



# **SAHEL: FIGHTING INEQUALITY TO RESPOND TO DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY CHALLENGES**

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Despite its development potential, the Sahel faces an unprecedented crisis. Today, there is a multifaceted predicament on top of the pre-existing development challenges that the region has been tackling. This has security, humanitarian, and environmental aspects. The crisis also has its roots in the inequality and the strong sense of injustice among the region's people, particularly the youth. Inequality is profound and is seen in all aspects of life. The governments of the Sahelian countries and the international community must respond to these urgent problems, making the fight against inequality a top priority. Strong, well-coordinated responses engaging all stakeholders must go beyond the current narrow focus on security, and can result in lasting solutions.

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For further information on the issues raised in this paper please email [advocacy@oxfaminternational.org](mailto:advocacy@oxfaminternational.org)

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Cover photo: Fatoumata lives in the community of Koto Dougo, 20km from the city of Bobo Diulasso, in Burkina Faso. She is a cattle rancher and milk producer. Every day she travels 20km to Bobo to sell her milk and milk produced by the other families in her community.

Photo: Pablo Tasco/Oxfam Intermon.

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# SUMMARY

Despite its development potential, the Sahel faces myriad challenges that require a vigorous response from governments, regional institutions and the international community. These challenges are a constant focus of attention for forums such as the G5 or the Sahel Alliance, which work to coordinate their security and development efforts. They are above all the daily focus of attention for the populations, especially its poorest communities, women and young people, who are concerned for their safety and lack access to the resources required to live in dignity as well as to healthcare and education services.

The growing economic, social and political divide makes the lives of millions of people tougher and shorter. Inequality is flagrant and manifest in all areas of life. It locks a growing share of the population in poverty and leaves them without prospects for the future. It fuels injustice and tensions and undermines the social contract and relations between communities. It creates the conditions for the destabilization and insecurity that prevails in the region today. The responses provided by governments and the international community to the humanitarian, food, climate and security crises must prioritize the reduction of inequality and injustice. It is vital that policy solutions be conceived through this lens in order to get populations on the path of inclusive development and provide lasting solutions to the current insecurity. Inequality is not inevitable; rather, it calls for strong and coordinated responses from all stakeholders.

## REDUCING INEQUALITY: AN URGENT NEED

**The fiscal and tax policy choices of the governments of the Sahel leave them with insufficient resources to finance quality public services for all** or reduce income inequality among the population and thus forge a stronger social contract. In 2016, government revenues represented only 22% of GDP in Senegal and a mere 14.4% in Niger. However, not only are these revenues low, which restricts governments' ability to finance redistributive social policies, there is also the question of governments' reliance mainly on regressive tax instruments such as a consumption tax. Because people living in poverty consume a larger share of their income than the rich, proportionally, they are the most-heavily taxed by these measures, which have an even greater impact on women, who are often among the poorest segments of the population. At the same time, tax incentives that aim to attract investors are a significant drain on government revenues. In Mali in 2015, total exemptions amounted to 203.45 billion CFA francs, or nearly 11% of the Government's budget and three-and-a-half times the education budget for that year. For the governments of the Sahel, extractive industries in particular are formidable negotiators. Whereas Niger, for example, is the world's fourth-largest producer of uranium, its largest export product, it receives only 4% to 6% of its budget revenues from that sector. Far from being used as levers to reduce poverty and inequality, such tax policy choices therefore tend to maintain or exacerbate them.

**A large share of the population, which consists of marginalized groups or victims of discrimination, is neglected by public education, health and social welfare services.** The Sahel countries rank among the world's lowest on the Human Development Index (HDI) due to unequal access to healthcare and quality education, which bears a direct relationship with income and wealth inequality. Populations' access to healthcare is especially limited by the cost of services, with more than 50% of families unable to provide their children with the medical care they need. As a result, under-five mortality in Senegal is almost two-and-a-half times greater among the poorest 20% of the population than among the richest 20%. In Chad, women in the richest quintile are four-and-a-half times more likely to receive qualified care during childbirth than those in the poorest quintile. These inequalities are further exacerbated by geographic location, the density of healthcare workers in rural areas being alarmingly low, resulting in tragic consequences. Households' economic status also has a crucial impact on the educational attainment of children. In Burkina Faso, household living standards often prove to be the leading driver of children's school attendance, resulting in wide gaps between the richest and poorest segments of the population. The education system fails to close the gap between girls and boys and sometimes even contributes to widening the inequality of opportunity when it comes to training or labour force integration, as girls are not retained long enough in the system. In many families, the decision to educate girls depends on the economic situation of the family and is subordinate to the educational and occupational choices of boys as well as the pregnancies, child marriages and domestic duties imposed on girls. The tens of millions of nomadic or transhumant pastoralists in the Sahel are particularly affected by inequality of access to basic services (health, education, drinking water, etc.), which are ill-suited to their way of life. In Mali, in the absence of official statistics, school attendance rates are estimated at between 2% and 3% for the children of nomadic pastoralists.

**Opportunities for training, work and economic and financial emancipation are scant for a large share of the population, especially in rural areas.** The agricultural sector is strategic in the Sahel countries, where an overwhelming share of the population depends on agriculture and herding for their livelihood. However, rural areas are also home to the greatest poverty as well as populations highly vulnerable to shocks. Regional and social inequalities are also more prevalent. Despite the overall funding increase in the agricultural sector, family farming and rural farming by young people as well as public goods and services are too often deprived of investment. Access to funding is particularly unequal among pastoralist populations. Whereas livestock raising accounts for almost one-third of agricultural GDP, it receives only 10% of agricultural expenditure. At the household level, economic inequality plays a major role in food insecurity. Hunger primarily affects the poorest communities, who do not have access to land or other productive resources. They experience problems accessing sufficient healthy food throughout the year and frequently depend on humanitarian aid or village solidarity for their subsistence. Due to the limited provision of training and opportunities, the overwhelming majority of the rural youth have no choice but to participate in the informal agricultural economy in order to meet their basic needs. This work, which often takes place on farms run by the head of the family, offers little opportunity for social or economic emancipation. For young girls, involvement in household chores further limits opportunities. Women are required to be both housewives and farmers. While

women account for around 40% of the agricultural labour force in Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal and play a vital role in ensuring household food security, they account for less than 10% of farm-plot owners and have significantly less access to finance.

**The Sahel is one of the world's regions worst-hit by global climate inequality.** Responsible for an estimated 0.25% of total greenhouse gas emissions, the Sahelian countries rank among the most vulnerable to climate disruption. The effects of climate change are also highly unequal among Sahelian populations, disproportionately affecting small farmers, pastoralist populations, women and poor communities living in precarious conditions (housing, financial resources, etc.). Episodes of drought increase pressure on resources, exacerbating numerous simmering tensions. Conflicts between herders and farmers, which have caused hundreds of deaths in recent years, particularly in Mali and Chad, is largely attributable to the use and ownership of land, which the authorities have mismanaged for decades. Without appropriate solutions, droughts, soil degradation and water scarcity will tend to foster such conflicts, which are already exacerbated by the current security environment. Recurring drastic climate events can also be expected to accelerate the rate of population displacement, particularly to urban areas, increasing pressure on employment, housing, energy, healthcare and sanitation in cities. When combined with political instability and conflict, as in the case of Mali in 2012, droughts can trigger tragic humanitarian crises. Adapting to and combating climate change are critical policy issues for the countries of the Sahel. Last February, 17 governments across the Sahel belt announced a US\$400-billion Climate Investment Plan, which received initial pledges of aid. However, funding needs remain huge.

## STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE AND THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

**The Sahel countries are faced with institutional, local and economic governance challenges.** These challenges must be overcome to improve basic services as well as access to them, strengthen judicial systems, fight corruption and build effective, inclusive and equitable institutions capable of improving public services and citizen engagement. These challenges also fuel discontent towards governments and contribute to weakening their legitimacy. The populations aspire to the exercise of their most basic rights as well as greater justice, transparency and accountability at all levels. These demands for social justice are expressed through citizen movements that have gathered momentum in recent decades. Collective, associative, citizens' and media initiatives are multiplying to fight corruption and improve transparency and information regarding government budgets and spending. However, discontent is also expressed in the street. In Burkina Faso, Chad and Niger, the social climate has deteriorated under the effect of the austerity measures adopted by their governments, which directly affect the poorest communities. The protests and mass strikes seen in Chad in response to drastic government spending cuts and sharp tax hikes since 2016 are one particular dramatic example.

**In recent years, the democratic expression of Sahelian populations has encountered a significant reduction in civic space.** Many limits are placed on

the exercise of citizenship, including restrictive regulatory frameworks, bureaucratic barriers and a lack of specific protection for stakeholders who engage or openly criticize measures taken by the ruling elite. In Mauritania in 2016, human rights groups and citizens' organizations denounced the adoption of a bill restricting freedom of association and curbing the areas of competence and levels of action of civil society organizations. In the worst cases, these organizations, as well as journalists and citizens who advocate for budget transparency and denounce corruption are victims of smear campaigns, censorship, acts of intimidation and violence. In Niger, for example, many of the organizers of a Citizens' Day of Action in March 2018, which was held to protest against some measures contained in the finance bill passed at the end of 2017 and which were deemed unjust, were arrested and sentenced to prison terms. For years in Chad, human rights groups have been denouncing restrictions on civic space, in particular constraints on the right to peaceful protest, which has been further curbed since the 2016 elections. Yet the guaranteed right to freedom of association, expression, assembly and information is a precondition to democratic expression and political stability.

**Discrimination against Sahelian women permeates all spheres of society.** It is firmly entrenched in customs and practices but also in social institutions that determine the status of women as actors in society, political and democratic life, the economy and the private sphere. This is the case in particular of those social institutions that determine the decision-making power and status of women at home and in the family. Marriage and divorce, parental authority and inheritance rights are governed by laws and informal rules, norms and social practices that are highly unfavourable to women. Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Chad are among the countries with the highest rates of child marriage in the world (as high as 76% in Niger). Such practices are often correlated with socioeconomic inequalities. Women also receive insufficient protection from the violence committed against them, with a lack of domestic violence legislation too often legitimizing such practices. Female genital mutilation is criminalized, but the law is often poorly enforced. In Mali, nine out of 10 women have been victims of this practice. Sahelian women and girls have little power over their bodies or reproductive choices. Only 13% to 23% of women aged 15-49 use modern contraceptive methods. Among 15-19 year-olds, this percentage is even lower.

## IMPROVING CRISIS RESPONSE COORDINATION AND PLACING THE RESILIENCE OF POPULATIONS AT THE HEART OF INTERVENTIONS

The security and humanitarian situation is deteriorating, despite massive military campaigns by the international community and countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad, which since 2014 have met under the banner of the G5 Sahel. In one year alone, more than 440,000 people were forced to flee their homes, depriving them of their livelihoods and access to basic education and healthcare services and exposing them to new risks. It is estimated that 5.1 million people currently need humanitarian assistance in Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso.<sup>1</sup> According to the March 2019 UN Office for the

Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) harmonized framework, 1.8 million people are food-insecure. The spread of insecurity in the Liptako-Gourma region reflects the fragility of these states in many areas and the frustrations of long-neglected communities.

**To provide lasting solutions to this multi-dimensional crisis, stakeholders must invest heavily in governance and the social contract.** The distorting mirror approach of the Sahelian governments and the international community, which combines security and development, is criticized in particular for the priority it gives to restoring state structures over relations between populations and institutions and between different communities. To consolidate peace, society's deeply-held grievances must be addressed and inequality must be reduced at all levels. To this end, responsible and transparent governance is indispensable. Security measures and anti-terrorism legislation have been introduced across the Sahel to counter cross-border threats. However, these measures and the use of government security forces, which are sometimes unruly and themselves guilty of abuse and human rights violations, have been accused of exacerbating the conflict. Abuses committed on both sides reduce the sense of security among communities and individuals, who do not feel protected. To be successful in the long term, responses must prioritize the human dimension of security. This encompasses social, cultural, economic, political and psychosocial factors, which affect men and women differently.

**Budgetary expenditures on defence and public security have increased sharply in recent years, draining development budgets and social spending on education and health at the risk of perpetuating a vicious circle.** In Niger and Chad, average annual spending on education decreased over the period 2016-2019. In Burkina Faso, it was 30 billion CFA francs lower in 2019 than forecast in the 2017 finance bill. Health, education and agriculture budgets also change erratically from one year to the next, reflecting difficult political trade-offs between sectors. Niger's health budget, for example, fell by 22% year-on-year in 2016 before recovering and exceeding its 2015 level in 2019, while Mali's education budget was cut in 2019 despite positive overall growth in recent years. The G5 Sahel countries have also had to raise some taxes in response to new budgetary constraints. When they affect poor communities, such tax-related decisions risk exacerbating income inequality and are a source of discontent and social tensions in several countries, including Burkina Faso, Chad and Niger. Finally, despite the launch of the Sahel Alliance, the Sahelian countries receive insufficient aid to invest adequately in social budgets and reduce inequality.

**The proliferation of intervention frameworks and strategies in the Sahel increases the risk of competition between actors, complicating the design of equitable, concerted and inclusive public policies.** While these strategies coincide in some areas, they differ in others such as geographic targets, their respective priorities beyond a broadly common reading of the issues, the tools for implementation, the partnerships envisaged and their ability or willingness to unite other stakeholders. Created in 2017, the Sahel Alliance aims to be a platform for coordination among development partners designed to strengthen the impact of actions on the ground. However, how it ties in with the UN Support Plan for the Sahel, for example, which was adopted in 2018 and is also presented as an instrument designed to foster coherence and coordination, is not yet clear. The same holds for the extent to which these initiatives enable the

operationalization of the G5 Sahel Development and Security Strategy beyond funding for projects under its Priority Investment Programme. It is vital that these initiatives be organized and complement one another so that a united and coherent plan can be built for the development of the Sahel's regions in the midst of a particularly complex environment.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Regional governments, institutions and aid services as well as international donors, development partners and foreign aid services must act in concert to fight inequality:

1. By implementing progressive and fair tax policies that reduce income inequality and raise sufficient funds to finance quality and inclusive social and development policies.
2. With education, health and social protection policies that guarantee free, universal public services that are appropriate for women and girls and transparent for recipients.
3. With fair and equitable agricultural and herding policies that provide dignified work, incomes and life opportunities for all people who live off these activities and enhance the resilience and food security of the populations.
4. With rapid climate change adaptation policies that strengthen the prevention and resilience capacity of the populations most directly affected by the ongoing disruptions.
5. With regulatory, legal and political frameworks and social institutions that reduce discriminatory inequality and the vulnerability of Sahelian women in all areas of public, economic and political life as well as in the private sphere.
6. By rebuilding fairer and more inclusive governance at all levels of decision making, from the local to the regional and by protecting and strengthening civic space in order to enable all women and men to be represented and to actively participate in public and political life.
7. By responding to crises in a coordinated manner that meets the needs of the population in terms of human security, development and access to free, universal and quality public services.

# INTRODUCTION

By adopting Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10, which aims to reduce inequality, governments around the world recognized in 2015 the extent of economic and social divides and their impact on people's lives. These divides are evident in all areas in the countries at the heart of our analysis: Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Chad. Inequality of income and access to quality public services not only between genders but also between groups of neglected populations or people facing discrimination deprives millions of people of hope for the future. This economic and social divide is felt daily and makes the lives of millions of people tougher and shorter. Despite the Sahel's wealth and potential, 40% of the population lives below the poverty line, and the region is one of the least developed in the world. Infant and maternal mortality rates are among the highest, nearly 2.5 million school-age children are not in school and half the population does not have access to safe drinking water. Poor people receive little or no social protection, and workers are poorly protected and often forced to work in undignified conditions for meagre livelihoods. Deteriorating climate conditions further increase the vulnerability of the population, affecting above all those who are the least able to cope.

Inequality also manifests itself in the political, social and democratic spheres. It breeds frustration and is a source of discord, which undermines the social contract. The challenges to governance are huge, as are the demands placed on governments to improve access to public and citizenship services, fight corruption, strengthen judicial systems and increase the participation of populations currently excluded or marginalized from public and democratic life. The populations aspire to express their rights and their desire for greater justice, transparency and accountability at all levels. These demands are expressed not only in citizens' movements that have gathered momentum in recent decades but also in the street, and the responses to them have heightened tensions. The shrinking of civic space in several countries in recent years curtails the capacity of a growing segment of the population to express itself. In the absence of effective consultation on the development policies being put in place, the poorest citizens, marginalized groups and women are often excluded from decision-making processes.

These challenges are a constant focus of attention for forums such as the G5 Sahel or the Sahel Alliance, which try to implement coordinated solutions. Above all, they are a daily focus of attention for the Sahelian population, especially its poorest segments, women and young people, who fear for their safety, struggle to ensure their own livelihoods and lack access to the basic services that would allow them to live in dignity. These growing frustrations and inequality provide fertile ground for persistent conflict. They have plunged the region's countries into a multi-dimensional crisis that requires a vigorous response. Security and military solutions are now a growing focus of the efforts of regional governments and the international community, which are fighting various forms of conflict and trafficking that are destabilizing institutions, terrorizing populations and undermining development progress. These actions are accompanied by initiatives aiming to accelerate development efforts, in particular under the banner of the Sahel Alliance, in order to address the various challenges facing

the Sahel region. They have shone a light and drawn the attention of world leaders to the urgency of the situation and the need to address vulnerabilities. It is imperative that they address the root causes of the challenges by supporting proactive policies that lead to a lasting reduction in inequality.

# 1 AN URGENT NEED TO REDUCE INEQUALITY

Recent studies by the International Monetary Fund (IMF)<sup>2</sup> have showed the negative impact of income inequality on a country's long-term growth and prosperity when it exceeds a certain level (a Gini coefficient of income distribution of 0.27).<sup>3</sup> This is the case in particular when incomes are highly concentrated in the hands of a minority of the population. All the region's countries have crossed this threshold.<sup>4</sup> Compared with their neighbours, Chad and Senegal are the most unequal Sahelian countries, with the richest 10% of the population receiving a share of gross national income twice as high as the poorest 40%.<sup>5</sup> The IMF now recognizes that under such circumstances, an increase in inequality further undermines social consensus and risks leading to social unrest if fair and sustainable solutions are not devised and put into action.<sup>6</sup>

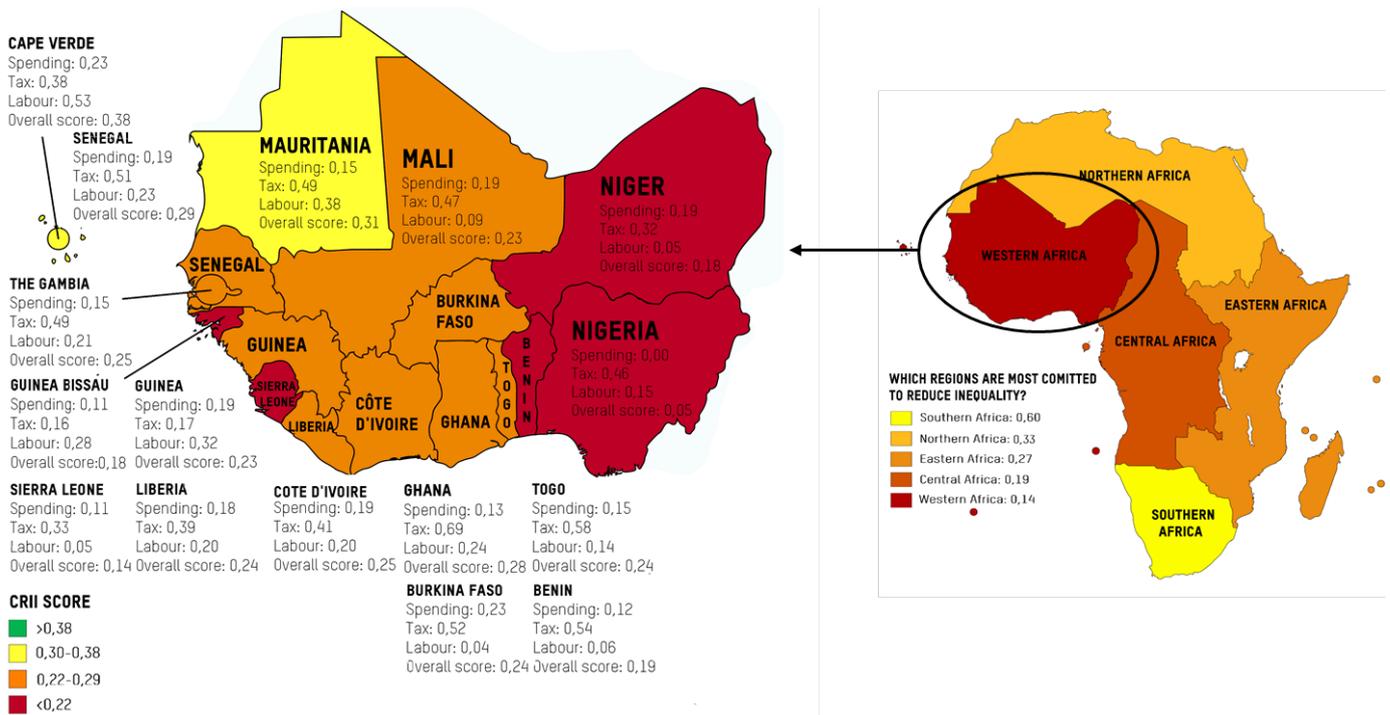
	<b>HDI (Global ranking)</b>	<b>Poverty (income &lt; US\$1.90/day)</b>	<b>Income inequality (Gini)</b>	<b>Healthy life expectancy at birth<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Malnutrition (acute and moderate) of children aged under five</b>	<b>Literacy rate</b>
<i>Burkina Faso</i>	0.423 (183)	43.7%	35.3	52.9	27.3%	34.6%
<i>Mali</i>	0.427 (182)	49.7%	33.0	50.7	30.4%	33.1%
<i>Mauritania</i>	0.520 (159)	6.0%	32.6	56.4	27.9%	43.5%
<i>Niger</i>	0.354 (189)	44.5%	34.3	52.5	42.2%	15.5%
<i>Chad</i>	0.404 (186)	38.4%	43.3	47.2	39.8%	22.3%
<i>Senegal</i>	0.505 (164)	38.0%	40.3	58.8	17.1%	42.8%

Source: UNDP Database: <http://hdr.undp.org>

<sup>a</sup> WHO (2016)

Reducing inequality in all its forms is therefore an economic, social and political imperative for the countries of the Sahel, and governments have many policy options to achieve this. Progressive tax policies, in particular, can be powerful tools since they enable the direct redistribution of income within society. Funds raised and support from the international development community can help finance quality social policies and public services in education, health and social protection, which are among the main levers governments have at their disposal to reduce inequality and poverty. An IMF study covering 150 countries over a period of more than 30 years shows that such investment significantly bridges the gap between rich and poor.<sup>7</sup> A less unequal society is a boon for the country as a whole, thanks to decreased crime, greater confidence, improved health and longer and happier lives.

Yet Oxfam's analysis, which measures the efforts made in this area by West African countries, shows that this is the region that is least committed to reducing inequality and that the Sahelian countries have a long way to go.



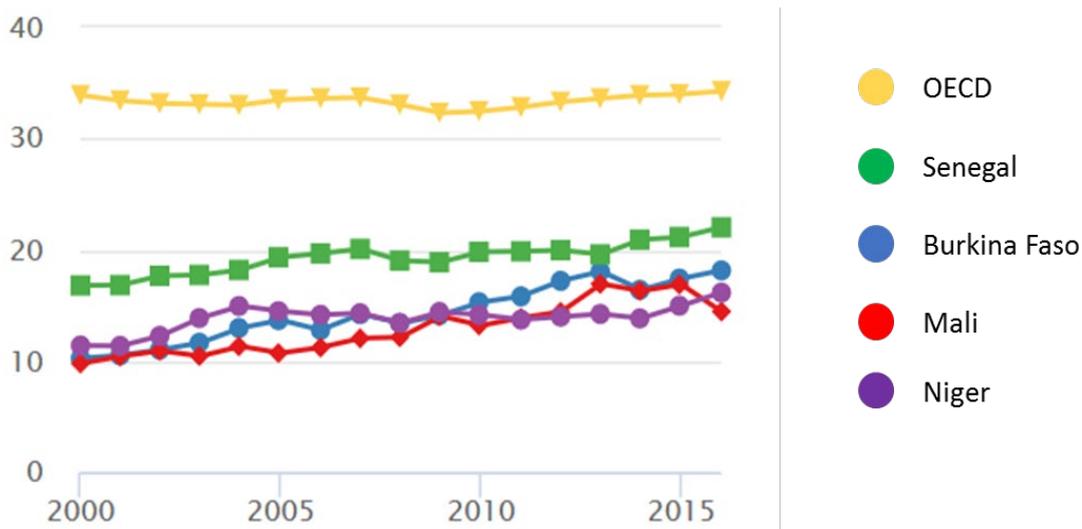
Source: Oxfam report: 'The West African Inequality Crisis'.<sup>18</sup>

Considering that 40% of the population lives on less than US\$1.90<sup>9</sup> a day and that the political, economic, social and security situation has deteriorated sharply in recent years, this finding means that governments and the international community to redouble their efforts.

## TOWARDS A PROGRESSIVE AND FAIRER TAX SYSTEM

As a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP), tax revenues in several Sahelian countries are half those of rich countries, accounting for 22% of GDP in Senegal in 2016, 18.1% in Burkina Faso, 16.1% in Mali and 14.4% in Niger compared with an average of 34.3% among the wealthy countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).<sup>10</sup> This is due to a combination of factors, including the size of the informal economy, tax exemptions, low corporate tax rates and tax evasion.<sup>11</sup>

## Tax revenues as a percentage of GDP



Source: OECD Revenue Statistics in Africa<sup>12</sup>

Yet progressive and equitable tax policy choices can play a major role in reducing inequality and poverty but also in strengthening the social contract, the latter being a direct corollary of the former. Historically, the Sahel countries have prioritized short-term political objectives, favouring the easiest-to-collect taxes and doing little to upset the interests of corporations or the rich.<sup>13</sup> In particular, priority has been given to taxes and duties on goods and services, which account for around 60% of total tax revenues in all Sahel countries, with value-added tax (VAT) the main source of revenue. In Mali, for example, VAT accounted for almost one-third of tax revenues in 2013, while corporate tax and income tax each accounted for half as much (respectively 16% and 15%).<sup>14</sup> Yet VAT and other taxes on consumer goods are regressive tax instruments. Since poor people consume more of their income than the rich, proportionally, they are taxed the most.<sup>15</sup> These measures affect women even more harshly as they are often among the poorest segments of the population.<sup>16</sup> Yet the use of such forms of indirect taxation continues to rise. In Mali, according to the IMF, the increase in the ratio of tax revenue to GDP in 2015 and 2016 can be attributed almost entirely to indirect taxes, primarily VAT.<sup>17</sup> In fact, a few years earlier, the corporate tax rate was cut from 35% to 30%.<sup>18</sup>

Country	Taxes on income & profits, % of total taxation, %, 2016	Taxes on property, % of total taxation, %, 2016	Taxes on goods & services, % of total taxation, %, 2016
Africa (21)	33.9	2	54.8
OECD	33.6	5.7	32.7
Senegal	27	2.7	61.8
Niger	26.4	0.3	60.9
Mali	23.7	2.1	59.3
Burkina Faso	23.7	1	63.6

Source: OECD Revenue Statistics in Africa<sup>19</sup>

Exemptions from consumption taxes on basic necessities such as soap and food and even agricultural inputs have been introduced in the Sahel countries. However, these are often granted for specific periods, in particular during food crises, and are threatened by economic recessions or tight budgetary constraints, as is the case at present in Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso.

*At the same time, taxes levied on businesses have declined in several Sahelian countries.* Some tax rates have been lowered, and countries have introduced significant measures to improve their attractiveness to potential investors (through tax exemptions and holidays, etc.). These tax measures represent a significant barrier to domestic revenue mobilization. According to European Union estimates, total tax exemptions in Mali amounted to 203.45 billion CFA francs in 2015.<sup>20</sup> This amount represented almost 11% of Mali's budget for that year and 3.5 times the country's education budget. Had these amounts been invested in health, they could have given access to primary healthcare to more than 4 million Malians.<sup>21</sup> The situation is also particularly unjust in Niger. According to a study conducted by Niger's Network of Organisations for Budget Transparency and Analysis (ROTAB),<sup>22</sup> a local coalition of anti-corruption groups, exemptions granted to various categories between 2013 and 2016 amounted to more than 300 billion CFA francs, of which more than 70% went to companies in the extractive sector alone.<sup>23</sup> Had these funds been invested in the education sector, they could have been used to build and equip more than 25,000 classrooms for tens of thousands of children currently without either desks or chairs in school.

*Extractive industries are among the leading beneficiaries of tax benefits and are formidable negotiators vis-à-vis the governments of the Sahel.* Some of the region's countries have substantial natural resources: iron, oil and fisheries resources in Mauritania; uranium and gold in Niger; gold in Burkina Faso, etc. These are mostly exploited by foreign companies while the populations struggle to see the benefits. Niger is the world's fourth-largest producer of uranium, the country's main export product. However, revenues from uranium contribute only 4% to 6% of Niger's budget, while development aid accounts for almost 40%.<sup>24</sup> In 2013, following contract renegotiations between Areva (today Orano) and the Nigerien government, the French company was forced to increase its contribution to the Nigerien budget to continue to mine uranium. But a few years later, an Oxfam France study showed that the royalties paid by the company in Niger had actually decreased since for an equivalent level of output; the company paid fewer royalties in 2015 than in 2014, depriving the country of €15 million.<sup>25</sup> ROTAB, Oxfam's partner in Niger, estimates that from 1960 to today, the extractive sector has contributed little to the economy or to national development and has instead fuelled insecurity and armed conflict.<sup>26</sup> In Mali, Africa's fourth-largest gold producer and exploiter of other minerals (diamonds, bauxite, phosphate, iron, uranium, manganese), the mining sector is also pivotal for domestic revenue mobilization. Yet the Publish What You Pay coalition reports that the tax rate in force for these contracts in Mali was reduced from 45% in 1991 to 30% since the adoption of the 2012 mining code. According to a report by the coalition, the range of tax exemptions represents a shortfall of several billion CFA francs each year for the Malian government.<sup>27</sup>

*Finally, taxation of international trade (customs duties and tariffs) has declined continuously over recent decades in the West African region.* The spread of customs unions and free-trade agreements and areas has significantly reduced such revenues for the Sahelian countries, as in all developing countries. The entry into force of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the West African region and the European Union could make the situation even worse. According to a recent study by the NGO SOL, forgone annual customs revenues could rise from €2.1 billion in 2020 to €7 billion in 2035 and €9.7 billion

in 2050, amounting to a cumulative loss of nearly €200 billion in 2050 for the West African states.<sup>28</sup>

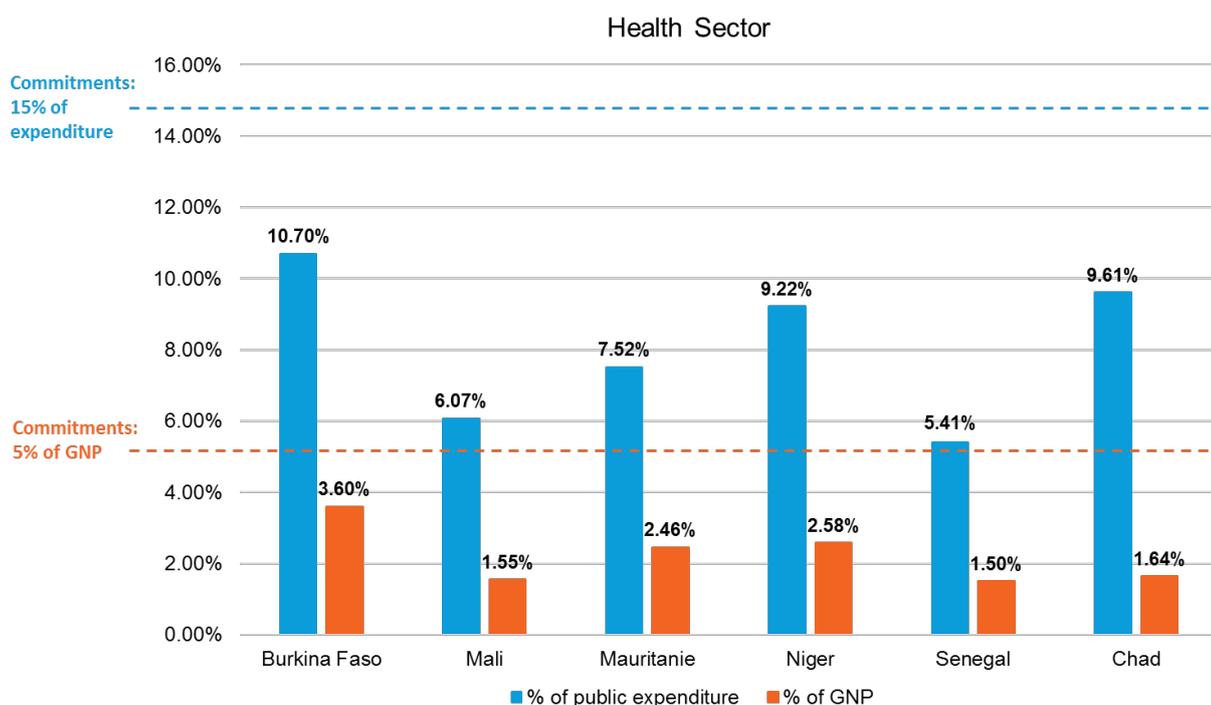
*Making taxation conducive to development and inequality reduction therefore requires important reforms*, with an emphasis on progressive tax instruments and on ensuring that large companies and the wealthy contribute their fair share to budgetary efforts. But additional revenue mobilization only makes sense if it translates into increased spending on social sectors, in particular health, education and social protection, if it is to meet the needs of the most vulnerable populations and give rise to a middle class and a future generation of taxpayers.

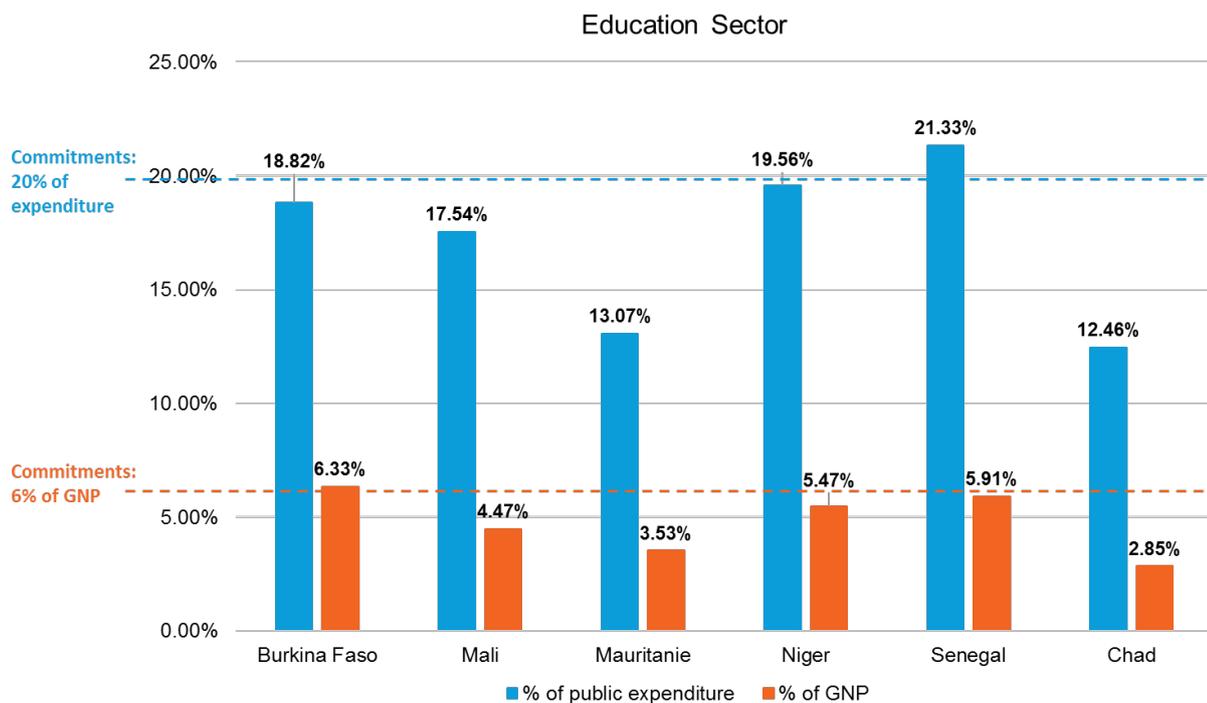
## EFFORTS TO IMPLEMENT INCLUSIVE AND QUALITY SOCIAL POLICIES

Education, health and social protection public policies benefit everyone, but they especially benefit those living in poverty, women in particular, who no longer have to finance these services from their already meagre income, nor replace them with their own unpaid services. Yet, although these public services are essential, access to them remains extremely unequal between rich and poor, urban and rural populations and men and women, thus restricting the future prospects of a large part of the population.

*African states are committed to earmarking significant portions of their budgets for education (20% of their budgets and 6% of their GDP)<sup>29</sup> and health (15% of their budgets and 5% of their GDP).<sup>30</sup>* Although they have made significant progress in providing general access to these services for a growing population, budgetary efforts remain wide of the mark.

### Portion of education and health expenditure in gross national product and total public expenditure





Sources: GSW, ILO, WHO, UIS. Data from Oxfam report, “The West African Inequality Crisis”

## Education sector

Four Sahel countries are close to the goal of earmarking 20% of their national budgets to education, and Senegal has even exceeded it. But beyond percentages, limited national budgets, the very high number of children in need of education and very rapid demographic growth create enormous challenges for education systems. This is reflected, for example, in budgets earmarked for each child in school. In 2012, in primary education, only Senegal and Mauritania achieved the level of expenditure per child considered necessary to provide a quality education.<sup>31</sup>

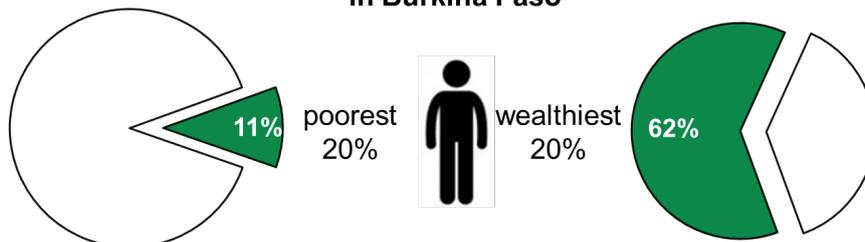
*Significant progress has been made to limit gender inequality as well as inequalities between urban and rural areas, and this has allowed a degree of mass school enrolment.* In Mauritania, for example, the educational map has definitely improved with the construction of lower secondary schools in almost all of the country’s departments, districts, and municipalities. In particular, local schools have proved to be strong contributors to the education of girls. In Niger, net enrolment rates for girls have tripled in 30 years,<sup>32</sup> and in Burkina Faso, completion rate and gross enrolment rate parity have been achieved in primary education. However, disparities in years of schooling completed remain significant. For example, a Burkina Faso child enrolling in school in an urban area can expect to spend more than 11 years in school, whereas a contemporary in a rural area will spend less than four years.<sup>33</sup>

*Income inequality is a determining factor in child education.* In Chad in 2004, only 9% of children of primary school age from the poorest segment of the population were in school, compared to 65% of those from the wealthiest segment, or a ratio of 1 to 7 between the poorest and the wealthiest.<sup>34</sup>

## Net enrolment rates in primary education in Chad



## School attendance rate for 13-16 year-olds in Burkina Faso



Sources: AFD-URD Technical Note: Sahel Youth – Exclusion Dynamics, Integration Methods.

These discrepancies are highly significant in a country such as Burkina Faso, where households' standard of living is the key determining factor in school enrolment, ahead of gender and distance.<sup>35</sup> The school attendance rate also shows highly significant discrepancies between the wealthier and poorer segments of the population, even increasing as children grow older (from 1 to 3 for 7-12 year-olds to 1 to 6 for 13-15 year-olds).<sup>36</sup>

*Despite progress in girl's education, schools cannot erase inequality between girls and boys.* As a result of girls not being kept in the education systems for long enough, differences in training and integration opportunities sometimes even increased. In many families, the decision to educate girls is governed by the family's economic situation and is secondary to educational and occupational choices made for boys, with early pregnancies and marriages and domestic duties imposed upon girls.<sup>37</sup> Yet girls and women living in poverty are those who would have the most to gain from schooling. Education increases the decision-making power of women in the household and reduces the wage gap with men. If education applied gender-sensitive pedagogy better, gender-related prejudices, discriminatory pedagogic practices and discriminatory social norms, which can exist in families and communities, would come into question. According to UNESCO, if all girls completed secondary school, the number of early or forced marriages would fall by 64%.<sup>38</sup>

*The 50 million nomadic and transhumant pastoralists in the Sahel<sup>39</sup> are particularly affected by inequalities in access to basic services* (health, education, drinking water, etc.). Fixed and settled school systems are poorly adapted to a population whose way of life often depends on mobility. Added to this is the growing impoverishment of pastoral people and how rarely their specific needs are taken into account by education programs, which, according to the Association for the Promotion of Livestock in the Sahel and the Savanna (APESS), leads to extremely poor outcomes in terms of school enrolment.<sup>40</sup> In Mali, in the absence of official statistics, the Swiss Development and

Cooperation (SDC) agency estimates the attendance rate to be between 2-3% for the children of nomadic pastoralists.<sup>41</sup> Yet it is in fact possible to provide the children of nomadic peoples with access to education, as shown by the success of the Education and Training of Nomadic Pastoralists Programme<sup>42</sup> introduced in 2011 by a consortium of pastoral organizations active in the field of education and financed by SDC. According to APSS, this programme provides education relevant and adapted to livestock communities. As partners in this programme, the governments of Burkina Faso, Benin and Togo now support an alternative education formula for mobile and cross-border communities previously marginalised by traditional educational systems.<sup>43</sup>

*Several recent studies warn of the consequences of conflicts and current insecurity on educational efforts,*<sup>44</sup> particularly for girls. A direct consequence of conflict is the destruction of infrastructure and the displacement of people as well as increased student dropout rates and absenteeism among teachers, who are often directly targeted by armed groups. In May 2019, in Burkina Faso, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs (OCHA) identified more than 1,000 closed schools and nearly 150,000 students out of the school system.<sup>45</sup> Crises affect the number of students in school. The 2014 PASEC assessment, which measures the quality of education through surveys, showed that in Chad and Niger, 80-90% of students did not reach the minimum skills thresholds in reading and mathematics at the end of primary education. In the last PASEC assessment of Mali, the 2012 crisis is mentioned as one of the factors that destabilised the education system, noting that student class time had fallen by an average of 30%.<sup>46</sup> Conflicts entrench gender inequality further. UNESCO estimates that girls are two-and-a-half times more at risk of dropping out of primary school when living in a country affected by conflict.<sup>47</sup> Other studies reveal the correlation between conflict situations and increased numbers of sexual abuse cases and of early or forced marriages and pregnancies among adolescents.<sup>48</sup>

## Health sector

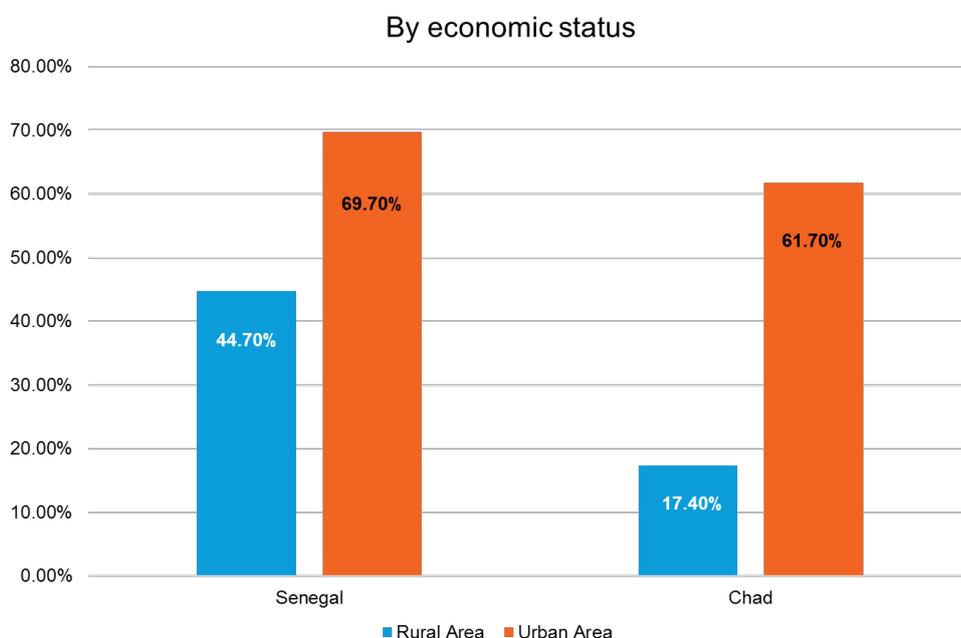
*The Sahel has seen definite progress in terms of health,* especially under the impetus of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). In Burkina Faso, maternal mortality has fallen by more than half since the 1990s, from 727 deaths per 100,000 live births to 371 in 2015. Mortality rates for children under five have also fallen by more than half in Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali and by more than two-thirds in Niger and Senegal.<sup>49</sup> This progress has been made possible thanks to policies exempting users from payment and strengthening the provision of care, such as extending immunization coverage. For example, the rate of diphtheria/tetanus/pertussis (DTP) immunization coverage rose from 15% in 2000 to over 90% in 2015 in Burkina Faso and from 34% to 75% in Niger.<sup>50</sup>

However, the Sahel remains one of the regions reporting the most alarming health statistics in the world. Even if in good health at birth, a life expectancy of 53 years on average (though only 50.7 in Mali) is among the lowest in the world and 20 years below the G7 country average. Coverage rates for essential care are below the African average, and Chad, Mali, Niger and Mauritania are among the 10 countries with the lowest essential care coverage in the world. One child in five dies before the age of five, usually of preventable diseases.<sup>51</sup> Quality in the provision of care and health services remains extremely limited due to a

variety of factors, the most important being the lack of qualified health personnel and the concentration of health services in cities. Whereas the WHO minimum standard for medical density is 10 doctors per 10,000 inhabitants, density in the Sahel is an average of 0.9 and about 0.5 in Burkina Faso, Chad and Niger.<sup>52</sup> The lack of financing for health policies has an impact on personnel, equipment and the supply of medicine and medical material in health centres.

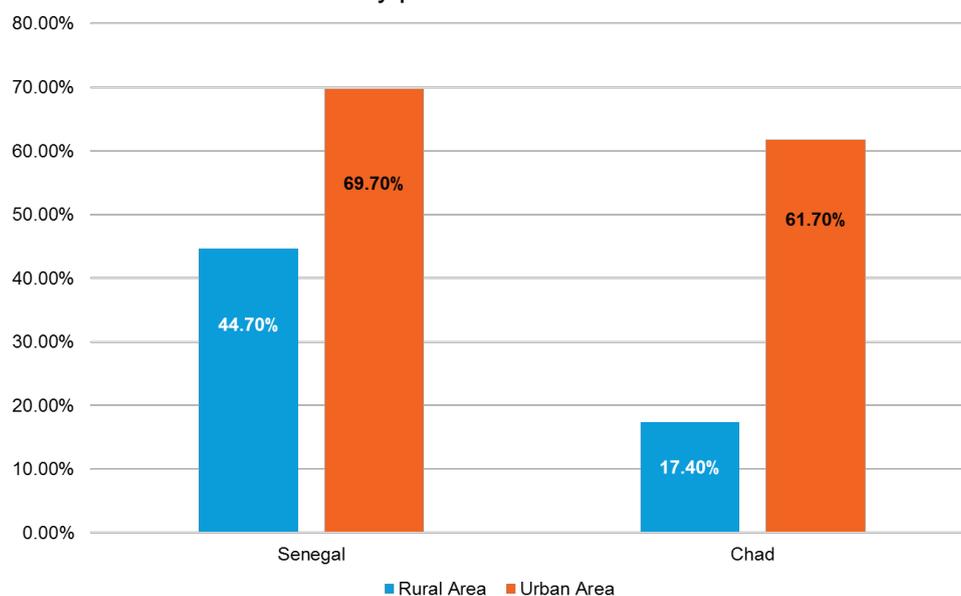
*Income inequality is glaring.* People’s access to care is particularly limited by the cost of services and of reaching health centres and remaining there for the duration of care. In the Sahel, more than half of families do not have the means to provide their children with the health services they need.<sup>53</sup> The direct payment required from the sick to gain access to care is a financial barrier for poor people but do not adequately fund health systems.<sup>54</sup> These direct payments were promoted at the end of the 1980s through the Bamako Initiative, which was supposed to contribute to the recovery of health systems. In reality, these policies serve to reinforce financial barriers to accessing care and inequalities in the health sector. Today, direct payment by households still account for 47% of total health expenditure in the region, and more than 56.4% in Chad.<sup>55</sup> Household economic status therefore has a significant impact on level of health. In Senegal, for example, mortality among children under five is almost two-and-a-half times greater in the poorest quintile than in the wealthiest quintile. In Chad, women in the wealthiest quintile have four-and-a-half times more chance of being assisted by qualified personnel in childbirth than women in the poorest quintile.<sup>56</sup>

### Inequalities for women in access to qualified personnel in childbirth



## Inequalities for women in access to qualified personnel in childbirth

By place of residence



Source: Global Health Observatory (GHO) data – Health equity monitor

*These inequalities are accentuated further depending on place of residence. The low density of medical staff in rural areas is particularly alarming and its consequences dramatic. In 2014 in Chad and Senegal, 60-70% of women in urban areas received assistance from qualified staff, compared to 45% in rural areas in Senegal and only 17% in Chad. The cost of healthcare also exacerbates inequalities between women and men. In Mali, a detailed study found that these costs trap women and their families into cycles of poverty and disease against which they are powerless.<sup>57</sup>*

*Level of education also plays a central role in the capacity of people to access healthcare, in particular women, who have primary responsibility for children's care. A lower level of education usually goes along with less economic and social independence and less decision-making power for women in the household. This has severe consequences for the health—even the survival—of children. In Senegal, for example, levels of education are linked to mortality rates on a ratio of 1 to 2 between a secondary level of education and no education (linked to mortality rates of 34.2 and 74.3 per 1,000, respectively).<sup>58</sup>*

*In the early 2000s, Sahel states implemented payment exemption policies for certain health services. Burkina Faso, Niger and Senegal implemented initiatives for priority groups (the needy, pregnant women, children under 5). In Mali, the government implemented policies aiming to provide certain services for free, particularly caesarean births. When these policies were funded, they had positive outcomes: between 2005 and 2009, the rate of caesarean births in Mali doubled and medically supervised births went from 53% to 64%.<sup>59</sup> In Niger, moving to free care for children under 5 led to a significant rise in the use of curative care (from 49% in 2006 to over 90% in 2012).<sup>60</sup> However, under-funding of arrangements and the complexity of management circuits led to delays in the reimbursement of health centres followed by a reassessment of arrangements for lack of adequate funding.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, beyond financial difficulties, targeted*

free access does not always truly integrate the most disadvantaged people as some of the needy do not benefit.<sup>62</sup>

*Several countries in the Sahel have made a commitment to policies of universal health coverage.* In 2012, the future president of Senegal, Macky Sall, made universal health coverage (UHC) a key part of his presidential campaign. In June 2018, the Government of Mali passed a bill establishing universal health care insurance (RAMU) and UHC. Most countries in the Sahel had established systems of compulsory health care insurance whose only beneficiaries were formal sector workers. The challenge was to broaden these systems to the whole population, specifically to the informal sector and to the poorest population. Several countries had chosen systems of voluntary contributions based on community mutual societies partly subsidized by the government (in Senegal and Mali, for example). However, studies reveal the weaknesses of these approaches, especially the poor penetration rate of mutual societies, the inefficiency of healthcare coverage based on charity and voluntary contributions and the weak capacity of the population to make contributions.<sup>63</sup>

*It has been shown that free quality public health systems are one of the most powerful levers against inequality.* However, establishing UHC systems cannot follow a single model, and the governments of the Sahel must develop appropriate approaches. Nevertheless, certain principles must be respected to fight effectively against inequality, including strengthening health systems, eliminating financial barriers and prioritising redistributive systems and large-scale mutualisation.<sup>64</sup> The provision of services should also remain public and be adapted to women, specifically by prioritising universal access to healthcare and sexual and reproductive rights. Increasing budgets allocated to healthcare is essential to achieve this goal.

## **Social protection**

*The Sahel has been one of the last regions in sub-Saharan Africa to move towards developing social protection systems for the poorest and most vulnerable populations.*<sup>65</sup> In many countries, social protection has been limited to partial provision of healthcare insurance and retirement benefits, covering only government employees and a limited number of workers in the formal economy, while coverage has been almost non-existent for workers in the informal economy and for those not in active employment. However, the series of crises affecting the region since 2008 has led to renewed interest in social protection instruments due to the inability of agricultural policies and traditional food aid to reduce food insecurity as well as alarming levels of malnutrition or to deal with the living conditions of rural populations.<sup>66</sup> Humanitarian actors have enhanced their tools for responding to crises and have acquired skills for making emergency cash transfers, now largely the preferred form of aid. Moreover, they have extended their interventions beyond only peak crisis periods and developed seasonal cash transfer projects. However, these programmes remain constrained by short-term intervention methods and financial dependence on humanitarian aid, and do not permit a response to structural vulnerabilities, particularly the food and nutritional insecurity that affects a significant portion of the population of the Sahel belt.<sup>67</sup>

*Under the impetus of UNICEF and the World Bank, the countries of the Sahel have all developed a social protection policy or strategy.* These generally

emerge in the context of crisis management, focus on food security and nutrition and prioritise social transfers to reach the poorest and most vulnerable. At present, Senegal's national programme of family security grants is the most institutionalised programme and the only one largely financed by national resources.<sup>68</sup> It has scaled up rapidly and in 2016 covered 300,000 vulnerable households. According to an assessment by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the quarterly grant of 25,000 CFA francs represents up to 22% of the average annual income of households and can be their only source of income during the lean season.<sup>69</sup> In other Sahel countries, although programmes have been launched and governments have generally expressed their desire to scale them up, key interventions are still financed by development partners, especially the World Bank.

### Main national social protection and cash transfer programmes

Country	Name	Year when transfers began	Managed by	Main source of financing	Coverage
Burkina Faso	Burkin-Naong-Sa Ya	2015	Project management Unit (Ministry of Social Action and National Solidarity)	World Bank	Anticipated: 40,000 households in 2016 (North, East, Centre East)
Mali	Jigisèmèjiri	2013	Project Management Unit (Ministry of Finance)	World Bank	Ongoing: 43,600 (September 2015)
Mauritania	Social Transfer Programme	2017 (anticipated)	Tadamoun Agency, under the supervision of the Social Protection Unit of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development	World Bank/ Government; other donors are expected	Anticipated: 100,000 (programme total, for which the World Bank contributes for up to 25,000 households) Projected: 5,100 households in January 2017
Niger	Social Safety Net Project	2010	Project Management Unit under the direction of the Prime Minister's office	World Bank	Anticipated: 80,000 households for cash transfers; 60,000 people employed in public works
Senegal	PNBSF	2013	General Delegation of Social Protection and National Solidarity (President's Office)	Government and World Bank	Current: 20,000 households (end 2015) Anticipated: 25,000 (2016), 30,000 (2017)
Chad	National Safety Net Project	(anticipated)	Safety Net Unit (CFS) under the Ministry of National Planning and Cooperation	World Bank	Anticipated: 15,200 households (cash transfers in rural areas of the Sahel and South, funds for work in urban and periurban areas of N'Djamena)

Source: Burkina Faso, Niger, Senegal: Hoges and Médédji (2016, p. 20); Chad: World Bank (2016a, 2016b); Mali: World Bank (2015); Mauritania: World Bank (2015, 2017); Oxford Policy Management (2017).

*Despite its current popularity and the increased resources allocated to these programmes, social protection remains extremely precarious for the people of the Sahel. It will take years, even assuming that development is sustained, before it can make a real difference for populations. At present, overall provision is extremely limited and coverage rates of existing systems are extremely poor. In addition, these social support programmes are currently incapable of providing a response to the economic, food, climate and humanitarian crises that have affected the Sahel in recent years. These cash transfer programmes, which only reach a few thousand households, cannot respond to the needs of millions of people facing food insecurity.<sup>70</sup> Finally, not only are there few beneficiaries, but the proposed support is also generally inadequate compared to the needs of the most vulnerable. Although social protection is essential and should be gradually expanded, huge challenges remain.*

## PUTTING AMBITIOUS AND FAIR AGRICULTURAL AND LIVESTOCK POLICIES IN PLACE

Agriculture is a strategic sector in Sahel countries, where an overwhelming proportion of the population is rural and depends on agriculture and livestock herding to survive. While this sector accounts for 25% of the GDP of Sahel countries, these rural environments also have the highest concentration of poverty, with populations highly vulnerable to climatic, political and economic shocks. This is also an environment where regional and social inequalities are most sharply expressed in lack of income-earning opportunities and of access to basic social services, safe water, reliable electricity, etc. The agricultural sector is consequently a key lever for tackling inequalities in rural environments and policies should be more forceful in this regard.

*Policies remain under-engineered for coping with rural development challenges.*

In 2003, African leaders announced a commitment to earmark at least 10% of their national budgets to support the agricultural sector. This target was reiterated ten years later at the Malabo Summit, when African states underscored their desire to make agricultural growth a lever for poverty reduction.<sup>71</sup> While a number of countries did achieve this target, investments have been marked by sharp inequalities between livestock herding and crop farming, family farming and large scale agriculture and rich and poor fringes of the population, often to the detriment of young people and women, who are particularly marginalized.

### Agricultural expenditure as proportion of total budget

Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Average
<i>Burkina Faso</i>	8.0	11.0	11.0	11.0	12.0	9.0	10.3
<i>Mali</i>	12.0	13.0	8.0	10.0	11.0	12.0	11
<i>Niger</i>	7.0	15.0	8.0	9.0	12.0	8.0	9.8
<i>Senegal</i>	8.0	7.0	9.0	7.0	9.0	9.0	8.2
<i>Mauritania</i>							
<i>Chad</i>							

Source: Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (ReSAKSS) & FAO, 2018; ReSAKSS compilation based on IFPRI (2015); World Bank (2017); national resources.

*The resources and public services available to pastoralists are highly limited and precarious* despite animal husbandry accounting for close to a third of the agricultural GDP of many Sahel countries<sup>72</sup> and 10% to 15% of their total GDP.<sup>73</sup> Despite the commitment by Sahel governments to earmark 30% of their agricultural budgets to livestock, the actual level of investment shows the authorities' relative lack of interest in this sector. According to the Association for the Promotion of Livestock Farming in the Sahel and the Savanna (APESS), livestock farming receives on average 10% of all expenditure allocated to agriculture,<sup>74</sup> or approximately 1% of national budgets.<sup>75</sup> Happily, the trend is upward, but much remains to be done.<sup>76</sup>

#### **Box: Securing the rights of pastoral populations**

In addition to budgets earmarked for livestock farming, the fight against inequalities affecting livestock farmers must also protect their rights, in particular the right to access grazing land. Despite an extensive legislative and institutional framework, countries such as Niger have proved unable to uphold this right effectively. According to statistics published by Niger's network of Chambers of Agriculture and by the Association for the Regeneration of Livestock Farming in Niger (AREN), more than three million hectares have been sold to uranium companies (e.g. SOMINA), oil companies (e.g. the China National Petroleum Corporation – CNPC), lost to fenced ranches on open grazing land or the object of unlawful land claims between 2008 and 2014.<sup>77</sup>

To improve the living conditions of pastoral communities, the development of livestock herding and the local processing and marketing of animal products (dairy, meat, hides, etc.) constitute a major opportunity. Deliberate, proactive efforts by regional and government institutions are therefore needed to develop the value chain, such as the Milk Offensive launched by ECOWAS, and to promote the strengthening of family farms and industries that use locally-raised livestock products.<sup>78</sup>

*The Sahel's agricultural sector is dominated by family-based subsistence farming, which benefits far too little from agricultural investment.* Although support for inclusive agricultural development is often advocated in national agriculture investment programs of Sahel countries, family farmers and rural youth are often excluded from public investment. Most public programs, which are supposed to benefit all producers, are in practice captured by a minority of well-off beneficiaries. This is notably the case for subsidies for inputs, which make up a very large proportion of public agricultural spending.<sup>79</sup> Access to financing is another uneven playing field for small producers, excluded as they are from collateral-based schemes (with collateral taking the form of land), financial collateral and agricultural insurance, of which only a very small percentage of farmers can take advantage. As for strategies aimed at developing value chains, they mainly target public investment in small and mid-sized agrifood enterprises, largely excluding family farms.<sup>80</sup> As the authors of a CIRAD report on financial disparities in West African agriculture emphasize, 'Overall growth in agricultural sector funding fails to hide the fact that some domains or types of operators risk being major losers,'<sup>81</sup> including in terms of the sustainable funding of public goods and services and family-scale farming.

*Ongoing food insecurity, which is puts heavy pressure on the populations of the Sahel, especially in rural regions, is a clear marker of inequality.* The structural causes of food insecurity are many and interconnected, with poverty and economic inequalities playing a determining role.<sup>82</sup> Famine affects the poorest most as they have no access to land or productive resources and find it hard to secure enough healthy food throughout the year, even when markets are teeming because they lack the necessary income. These populations are least able to cope with shocks and unexpected events such as late rains, food price increases or food shortages. They are also those that benefit least from traditional agricultural policies focused on increasing agricultural yields as most of their income comes from non-farming activities.<sup>83</sup> In such a permanently precarious situation, their subsistence regularly depends on humanitarian aid or village solidarity. Despite continually restated targets and in the face of major demographic growth, the agricultural and rural policies of Sahel countries are not succeeding in winning the war against hunger. According to the latest United Nations report on global food security and nutrition, the number of undernourished people has increased by 13.1 million in 11 years.<sup>84</sup>

*Redistributive policies that combat income inequality or support the purchasing power of the poorest populations are essential in a rural environment.* In this regard, some Sahel countries are experimenting with welfare programs for the poorest populations. This is the case, for example, in Burkina Faso and Niger, where productive social safety nets combine cash transfers and in-kind transfers of productive assets. These cash transfers are meant to enable a household to cover its basic needs, while the equipment, seed and fertilizer or livestock (goats or poultry) are meant to support an income-generating activity. Studies of the outcomes of these actions show that they have a faster impact on increasing the income and capital of households, improving their food security and increasing investment, and that they allow them to reduce their recourse to negative coping strategies.<sup>85</sup>

*The overwhelming majority of rural young people have no other choice than to find means of subsistence in the informal agricultural economy as training and income opportunities are severely limited.* They often end up working on farms run by the head of the family, which offer few opportunities for financial or social emancipation. For girls, the pressure is all the stronger to help with domestic chores for no pay, which leaves them with few prospects. This dependency is reinforced by the major difficulties young people face in acquiring land, which generally belongs to their elders (for whom property is a guarantee of welfare and income in old age), a situation aggravated by strong demographic growth. To supplement meagre agricultural incomes, seasonal migration is often a necessity, with rural young people moving to urban centres or abroad for part of the year to ensure their subsistence, thus swelling the ranks of workers in precarious positions.<sup>86</sup>

*Women suffer the dual pressure associated with being both women and farmers.* Although they represent some 40% of agricultural laborers in Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal and play an essential role in the food security of their households, they represent less than 10% of farm-plot owners and have considerably less access to resources than men.<sup>87</sup> Access to land is even more problematic for girls and young women, who are forced to go through their mother before marriage or their husband after marriage if they wish to own land.<sup>88</sup> In practice, governments are not taking the necessary measures to dismantle the social,

cultural, economic and institutional obstacles that prevent women farmers from accessing essential agricultural inputs. In effect, women are the great forgotten element at all levels of the agricultural planning, budgeting, data gathering and monitoring processes.

## FOCUSING CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION POLICIES ON THE MOST VULNERABLE

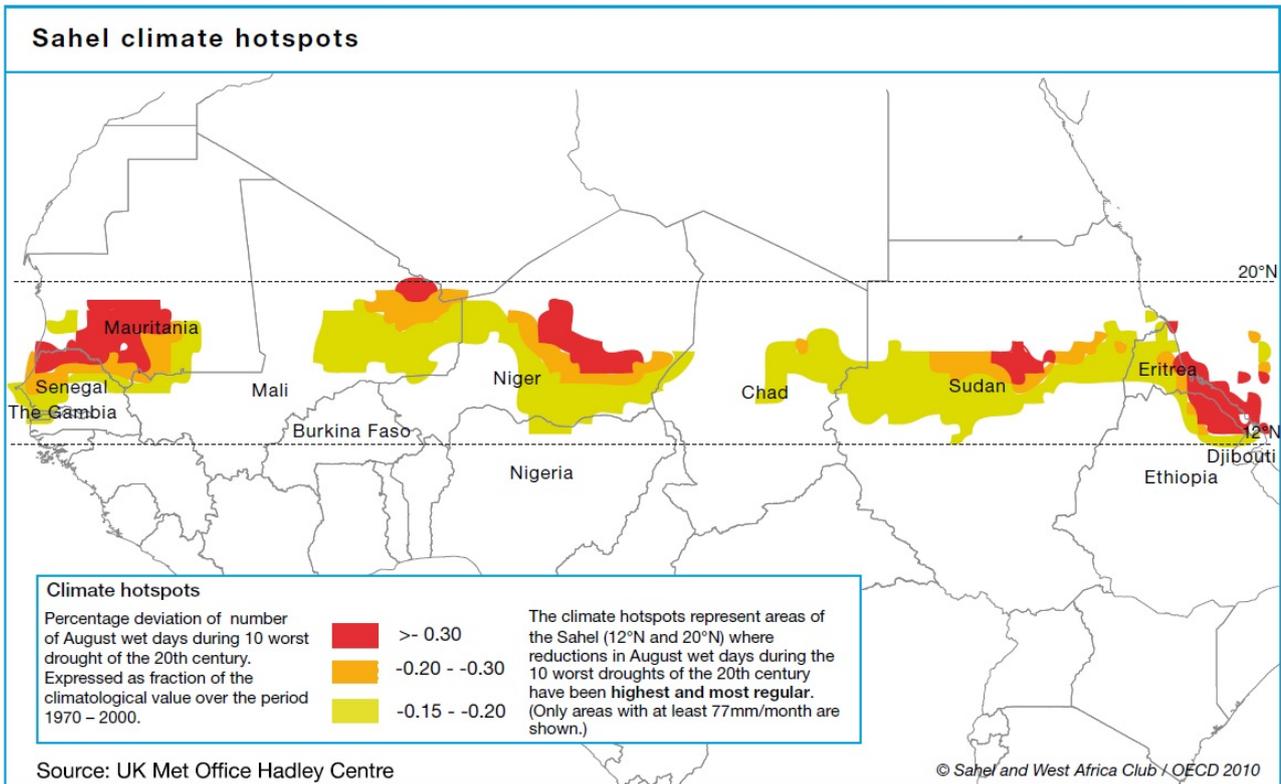
*The Sahel is one of the world's regions that suffer most from climate inequality.*

The Sahel is responsible for a tiny proportion of global greenhouse gas emissions, estimated at 0.25%, with per capita emissions in the four countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and Niger) in the world's lowest decile.<sup>89</sup> Yet the Sahel is one of the regions most vulnerable to the impact of climate change. The GAIN Index<sup>90</sup> ranks West Africa's Sahel countries in the most vulnerable quintile of countries, with Niger considered the most vulnerable and Chad the third most vulnerable.

	Emission % (global) <sup>8</sup>	Emissions Rank <sup>9</sup> (215 countries)	Rank Per Capita Emissions <sup>10</sup> (188 countries)	ND-Gain Index <sup>11</sup> (181 countries)
<b>Burkina Faso</b>	0.05	142	175	<b>164</b> 14 <sup>th</sup> most vulnerable. 35 <sup>th</sup> least ready
<b>Chad</b>	0.06	172	187	<b>180</b> 3 <sup>rd</sup> most vulnerable. 4 <sup>th</sup> least ready
<b>Mali</b>	0.06	159	182	<b>166</b> 9 <sup>th</sup> most vulnerable. 43 <sup>rd</sup> least ready
<b>Mauritania</b>	0.02	143	141	<b>154</b> 23 <sup>rd</sup> most vulnerable. 42 <sup>nd</sup> least ready
<b>Niger</b>	0.06	152	179	<b>175</b> #1 most vulnerable. 46 <sup>th</sup> least ready

Source: Climate Change Profile: West African Sahel, MOFA, Netherlands (2018)<sup>91</sup>

*Climate change is already at work in the Sahel*, which has become drier and hotter, with temperatures rising faster than the global average and average precipitation decreasing throughout the countries under study.<sup>92</sup> The poor distribution of rainfall in time and space causes episodes of drought followed by floods, destroying crops when rivers crest (for example, the Niger River) or displacing large populations (as in the Ouagadougou City flood in 2009, which forced 15,000 people to leave their homes).<sup>93</sup> The frequency of extreme storms has already more than tripled over the past 35 years in the Sahel, and these storms are among the most explosive on the planet.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, climate projections are alarming: the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change reveals temperature-rise scenarios of 4 degrees in the four countries under study (Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, Niger) by 2100, an increase in extreme climate events and a global reduction in water resources.



Source: <https://www.oecd.org/swac/publications/47234320.pdf>

*Climate change does not impact everyone in the world in the same way.* Small farmers, pastoral populations, women and the poorest populations living in precarious conditions (in terms of housing, resources, etc.) are the most impacted by climate change and its violent manifestations. Rainfed agriculture being the norm, populations depend on several months of rain each year, a period that is becoming increasingly short and unpredictable. This dependency coupled with soil degradation and desertification makes them highly vulnerable to climate fluctuations and endangers their principal means of subsistence. This is also the case in animal husbandry, which is threatened by reduced water availability and fodder production as well as shrinking grazing regions. Women are among the most vulnerable. Existing social and economic disparities, which result from their limited access to land, credit and technology as well as their low participation in decision making considerably reduce their capacity to withstand external shocks.<sup>95</sup> Their social role as the family's main care-giver and food-provider makes them all the more vulnerable. Shortages force them to spend more and more time travelling longer distances to fetch water and firewood. In rural areas, droughts force them to subordinate themselves to the needs of their family when the men migrate to cities to work.<sup>96</sup>

*Climate change displaces populations and fuels crises on many levels (humanitarian, food, health, safety),* with tragic consequences. Subsistence strategies in the Sahel have always included forms of migration. For pastoral populations, who migrate with their herds in line with the seasons, but also for vulnerable crop farming households, seasonal migration is a strategy for diversifying and protecting their resources. However, recurring extreme climate events are expected to accelerate the pace of such internal migrations on a regional or country scale, particularly to urban areas, augmenting the pressure on jobs, housing, energy, health and sanitation in cities.<sup>97</sup> When combined with political instability and conflicts, as in Mali in 2012, droughts can deepen

humanitarian crises and worsen huge displacements of populations, as in the 100,000 people who found refuge in neighbouring countries and the 95,000 displaced within Mali itself.<sup>98</sup>

*Drought episodes exacerbate pressure on resources.* They disrupt the transhumance patterns of nomadic livestock breeders once their means of subsistence reach a critical level. The need to change routes in search of grazing land and water exacerbates an entire set of latent tensions. Conflicts between livestock herders and crop farmers most often flare up when animals trample crops and destroy fences or when herd migration corridors cannot be maintained. They can also be caused by expansion in cultivated land, sometimes encouraged by governments.<sup>99</sup> The source of these conflicts is no surprise. They are attributable primarily to political and economic factors relating to the use and ownership of land, which are largely unanticipated or not managed by governments, and to factors that are often too complex to elicit effective government responses.<sup>100</sup> Without solutions tailored to local contexts, the impacts of climate change will be conducive to conflicts and will tend to aggravate them.<sup>101</sup> In recent years, local conflicts that have pitted migrating pastoralists against crop farmers or often against people from different ethnic backgrounds have caused hundreds of deaths in Mali and Chad, the most tragic episodes being the deaths of 400 people in Nigeria between January 2017 and April 2018.<sup>102</sup> These consequences call into question the ability of existing institutions and modes of governance to manage natural resources in increasingly degraded climatic conditions.<sup>103</sup>

Policies for adapting to and fighting climate change are critical for Sahel countries. All Sahel countries have ratified the UN conventions on biodiversity, desertification and climate change as well as the Paris Accord. They have prepared and are implementing national strategies, policies and action plans designed to tackle climate change as well as adaptation to the phenomenon. These documents highlight these countries' vulnerability as well as the urgent need to restore degraded land, reforest to combat desertification, develop more appropriate and diversified modes of crop and livestock production, improve water management and strengthen early warning systems (among others). In February 2019, 17 countries across the entire Sahel belt announced a Climate Investment Plan costing USD 400 billion over 12 years (2018-2020).<sup>104</sup> The first priority program received pledges of aid amounting to **US\$ 3.41 billion; however, funding needs remain huge.**<sup>105</sup>

## 2 STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE AND THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

Inequality affects the political, social and democratic fields, causing discord that harms the social contract, both vertically (between citizens and rulers) and horizontally (between groups). It has its most violent expression in the clashes and conflicts currently undermining Sahel societies and from which armed groups, traffickers, and criminal organizations prosper. Initiatives aimed at promoting peace and security in the Sahel must necessarily deal in depth with these forms of inequality in order to rebuild fairer and more inclusive governance at every decision-making level, from local to regional, and to protect and strengthen civic space so that everyone may participate actively in public and political life. They must guarantee the populations' security as well as equal rights among citizens, especially between men and women.

### RESPONDING TO THE DEMOCRATIC ASPIRATIONS OF CITIZENS

*The countries of the Sahel are confronted by problems of institutional, local and economic governance, which are reflected in the under-performance recorded by the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IAAG) since 2006. Only Senegal and Burkina Faso are in the top third in the IAAG's 2018 classification, with Niger and Mali in the second third, leaving Mauritania and Chad at the bottom.*<sup>106</sup>

#### Changes in Selected Governance Indicators, 2006-2015

	Security and Rule of Law				Participation and Human Rights		
	Rule of Law	Accountability	Individual Security (police, criminality, human trafficking, etc.)	National Security	Participation (elections, civil society, etc.)	Rights (civil rights, freedom of expression and association, etc.)	Gender Equality
<i>Mauritania</i>	-15.3%	-9.2%	-6.8%	-2.9%	-12.8%	-8.3%	-1.9%
<i>Mali</i>	-6.1%	-12.3%	-5.9%	-10.3%	-17.3%	-13.9%	-6%
<i>Niger</i>	2.8%	2.6%	3.1%	-9.6%	-5%	10.7%	10.2%
<i>Burkina Faso</i>	3.4%	0.3%	-17.9%	-4.1%	-3.9%	7.8%	0.7%
<i>Chad</i>	4.8%	-1.6%	-8.4%	0.6%	5.1%	0.2%	1.9%

Source: Ibrahim Index, Cited in Alliance Sahel: Note Sectorielle Gouvernance.

According to the World Development Report 2011, the countries and regions where institutional legitimacy and governance are weakest are also the most vulnerable to violence and instability as well as the least likely to handle internal or external pressures.<sup>107</sup> The Sahel countries face huge challenges, each one a

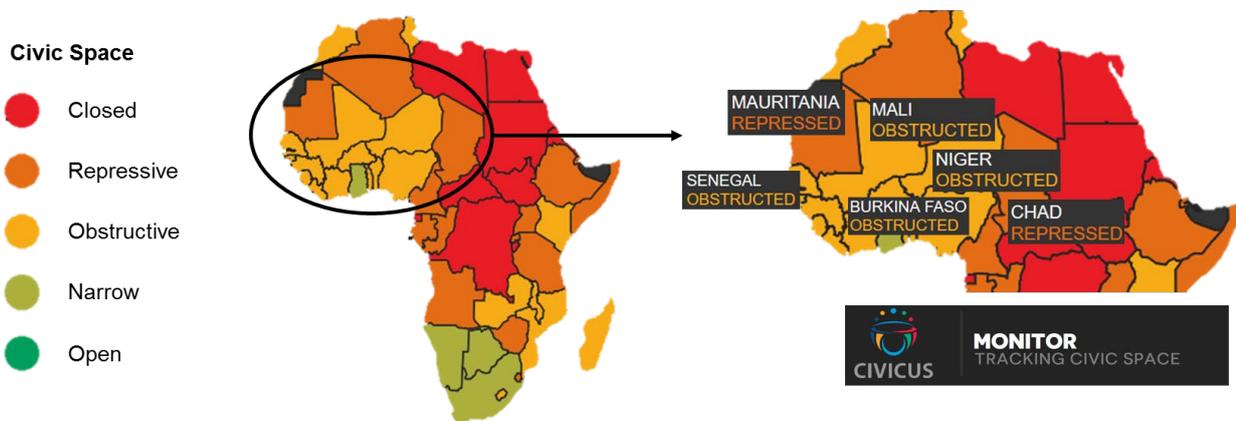
further obstacle to governments in terms of improving access to public services and citizenship, fighting administrative delays, difficulties and corruption, strengthening legal systems and improving the political and economic participation of those who are excluded or marginalized (among others). All these factors contribute to weakening the legitimacy of governments among the population, thus worsening the crisis of confidence between the public authorities and a growing number of citizens.

*Strengthening the social contract between citizens and public authorities will require the redeployment of effective, inclusive and fair institutions* capable of improving public services and civic engagement. People aspire to having their most fundamental rights respected as well as to greater justice, transparency and accountability at every level. They want institutions that respond to their needs and to have greater participation in their country's public and democratic life. These demands for social justice are expressed in the civic movements that have gained momentum over recent decades. In Burkina Faso, the Balai Citoyen (Civic Broom) movement created in 2013 found inspiration in the Senegalese movement *Yen a marre* ('We've had enough'), which in 2012 successfully opposed an additional term for President Abdoulaye Wade. In 2013-2014, Balai Citoyen mobilized against holding a referendum on changing the constitution and is currently involved in fighting corruption and nepotism in Burkina Faso. In the six countries of the Sahel, various 'Publish What You Pay' coalitions are involved in improving the management and governance of natural resources and in increasing the contributions of extractive industries to financing development policies. Collective, associative, civic and media initiatives are growing in number at both national and local levels to combat corruption and improve transparency and information on budgets and public expenditure.

*The lack of confidence in institutions also expresses itself in the streets.* In Burkina Faso, Chad and Niger, the social climate is worsening due to the governments' austerity measures, which directly affect the poorest people. Protests and widespread strikes in Chad are an illustration of this development. These were organized in reaction to drastic reductions in public expenditure and to sharp increases in taxes that the government has imposed since 2016. In its recent report entitled *Strangled Budgets, Silenced Dissent: The Human Cost of Austerity Measures in Chad*, Amnesty International published an extract from a letter by a Chadian lawyer addressed to the government, in which the lawyer claimed that social unrest is affecting all social classes: civil servants through increases in income tax, students through the abolition of university scholarships, traders and transporters through the increase in the tax on fuel, and households through the rise in food prices. In addition, the government's ban on peaceful protest is perceived by the population as an unfair measure designed to muzzle the public. This has important consequences, including the exacerbation of social tension.<sup>108</sup> In Niger, the Network of Organizations for Transparency and Budgetary Analysis (ROTAB), *Alternatives Espaces Citoyens*, the Movement for the Promotion of a Responsible Citizenship (MPCR) and other organizations and collectives, several of them Oxfam partners, have become involved in fighting measures deemed unfair in the 2018 Finance Law. Specifically, they denounced the reintroduction of taxes on basic products, which risk damaging the situation of the poorest people, whereas tax advantages were being maintained for large (often foreign) businesses involved in telecommunications and the extractive industries.<sup>109</sup>

# PROMOTING AND PROTECTING THE POPULATION'S CIVIC SPACE

In recent years, the democratic expression of Sahel populations has come up against a significant reduction in civic space,<sup>110</sup> which is crucial for members of civil society to develop and defend their interests, affirm their values and identities, claim their rights, hold power holders accountable and require them to bring positive change to the society.<sup>111</sup> To achieve this, the legal framework must allow civil society freedom of association and expression without favour or discrimination by government or discriminatory regulations against women or based on sexuality. Numerous limitations on the exercise of citizenship exist in several Sahel countries, and these are being toughened, as highlighted in the 2018 report on the state of civil society by Civicus,<sup>112</sup> and often justified in the name of the fight against terrorism.



Source: Extracted and adapted from Civicus Monitor<sup>113</sup>

*Restrictions take many forms:* outdated and restrictive regulatory frameworks and lack of specific protection for committed actors, whether from the community, journalists, defenders of human rights or citizens; lack of adequate financing for their actions; bureaucratic obstacles to the registration of civil society organizations, etc. Civil society organizations, journalists and citizens who advocate budgetary transparency and denounce corruption are victims of smear campaigns and censorship. In the worst cases, these become intimidation, surveillance and arrest, and violence against civil society actors, including limited access to impartial and independent administration of justice, and limited availability of legal services.

In Niger, for example, most of the organizers of the Day of Civic Action in March 2018, who were calling for a challenge to the measures considered unfair in the finance bill passed at the end of 2017, were arrested and sentenced to prison terms.<sup>114</sup> In 2017, the arrest of a journalist and two trade unionists for reasons that had nothing *a priori* to do with their activism raised concerns. According to Amnesty International's reaction to these arrests, '...the message to these dissident voices in Niger is clear: expressing yourselves freely on the economic and social situation and demanding transparency in the management of public affairs could lead to prison.'<sup>115</sup> In Mauritania, human rights associations and collectives rose up in 2016 against the passage of a government bill restricting freedom of association,<sup>116</sup> requiring government authorization for creating associations and restricting their field of activity and level of action. Some of the

bill's provisions state that no association can be created on a basis or for a purpose that is contradictory to Islam or for activities that may harm the republican form of government or public decency are seen by human rights organizations as potentially lethal to liberty. In February 2016, a memo (of which Amnesty International has a copy), stipulated that 'organizing a show, lecture or event at which the public is admitted without prior authority from the *Hakem* (prefect) is strictly prohibited.'<sup>117</sup> In Chad, human rights organizations have for years been denouncing restrictions on civic space and specifically the right to assemble peacefully. According to Amnesty International, these rights and civic space were reduced even more following the 2016 elections, the government's adoption of a series of austerity measures in response to the country's economic crisis and greater censorship, as shown by the blackout on social networks for over a year.<sup>118</sup> Based on texts going back to the 1960s, any public demonstration requires government authorization, which is never granted.<sup>119</sup>

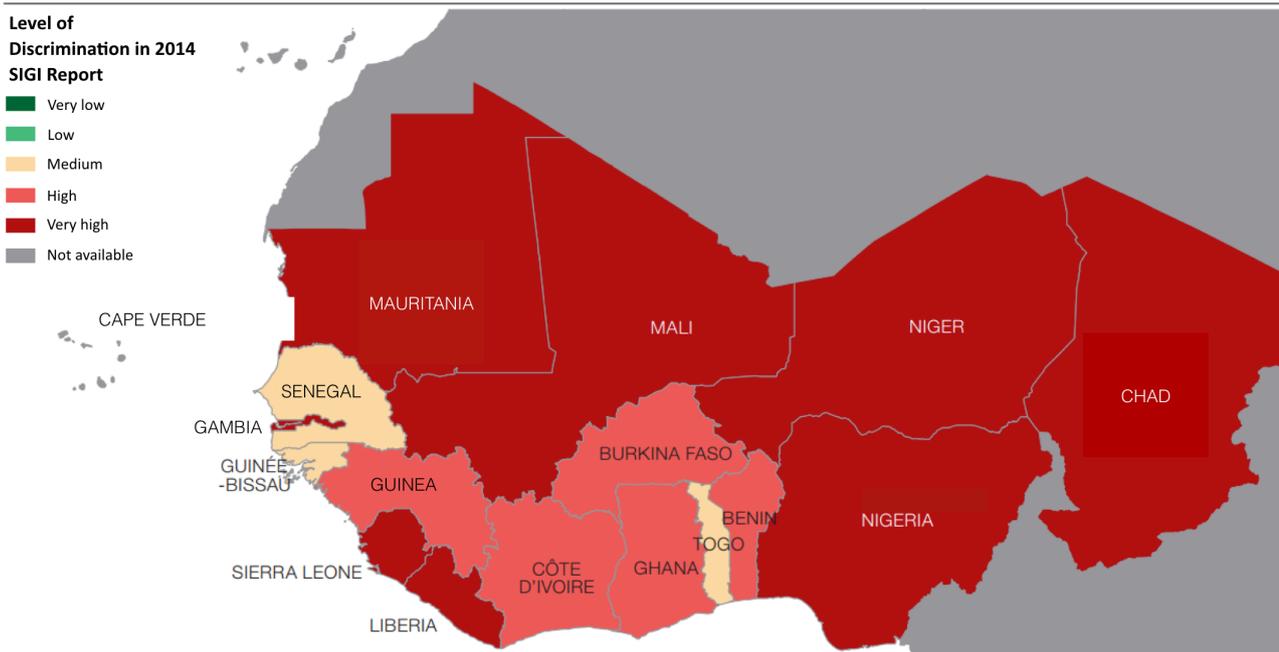
*Sahel governments must develop and implement policies providing a legal framework promoting civil action.* A guarantee of the right to free association, expression, assembly and information is indispensable for democratic expression and stability. Governments must also provide a space for civic participation in political processes. The poorest citizens, marginalized groups and women are often excluded from the decision-making process in the absence of real dialogue and consultation over policies. However, other approaches are possible. In Mali, a project supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) promotes communication channels with citizens so that they can address their locally elected representatives directly in the presence of the media.<sup>120</sup> Despite some initial reservations on the part of elected representatives, these public meetings have helped identify and fight against cases of corruption and financial misappropriations and to organize annual consultations that give citizens a voice on issues of planning and development at the regional level. However, such initiatives, which give a mandate to independent national organizations, which are best placed to hold governments accountable, are only too rare and inadequately supported by the international community and by the Sahel's governments.<sup>121</sup>

## ESTABLISHING AND ENSURING RESPECT FOR EQUAL RIGHTS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

Women and girls have limited access to resources and decision-making spaces, whether in public, economic or political life, and sometimes in the family. Discriminatory social norms, beliefs, attitudes, practices and laws are the cause of significant gender inequality and vulnerability for women in the Sahel.

## Evaluation of Levels of Gender Discrimination in West African Social Institutions

Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) Outcomes in West African Countries



Source: OECD (2014a), *Gender, Institutions and Development Database*, <http://stats.oecd.org>

Source: Gender Inequality in West African Social Institutions, OECD Sahel Club (2018)<sup>122</sup>

*This is specifically the case of social institutions, which determine the decision-making power and status of women in the household and the family, as clearly shown in the analysis published by the Sahel Club in 2018.<sup>123</sup> Marriage, parental authority and especially inheritance rights are governed by laws and informal rules, by social norms and practices that are extremely unfavourable to women and by practices that are often correlated to socio-economic inequalities. Acknowledgement of parental authority is another area of discrimination in most Sahel countries. For example, such constraints mean that the man is recognized as the only head of household in Mali, and parental authority is accorded only to the father in Mauritania.<sup>124</sup> Inheritance law also is also often discriminatory, as is the right to divorce, particularly in Mauritania and Niger. Thus, a Mauritanian woman can only sue for divorce by invoking harm or injuries and must pay compensation if she is found to be in the wrong. In contrast, the husband can repudiate the woman without having to provide any reason.<sup>125</sup>*

*Women are inadequately protected against abuse.* The lack of legislation on domestic violence too often legitimizes the practice. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a crime, but the law rarely applied. In Mali, nine out of 10 women have been victims of FGM.<sup>126</sup> Finally Sahel women and girls have little control over their bodies or reproductive choices. According to *Équilibres & Populations*, only 13-23% of all women aged 15-49 (depending on the country) use modern contraceptive methods, and the prevalence rate among 15-19 year-olds is even lower.<sup>127</sup> Yet access to sexual and reproductive health services is essential for women's independence and for allowing them to choose if and when to have children. This in turn has a considerable effect on women's economic opportunities.<sup>128</sup>

# 3 IMPROVING CRISIS RESPONSE COORDINATION AND TAILORING INTERVENTIONS TO POPULATIONS' NEEDS

During the last decade, political instability and weak governance has fomented violent conflicts in the Lake Chad basin and in Mali, where the demands of populations in the north intensified alongside the emergence of armed insurgents. Conflicts then spilled into several countries across unstable borders and now threaten to spread throughout the region. Over 440,000 people have been displaced in the Liptako Gourma region, while 5.1 million are in need of humanitarian aid, and this number continues to rise.<sup>129</sup> To address the deteriorating security situation, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad, created the G5 Sahel in 2014 with the goal of coordinating a political response to security and development issues. The G5 Sahel, together with the international community, have intensified military operations. With a military presence in Mali since 2014, France is now active in nearly all the countries of the region. The UN dispatched a peacekeeping mission in Mali, MINUSMA, while the European Union and the United States both have a military presence in the region. Established by G5 Sahel member countries, the Joint Force has so far carried out only one-time operations, though it will be permanently deployed in 2019.

The security and humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate despite extensive military operations. The spread of insecurity underscores the fragility of Sahelian states in multiple areas as well as the frustrations of long-neglected communities. Insecurity has driven millions from their homes, which has deprived them of livelihoods and access to basic health and education services, exposed them to new risks and left them more vulnerable to shocks than before. Moreover, the volatile and unstable context is widening gender inequalities. In these circumstances, the responses of all actors should focus on the humanitarian aspect of security in order to foster sustainable conflict resolution, enable the delivery of basic services to populations and foster the development of public policies that will continue to meet populations' needs and align with their aspirations once the crisis has ended.

# RESPONSES MUST PRIORITIZE GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN SECURITY

*Security measures are necessary, but they do not address the root causes of the crisis and can lead to a one-dimensional militarised approach to security.*

Therefore, security measures must be implemented within the framework of a long-term plan that incorporates resilience, security and community governance. Sustainable conflict resolution can only be achieved by addressing the structural causes of armed conflict in the Sahel, particularly social, economic and political inequalities. The approaches of the international community and of the G5 Sahel states are both based on the notion that security and strengthened government structures are prerequisites to stability and sustainable development. However, in locations where state sovereignty is being challenged, approaches to strengthening governance must emphasize restoring bonds and trust between populations and institutions. These approaches must also address horizontal inequalities between the sexes and between different communities and population groups and emphasize institutional transparency and accountability in order to establish or strengthen the social contract.<sup>130</sup> According to a report published in 2019<sup>131</sup> by the Urgence, Réhabilitation, Développement (URD) Group, the countries most affected by terrorism are those that have been destabilized by frustrations and demands for justice in a context of development inequalities. The report highlighted the problem resulting from governments overemphasizing the link between security and development in their anti-terrorism efforts while neglecting political and social issues. This emphasis on security often masks governments' failure to address the fundamental reasons why certain segments of the population resort to terrorism, a desperate form of socio-political expression.<sup>132</sup> Therefore, in order to consolidate peace, it is essential to resolve long-standing grievances and reduce inequalities while promoting accountable and transparent governance. The director of the Sahel Project at the International Crisis Group (ICG) also recommends replacing current military-centred responses to combatting terrorism with political initiatives. According to this view, conflict resolution will require delivering public services to nomadic populations and reforming the administrative map in order to improve the political representation of certain population groups, nomads in particular.<sup>133</sup>

*All Sahel countries have implemented security measures and adopted anti-terrorism laws to deal with cross-border threats.* However, it has been pointed out that restrictive measures and the use of government security forces, which can be undisciplined and have even committed human rights abuses and violations against populations in several countries in the region<sup>134</sup>, have aggravated rather than resolved conflicts. Human Rights Watch documented over 60 killings by armed Islamists and 130 killings of suspects by Burkina Faso's security forces in the Sahel region between late 2017 and February 2019.<sup>135</sup> Military interventions and the presence of security forces make some communities and individuals feel less secure when they believe that such forces are not protecting them or do not take local grievances into account. According to research on violent extremism in the central Sahel by Alert International,<sup>136</sup> the key "determining factor contributing to vulnerability to violent extremism is

the experience or perception of abuse and violation by government authorities.” This study found that conflicts were fuelled by abuses of power by governments and security forces, human rights violations and the perception of corruption in legislative and legal systems.

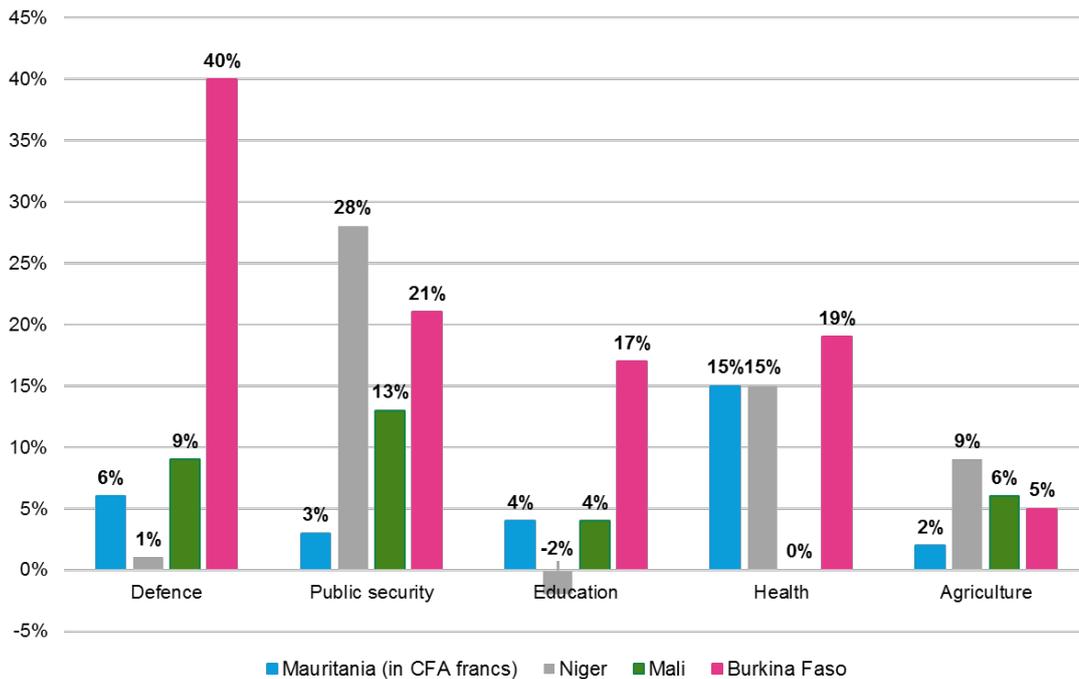
*Oxfam believes that people must be at the core of security interventions.* This requires understanding their perceptions of their own security and the impact insecurity and violence have on their daily lives as well as promoting local solutions and strategies. This type of approach gives people a voice in defining their own risk criteria and in making decisions about what kind of interventions are most appropriate. Unless governments take the human aspect of security into account, their security efforts to reduce armed violence and contain conflicts have little chance of achieving long-term success.

## IN A CONTEXT OF INCREASED MILITARY SPENDING, GOVERNMENTS' BUDGETARY CHOICES MUST ALIGN WITH POPULATIONS' SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS

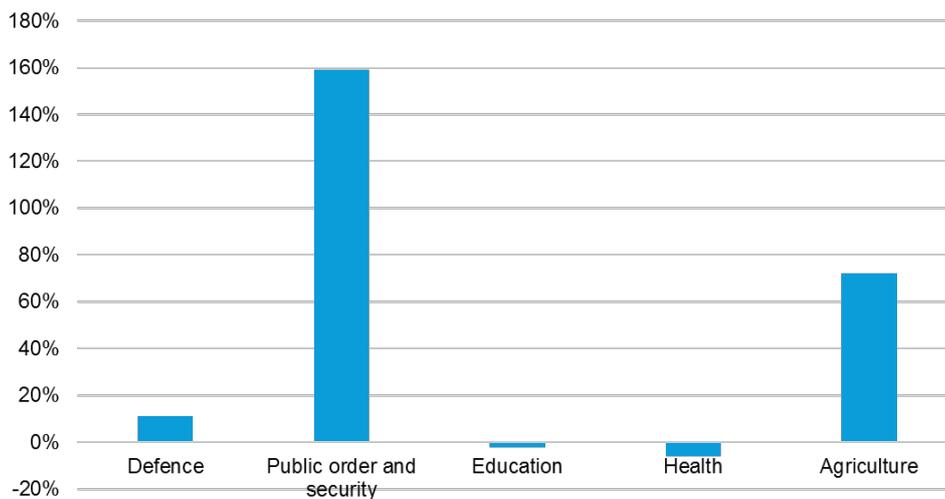
In recent years, all G5 Sahel countries have increased defence and public security spending in order to address security challenges and operationalize the G5 Sahel Joint Force. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), between 2013 and 2018, military spending nearly quadrupled in Mali, increased by 2.5 times in Niger, and doubled in Burkina Faso.<sup>137</sup> However, budget deficits do not seem to have increased significantly.<sup>138</sup> There is serious concern about development spending being reduced in these countries at a time when they need it the most and in a context where governments are being criticized for failing to provide basic social services.<sup>139</sup> This concern has been publicly voiced by some public officials in the region, including Burkina Faso's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, who pointed out that security spending is diverting funds away from social services.<sup>140</sup>

*Oxfam analysed national budgets over the 2016 to 2019 period and found that security and defence spending does correlate with reduced development spending.* Funds allocated to social and development issues have not decreased over the last four years (except in Burkina Faso and Chad), but they have been significantly restricted by heavy security and defence spending.

**Average annual growth per expenditure type and G5 Sahel country (excluding Chad)**



**Average annual growth from 2016 to 2019 per expenditure type in Chad**



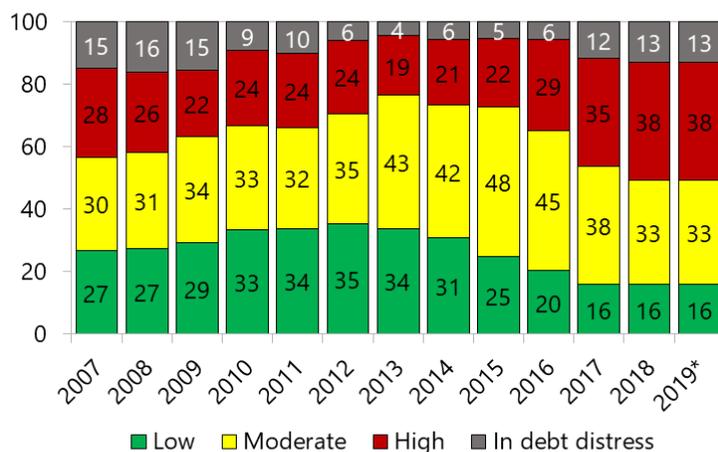
Education and health spending have been particularly restricted, which runs the risk of fuelling a dangerous vicious circle. In Burkina Faso, education spending has increased, but in 2019 it remained 30 billion CFA francs below the target amount set forth in the 2017 Finance Bill. In Niger and Chad, average annual education spending even declined over the 2016 to 2019 period. As one Nigerien government official pointed out, “Under the presidential program, 25% of the national budget was supposed to be allocated to education [in 2017], but it only received around 10%. Same story for drinking water, which has not received half of what was allocated to it. As for the justice system, it currently receives 1% of the budget despite the fact that we agreed to make fighting corruption a priority.”<sup>141</sup> In addition, dramatic swings from one year to the next were noted in budget allocations for health, education and agriculture, which attests to policymakers making difficult trade-offs between sectors. In Mali,

average annual growth in the education budget increased over the four-year period despite the fact that the education budget declined by 5.4% between 2018 and 2019. In Niger, the health budget declined by 22% between 2015 and 2016 but rebounded in 2019 to surpass the 2015 level. In Burkina Faso, the agriculture budget fell by 38% between 2017 and 2019, with the 2019 budget falling 52 billion CFA francs short of the amount allocated by the 2017 Finance Bill.

In addition to increased defence and security spending, the debts of many African countries, including those of the Sahel region, have risen sharply in recent years. This can be attributed a lack of transparency and democratic control as well as to the arrival of new lenders (China, Saudi Arabia, private banks) that have remained largely absent from multilateral discussions and hold little regard for the long-term solvency of borrowers or the effect of debt distress on public services in borrower countries.

### Evolution of Risk of Debt Distress

(in percent of LICs with DSAs)



Source: LIC DSA database

\* As of May, 2019

In the diagram above, Chad and Mauritania are at a high risk of debt distress, while Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger are at a moderate risk level.

Sahel governments decided to raise certain taxes to cover the costs of increased defence and security spending and of debt servicing. When fiscal decisions such as this affect poor populations, they can widen income inequalities. They have also been a source of discontent and social tension in several countries, including Burkina Faso where the 2019 budget was the subject of protests. In a newspaper article published in late 2018,<sup>142</sup> the Minister of the Economy pointed out that while Burkina Faso increased education and health spending by 33% and 13.65% respectively, the rest of the economy was characterized by austerity. In November, the Government approved a 12% increase in fuel prices, which sparked protests against the high cost of living.

Sahelian countries do not receive enough development aid to make the social investments needed to reduce inequalities. During an official visit to Burkina Faso in 2019, German Chancellor Angela Merkel underscored the severity of the situation as follows: “The countries allocate 15% and even 20% of their budgets to defence and security. As a result, many development projects cannot be implemented.”<sup>143</sup>

# COORDINATING INITIATIVES IN THE SAHEL TO IMPLEMENT SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC POLICIES THAT ADDRESS INEQUALITIES

*In the wake of the crises in Libya and Mali, the international community and Sahel governments designed numerous initiatives and strategies to support their vision and guide their activities in the Sahel region.* Regional governments, the United Nations, development banks, regional institutions and bilateral and multilateral cooperation frameworks have produced numerous intervention frameworks and strategies for the Sahel. In early 2015,<sup>144</sup> the Institute for Security Studies published a policy brief that assessed their convergence in four key areas: security, development and resilience (including infrastructure), governance and education. The brief also underscored their differences in terms of geographic coverage (from five to 12 countries), respective priorities (despite the fact that they tend to have a shared conception of overall challenges), implementation instruments, planned partnerships and their capacity and willingness to coordinate with other stakeholders. The authors emphasized the need for coordination, citing the risk of competitiveness between stakeholders taking precedence over coordination in the implementation of interventions.<sup>145</sup> Other studies raise concerns that in attempting to resolve the crisis in the Sahel, donors are overprioritizing anti-terrorism efforts, border security and the reduction of migratory flows to the detriment of combatting inequalities or strengthening governance.<sup>146</sup>

The strategies above have been supplemented and elaborated on by other state- or international community-led initiatives. Three aim to coordinate emergency and development activities in the region. The most publicized and visible is the Sahel Alliance initiative, which was spearheaded by France and Germany in 2017 and brings together 12 donors. It is a collaboration platform whose goal is to optimize project impacts in G5 Sahel countries and to coordinate donors. In mid-2018, the United Nations adopted the Support Plan for the Sahel, which is “an instrument for fostering coherence and coordination for greater efficiency and results delivery under the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) framework.”<sup>147</sup> In late 2018, the G5 Sahel implemented the Priority Investment Programme (PIP) and held a financing conference with the goal of aligning donors on a set of projects aiming to operationalize the Strategy for Development and Security which the G5 Sahel adopted when it was founded. Each of these initiatives has priority areas and specific objectives. However, while they do share some links, they do not target the same issues, sectors, or themes. Nevertheless, linkages and complementarity are key challenges in such a complex context. Research underscores the need to combine humanitarian, security and development responses and to take emergency action while laying the groundwork for long-term development. Implementing these principles and coordinating interventions remain significant challenges. The task is to open up territories and build infrastructures (transportation, energy, water and sanitation, etc.) that align with service delivery needs while developing sound public policies for the entire population (social, citizenship, economic development, etc.). Beyond the coordination, financing and operational challenges in sometimes volatile security

situations, for interventions to be sustainable, they must strengthen institutions in all areas so that public services can be extended to populations that have been severely marginalized until now. For this to occur, it will be necessary to strengthen institutions' capacities, financial resources and governance, augment civil participation in the decision-making process and establish public services that align with citizens' needs and aspirations.

*In the current context, it is difficult to see how the initiatives of various actors could be merged into one concerted and coherent development plan for the Sahel region.* The G5 Sahel's Priority Investment Programme appears to be a hodgepodge of projects seeking funding,<sup>148</sup> as was pointed out in the report entitled 'Five Years Later: A Radioscopy of the G5 Sahel.'<sup>149</sup> Regional coherence and linkages with national projects, including those financed through the Sahel Alliance, are largely absent. In addition, many implementation aspects still need to be defined, including donors' disbursement conditions, the earmarking of funds allocated to PIP projects and the operational leadership of projects.<sup>150</sup> The Sahel Alliance raises questions about its ability to strengthen public policies and integrate populations and civil society into the decision-making process. The Alliance is based primarily on the adoption of an intervention strategy common to donors and a willingness to promote new intervention modalities among donors in the region. It also aims to improve the coordination of current and future projects by conducting needs assessments for each intervention area, encouraging partners to accelerate examination and disbursement procedures, delegating project leadership among donors and promoting project implementation among local actors. From this perspective, the Sahel Alliance prioritizes the concrete implementation of the principles of aid coordination and efficiency Oxfam has long promoted for the region<sup>151</sup> despite the fact that progress has been slow, being hampered by the individual motivations of donors, each with its own requirements for accountability.<sup>152</sup> However, the Sahel Alliance runs the risk of being challenged by principles no less necessary for the creation of sustainable public policies in G5 countries. The desire for rapid project implementation sometimes trumps the need to strengthen or establish public institutions capable of delivering services to populations despite the fact that poor service delivery is the population's primary grievance. A long road lies ahead, and it will be imperative to set forth an inclusive vision of development in concert with all stakeholders. Such a vision must prioritize reducing the inequalities that affect all areas of the lives of Sahelian populations, whether economic, social, political or in terms of public representation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Inequalities in terms of income and access to high quality public services as well as between the genders and population groups –with some being neglected and marginalized -- keep millions of people in poverty without hope for a better future, undermine social cohesion, foment political and social frustrations and create a climate conducive to ongoing conflicts. Combatting inequality in all its forms is no longer a choice but an urgent need that all actors must address in order to resolve crises in the Sahel region in a sustainable manner. This will require designing fairer and more equitable policies and modes of governance that align with the needs and aspirations of populations in Sahel countries.

Each actor has a critical role to play within a broader framework of cooperation:

- **Sahel states** must undertake fiscal policy reform, strengthen social and development policies and implement in-depth governance reforms in order to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10 on inequality reduction.
- **ECOWAS and WAEMU** must develop regional frameworks that encourage countries to adopt fair and equitable policies and strengthen cooperation in the management of border areas.
- **The G5 Sahel** must place much greater emphasis on development and governance and recognize that the current security-focused approach will not lead to sustainable conflict resolution. It must promote an inclusive vision of Sahel development among states, regional organisations, populations, development partners and civil society organisations.
- **The Sahel Alliance** must play a central role in coordinating development aid for the Sahel and strengthen joint efforts to design and implement effective public policy under states' leadership.
- **The G7's** discourse on inequality reduction must give rise to concrete action and instruments to meet emergency needs as well as provide sustainable responses that take into account the structural causes of the vulnerability of Sahelian populations.

States, institutions, regional development agencies, donors and lenders and development and international aid actors must act in concert in the following areas in order to reduce inequalities.

- **Implementing progressive and fair fiscal policies that reduce income inequalities and generate the revenue needed to fund effective and inclusive social and development policies.**

To achieve this aim, it will be necessary to:

- Implement fair and progressive fiscal policies to lighten the tax burden on the poorest individuals and strengthen states' ability to collect revenue in an equitable manner. Efforts in this area must include fairer corporate taxes, fighting fraud and tax evasion, and reducing exemptions that erode government revenue.
  - Improve transparency and citizen participation in decision-making processes pertaining to fiscal policy and revenue redistribution and fight corruption by strengthening inspection agencies while promoting democratic ownership and accountability.
  - Invest public revenue in development and social protection, education, and health policy.
- **Implementing education, health and social protection policies that guarantee free and universal public services adapted to women and girls and transparent for beneficiaries.**

To achieve this aim, it will be necessary to:

- Allocate adequate resources to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and provide health, education and social protection services to all, with Sahel countries upholding their commitments and allocating at least 20% of their national budgets to education and 15% to health.

- Ensure equal access to education, health and social protection services among rural and urban populations, rich and poor and men and women while taking into account the different needs of men and women and of population groups.
- Support efforts to maintain or rapidly restore public education or health services in regions where public services are patchy or absent due to conflicts and insecurity (either as a direct result of conflict or as a result of hosting displaced populations).
- **Implementing fair and equitable agricultural and livestock policies that provide individuals dependant on these sectors with job opportunities, incomes and decent standards of living and that will strengthen resilience and improve the populations' food and nutritional security.**

To achieve this aim, it will be necessary to:

- Allocate adequate funds to meeting the challenges of reducing inequalities and developing the agriculture and livestock sector in line with repeated commitments to eradicating hunger. States must uphold their commitment to allocating at least 10% of the national budget to the agriculture sector, 30% of which must go to livestock.
- Design and implement policies that guarantee access to land and means of production adapted to women and marginalized populations, particularly livestock farmers (transhumance shepherds, nomads), young people and family farms, which have been largely neglected by public investment programmes.
- Promote the production, processing and marketing of local agricultural and livestock products, which support family farm-focused agri-business, and foster production methods that can withstand the effects of climate change and are environment-friendly.
- Strengthen measures to prevent and respond to food crises by improving planning for the lean season in pastoral areas and increase participation of civil society organisations.
- **Implement policies for the rapid adaptation to climate change by strengthening the prevention capacities and resilience of populations most affected by current upheavals.**

To achieve this aim, it will be necessary to:

- Secure adequate financing for the Climate Investment Plan adopted by Sahel states in February 2019 in order to rise to the challenge of adapting to climate change.
- Promote and scale mechanisms, techniques and practices for preventing climate risks and adapting to climate change while capitalizing on both traditional and innovative initiatives and approaches and helping communities integrate them into their daily life.
- Support large-scale development of renewable energies to combat energy poverty and create sustainable alternatives to fossil fuels.
- **Establishing regulatory, legal and political frameworks and social institutions that will reduce inequalities and the vulnerability of women in the Sahel region in all areas of public, economic, political and private life.**

To achieve this aim, it will be necessary to:

- Establish and enforce laws and legal frameworks that increase the decision-making power and status of women in households and families, protect women from violence, and give women power over their bodies and reproductive decisions.
- Design policy and strategies in the area of training, employment and decent jobs for women and establish regulatory and legal frameworks that guarantee equal access to productive resources, in particular land.
- Promote the democratic representation and political inclusion of women at all levels of decision making and guarantee equal access to public services, including health, education, social protection, drinking water and energy.
- **Restoring fairer and more inclusive governance at all levels, including local and regional, and protect and strengthen civic space while ensuring that women have equal representation and equal access to political life.**

To achieve this aim, it will be necessary to:

- Implement open and transparent systems of accountability that combat corruption and fraud and open up civic space while recognizing the role of citizens in shaping government action and their right to participate in public life.
- Include vulnerable populations in decision-making frameworks and the design and implementation of public policies and programmes, either directly or through the intermediary of real dialogue with civil society organisations.
- Strengthen government agencies' and legal systems' capacity to prevent and resolve conflicts between population groups.
- **Implementing coordinated crisis responses that meet populations' needs in terms of human security, development and access to high quality public services that are free and universal.**

To achieve this aim, it will be necessary to:

- Restore bonds and trust between populations and institutions and between communities and population groups and improve the transparency and accountability of institutions in order to restore or strengthen the social contract.
- Ensure that the human aspect of security is taken into account by supporting its inclusion in community peacebuilding initiatives and that security responses do not give rise to retaliation or adversely affect populations' livelihoods, security or civil rights.
- Ensure that defence and security spending do not divert public funds away from development, social services or inequality reduction in order to avoid fuelling a vicious circle.
- Prevent a new debt crisis by improving the transparency of contracts and agreements, engaging new lenders in multilateral discussion frameworks and adopting responsible lending practices that do not hinder states' ability to implement inequality reduction policies.

- Increase official development assistance for Sahel countries, particularly through budget support, and increase the concessionality level of various types of loans in order to limit debt servicing costs.
- Establish a collaborative framework in which states assume leadership of the various strategies and initiatives for the Sahel in order to meet populations' real needs and facilitate the establishment of a concerted development plan for the Sahel while strengthening institutions' capacity to deliver high-quality public services and fulfil citizens' aspirations.

# NOTES

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