

## 1. The situation in the Sahel

A special Regional Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) meeting took place on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2018, chaired by WFP Regional Director for West and Central Africa to discuss the situation in the Sahel with a special focus on the food security and nutrition outlook. The purpose of the meeting was to both transmit key conclusions from a series of analysis conducted after September 2017 by the Regional Food Security and Nutrition Technical Working Group and some agencies (WFP, FAO, UNICEF and ACF), and to advocate for joint early action in response to a situation that is rapidly deteriorating. Some days before the meeting, UNICEF, WFP and FAO released a joint Position Paper that put forward the three agencies' analysis and highlighted potential worst-case scenarios and their integrated programmatic strategy to respond to the needs that are expected to increase in the Sahel.

At the start of the meeting, the Chair clarified that the reference to Sahel in the discussion included the G5 countries – Chad, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Senegal.

WFP, UNICEF and FAO provided an overview of the situation, highlighting the key factors influencing the food insecurity and nutrition situation, triggers and the potential humanitarian consequences. WFP presented a short analysis which concluded that an increase of 60% of food insecure people can be expected during the lean season – which would be translated as an increase from the 4.2 people that are currently projected to around 6.8 million people at risk of food insecurity. FAO provided an overview of the pastoral situation, focusing on areas of concentration, departure and transhumance; concluding that 2.5 million pastoralists are at risk of serious livelihood crisis. Hotspot areas identified are within the Sahel band stretching from Chad to Mauritania and parts of northern Senegal.

UNICEF presented a mapping of priority areas based on prevalence (using upper confidence interval values) and other indicators - noting that if no action is taken the SAM burden is likely to increase by 46%. As an immediate measure, a joint response plan is being prepared, with emphasis on scaling up preventive measures in high priority areas through blanket feeding and infant and young child feeding as well as health and water and sanitation interventions to avoid deterioration of the situation. Additionally, a consensus statement on the simplified protocol<sup>[1]</sup> for the treatment of SAM and MAM is being discussed at the global level by 6 NGOs, 3 Universities and 3 UN agencies (WFP, UNICEF and WHO).

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<sup>[1]</sup>CORRIGENDUM: UNICEF announced that "A consensus statement on the simplified protocol for the treatment of SAM and MAM has been adopted by 6 NGOs, 3 Universities and 3 UN Agencies (WFP, UNICEF and WHO)." UNICEF would like to rectify that the 3 UN agencies had just received this statement and had not yet endorsed it at the time of the IASC meeting.

In the context of the Sahel crisis, however, the No Wasted Lives coalition in West Africa will urgently work with the Regional Nutrition Working Group to develop operational guidance, and then encourage countries to implement the simplified protocol.

**Conclusions and action points:**

- Clear warning signs show that the number of people affected by food insecurity and malnutrition is likely to increase substantially compared to previous years and might reach/surpass the 2011/2012 crisis. This is likely to be confirmed by the March 2018 Cadre Harmonisé (CH) report. Noting the slow onset of drought, the meeting concluded that immediate early action by relevant actors – including the governments and donors – is necessary to prevent a potential catastrophe.
- Partners have agreed to work together at country and regional levels, ensuring that there is cluster/sector coordination to conduct assessments, analysis, planning, response implementation and monitoring.
- Agreed to use different forums/joint missions to advocate for the required support. In this regard, a calendar of key meetings and events should be mapped out and shared.
- Develop consensual messages to be shared at key events such as the PREGEC and RPCA.
- Agreed on crossing identified hotspots (nutrition, food security and pastoralism) to prioritize key areas to implement joint activities. Ongoing development programmes should be oriented to these hotspots when possible.
- Agreed to develop/maintain a regional strategic framework, paying attention to cross-border issues.