

Letter From the Editor

According to data released by the *Cadre Harmonisé* this month, the Sahel is facing one of the worst years of food insecurity in 15 years. But the causes of food insecurity are more complex today than they have been in the past with additional factors including increased political insecurity and extremist violence layering on top of climate shocks, which are in turn aggravated by the market and social disruptions of COVID 19, and further deepened by additional global disruptions resulting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Consequently, the importance of USAID's work in the Sahel is as great today as it has ever been.

With this setting in mind, we are launching the inaugural issue of The Harmattan Herald, Sahel Regional Office's quarterly newsletter. Over time, we want to highlight key issues, challenges, opportunities, and progress in the region. We hope to inform our stakeholders, promote coordination, and enhance knowledge management across the Sahel. Ultimately, we hope to contribute enduring and sustainable approaches to improve USAID's impact in partnership with other USAID operating units, DC-based Bureaus and Independent Offices, donor and implementing partners, and especially citizens, communities, and countries in the Sahel.

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\$311 Million For the Major Food Crisis in the Sahel and West Africa: To address growing food insecurity that is already affecting tens of millions of people across West Africa, USAID will be providing more than \$311 million in humanitarian assistance to support vulnerable people in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin Regions.

This additional funding will enable USAID partners to provide emergency food and nutrition assistance for more than 3.8 million people. It will also allow protection activities as well as emergency shelter, water, sanitation, and hygiene assistance.

The United Nations currently estimates that more than 40 million people will face food shortages during the upcoming lean season, which is the period between planting and harvest from June to August when food typically runs out across agricultural communities.

Since October 2020, USAID has contributed \$904 million in assistance to the Lake Chad Basin and Sahel regions.

The United States Joins the Sahel Alliance: The United States announced it will become a full member of [the Sahel Alliance](#), an international cooperation platform created in 2017 to enhance the stability and global development of the G5 Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger). The Sahel Alliance was also set up to coordinate donor programs, including over 1,000 projects with a combined budget of nearly \$25 billion in 2020. Joining the Sahel Alliance offers the United States new opportunities to partner with donors, the private sector, and host governments to improve the impacts of our development programs and advance reform efforts in the region. During fiscal year 2020, the United States provided more than \$598 million in development and humanitarian assistance to programs in the G5 countries. AFR AA(acting) Diana Putman's remarks at the general assembly meeting are [here](#).

Women's Group Back In Business: The members of the Wend-Konta association in Kaya, a town in Northeastern Burkina Faso, have restarted their production of Koura-Koura!

Last year, due to several difficulties, they had exhausted their financial resources and could no longer buy peanuts, a key ingredient in the preparation of the famous Koura-Koura meat skewers.

Fortunately, the USAID CATALYSE project was able to help them. This project helps entrepreneurs, especially women and young people, to obtain loans on favorable terms. This includes reduced appraisal fees, advantageous interest rates, and no collateral requirements.

With business picking up, the Wend-Konta Association plans to purchase a grinder and larger peanut roasting machines, ensuring members and their families a stable and promising future.

The USAID CATALYSE project aims to mobilize more than \$34 million in business financing by 2024 to support small businesses in Burkina Faso and Niger.

Success In Ambitious Groundwater Mapping: The USAID TerresEauVie activity has completed a series of groundwater studies in over 18 communes in Niger and 3 in Burkina Faso. The results of the studies will allow decision-makers to better understand the potential and limitations of groundwater use for humans, livestock, and agriculture in the Sahel. The results of the studies will also be useful to guide development and investments, such as building new wells. Sustainable freshwater access, especially in a context of accelerating climate change and growing demographics, is a major challenge for the Sahel.

Niger Establishes its First Water Agency: In January 2022 the Nigerien government set up the country's very first regional water agency in the Maradi region. This was made possible with the support of the USAID TerresEauVie activity along with other partners. In Niger, recurrent droughts, overexploitation of surface and groundwater sources, as well as demographic changes have taken their toll on limited water resources. The water agency will give Niger the structures and tools it needs to protect and share water among communities. Niger is planning to set up approximately 15 water agencies over the next 10 years to manage watersheds across the country.

Mass Land Management Solutions Prevent Local Violence: In Niger, farmers and herders have been increasingly involved in deadly clashes over the use of land to sustain their livelihoods. To address this, the USAID TerresEauVie activity helped several communal and departmental land commissions to take

on the management of more than 32,000+ hectares of pasture areas in the Zinder and Maradi regions. This is equivalent to roughly three times the size of Washington, D.C. This new management includes delineating pasture areas, demarcating cattle passage corridors, and issuing official land tenure documents. Along with other USAID integrated resilience activities such as Hamzari, Girma, Wadata, and in partnership with the World Food Programme, TerresEauVie will continue to support issuing land ownership documents and land management with guidelines in place within local and state government services.

Niger: Women and Youth Mobilized for Flood Prevention The USAID TerresEauVie activity mobilized more than 17,000 women and youth in 23 communes to work on flood prevention. This was organized under "Gayya", a tradition that promotes local solidarity through activities that benefit the community as a whole. As part of their work, these women and youth completed large-scale sanitation work and cleaned 26 kilometers of drainage and gutter ways. In addition to flood prevention, the nearly 120,000 residents of the communes benefitted from cleaner streets and a reduction in the incident rate of several diseases. This also contributed to having women to become recognized agents of positive change in flood preparedness, and management efforts and are continuing these cleaning operations.

Shock Response Activity Implementation Saves Lives: USAID implements many of its development activities with provisions in award agreements called Crisis Modifiers. This allows for the rapid shifting of program activities to respond to shocks, both natural and man-made, including droughts, floods, disease outbreaks or other crises. Since November 2019, the USAID TerresEauVie activity has enacted five Crisis Modifiers to support and augment humanitarian delivery of drinking water to 28,000 people in areas of Burkina Faso and Niger affected by violence and floods. The infrastructure built through these efforts will be handed over to local authorities, with assistance from the activity for long-term management. Crisis Modifiers are key to avoid seeing investments and hard-won progress suddenly wiped out by rapid onset disasters.

Chad: President and Women Leaders Unite for Peace: In February, USAID and FHI 360 brought together 115 members of the National Council of Women Leaders in Bongor, a city in southwest Chad. There, the women leaders were trained on the country's transition legal framework and discussed their participation in that process. In March, President Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno met with the members of the National Council of Women Leaders to hear their ideas and reiterated the essential role of women in an inclusive and successful transition. He also praised the work of the National Council of Women Leaders when appointing a woman to the rank of Brigadier General for the first time in the country's history on March 8, 2022.

COVID-19 Update: In March 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) was signed into law, providing \$11 billion in resources to USAID and the State Department to support African nations in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. As of March 31, 2022, USAID's Sahel Regional Office and our client country offices received a total of \$15.7 million to strengthen health systems, support vaccination drives, reduce mortality through critical medical supplies, and limit contagion through the provision of protective gear and behavior change campaigns.