object of the study. Having established that the budgetary and time resources were not sufficient, the consultants studied alternative solutions.

Key Aid Consulting employed the following methods :

### 1. Literature and budgetary data review

During the inception phase, Key Aid Consulting conducted the first literature review and analysed 66 documents: HEA project documents;<sup>23</sup> reports on the HEA method, reports produced during the different phases of the project,<sup>24</sup> studies on the EWS/SAP, etc.

The bibliography is presented in Annex 0.

### 2. Qualitative Interviews

In addition to the five initial interviews, Key Aid Consulting conducted 28 remote interviews with various users of the HEA in the different countries of intervention. The interviewees were representative of international NGOs, United Nations agencies, donors, EWS/SAP and government members. The sampling of participants was done purposively.<sup>25</sup>

These interviews helped identify and collect data for the four case studies that are presented in this report (see boxes throughout the report).

### 3. Online Survey

Key Aid Consulting designed, then administered an online survey via the Kobo Toolbox platform. This survey, open for three weeks, was shared via Save the Children and the various HEA focal points. It led to the collection of data among a sample of 47 people.<sup>26</sup> The geographical distribution and by type of organisation of this sample is detailed in the following table:

**Table 1: Geographical breakdown of the sample (n=47)**

Country	n
Niger	13
Nigeria	9
Chad	9
Regional	8
Burkina Faso	3
Senegal	3
Mauritania	2

It is important to emphasise that no data was collected on Mali. The consultants failed to identify whether this was due to a problem with the link (that was not shared in country) or if nobody participated.

**Table 2: Distribution of sample by type of organisation (n=47)**

Type of organisation	n
International NGO	15

<sup>23</sup> Projects proposal, budget, logical framework, monitoring report, assessment.

<sup>24</sup> Outcome Analysis, Baseline.

<sup>25</sup> That is to say that participants most likely to respond to the consultants' questions will be included in the list of individuals to be interviewed.

<sup>26</sup> There were initially 51 respondents in the survey. Four entries were deleted because one of the respondents confused HEA methodology with the acronym Hygiene, Water and Sanitation (Hygiène, Eau et Assainissement in French). The second did not find the button to switch language from French to English and thus failed to answer most of the questions. The 3rd and 4th were respectively based in Ghana and Sierra Leone, countries that are not covered by the HEA project, and declared not having any experience in the countries that are.

Other government agencies	9
United Nations agencies	6
Other	6
Early Warning Systems	6
Donors	4
National NGO	1

#### 4. Budgetary data

Key Aid Consulting developed a financial data collection mask for Save the Children, to extract and organise the data of the project’s last four phases.

However, Save the Children was unable to extract the data by type of activity without a long and tedious data reprocessing work, which did not coincide with the timetable for the project.

Consequently, Key Aid Consulting and Save the Children agreed on an alternative approach, namely the analysis of budgets submitted to donors of the ongoing phase of the project, triangulated with the Terms of Reference of studies (baseline, OA) carried out in countries of the project, rather than relying on the accounts of these phases, and hence on the actual expenditures incurred by the project.

Therefore, the analysed data only cover the last two phases of the project.

### II.3. Data analysis and dissemination of results

The consultant recoded and coded the qualitative data (by country and type of actor) to analyse emerging trends. The coding and analysis of the data was made via study questions and sub-questions (c.f. 0) et was broken down by type of organisation and by country, when necessary and possible, so as to identify the trends specific to each country or type of organisation.

The quantitative data of the online survey were analysed in R Studio<sup>27</sup> and broken down by type of organisation and by country. Given the size and distribution of the sample, the consultants do not believe the survey data to be representative of all users of the HEA approach in the Sahel. In that respect, instead of using the survey data individually, Key Aid Consulting triangulated it with the qualitative data collected during the interviews.

As regards financial data, the analysis first focused on a review of the main spending centres, by phase and by country when relevant. It then moved on to a comparison of the financial data VII with the corresponding logical frameworks, to calculate the direct costs of activities. When possible, the unit costs were cross-referenced with Terms of Reference information<sup>28</sup> or data derived from interviews. Furthermore, to analyse the project’s efficiency, the consultants used the cost per use of the HEA as performance indicator:

$$C_u = \frac{CT}{N * F}$$

Where:  $C_u$  = unit cost per use of the HEA

<sup>27</sup> R Studio is an open-source tool to analyze SPSS or STATA data for instance.

<sup>28</sup> The Terms of Reference and baselines produced in the different countries include the direct costs of these studies: logistics costs, per diem, etc.

CT = total cost of the phase

N = number of users

*N.B. User is understood to mean organisations and not the individuals working within these organisations.*

F = average frequency of use per user

This indicator was first used in the present report as a baseline to determine  $c_u$  in June 2018. It was also used to apprehend the impact a change in economic model parameter would have on the cost per unit, namely a variation in number of users, frequency of use or expenditure items.

At the end of the analysis phase, the consultants produced this report in French, which was subsequently translated into English.<sup>29</sup>

## II.4. Limitations of the study

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Several limitations should be considered upon reading this report:

1. The consultants were unable to collect enough qualitative or quantitative data to triangulate information and thus produce a per-country and per-type of organisation analysis. Nonetheless, when possible, the consultants indicated the trends by country and by organisation.
2. Similarly, the size and spread of the survey sample is insufficient to present data broken down by country and/or by type of organisation. Throughout the report, the survey data were hence triangulated with the interview data and were not presented independently.
3. Users of both the project and the method were unable to identify the activities specific to each phase. To proceed with the analysis, the consultants were led to assume that the experience feedback corresponded to the most recent implementation phases.
4. The cost analyses presented in this report were carried out based on budgets submitted to the donors, and not on expenses incurred, although a comparison with the Terms of References provided by Save the Children was carried out.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, the unit costs presented in this report have a margin of error estimated between 10 and 20%.
5. Given that the consultants carried out the data collection remotely, they mainly obtained a list of contacts via Save the Children and EWS/SAP focal points. As a result, the individuals interviewed and surveyed were more likely to be favourable/supporters of the HEA method than critics; and this study may in fact present a hypothesis confirmation bias.
6. The individuals interviewed were not always able to distinguish between the benefits of the HEA project and those of the HEA approach. This explains why throughout the report the consultants successively speak of the project and of the approach.

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<sup>29</sup> By Marie Parisot, freelance translator.

<sup>30</sup> In total, the consultants had access to nine TDRs and budgets.

## III. Results

### III.1. Benefits yielded by the methodology and the HEA project in different countries of the region

This section first presents the main benefits yielded by the HEA approach for its users (international NGOs, United Nations agencies, national NGOs, donors, other government agencies). It then describes how the HEA Sahel project contributes to these benefits, and the potential consequences of a withdrawal of funding.

This section is mainly based on the analyses of HEA users' perception and satisfaction.

#### III.1.1. Benefits of the HEA approach

The majority of data collected via this study,<sup>31</sup> whether during interviews, the survey or literature review, shows that the HEA approach remains an important source of data on food security and livelihoods in Sahel countries. It is used, generally several times a year,<sup>32</sup> by various types of organisations (international NGOs, United Nations agencies, donors, EWS/SAP; other government agencies) and in the different countries of the area (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Chad).

Users were generally satisfied with the HEA approach. Regardless of the degree or frequency of use, they found it relevant to inform the EWS/SAP<sup>33</sup> and the food security frameworks in the Sahel countries (particularly the CH),<sup>34</sup> and to contribute to the relevance and effectiveness of humanitarian programs in the area.<sup>35</sup> As explained in the section, the consultants did not reach a sufficient degree of data saturation to be able to produce an analysis broken down by country or by type of organisation.

The users described seven specific uses of the HEA in the Sahel countries. These uses were classified in the following table according to their declared regularity of use, by cross-referencing qualitative interview data with that of the survey.

<sup>31</sup> 76% of people surveyed (n=47) reported that their organisation used the HEA within the framework of its interventions. 81% of them reported knowledge of at least 5 organisations using the HEA; this figure has been corroborated by the interview data.

<sup>32</sup> According to the interviews conducted, the literature review, and the survey data (83% of respondents reported using the HEA several times per year, n=46).

<sup>33</sup> Source: interviews and surveys (the average score on the question "How would you rate the relevance of the HEA tool to inform the Early Warning Systems?" was 7.57 out of 10, 10 being the highest score).

<sup>34</sup> Source: interviews and surveys (the average score on the question "How would you rate the relevance of the HEA tool to inform the logical frameworks of the food situation in your country and the Sahel?" was 7.66 out of 10, 10 being the highest score).

<sup>35</sup> Source: interviews and surveys (the average score on the question "How would you rate the relevance of the HEA tool to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian programs in the region or in your country?" was 7.34 out of 10, 10 being the highest score).



Table 3: Type of uses of the HEA

Specific uses	Description of use	Use
Scale of colours: <b>green</b> = more than 70% of uses, <b>yellow</b> = approximately 30% to 70% of uses, <b>orange</b> = between 0 and 30% of uses		
To update the Cadre Harmonisé and Early Warning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contribution of HEA data (baselines and OA) to the convergence of evidence process needed to update the Cadre Harmonisé,</li> <li>Forecasting needs according to HEA data to anticipate the number of people affected by a shock (for ex.: drought) and the impact of this shock on their livelihoods.</li> </ul>	Green
To target project's beneficiaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultation of data on the socio-economic categorisation of households (Very Poor, Poor, Medium, Rich), to identify and target the households most vulnerable to shocks and those most vulnerable from a socio-economic point of view;</li> <li>Development of criteria for selection of beneficiaries;</li> <li>Prioritisation of areas of intervention by means of OA.</li> </ul>	Green
To understand the humanitarian context in the country and specific intervention areas, and to design programs accordingly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultation and use of the information derived from HEA baselines on livelihoods to guide the selection of activities and means of intervention (income-generating activity, supplements to social safety nets, etc.);</li> <li>Understanding households' poverty and vulnerability determinants;</li> <li>Context-sensitive monitoring and anticipation of shocks (number of households, areas, impacts).</li> </ul>	Green
To define a basket of expenditure for food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of the HEA baseline data to determine the composition of the average basket of expenditure for food.</li> </ul>	Yellow
To design social protection programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Construction of national registries for social safety net programmes;</li> <li>Comparison of HEA data with the Proxy Mean Testing (PMT) from the World Bank in some countries.</li> </ul>	Yellow
To calculate the value of cash transfers and/or periodicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Calculation of cash transfers value to allow different socio-economic groups to meet their basic food needs;</li> <li>Possibility of adjusting the amount of the transfer depending on the seasons (of the year), thanks to the HEA seasonal analysis.</li> </ul>	Yellow
To conduct project monitoring and assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of the analysis results on key parameters for monitoring of prices, benchmark market supply;</li> <li>Use of the baselines and OA as <i>baseline</i> and <i>endline</i> to determine a program's effectiveness.</li> </ul>	Orange

It is worth noting that these uses are not mutually exclusive. Organisations that use the HEA indeed resort to it with different goals and at different times of the year (updating of the CH, annual programming, during emergency responses, etc.). According to the survey, they resort to the HEA for three different types of uses.<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, although the most common uses are those listed in the table, it is likely that they do not represent the full extent of current or potential uses of the approach. As a matter of fact, according to some of the interviews, use of the HEA approach focuses on anticipation and response to

<sup>36</sup> The exact average is M=3.06 for a sample size of 46.

emergencies, whereas it might be possible to use it more extensively for resiliency and development programmes.

*“We only carry out 10% of what we could actually do with the HEA to strengthen resiliency and development programmes. There is for instance a huge potential at the farmers’ organisations’ level to better target their advocacy. Input subsidy is not particularly efficient for the poorest as they cannot pay the supplement or no longer have land or too little livestock. They can exploit it to make more detailed, differentiated and more relevant proposals, and thus foster dialog on public policies and development programmes at national and regional levels. ”*

In addition, data collected during the survey suggests that other types of organisations use the HEA approach from time to time. For instance, a public policy consulting firm responded to the survey circulated via the working groups. Similarly, a financial service provider in Nigeria participated in the survey and described using HEA baselines to plan his transfers to beneficiary populations thanks to the available market data.<sup>37</sup>

Generally speaking, for most of the people interviewed, the HEA approach presents a number of advantages compared to other methodologies used in the region. Firstly, it maps the areas’ socio-economic composition, categorising homes according to the Very Poor, Poor, Medium, Rich classification.

Secondly, the HEA approach has a predictive nature whose purpose is to anticipate a shock’s location, extent, impact and seasonality, thus allowing first, the Sahel States and second, the humanitarian actors to prepare for and respond to crises more promptly. According to one of the interviewees, this was for instance the case in Nigeria two years ago when the government was able to anticipate the impact of drought in the states of Zamfara and Katsina, and consequently prepare its response.

*“HEA brings a global understanding of the overall sensitivity to shocks compared to other purely descriptive elements given by other indicators.” Donor*

*“Useful for longer term planning as it is predictive and has a modelling capacity.” International NGO*

Thirdly, the HEA approach “gives voice to communities” thanks to the participatory nature of the method. Fourthly, the HEA represents a good compromise between the coverage, precision and longevity<sup>38</sup> of the collected data and the resources (budget, work days) required to conduct the study compared to other methodologies (vulnerability studies implemented by the Government and the United Nations, the PMTF<sup>39</sup>). The consultants however were unable to gain access to the costs of these methods for budgetary comparison.

Lastly, the HEA approach allows all humanitarian and development players to share a common language and analysis framework, which facilitates their coordination at national and regional levels.

*“The main benefit is [...] the common language, collaboration, the possibility of exchanging with the government, having a common frame of reference. It [the HEA] contributes to reinforcing confidence. Between Sahel countries, people know what we are talking about and*

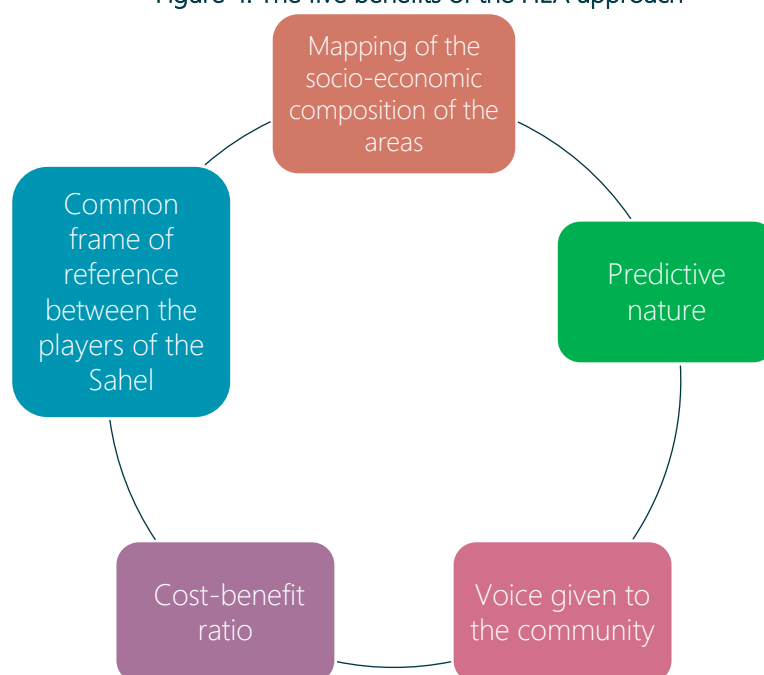
<sup>37</sup> This provider declared having discovered the HEA during the implementation of a cash transfer program and having used the HEA information provided by the NGO partner, to plan his transfers to beneficiary populations thanks to the available market data. According to him, these data could be useful to financial service providers to work with NGO partners, but he did not know where to find them, not being aware of the existence of the HEA Sahel website.

<sup>38</sup> If there are no major contextual changes.

<sup>39</sup> It is also one of Chloé Maillard and H  l  ne Juillard’s conclusions, ‘HEA Sahel Regional Project External Evaluation (Phases V and VI)’, May 2018.

*we can move forward. It is important, as there are a lot of different players in these areas.”  
International organisation*

Figure 4: The five benefits of the HEA approach



### III.1.2. Benefits of the HEA Sahel project

Even if it has not always been obvious for respondents to distinguish between the benefits of the approach and those of the HEA Sahel project, they widely agreed that it had contributed and made possible the use and institutionalisation of the HEA approach in the region.

The production of multiple baselines and OA are the project’s main contribution. This translates into a relatively important coverage in terms of data, and the fact that these data are available via working groups within the countries and on the HEA website (<https://hea-sahel.org>). The latter includes 85 baselines<sup>40 41</sup> and 146 OA (report and presentation of results).<sup>42</sup>

Table 4: Coverage of baselines from different countries of the region at the end of phase VII

	Bur. Faso	Mali	Mauritania	Niger	Nigeria	Senegal	Chad	Sahel
# of zones	9	17	10	13	35	15	9	108
# of baselines	9	15	8	10	10	13	8	71
coverage %	100%	88%	80%	77%	29%	87%	89%	68%

There is a widespread perception among respondents that HEA data significantly contribute to the update of the CH.<sup>43</sup> Admittedly, other data sources such as vulnerability studies, the Food

<sup>40</sup> The number of baselines is higher on the website than on table 4, given that certain baselines are duplicates (old version and updated version).

<sup>41</sup> “Save the Children does not yet use a Dashboard allowing for improved access to the LIAS and baselines but is studying the possibility of doing so in the near future.”

<sup>42</sup> Figure calculated by browsing through and recording all the online reports on the site on 22/05/2019. The site’s contents may have evolved since.

<sup>43</sup> HEA data mostly contributes to the convergence of evidence.

Consumption Score (FCS) or the Household Hunger Scale (HHS) contribute to it, but in contrast to HEA data are not always available on a country scale. Despite the perceived added value of the HEA data in the CH, more than half of the interviewees, especially donors and EWS/SAP representatives, consider that the legitimacy of the HEA in the CH would not have been possible without the project's successive phases. In March 2019, participants in the CH of Niger and Nigeria particularly emphasised this benefit, given that the update of the CH was only possible thanks to the HEA and a proxy.

The project has further contributed to the quality of the collected data and analyses produced. This quality is mainly due to the training of HEA experts since 2010 in countries covered by the project. For example, HEA courses welcomed 375 participants during phase VI<sup>44</sup> and 221 people during phase VII<sup>45</sup>. It is important to stress that, according to a number of project stakeholders, the regional team also plays an important role in the consistency and quality of the collection and of the analysis at regional level. The latter indeed provides technical support to the focal points, notably in the analysis phase, and helps ensure a viable course and frame of reference between the different countries.

**Figure 5 : Update of the Cadre Harmonisé in Niger in March 2019**

In March 2019, the National Survey of Vulnerability to Food Security normally funded by WFP and the government (approximate price: 280,000,000 CFA francs in 2018) and aimed at collecting food consumption indicators did not take place in March 2019. The most current data were dated November/December 2018. This study was used with the HEA to update the CH. The reason cited during interviews stemmed from lack of funding and lack of available budget.

Thus, the Interdisciplinary Working Group (GTI) consisting of ministry representatives, of the Food security cluster, UNICEF, FAO, CILSS and international NGOs, performed an analysis of the Cadre Harmonisé with HEA data and a proxy (Agricultural Product/Population). According to the CH manual, at least one performance indicator and data from contributing factors are needed to achieve the convergence of evidence necessary to update the CH.

The availability of data in all areas, thanks to the HEA project and to the data collection budget, made it possible to update the Cadre Harmonisé in 2019. The CH manual indeed establishes that the HEA data and the proxy are sufficient to achieve a convergence of evidence. However, respondents agreed that more data is required to gain in-depth understanding of the situation.

Training that targeted focal points, members of HEA working groups and other stakeholders, along with the coordination and dissemination activities funded out of the project's budgets, helped reduce the technical dependency vis-a-vis the project's regional team and undertake the institutionalisation of the HEA method within EWS/SAP. This was one of the project's stated goals.

According to the interviewees, it was the case for Burkina Faso and Senegal, where local skills are considered by those first affected as sufficient to implement HEA activities without regular support from the regional team. Moreover, Senegal and Burkina Faso were not included in the beneficiary countries of phase VII, the regional team having found the level of institutionalisation to be sufficient. Conversely, according to key informants, it would seem that institutionalisation is less accomplished in Mali, Mauritania and Chad. As regards Niger, the data are contradictory. These perceptions are partially confirmed by the HEA experts' tracking tool, implemented during Training the Trainer in Dakar, in November 2018. Said tool assesses the ability of experts to lead and train participants in different surveys (baselines, OA, key parameters).

<sup>44</sup> 'Indicator Performance Tracking Table - Phase VI' (Save the Children, December 2017).

<sup>45</sup> 'Indicator Performance Tracking Table - Phase VII', September 2018.

Nevertheless, even if the technicians at EWS/SAP level and State services are trained and recognise the benefits of the project, there is a lack of ownership of the HEA results by the various ministries. The demand for the HEA is in addition low within countries, outside CH periods. As a result, ministries and EWS/SAP representatives did not sufficiently publicise the HEA for it to be included into national budgets. This explains the difficulties faced to add the HEA approach into said budgets or, when possible, to guarantee an actual and sufficient disbursement of funds. See

Figure 6 for a case study on the institutionalisation of the approach in Senegal.

**Figure 6 : Institutionalisation of the HEA approach in Senegal**

Due to a contraction in funding and given the level of institutionalisation - deemed high - Senegal was not included in phase VII of the project. Thus far, what of the level of institutionalisation of the HEA approach in Senegal?

From a technical point of view, EWS/SAP coordinators believe that there are enough skills at country level to be able to collect and analyse the data, with 10 to 12 well-trained experts. At the time of data collection, the EWS/SAP was planning a training course for regional staff of the Secrétariat Exécutif du Conseil National de Sécurité Alimentaire (SECNSA), the organisation on which the EWS/SAP is dependent. Its employees regularly carry out data collections and the EWS/SAP wanted to lean on the latter to collect key parameters.

However, a technical blocking point exists to which the EWS/SAP is confronted, namely the configuration of the Livelihood Impact Assessment Spreadsheet (LIAS). Only two people are indeed capable of doing this, which represents a major bottleneck. During the previous phases, when this was the case, EWS/SAP called on the FEG via Save the Children. This is no longer possible because FEG consultancies are too expensive.

From a financial point of view, since mid-2018 the HEA Sahel project no longer contributes to the funding of the EWS/SAP focal point's salary or to data collection activities. The EWS/SAP received funding from the office of Save the Children Senegal, from the P2RS and from ECOAGRIS, which enabled it to lead the OA required to update the CH. At the end of the year, four baselines will expire (SN 04, SN 05, SN 10, SN 15) and the EWS/SAP is looking for funding (12 000 000 CFA francs per baseline approximately) to update them. Securing funding has proved to be a challenge for EWS/SAP coordinators, who even if they rely on the person in charge of partnerships at SECNSA have difficulties finding the necessary budget.

Institutionalisation in Senegal has been described as "decided by the HEA project" without any genuine commitment from the policy makers of the government to invest the resources needed to ensure sustainability of the approach.

### III.1.3. Consequences for the users should the project be shut down

The users' opinions are divided as to the potential implications of a discontinuation of the HEA project after phase VII, due to run until end of July 2019.

On the one hand, minority of users believes that the end of the HEA project is justified by the fact that coverage in terms of baselines is now sufficient and that the coordination and data collection activities within countries will continue without the HEA project. Admittedly, the HEA project funds an important part of these activities but it is precisely this availability of funding that would make countries reluctant to seek funding themselves.

On the other hand, a majority of users believes that the discontinuation of the project at this stage would represent a significant risk to the sustainability of investments made thus far for integration at national institution level.

*“It is a mistake to believe that the HEA is not used. It is everyone’s spare wheel” Regional Organisation*

The definition of this risk tends to vary depending on the users’ primary use. Four main trends however do emerge.

Thanks to the project's successive phases and ancillary activities such as training and data collection, the HEA approach has for two years now been perceived as being on the brink of achieving a critical mass that would allow for institutionalisation and sustainability of the approach. However, according to these same people, the coverage rate in baselines<sup>46</sup> has not been fully (100%) reached and the number of experts is not sufficient in all of the countries.<sup>47</sup> According to the interviewees, should the project be shut down after this phase, it would incur the risk of not having been able to achieve a sufficient critical mass<sup>48</sup> to allow for its sustainability.

As the baselines become available, it is becoming less and less expensive to collect data, as all that is left to collect pertains to key parameters. As such, thanks to the existing data, humanitarian and development organisations may now carry out need assessments at lower cost.<sup>49</sup> Eventually, without funding, the baselines would become obsolete, which would represent a low return on investment of the amounts invested in the previous phases of the project.

Furthermore, according to nearly half of current users, regardless of the country or the type of organisation, discontinuation of the project would mean additional costs (HR, logistics, consultants) and loss of human time, generated by the need to collect contextual data and the needs previously available thanks to the HEA. The resources allotted to this study did not provide for quantification of these costs, the loss of time that it could represent or the horizon from which they could occur (the project’s benefits will continue over time after the end of the project).

Users also believe that the consequences of a discontinuation of the HEA Sahel project at the end of this phase would slow down the institutionalisation process of the HEA approach in the Sahel. Even if some countries have reached an important stage of institutionalisation and are now able to carry out the analyses themselves, the absence of a regional technical player to monitor the rigor in deployment of the methodology, the quality of the data and the quality assurance of analyses could in the long term undermine the quality, regional coherence and reputation of said method. In addition to this monitoring/quality assurance and technical support role, having a regional team is considered a comparative advantage as it helps ensure coordination between these countries and promote innovations at regional level.

In conclusion, for users of the method, the benefits of the HEA Sahel project are considerable, as are the detrimental consequences of a possible discontinuation of the project. Nevertheless, these consequences are also the result of the design and implementation of the previous phases. Indeed, the choice and combination of these phases’ activities have had an impact on cost, economic model, emergence and non-emergence of certain uses of the approach, the number of users and the frequency of use.

<sup>46</sup> See Table 4: Coverage of baselines from different countries of the region at the end of phase VII.

<sup>47</sup> According to the data provided by the regional office, only 21 experts are operational: 3 In Mali, 1 in Mauritania, 6 in Niger, 3 in Nigeria, 6 in Senegal and 2 in Chad.

<sup>48</sup> It is important to emphasize that the consultants have not collected data on the experts’ actual or perceived skills. This paragraph deals with the number of experts and not their level of skills.

<sup>49</sup> It would for instance be a good idea to use data in *remote sensing*, such as rainfall.

## III.2. Study of the project's economic model

This section provides a study of the economic model and unit costs of the project's activities. It also seeks to identify the drivers and impediments for optimisation of the project's economic model and cost structure.

### III.2.1. Economic model of phase VII

The cumulative budget of the project's last five successive phases<sup>50</sup> was around \$9,447,486, as detailed in the table below:

Table 5: Budget for the HEA Sahel project by phase and donor (USD)<sup>51</sup>

Phase	Period	Source of Funding			
		ECHO	OFDA	ECOAGRIS	WORLD BANK
Phase III	2012-2013	\$575,000			
Phase IV	2013-2014	\$639,906	\$1,000,000		
Phase V	2014–2015	\$608,175	\$3,601,202	\$460,474	\$39,448
		\$195,500			
Phase VI	2015-2016	\$172,500			
	2016-2017	\$412,675			
	2017-2018	\$345,000			
Phase VII	2018-2019				
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$2,948,756</b>	<b>\$6,058,870</b>	<b>\$400,412</b>	<b>\$39,448</b>
<b>Grand Total (2012-19)</b>		<b>\$9,447,486</b>			

Project HEA Sahel's economic model progressively evolved with each subsequent phase, leaning towards an institutionalisation of the method. The last phase of the project is devoted to "national institutional capacity building for improved EWS/SAP governance in terms of food security in West Africa".<sup>52</sup> Budget-wise, the emphasis placed on institutionalisation was mirrored by lower unit costs per activity, with partners<sup>53</sup> in the countries of intervention contributing more to the baselines, OA and collection of key parameters budget. This is why the economic model study presented below mainly focused on phase VII of the project.

The total budget for phase VII, which lasted from September 2018 to July 2019, amounts to \$1,457,668. This budget is distributed according to four main expenditure items, namely Human Resources (HR) (47% of the budget), the programme<sup>54</sup> (29%), administrative costs / indirect costs

<sup>50</sup> Budget data for Phases I and II of the budget were not available and have not been included in the table.

<sup>51</sup> Exchange rate used for conversions into USD (ECHO and EcoAgris budgets): 1 EUR = 1.15 USD.

<sup>52</sup> <https://hea-sahel.org/hea-sahel#hea-overview-3>.

<sup>53</sup> These are the HEA working groups' partners, and not the current partners of the project (Oxfam and ACF). As such, the budgetary analyses of this report include expenses incurred by the sub-agreements with ACF and Oxfam, but do not include any potential expenditure made by partners of HEA working groups in the various countries.

<sup>54</sup> Three expenses were reintegrated in the program costs (which were thus no longer part of the budget lines corresponding to program expenditures in the OFDA budget) of phase VII: FEG consultancy, mapping system and website hosting costs.

(17%),<sup>55</sup> and other costs (per diem, transport, M&E) excluding activities implemented in the field (6%).<sup>56</sup> Human resources are broken down between HR programmes and HR support.

The programme costs are further divided into six main activities: the production of baselines, Outcome Analysis, collection of key parameters, training of HEA experts, advocacy/awareness/media activities, dissemination and publication and lastly the operation of HEA working groups. Budget allocation is included in Figure 7.

Project HEA Sahel's economic model is primarily based on human resources fixed costs. Human resources dedicated to the program indeed make up the main item of expenditure (45% of the budget). They carry out the advocacy, awareness raising and training activities, support activities in the various countries, participate in the various HEA working groups. Given the nature of the program (capacity-building, advocacy and communication, data collection), these expenses emerge as full-blown activities-related expenses. By reintegrating them, the program-costs' ratio in relation to support costs represents 74% of the total budget.

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<sup>55</sup> Indirect costs amount to \$252,670. They regroup all indirect costs such as listed in the budget, namely \$229,025; the indirect costs of sub-agreements with ACF Mauritania (\$129,329) and Oxfam Chad (\$130,765) are reintegrated into it.

<sup>56</sup> It is important to note that these costs do not include the logistics costs specific to certain activities such as baselines, OA and the collection of key parameters.



Figure 7 : Breakdown of the different expenditure items of the budget for phase VII of project HEA Sahel

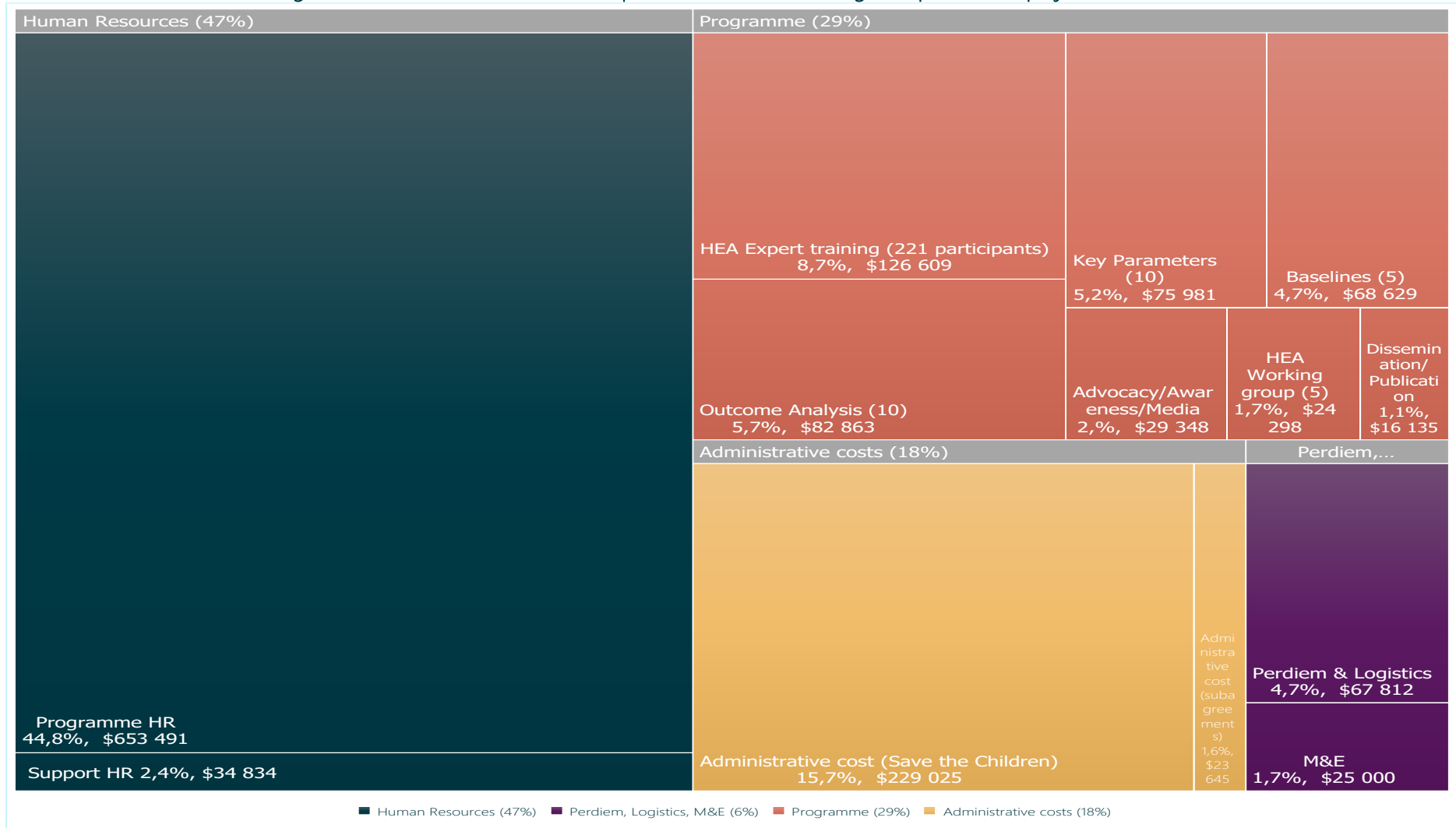


Table 6 : Expenditure items for phase VII of project HEA Sahel

Human Ressources	\$	688 325	47,2%
Programme HR	\$	653 491	44,8%
Support HR	\$	34 834	2,4%
Programme	\$	423 862	29,1%
Baselines	\$	68 629	4,7%
Outcome Analysis	\$	82 863	5,7%
Key Parameters	\$	75 981	5,2%
Experts HEA training	\$	126 609	8,7%
Advocacy/Awareness/Media	\$	29 348	2,0%
Dissémination et publication	\$	16 135	1,1%
Dissemination/ Publication	\$	24 298	1,7%
Perdiem, Logistics, M&E	\$	92 812	6,4%
Perdiem & Logistics	\$	67 812	4,7%
M&E	\$	25 000	1,7%
Administrative costs	\$	202 590	17,3%
Administrative cost (Save the Children)	\$	229 025	15,7%
Administrative cost (subagreements)	\$	23 645	1,6%

Upon analysis of project HEA's economic model at geographical level, we find that 37% of the budget is allocated to the five countries of the area (Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Chad) and that the annual budget of a country hovers between \$85,000 and \$120,000.<sup>57</sup> The remaining 63% are divided between the regional office (43% of the total budget) and headquarter overheads (20%).

Table 7: Costs structure for project HEA Sahel by country and area

Geography	Budget	% of budget
Headquarters <sup>58</sup>	\$286,366	20%
Regional Office	\$631,359	43%
Mauritania <sup>59</sup>	\$117,572	8%
Mali	\$118,104	8%
Niger	\$85,538	6%
Nigeria	\$99,852	7%
Chad <sup>60</sup>	\$118,877	8%

<sup>57</sup> The budget by country was reconstituted taking into account all of the direct costs by country. Where needed, the budget lines common to all countries (ex: Fringe Benefits and Allowances - national staff) were broken down in all countries proportionally to the country's weight in the total budget of the corresponding budget line (ex: national employee payroll in Nigeria / all national employees payroll \* Fringe benefits and Allowances - national staff).

<sup>58</sup> These are the indirect costs of Save the Children and the costs of two Human Resources headquarters, plus the indirect costs of sub-agreements with Oxfam Chad and ACF Mauritania.

<sup>59</sup> Indirect/administrative costs of the sub-agreement with ACF were included in the headquarter overheads.

<sup>60</sup> Indirect/administrative costs of the sub-agreement with Oxfam were included in the headquarter overheads.

Within each of the aforementioned countries, the project funds the NGO focal point's salary and part of the EWS/SAP focal point's salary.<sup>61</sup> This expenditure item represents on average \$40,480 per year per country. The focal points participate in the implementation of the project activities (baseline, OA, key parameters), and in the advocacy, management and administration efforts for the project, as detailed in the following table:

**Table 8: Distribution of focal points' working time<sup>62</sup> by activity**

	Focal point – NGO	Focal Point - EWS/SAP
Baseline	30%	30%
OA	20%	20%
KP	20%	20%
Project management	0%	0%
Training	15%	15%
Admin	10%	5%
Advocacy	5%	5%

Within the Regional Office expenditure item, the main expense remains human resources. It indeed includes 10 people: the regional team, composed of five full-time members,<sup>63</sup> and the support functions partially involved in the project.<sup>64</sup> In total, the regional office's human resources budget is about \$469,719, of which \$410,083 for the HEA program regional team involved in the implementation of activities and support to the different Sahel countries. The table below details the composition of the programme team as well as the indicative distribution of their working time for project-related activities:

**Table 9: Distribution of the regional "HEA Sahel programme" team in terms of budget and working time**

		Head of Regional Unit	Senior Roving Technical Coordinator	Roving Technical Coordinator	Programme Officer
Budget		\$117,261	\$101,476	\$78,926	\$34,294
Total budget HEA Team		331 957 \$			
% regional team budget		29%	25%	19%	8%
	Baseline	5%	25%	30%	5%
	OA	10%	25%	30%	20%
	KP	0%	10%	10%	0%
	Project management	55%	0%	0%	10%

<sup>61</sup> Between 15 and 50% of the total salary.

<sup>62</sup> Source: Regional Team.

<sup>63</sup> The six members are: Head of Regional Unit (International Staff), HEA Senior Roving Technical Coordinator (IS), HEA Roving Technical Coordinator (IS), HEA Advocacy Manager (IS), Programme Officer, Regional HEA Unit (National Staff), Programme Intern Stipend (NS).

<sup>64</sup> The four support functions involved part-time are: Head of Award Management (NS, 20% of the working time), Admin Officer (NS, 20%), Finance Officer (NS, 20%), Communication Office (NS, 10%).

## Costs and benefits of the HEA Sahel Project

Training	5%	25%	30%	0%
Admin	5%	0%	0%	65%
advocacy	15%	10%	0%	0%
FEG	5%	5%	0%	0%

The data from the two previous tables are used to calculate the direct unit costs of some of the activities<sup>65</sup> such as detailed in the table below:

Table 10: Direct unit costs of the HEA project's activities

	Activity cost per unit	Country HR cost <sup>66</sup>	Regional team HR cost <sup>67,68</sup>	Direct Cost Total
Baseline (for 7 baselines conducted) <sup>69</sup>	\$ 22,876	\$10,409	\$ 9,824	\$30,037
Outcome Analysis (10)	\$ 8,286	\$4,858	\$7,573	\$20,717
Collection of key parameters (10)	\$7,598	\$4,858	\$2,614	\$15,069
HEA experts training <sup>70</sup> (221)	\$573,71	\$220	\$276	\$1,069
Operation of the HEA working groups (5)	\$4,860	\$3,643	\$6,003	\$14,505

As regards baselines, OA and the collection of key parameters, activity costs per unit vary significantly from one country and from one area to the other. For instance, the consultation of baseline Terms of Reference carried out in 2019 helped identify a baseline in Mali estimated at \$37,923<sup>72</sup> and another at \$14,092<sup>73</sup> in Chad. These total direct unit costs should therefore be considered to be average costs.

In addition, other direct costs crucial to the project's operation were not included in these unit costs. Within the regional team, these are the resources divided between different projects that handle

<sup>65</sup> It is not possible to determine the direct unit costs for advocacy, awareness raising, media or dissemination and publication activities, given that there are no specific targets in the follow-up table and that said activities are intangible, thus by nature difficult to quantify.

<sup>66</sup> This represents time spent by the focal points (Government NGOs) on the activities (details in Annex). The costs vary from one country to the other.

<sup>67</sup> These costs were calculated by summing up the percentage of time spent on each activity by each employee involved in their implementation (c.f. VI.4.) by the total of wages and fringe benefits of each employee. Employees included in the calculation are the Head of Regional Unit (International Staff), HEA Senior Roving Technical Coordinator (IS), HEA Roving Technical Coordinator (IS), HEA Advocacy Manager (IS), Programme Officer, Regional HEA Unit (National Staff).

<sup>68</sup> It is important to note that the percentage of time spent carrying out these activities depends on the number of units. If the number varied, the percentage would consequently evolve.

<sup>69</sup> Phase VII budget.

<sup>70</sup> FEG costs are included in this expenditure item. They represent \$26,180 for 35 days of consultancy.

<sup>71</sup> This represents the cost per individual per training and not the cost of training each trained individual.

<sup>72</sup> 'Termes de Reference: Formation Baseline – Réalisation Du Profil de Moyens d'existence HEA/AEM de La Zone M116 Du Mali« sud-Ouest Orpaillage et Mais »', Avril 2019.

<sup>73</sup> 'Budget Détaillé Pour La Réalisation Du Profil à Melfi', n.d.

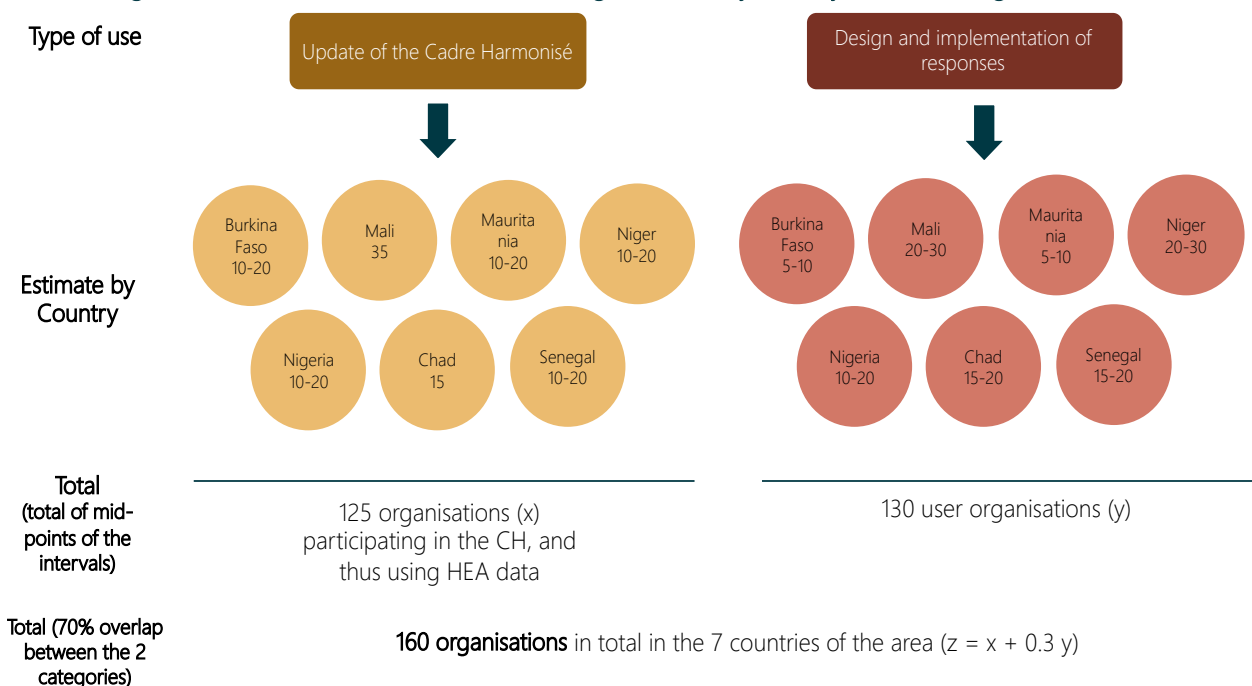
contract monitoring<sup>74</sup> and the dedicated resources<sup>75</sup> that handle advocacy,<sup>76</sup> dissemination, testing and steering of the new approach (using HEA data for the calculation of the Minimum Expenditure Basket for instance), project management and connection. The total budget corresponding to these resources, for the regional team only, is of \$338,185, combined with advocacy and dissemination activities costs of \$40,443 (see Table 6).

Lastly, it is important to emphasise that economic model analysis did not include indirect costs for two reasons. First, it was not possible to break these indirect costs down precisely enough to calculate a representative and meaningful full cost per unit<sup>77</sup> for each of the activities. Moreover, the project team ultimately aimed for a *light* economic model with the least indirect costs possible. This direct cost analysis was thus produced to nourish these reflections.

### III.2.2. HEA project cost-effectiveness report

By triangulating the various data sources (interviews, survey, literature review<sup>78</sup>),<sup>79</sup> the study foregrounded two main categories of use of the HEA approach, and helped estimate for each the number of users by country (c.f. Figure 8). These estimates were made taking a conservative line, i.e. by using the smallest number when the interview or survey data contradicted one another partially.

Figure 8: Estimate of the number of user organisations by country and in the region



Save for Mali, where the collected data highlighted a higher number of local organisations using the approach, data was found to be relatively similar from one country to another with, in general,

<sup>74</sup> the RO Admin Officer and the RO Finance Officer.

<sup>75</sup> The HEA Advocacy Manager and of the remaining portion of the salaries of other members of the regional team.

<sup>76</sup> Since 2017, there is an Advocacy Manager position whose total cost is \$78,926.

<sup>77</sup> That is, which includes direct and indirect costs.

<sup>78</sup> For example, the CH summaries per country, when available, which include the partner organisations.

<sup>79</sup> The data pertaining to website visits (Google Analytics) were not used as a data source for these estimates, given that the data collection highlighted the fact that the website was not a widely used resource. The consultants were unable to gain access to the different countries' mailing lists and thereby estimated the open and/or consultation rates of the various documents shared via these mailing lists.

10 to 20 organisations using HEA data. It is important to note that said data do not reflect strength of use, which ranges from consulting the data to designing a household expenditures basket for instance.

As regards frequency of use of the HEA method, the data suggest that the HEA approach is used several times per year by each of the users. To calculate the cost per use of the HEA, the consultants considered two frequencies, namely 3 times and 6 times per year. Calculations are presented in the following table:

Table 11: Per unit cost of use of the HEA (Cu)

	3 uses per year	6 uses per year
$C_u=CT/(N * F)$	\$3,036	\$1,518

As a reminder (see. II.3 ), the cost per use (Cu) is a theoretical calculation unit used to show the impact of the increase in the number of user organisations (N), of the frequency of use (F) and costs of the project (CT). Here, N equals 160 (c.f. Figure 8) and CT equals \$1,457,668. The consultants calculated Cu with F=3, which is the average number of uses per year (c.f. III.1.1), and with f=6 to show the impact that the frequency has on the per unit cost of use.

Thus, the unit cost for three uses per year of HEA Sahel project information and results is approximately \$3,036 per use. This amount decreases significantly to \$1,518 per use if 6 uses a year are made.

The literature review did not allow for identification of similar projects with which to compare these unit costs. Nevertheless, by drawing a parallel between unit costs and perceived satisfaction and uses of the HEA, time and budget savings by user, these costs seem reasonable. As shown in the next section, drivers nonetheless exist to improve this economic model.

### III.2.3. Drivers and impediments of the economic model

There are three ways to reduce the cost per use and thus generate a positive effect on the use of HEA tools and on the economic model of the HEA Sahel project:

1. Reduce project costs;
2. Increase the frequency of use;
3. Increase the number of users.

#### Reduction of project costs

Save the Children will only be able to marginally reduce costs, which will not allow it to significantly improve its economic model at equal level of effectiveness.

During interviews, almost half of the respondents indeed stressed that it was possible to generate efficiency improvements in data collection and training activities. As regards data collection, the main recommendation lies in decentralizing data collection by collecting via telephone and relying on the existing mesh of local players.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, data collection costs only represent 16% of the total budget.<sup>81</sup> Accordingly, by way of an example, a 25% reduction of data collection costs would result in savings of only \$57,000. This would however make it possible to fund an additional data

<sup>80</sup> Or on other data sources such as satellite imagery, as is the case with the HEA project in Ethiopia.

<sup>81</sup> Baseline production represents 5% of the total budget, the OA 6% and the collection of key parameters 5%, for a total of 16%.

study (baseline or OA), but it would not significantly reduce the total envelope available for the project (3.9% of the total budget).

As regards training, the average unit cost for each participation is of \$798, which, according to the consultants,<sup>82</sup> is relatively low. Nevertheless, as highlighted by a large number of interviewees, the positive impact of low training costs is offset by the turnover of HEA experts. Since the onset of the project, training courses have helped bring a total of 24 trained people,<sup>83 84</sup> to expert level (and capable of using all of the HEA tools independently), a number that is not considered sufficient by users. The distribution of experts by country is detailed in the following table:

**Table 12: Distribution of experts by country**

	B. Faso	Mali	Mauritania	Niger	Nigeria	Senegal	Chad	Total
# experts	3	3	1	6	3	6	2	24

As such, new training costs will be required for new phases of the project to train the experts and data collection team members. It would therefore seem that a driver for improvement of the economic model depends on the selection of people trained and on their loyalty. From this point of view, integration into university curricula such as the master’s in food security of Agrhymet, could represent an interesting example of alternative targeting and sustainable training of HEA experts. Making it known to a greater number of Sahelian food security players, as is already the case in Chad and Niger (c.f. Figure 9)

These trained youth could participate in data collection, and in the long term become experts, either by following training with Save the Children, or within their university. Quality control of the training would nonetheless be required for Save the Children to consider synergies with the certification system of experts that it implemented.

As explained in part III.1.1, the project’s main expenditure item remains human resources, particularly at regional level, and the expenses associated with these HR (per diem, travel). The choice of centralising the office in Dakar, instead of allocating the HR in the different countries covered by phase VII, would make it possible to mitigate associated expenditures. This would however have a marginal impact on the project’s budget as they only represent 4.7% of the total budget and could not be completely removed should the team be decentralized. The only solution to significantly reduce this expenditure item would be to reduce the size of the regional team. However, the majority of persons interviewed, regardless of their country or organisation, agreed on the need to have a regional team to ensure both consistency and quality of data collection, to spearhead proposals to develop the method, and to ensure continuation of the institutionalisation process. Consequently, reducing the HR costs of the regional team simply was not an option at this stage.

One way to reduce this expenditure item would be to convince the different services welcoming the EWS/SAP focal points to pay their full wages or implement a Cost system for EWS/SAP salaries within the country. If the wages of the NGOs’ focal points were funded at country level, this budget reduction would amount to \$177,210. Lastly, one option to optimise the budget could be to reduce Save the Children’s administrative costs. Given that the project would be undertaking its eighth implementation phase, a reduction of these costs seems feasible. The latter represent 16% of the

<sup>82</sup> This opinion is based on three project assessments with a high capacity building component. The costs per participant were higher.

<sup>83</sup> Source: data provided by the HEA regional team.

<sup>84</sup> Even if there were over 1,000 participants in training courses implemented by the project.

total budget and could be reduced to around 7 to 10% (as with the ECHO budget). In opting for 10%, this would represent a reduction of the budget of almost \$83,258.

**Figure 9: Case study on capacity building of universities in Sahel countries**

In Niger and Chad, the long-term institutionalisation strategy of the HEA is being established via a partnership with two universities, thus enabling teachers and their students to be trained on this tool.

In Chad, the institutionalisation process of the HEA approach is being established via a partnership between Oxfam, the NGO focal point for the HEA Sahel project and the University of Ndjameña, which teaches its students the HEA approach. In 2016, a tripartite agreement on the instruction of the HEA method in Chadian universities was signed between the Chadian Government, represented by the Food Security Information and Early Warning Systems (SISAAP), the technical and financial partners represented by OXFAM, and the University of N'Djamena represented by its Faculté de Sciences Économiques et de Gestion (FSEG). Oxfam then provided the university with financial and technical support and thus trained nine Faculty teachers researchers.

The HEA approach is taught in Chad at the FSEG of N'Djamena. During the 2017-2018 academic year, 37 students in master's 1 (Option: Applied Economics - Economy and International Trade) in the French and Arab branches were entitled to HEA training. Moreover, thanks to lobbying efforts on behalf of the Conseil d'Enseignement et de Recherche (CER) on the importance of the tool, the HEA was included in the curriculum at university in Chad.

In Niger, from 2013 to 2018, 250 master's students in nutrition and other disciplines, and approximately 120 others at the Centre Régional d'Enseignement Spécialisé en Agriculture (CRESA) were initiated to the method.

There are two advantages to this institutionalisation approach. To start with, the teachers in these universities capitalize and retransmit the information to their students; and the university institution allows for the archive and potential dissemination of the HEA (via conferences, or simply their students). Unlike NGO staff who regularly move to new positions, teachers generally remain longer, thus avoiding having to be retrained in the HEA method. Secondly, the trained students will end up in various ministries (agriculture, social protection) or NGOs, and will already be aware of the institutionalisation method.

It also represents a disadvantage: the integration of an approach or method in a university curriculum is long and difficult, given the necessity to design the course, to have it validated by the department and by the Council, then to present it to all of the university's teachers for approval of the educational objective of the training. This may well have been done in Niger and Chad, but Save the Children only had a very limited involvement in this process, which affects the level of knowledge and skills of students benefiting from these courses on the HEA. The latter, to date, remains unknown. If the current level of integration of the HEA in the university of N'Djamena and Niamey seems sufficient to educate more food security players in the methodology, an alignment with the certification system of HEA experts implemented by Save the Children seems today necessary to ensure that students trained can sustain the critical mass of HEA experts in the region.

In 2019, ACF also conducted courses on the HEA approach at the University Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD) in Dakar as part of a master's 2 in Nutrition. This partnership between ACF and UCAD will be renewed in the years to come.



The following table illustrates the reduction in the unit cost  $C_u$  from these budget cuts at equal frequency and number of users.

Table 13: Impact of budget cuts on per-unit cost of use

	3 uses/year	6 uses/year
Current $C_u$	\$3,036	\$1,518
> $C_u$ with greater use of mobile data collection (savings of \$57,000, or 3.9% of the total budget)	\$2,918	\$1,459
> $C_u$ with Cost Recovery system at EWS/SAP focal points' level (savings of \$117,210, or 8.0% of the total budget)	\$2,667	\$1,333
> $C_u$ with a reduction of indirect costs (savings of \$83,258, or 5.7% of the total budget)	\$2,863	\$1,432
$C_u$ by aggregating three costs reductions (17.7% of the total budget)	\$2,375	\$1,187

Aggregating these three budget reductions would help reduce the cost of use by 21%.

### Increase in the frequency of use

As explained in part III.1.1, when used, the frequency of use of the HEA is generally relatively high, with several uses per year and three types of use. The HEA data are, by nature, usable occasionally as they are updated, and not on a daily basis. Therefore, frequency of use does not seem to be the main driver to improve the project's performance indicator, although three drivers seem to stand out.

First, the organisations indirectly using the HEA data integrated in the CH do not use all the data, (ex: households with less than x ha, x heads of livestock). If the CH represents their only use, then it is likely that the users within these organisations are not aware or do not instinctively think of consulting the rest of the HEA data, such as those that enable targeting.

In addition, some users have referred to a use which could increase frequency of use of the HEA approach. By highlighting examples of use of the HEA approach for monitoring purposes, international NGOs could indeed use it for this type of use, which still seems to be marginal.

*“At Oxfam, we either use the baseline or the endline to see the changes created within the household. It is a valuation method. It works well. Besides from Oxfam, we don't know who uses it to this end. Christian Aid had expressed their interest, but we don't know if they followed through. There is learning to be shared.” Oxfam*

Lastly, a majority of interviewees agreed to emphasize the untapped potential of the HEA approach for development and resilience programmes.

### Increase in the number of users

An increase in the number of users has been identified as a key parameter to strengthen the HEA's economic model. To do so, several obstacles need to be cleared and drivers need to be activated.

First of all, the people consulted in the framework of this study stressed the need to expand the approach notably by adding data on gender,<sup>85</sup> nutritional indicators,<sup>86</sup> group statuses (refugees, displaced persons, returnees, host populations) in contexts of displacement,<sup>87</sup> and to make more

<sup>85</sup> Spontaneously cited in 10 responses to the survey (n=35), and during 3 interviews.

<sup>86</sup> Spontaneously cited in 7 responses to the survey (n=35), and during 4 interviews.

<sup>87</sup> Spontaneously cited in 5 responses to the survey (n=35), and during 1 interview.

baselines in urban areas. Users also stressed the fact that the HEA was unsuitable for following pastoral groups ; whereas there would be a herd dynamics component included in the HEA tools. It would appear, therefore, that this component is unknown to some of the users.

According to the interviewees, the HEA approach could moreover serve within governments at central, regional, and local levels, and not only within the EWS/SAP, but also within the services in charge of social safety net programmes or longer-term resilience projects. The regional team could for instance establish a dialog with producer organisations (observatories of family holdings, development of strategies and action plans for basic POs who could also use HEA for their monitoring-evaluation mechanism). The HEA approach as it stands does not suffice to target villages and the individuals within the villages to be included in the social protection registers. That is why the HEA is now used in combination with the PMT methodology for social protection projects in the Sahel regions.<sup>88</sup> In addition, at the time of data collection, there was an initiative in Chad to promote HEA targeting for eligibility of households, social safety nets and registration in the unified social register.<sup>89</sup> With regard to resilience projects, most of the interviewees saw the potential of the approach, but data collection for this study was not sufficient to identify concrete examples of use of the HEA<sup>90</sup> within the framework of resilience projects.<sup>91</sup>

Adoption of the HEA approach, particularly at government level, will then require close communication and outreach activities.<sup>92</sup> According to one of the interviewees, the HEA retains an aura of complicated methodology. This same concern applies at local NGO level, who it would seem use the HEA approach relatively sparsely yet who could become regular users. For many, the HEA approach is still considered as an “experts” approach and hard-to-access, whereas it highlights useful information in an important number of sectors (with a single perspective focused on socio-economic categorization, Kcal equivalent, etc.) and could inspire greater communication in this respect.

Lastly, the increase in the number of users will require an evolution of communication means and processes around the methodology. One of the benefits of the HEA project is that it helped create, according to one of the persons interviewed, an “HEA family” with strong links and interactions between players within the country. This benefit is nevertheless also a drawback with respect to increase in the number of users. Most of the HEA information circulate via mailing lists and the website has a reputation for not being up to date. There were only 1,322 unique visits to the HEA Sahel sites between April 2018 and March 2019.<sup>93</sup> This therefore makes it harder to include new potential users who are not part of the working groups in which information on the approach and the project is exchanged.

*“Communication in the form of mapping for the OA should be improved. It is hard to see any visual results online, one has to look for them, ask the partners... Loss in results reporting, especially in the last two years.” Donor*

<sup>88</sup> Maillard and Juillard, ‘HEA Sahel Regional Project External Evaluation (Phases V and VI)’.

<sup>89</sup> Reference database of the beneficiaries of government social protection programmes.

<sup>90</sup> It is important to note that this may be due to a sampling bias.

<sup>91</sup> Even if the participation rate in the survey had been higher, it would have been difficult to accurately predict the extent to which the information on the reference baselines and livelihood maps are actually used by players in the different countries.

<sup>92</sup> For instance, the use of HEA indicators to monitor implementation of national programmes in the framework of national strategies such as the Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity (SCAPP) and National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) in Mauritania.

<sup>93</sup> ‘Analytics HEA Sahel - Vue V3 Présentation de l’audience 2080201 - 20100221’, n.d.

As shown in the following table, an increase in the number of users has an important impact on the per unit cost of use:

Table 14: Impact of the increase in number of users on the per unit cost of use

	3 uses/year	6 uses/year
Current $C_u$	\$3,036	\$1,518
$C_u$ with a 25% increase in the number of users (200 organisations)	\$2 429	\$1 214
$C_u$ with a 50% increase in the number of users (240 organisations)	\$2,024	\$1,012

## IV. Conclusion

Almost 150 organisations use the HEA approach in Sahel countries to update the Cadre Harmonisé and Early Warning System, to target beneficiaries in emergency responses, understand the humanitarian situation in the country and specific areas and to design programs accordingly, define a basket of expenditure for food, calculate the value of cash transfers and/or periodicity, carry out the monitoring and evaluation of projects and design social protection programmes. With close to three different uses on average by organisation and high levels of satisfaction vis-a-vis the HEA, it seems clear that the HEA approach provides its users with many benefits.

The HEA Sahel project, as funder of seven phases of the project, having made possible the training of HEA experts, the constitution of a baseline directory, an OA, and the collection of key parameters, followed by the dissemination of this directory, has directly contributed to the use and adoption of the method in the region. Sustainable adoption of the project however, without the financial support of a regional project, depends on a technical and financial institutionalisation of the approach within the different countries. This could be done via a new economic model combining costs optimization and better distribution of the financial support, which is not always the case despite the seven phases of the project. This is why users agree that were the project to cease, the quantity and quality of available data would gradually decline. This discontinuation would then generate a significant shortfall for food security and livelihood players in the Sahel, who would be forced to invest human and financial resources to do so. Yet, the data show that the tendency of users to invest their resources in HEA data and information collection is limited. However, these users are in favour of a new implementation phase of the project, because from their point of view, perceived benefits outweigh costs incurred. To make the investments already incurred sustainable, it thus seems necessary to seek and secure new and existing funding sources.

The data collected from users and with the budget for phase VII attest that it is possible to improve the HEA Sahel project's economic model. The following recommendations support this.

## V. Recommendations

These recommendations originate from the primary and secondary data analysis. They are organised around two main drivers to improve the economic model.

### Increase in frequency of use and in number of users

- Recommendation 1: Before thinking about increasing its number of users, the project team should implement a monitoring system of the number of HEA users (by separating the

occasional data users from the experts). It should first of all be part of these project monitoring indicators, which is currently not the case. Without necessarily making it possible to assess the more qualitative aspects of use, it would enable the project to have data on the use of the method and thus serve the advocacy strategy of the project. Better monitoring of the number of users will then require a change in communication practices, accentuating communication around the project site (c.f. recommendation 2): rather than to send the analysis results by email, the focal points could send the links to the documents directly on the site to increase traffic and show users that they can have access to all the analyses via this portal. The Google Analytics data of the site would then make it possible to monitor the number of unique uses by country.

- **Recommendation 2:** Several users, especially at regional level, have also highlighted the need to make the site more interactive, with geographical and temporal data visualization tools, such as maps. This would for example make it possible to monitor the evolution of an area and of a set of areas in time and see whether the situation improves or deteriorates. Or, to monitor the evolution of the breakdown of socio-economic groups in time. The current format of the baselines and the OA on the website, namely reports to download, makes this type of comparison and analysis difficult without significant data reprocessing. Management and data analysis solutions, such as *Tableau*, which can be integrated into the existing site, represent limited costs options. The study did not however allow to assess the extent to which this lack of interactivity represented an impediment to use or institutionalisation, even if according to the users, a higher degree of interaction would contribute in the long term to an increase in frequency of use and in number of users. In complementing these tools, the website could include decision- making help notes.
- **Recommendation 3:** To increase the number of users and frequency of use, the HEA Sahel team should accentuate the less frequent uses of the HEA to humanitarian players, such as monitoring, project assessment or calculation of cash transfers values. The project team should target new users by targeting a more significant use by rural and agricultural development, social protection/social safety nets players, and governmental structures.<sup>94</sup> To do so, the project team could strengthen its dissemination activities by developing explanatory guides and documenting concrete examples of use. These explanatory guides could be made via e-learning solutions on the HEA website. The regional team could also support this advocacy strategy through greater use of social networks.
- **Recommendation 4:** The HEA Sahel project should promote the benefits of the HEA Sahel approach to other sectors (protection, WaSH), particularly in terms of design and follow-up of their intervention. In addition, according to some users, the HEA project should include data on gender, nutritional indicators, and data on statuses (displaced persons, refugees, returnees, host population) of target groups in contexts of displacement and pastoral environments. However, including new indicators in the project would represent a significant investment. In lieu thereof, the regional team should communicate on lesser known data (ex: data on pastoral groups) and integrate existing databases in their contextual analysis. Finally, adjustments to the HEA approach, focused on measuring households' capacity to invest in education, health, nutrition and child protection through the use of minimum baskets of expenditure could enable an extension of its use on sectoral projects of the health, education and nutrition type.

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<sup>94</sup> For example, according to one of the people who commented on this report, "In Senegal, the HEA is proposed as a potential tool for the generation of the "vulnerability layer" in the ARC Replica's risk insurance parametric model (via Start Network).

- **Recommendation 5:** The HEA team should consider circulating an annual survey to these users via the site and the working groups. This survey would make it possible both to collect data on the number of users, type and frequency of use and compare them to the data provided in this report (whose numbers could be used as a baseline). This would also allow to better identify user expectations and to perform the necessary adjustments, if requested by a majority of users, regarding the approach and communication made on this last.
- **Recommendation 6:** The HEA approach today appears to be limited to the humanitarian sphere and is fairly little used for development projects, such as resilience activities (observatories, farmers' organisations', sectoral ministries such as those of agriculture and the environment, Economic Community of the States of West Africa). The study has shown that keeping the current activities would make it difficult to change the HEA project's cost structure. Starting from this premise, continuation of the project would require an increase and diversification of the financial partners, chiefly the development partners. According to one of the donors interviewed during data collection, the HEA project should prospect donors funding resilience and social protection such as the World Bank (and in particular take advantage of the rapprochement between the PMT and the HEA to create harmonized registers).

### Project costs reduction and optimisation

- **Recommendation 7:** Collection and financial analysis carried out as part of this study have shown that, at program team level, a budgetary follow-up of activity costs sufficient to make it possible to monitor, assess and identify the costs structure of activities at country level, does not exist. Although such monitoring is not necessary to the implementation of the project, it would help reflections on how to optimise the economic model within the programme team moving forward.
- **Recommendation 8:** Within the various countries of intervention and drawing on the regional offices of the different ministries, such as the Ministry of Agriculture, it would be possible to collect data remotely, via SMS or phone and therefore reduce the project's costs.<sup>95</sup> At equal project costs, the project team could finance the additional data collection and/or use the secondary data sources (i.e. satellite data).
- **Recommendation 9:** Although it is difficult to estimate the magnitude of the phenomenon, almost half of the key interviewees highlighted turnover in the NGO sector as being a significant challenge to the institutionalisation of the project. Given the turnover of NGO employees, the project invests significant resources in HEA experts' training and upgrades (hence the need to focus on institutionalisation and resort to civil servants/public administrations). In order to mitigate the turnover, the project should train more experts at university level and try to establish partnerships with universities in all countries covered by the project. To achieve this and maintain the level of knowledge and skills of trained students, Save the Children further participate in the creation of the curriculum, make sure that the professors teaching the methodology are certified HEA experts, and provide certification and participation in field activities certifications to students wishing to deepen their current skills.
- **Recommendation 10:** HEA training courses conducted by Save the Children and its partners have brought together more than 1,000 participants throughout the seven successive phases of the project. However, there is no follow-up by the project team to determine the number of operational experts by country. To remedy this, Save the Children should look into systematizing the certification process implemented after the Training of Trainers conducted

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<sup>95</sup> To ensure quality control, training employees involved in data collection will be a necessity.

in 2018. To do so, Save could rely on partner universities that could handle the certification process. This would strengthen the partnership with these universities and benefit from said universities' existing certification practices.

- **Recommendation 11:** The various analyses in section III.2 highlighted the different components of the project's cost structure, both in terms of expenditure items and in terms of countries. In the long term, to apply for funding from donors with more modest envelopes, the project team could fund the next phases via a multi donors funding plan. Table 7, with its budget allocation by country, can help design the funding plan. This will however require clearly defining a sound and objectivized strategy in the medium term, with clear objectives by country, especially at regional level. This will make it possible to define the activities, resources and team necessary for the implementation of the project. From there, the funding needs by country will arise, making it possible for Save the Children to establish a funding plan by country and at regional level. With the help of one its partnership managers, Save the Children and its partners could prospect several donors and thus reduce dependence vis-a-vis the project's single donor, OFDA, which incidentally is entitled to hope for a diversification of funding and a perpetuation of the model via cost recovery systems.<sup>96</sup>
- **Recommendation 12:** The project team should define objectively verifiable criteria to determine if a country is ready, or not, for institutionalisation (on both technical and financial grounds) and for a reduction of the financial contributions of the HEA Sahel project. This work began after the Training of Trainers in 2018, where Save the Children assessed the experts according to specific criteria.<sup>97</sup> Despite there being a clear causal link between the experts' capacities and institutionalisation, the latter is not limited to the number or to the skills of experts. These criteria could include for example: access to funding within the country, the ability to self-finance, the number of ministries consulted and included in the data collection, the volume of use within the country, the number and type of use, the degree of delivery and publicity of the approach in the implementation bodies...etc.<sup>98</sup> This institutionalisation "road map" would help determine a strategy specific to each country, both gradual and phased, and could serve as a tool for advocacy and collection of funds from governments and donors.

<sup>96</sup> That are, and it is important to note, uncommon in the sector. For example, the regional team could operate on a system similar to the FEG by selling consultancy days.

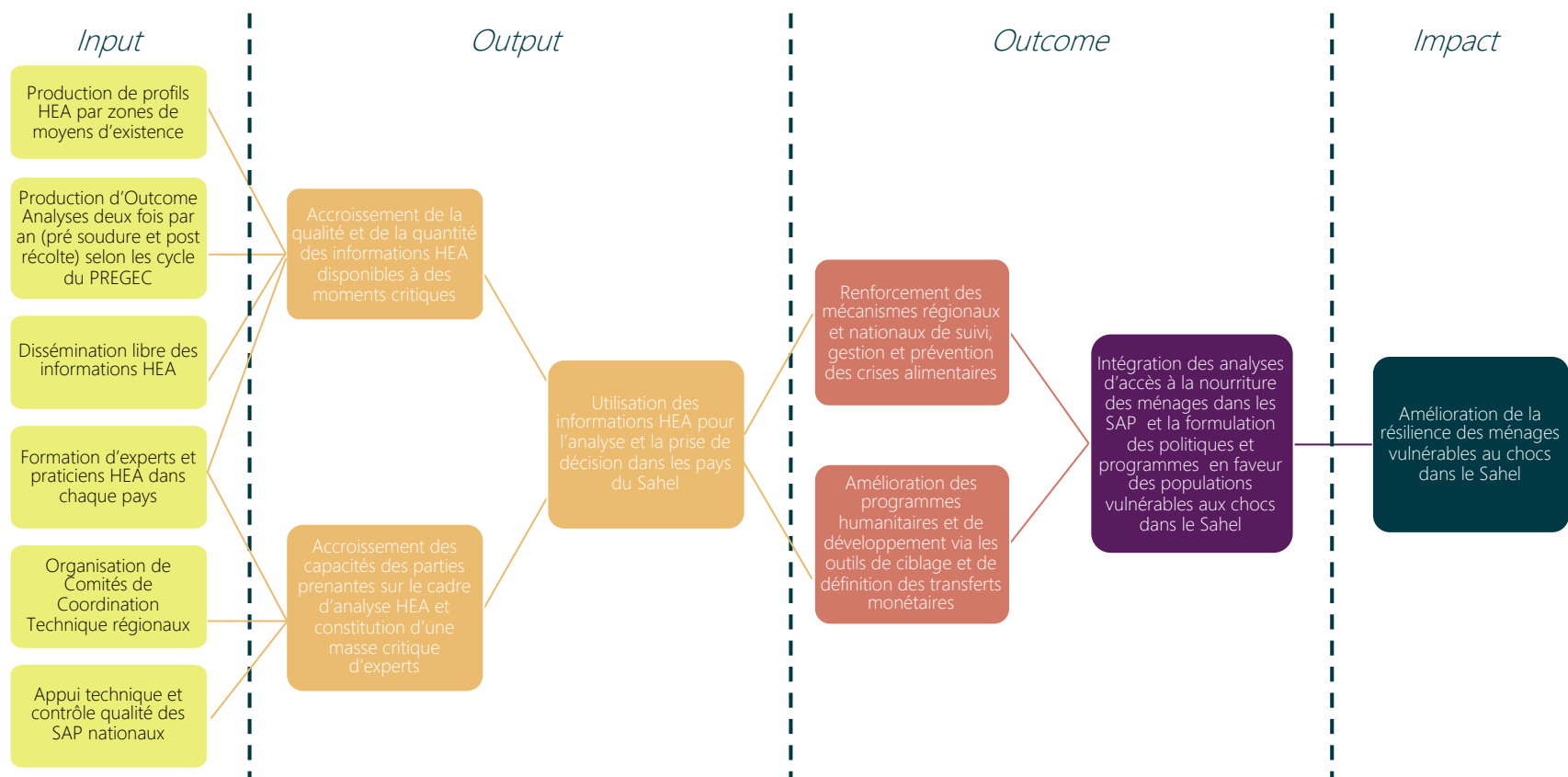
<sup>97</sup> For instance, the trainer's capacity to teach trainees how to perform problem specification calculations.

<sup>98</sup> For instance, CSA of Mali, DNP-GCA and by the Government Ministries in charge of rural development and social protection...

## VI. Annexes

### VI.1. Theory of Change of the project

The following Theory of Change was reconstructed on the basis of the assessment of phase VI and confirmed in the qualitative interviews conducted during the primary data collection.



## VI.2. Study matrix

Research Question: To what extent is the continuation of the HEA Sahel project value-creating, that is to say that the benefits of the project outweigh the costs?

Work issues	Key indicators	Source of Information
<b>1. What is the cost-effectiveness ratio of the HEA project?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cost-programme ratio on the total cost of the budget;</li> <li>- Calculation and comparison of costs depending on the phases;</li> <li>- Estimation of the number of users by country;</li> <li>- Cost-user ratio;</li> <li>- Calculation and comparison of cost per output between different phases of the project;</li> <li>- Calculation of an average cost per output;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Detailed budget of the last phases of the project;</li> <li>- Follow-up data on the project's results;</li> <li>- Website traffic analysis;</li> <li>- Country mailing lists analysis;</li> <li>- Minutes of HEA working group meetings in the countries;</li> <li>- Qualitative data collected during the survey and the interviews;</li> </ul>
<b>2. What are the main benefits of the project for users of the HEA methodology in the Sahel?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identification of the main benefits of the project from the users' point of view in the different countries;</li> <li>- User satisfaction vis-a-vis the methodology for each type of user,</li> <li>- Perceived usefulness and benefits of the HEA approach, justified by concrete examples, by the different users;</li> <li>- Assessment of the project's contribution to the capacity-building of the region's institutional players (national EWS/SAP, other ministries, regional players such as ECOWAS) and to the quality of the analyses;</li> <li>- Testimony/qualitative data highlighting the added value of the project and the methodology compared to others,<sup>99</sup> if possible ;</li> <li>- Testimony/qualitative data highlighting the consequences for users if the project came to a stop.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Donors annual reports (ECHO and OFD);</li> <li>- Research and studies on the use and the effectiveness of the methodology in the Sahel;</li> <li>- Project assessment reports;</li> <li>- Qualitative interviews of the methodology users and beneficiaries of the project;</li> <li>- Results of the online survey that will be circulated to users in the countries.</li> </ul>

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<sup>99</sup> These other tools could include the tools used to update the Cadre Harmonisé, for the assessment of food consumption in the region and targeting of the beneficiary populations.



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## VI.4. Distribution of working time

The following tables were produced by Save the Children's regional team in order to estimate time spent by the regional team and the different countries' focal points in HEA Sahel project activities.

	HEA Head of Regional Unit	HEA Senior Roving Technical Coordinator	HEA Roving Technical Coordinator	Programme Officer, Regional HEA Unit	Point Focal ONG	Point Focal SAP
Baseline	5%	25%	30%	5%	30%	30%
OA	10%	25%	30%	20%	20%	20%
KP	0%	10%	10%	0%	20%	20%
Training	5%	25%	30%	0%	15%	15%
Representation	15%	10%	0%	0%	10%	5%
PM	55%	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%
Admin	5%	0%	0%	65%	5%	10%
FEG	5%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

KEY  
AID  
CONSULTING