



Caisses de résilience in Mali

Promoting women's empowerment and improving nutrition for vulnerable households through an integrated approach

In Mali, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is implementing the “Caisses de Résilience” approach with a strong focus on nutrition to support 3 000 vulnerable households in 64 villages in the Mopti region (district of Bandiagara).

The three-year programme, launched in February 2015, aims to improve nutrition, the empowerment of women and livelihoods resilience of agropastoral households vulnerable to food insecurity, through an integrated set of productive, social, nutritional and financial interventions.

→ Approach

In Mali, training and capacity development of producers through the Farmer Field Schools (FFS) and Agro Pastoral Field and Life Schools (APFLS) are at the heart of the programme. Technical support is provided by a multidisciplinary team composed of agriculture, livestock, health and social development experts who assist men and women farmers through a “School without Walls,” a participatory platform for exchange and dialogue which allows members to learn by observation and direct experimentation in their own fields and households.

The programme is implemented by FAO in partnership with local authorities, community leaders, a local NGO (GAAS Mali) and Government technical services, as well as in close collaboration with WFP and UNICEF as part of a joint action plan to strengthen synergies and complementarity of their interventions in the same villages. Through this collaboration, the same communities benefit from an integrated support package in terms of food, production and access to basic services (water, health, education, nutrition). Joint missions of the three agencies take place regularly.

Targeting of beneficiaries is based on economical and food security criteria (using the Household Economy Approach - HEA¹), combined with nutrition and anthropometric criteria. The baseline survey also includes a qualitative study on nutrition and food consumption behaviors.



Key facts

Location → Mali, Mopti region
(district of Bandiagara)

Target group → 3 000 vulnerable households from 64 villages

Gender → Women represent 50% of the participants of the programme, which specifically supports women's communication and leadership skills

Nutrition → Improving nutrition is a central objective of the programme, with production, training and awareness-raising activities

Governance → Reinforcing local authorities for improved governance and coordination and increased collective impact at the local level

Partnership → Ongoing collaboration with WFP and UNICEF at field level



→ Key components

The programme interventions in Mali are implemented in an integrated manner, targeting the same household. They include:

- **Within the productive component**, the distribution of agriculture and livestock inputs and technical assistance for the adoption of good practices for sustainable and nutrition-sensitive agriculture, in particular mixed polyculture (cereals, vegetable and small livestock), as well as the development of technical skills, mainly integrated production and pest management and good practices of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.
- **Within the financial component**, farmer groups, both men and women, have access to social safety nets combining cash transfers, the establishment of community contingency funds and improved access to local credit systems.
- **Within the social component**, nutrition education based on the importance of local products, especially small livestock, poultry and vegetables, in particular through “food banks” of moringa and baobab plants maintained in a nursery phase in vegetable gardens in order to promote the consumption of their leaves, rich in micronutrients. In addition, local exchange platforms and community listeners’ clubs are set up to improve access to information and communication among different stakeholders in the community, especially women, on issues like nutrition, women’s empowerment, the role of opinion leaders for social change, etc.



Caisses de résilience, a successful approach

The CdR, an approach successfully implemented by FAO for several years in Uganda, Central America and Central African Republic, aims to increase the diversification of livelihoods and the accumulation of productive assets of highly vulnerable households, particularly targeting women, in order to strengthen their resilience to multiple risks and recurrent crises (drought, desertification, floodings, economic shocks, diseases, etc.). The approach allows to support vulnerable households to break the vicious circle of poverty and dependence, that repeated humanitarian interventions often fail to address in a sustainable way, for a virtuous cycle of investment, savings and resilience.

The approach is based on simultaneous support to strengthen **productive**, **financial** and **social** capacities of vulnerable households and their community-based organizations (women’s groups, farmers’ organizations, etc.). The implementation of climate-resilient agriculture practices, agroforestry and disaster risk management (*productive component*), as well as the assistance received to improve production, help increase the productivity of poor agricultural or agro pastoral households. The increased levels of production obtained can thus improve incomes. Combined with a community-based saving and loan system or *warrantage* schemes (*financial component*), the additional income enables to increase the available capital and to improve the reimbursement of loans. The communities can decide to use this increased capital to integrate within their group’s very vulnerable and marginalized households, in order to enable them to better protect their fragile livelihoods and access the benefits linked to the membership of a formalized group, such as: training, access to loans, nutrition monitoring (*social component*). Direct access to credit for women is particularly important to advance empowerment.

→ After 18 months of implementation

- 128 Agro Pastoral Field and Life Schools (APFLS) have been set up, including 3 000 members of which 50% are women ;
- Productive inputs, including nutrient-rich variety seeds (tomatoes, onions, amaranth, baobab, carrots, okra, moringa), orange fleshed sweet potato cuttings (rich in vitamin A), fences for vegetable gardens (4.8 hectares) and watering cans have been distributed to groups ;
- More than 400 public officials, community leaders and women leaders have been trained on good nutrition practices ;
- Numerous activities raising awareness on Essential Nutrition Actions (ENA) have been conducted, including through broadcasted radio messages on feeding practices and nutrition of children; the organization of 24 inter-community meetings to enable identification of and exchange on good local diet practices; the organization of cooking demonstrations using local products in 64 communities and the distribution of 2 000 training manuals on food and nutrition practices and nutrition tip sheets².

From an institutional perspective, the programme contributes to strengthening governance and coordination at regional and local levels by supporting the involvement of all stakeholders (local authorities, civil society organizations, government technical services and administration) in local platforms and monitoring of interventions (information exchange, technical support, etc.). This helps to strengthen the synergy of actions between various stakeholders and different sectors for increased joint impact.



Upscaling the caisses de résilience approach in the Sahel with the AGIR initiative

FAO's CdR approach contributes directly to the operationalization of the Country Resilience Priorities (Priorités Résilience Pays - PRP), adopted by the Government of Mali in 2015 as part of the AGIR initiative ("Alliance Globale pour l'initiative Résilience") for Sahel and West Africa. This initiative was launched by West African regional organizations in June 2012 to strengthen the resilience of households vulnerable to food and nutrition insecurity, following successive food and nutrition crises that recently affected the Sahel (particularly in 2005, 2010 and 2012). The three main components of Mali's PRP are to: improve social protection for the most vulnerable households; strengthen the nutrition of vulnerable households; and sustainably improve agricultural and food productivity, incomes and access to food of vulnerable households. A major challenge of the operationalization of these priorities is the need to adopt an integrated multi-sectoral approach to support the most vulnerable households simultaneously on the three main pillars (social protection, nutrition and agriculture) in order to increase the impact, protect existing gains and reduce the risks of backsliding. Such concerns are addressed by the Caisses de Résilience approach.

→ Over the next two years

The programme will intensify the integration of the different components to enhance the overall impact, mainly through:

- Technical support to men and women producers on vegetable gardening and livestock;
- Conducting exchange sessions on nutrition and cooking demonstrations using local foods in the communities ;
- Broadcasting radio programmes on good feeding practices, hygiene and health;
- Support to existing IYCF (Infant and Young Child Feeding) groups at community level;
- The establishment of community listeners' clubs as well as local multi-stakeholder platforms on resilience and nutrition; as well as
- Combined distributions of productive transfers (cash+) and in-kind productive assets (such as poultry and small livestock), based on available evidence of effectiveness.



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Footnotes

1 A methodology to analyse the main income sources and expense categories of rural households, allowing to classify any group of households in four categories of wealth and to define the main characteristics of each category. For more information: www.hea-sahel.org

2 Nutrition tip sheets are educational materials aiming at facilitating the communication for behavioral change among communities through illustrated key messages on nutrition, food and health.

→ For more information:

On the Mali programme

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