

Briefing Paper

Chad Conference: Resilience to food and nutrition crises

Introduction

This briefing paper is a summary of the discussions and conclusions of the Chad Conference on resilience to food and nutrition crises which took place in N'Djamena, Chad on 11-12 December 2013. The conference was a follow-up to a roundtable event on resilience to food and nutrition crises held in Dublin, Ireland in March 2013.

Over 60 participants attended the conference including representatives from the Government of Chad and Niger, local and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), United Nations (UN) agencies and donors including staff of the European Union (EU) Delegation, European Commission Humanitarian Aid & Civil Protection (ECHO) as well as national and international academic researchers.

The conference objectives were:

1. to achieve a common understanding of 'resilience'

2. to provide a forum for key actors to share learning, ideas, experiences, problems/ constraints encountered

3. to increase donor interest and investment in helping to address poverty and vulnerability in Chad, with particular focus on 'community resilience'.

A common understanding of resilience

Although the concept of resilience is not new, debates on resilience must strive to clarify the approach. Answering two simple questions can go a long way in understanding resilience: first, **resilience of whom?** Resilience is concerned with the most vulnerable, including the poorest of the poor, women and children, pregnant and lactating mothers, the very old and the disabled. Second, **resilience to what?** The largest concerns are climatic and economic shocks, conflicts and epidemics – but new ones could emerge in the future.

Building on the definitions that were shared, resilience can be defined as: "the ability of a country, community or household to anticipate, respond to, cope with and recover from the effects of shocks or changes in a timely and efficient manner, maintaining or improving their current quality of life, structures, functions and identities and without jeopardising their long-term prospects."



Concern:
tackling
hunger...

Sharing lessons learned and experiences

Through speeches, presentations and in-depth roundtable discussions on resilience globally and in the context of Chad, the following points of common agreement emerged:

There is a strong economic, social and humanitarian rationale for investing in building resilience to food and nutrition crises, especially in the context of vulnerable communities living in a chronic crisis environment. Building resilience seems to be the best way to balance the sometimes conflicting development and emergency response approaches, and to achieve long-term development goals. Development and humanitarian policies must move beyond their 'silos' and invest in prevention or mitigation. This requires collaboration between development and emergency actors.

Programming for resilience is an approach focused on results rather than a set of pre-defined development activities. It targets specific groups or populations: the poorest and most vulnerable, including women, and is therefore concerned with gender equality. Because poverty is rooted in a multi-dimensional reality, to have an impact policies and programmes that seek to build resilience must be multi-sectoral (cutting across food security, livelihoods, health, nutrition, WASH, education and social protection) and must involve all stakeholders (government, target communities, civil society, private sector, NGOs, UN and donors).

Resilience policy and programme design requires an analysis of the underlying causes of poverty in order to address these, rather than the symptoms. Contextual analysis and participative programme design are crucial to ensure locally appropriate solutions as well as to learn from local resilience strategies. In addition, measurement and identification of what works, followed by its scaling-up, will ensure sustainable practice for building resilience.

Resilience programming, including disaster risk reduction, must be done in coordination with existing structures and institutions and include capacity building, as well as surge capacity supplementation when required. Coordination is essential in order to avoid duplication and the creation of unsustainable parallel structures and to ensure ownership and appropriation by the state and the communities.

The Government of Niger shared its experience with the 'Nigeriens Feed Nigeriens' (3N) initiative. The 3N initiative is based on an inter-sector, multi-actor approach, crystallised by national, regional, departmental and communal level policy and programme dialogue which reinforces institutional dynamics for resilience to food and nutrition crises at all levels. The Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative (AGIR) has been incorporated into the 3N initiative, further strengthening the links between emergency response, recovery and development programmes and policies. Innovative aspects include a participative community early warning system and an effort to offer integrated services at the local level, covering agriculture, pastoralism, nutrition and environmental activities under the mantle of resilience.



The semi-arid landscape at Fagatar village, eastern Dar Sila region, Chad.



Concern community animator, Aicha Ousmane, training community members on Vitamin A rich foods and mother and child nutrition at Fagatar Village, eastern Dar Sila region, Chad.

Connell Foley, Dec 2013/Chad

Challenges and opportunities in Chad

There are multiple challenges as well as vast opportunities in Chad in terms of building resilience to food and nutrition crises. Chad was impacted by the wider Sahel 2012 food crisis in a significant way, with half of the population of 12 million living under the poverty line and the vast majority relying on subsistence farming for their incomes.

By 2020, Chad aims to be transitioning from a developing country to an emerging economy. Agriculture and rural development will play a key role under this vision for the country, and have been identified as strategic priorities by the current administration. The country's wider plans for tackling resilience link into a National Development Plan (2013-15) and a National Food Security Programme (PNSA). As Chad has also signed up to the AGIR, Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) and the Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and undernutrition (REACH) initiatives, the government will seek to ensure that they achieve synergies through inter-ministerial collaboration.

Despite these efforts in guaranteeing access to food and boosting agricultural production, significant challenges

remain in terms of strengthening resilience to food and nutrition crises. Beyond structural conditions, (including poverty, hunger and vulnerability to droughts and floods) and shocks such as plagues and epidemics, Chad's vulnerability is also exacerbated by price volatility and conflict. In addition, institutional capacity and governance issues constitute barriers to greater inter-ministerial collaboration, cross-sector policy design, implementation and monitoring, at the national, regional and local levels. Decentralising public sector presence and strengthening community capacities for response, recovery and development will be crucial to improve fragile and vulnerable populations' access to services and information. Improving resource allocation for resilience across sectors, ministries and communities, as well as creating structured communication channels, will be essential so that stakeholders are linked to decision-makers.

However, it is important to highlight that Chad's communities are used to living in harsh conditions, and thus have a wealth of knowledge about resilience, coping strategies and adaptive practices. The country also has natural resources that can be invested in building the resilience of the poorest and most vulnerable communities.

Conference outcomes

Chad is just beginning its journey towards building resilience to food and nutrition crises, and strengthening integrated policy making and programming. The following are the four key outcomes of the conference:

- The discussions helped to forge a common understanding of what community resilience to food and nutrition crises means in the context of Chad, across the government, donor, civil society and academic sectors.
- Lessons were shared from the Sahel and the Horn of Africa regions and challenges and opportunities to build resilience to food and nutrition crises were identified.
- The idea of drafting a national strategy for food and nutrition security, not only to improve the country's resilience to food and nutrition crises but also to engage in more concrete and meaningful ways with international policy processes such as AGIR and SUN was identified. Participants agreed that a national strategy would give all stakeholders a framework to operate in when investing in or programming for resilience-related activities.
- The conference strongly agreed on the need for formal and informal information sharing systems and fora in order to build momentum behind the resilience agenda.

Conference recommendations

Government

- **Formalise the process for decision making, consultation and implementation of a national approach to resilience.**
- **Use the existing CASAGC¹ platform to lead on resilience initiatives, whilst also building the capacity of the platform and extending it to include all stakeholders.²**
- **Increase the allocation of national resources for resilience building projects.**
- **Continue the process of implementation of a national early warning system.**

Civil Society

- **Strengthen and define civil society structures so as to achieve greater synergies and to have a greater participation in resilience activities nationally.**
- **Increase the participation of women to ensure gender aspects are addressed.**
- **Mobilise communities and raise awareness to ensure a better understanding of resilience and of national initiatives relating to resilience.**
- **Coordinate with other actors (NGOs, institutions etc) on advocacy efforts.**

Technical partners (NGOs and UN Agencies)

- **Improve coordination amongst stakeholders to achieve the greatest impact.**
- **Ensure greater coherence on approaches to and understanding of resilience.**
- **Raise awareness on resilience initiatives at decentralised level.**
- **Support and build the capacity of local NGOs and civil society groups.**
- **Engage with and include the private sector in resilience initiatives.**
- **Document and share contextual analyses, needs assessments, experiences and best practice relating to resilience.**

Donors

- **Engage with and support the government in the implementation of AGIR, SUN and similar initiatives.**
- **Coordinate amongst themselves for the coherent funding of resilience initiatives in Chad.**
- **Mobilise greater resources, and particularly long term resources, to finance resilience initiatives.**

¹ Action Committee for Food Security and Crises Management

² On the 4th of March 2014, the Prime Minister signed Decree # 527/PR/PM/2014 defining a new "Dispositif National de Prévention et de Gestion des Crises Alimentaires et Nutritionnelles" which includes all relevant stakeholders.