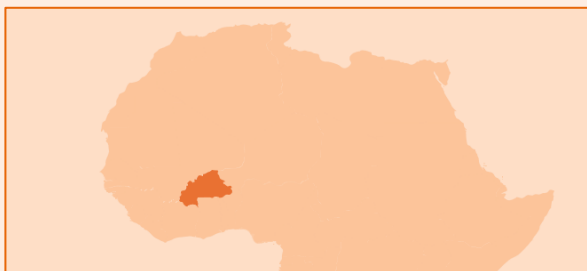


SUCCESS STORY

Strengthening the long-term resilience of communities and vulnerable households against food and nutrition insecurity in the Yagha province of Burkina Faso's Sahel Region (RESA)



EU Trust Fund for Africa - Sahel & Lake Chad



EUTF PARTNER:
HI, VSF, MdM, CRE



COUNTRIES:
Burkina Faso



BUDGET:
EUR 5.0M



From **06/2017**
to **02/2020**

Objective of the project

To support the resilience of vulnerable communities, with a focus on enhancing food and nutritional security.

Key successes

- > 3,700 households that participated in the graduation intervention achieved a 20% increase in income.
- > 133 Village Savings Associations created, leading to savings of over €48,000.
- > Improvements in Food Consumption and Food Diversity Scores and decreased Coping Strategies Index.

Since 2015, Burkina Faso's Sahel region has faced escalating insecurity due to a surge in terrorist threats and attacks, resulting in significant loss of life and mass displacement. Forced to abandon their farms and livestock, internally displaced persons (IDPs) rely on the solidarity from host communities and humanitarian aid. This crisis has further exacerbated the region's pre-existing vulnerabilities.

From 2017 to 2020, the EU supported the long-term resilience of communities and vulnerable households against food and nutrition insecurity in the Yagha province of Burkina Faso's Sahel Region. Through this project, communities received targeted support to meet their needs. One participant described his experience with the RESA¹ project in the following words:

The Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA), business plan development, and coaching have taught me how to better manage my income and that of my family. I am involved in livestock farming, and I have learned new techniques to better care for my animals. I understand the importance of savings groups since my wife herself is part of a tontine. Additionally, through coaching training, I have been able to solve problems within the VSLA groups as well as within my family. The RESA project greatly helps our communities."



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How did the EUTF help?

RESA implemented BRAC's 'graduation methodology' to support a cohort of 3,700 vulnerable households in 68 villages, with a specific focus on improving food security and nutrition.² The BRAC graduation model aims to 'graduate' participants out of extreme poverty by helping them access income-generating activities that will allow them to become economically self-sustainable. The methodology includes a sequenced set of interventions that are adapted to different contexts. In Yagha Province, these included: i) safety nets (cash transfers); ii) support for livelihood development; iii) savings support; and iv) coaching activities to develop income-generating activities.



By the end of the project:

- The average income of participating households increased by 20%, due to the combined effect of all the interventions.
- The proportion of households with acceptable Food Consumption Scores and Food Diversity Scores increased from 63% to 74%.
- The frequency and severity of negative coping behaviours decreased, from 90% of households at baseline to 3% of households at endline.

The project set up 133 Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) counting 2,209 members to encourage households to save money. These VSLAs enabled participating households to set aside €48,000 in savings. Moreover, VSLAs distributed loans, totalling €5,600 to members who wanted to make productive investments. These small loans enabled the development of 383 income-generating activities. The success of the RESA-led VSLAs has had spillover effects in the intervention areas, as people who had not participated in the project copied the model and set up 53 additional VSLAs.

The project implemented community-level activities to improve the access and quality of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and nutrition services to target populations. The project trained networks of community health workers and delivered equipment to health facilities. Nutrition activities specifically targeted children under the age of five and, by the end of the project, severe chronic malnutrition rates had decreased from 36.7% to 9.7%.

Keys to success

BRAC graduation methodology: The graduation methodology proved particularly suitable to address households' needs in that it offered personalised assistance to each household, starting with the most pressing needs of those in extreme poverty, notably through cash transfers. The project then assisted households to develop livelihoods aligned with their existing capacities and encouraged them to diversify their sources of income by developing other income-generating activities when possible.

Coaching activities delivered by locals: The project used an innovative mechanism by recruiting individuals locally as coaches and empowering them to drive positive change in their communities. The coaches supported households in their economic activities and encouraged them to engage in VSLAs. RESA's recruitment and training of local coaches ensured that advice, information, and recommendations were well-received by households. Personalised coaching was one of the key elements that motivated households to continue engaging in VSLAs.

Adaptability to the deteriorating security situation: RESA was responsive to the evolution of the security context in the Sahel region. As the security situation worsened, the team analysed each activity's sensitivity to changing conditions and modified its intervention strategies. Key adaptation strategies included the relocation of distribution sites for livestock, productive assets, and cash transfers, modifying the cash transfer method through engagement with local traders in the distribution process (via vouchers), and the development of radio messaging to reach communities areas that were otherwise inaccessible.

Building on success

Sustainability of the action: One of the outcomes of the RESA project was the improved access to basic services for all beneficiaries and particularly for pregnant and breastfeeding women, women of childbearing age, and children under five years of age. This was expected to increase healthcare facility attendance, support the treatment of malnourished children, and to raise household knowledge and adoption of family, hygiene, and sanitation practices.

RESA's follow-up project: The RESA project was followed by the EUTF-funded PDU RECOSA³ project (2019-2023, €17.6M). Implemented by Humanity & Inclusion, in consortium with A2N, Karkara, SongES, *Vétérinaires Sans Frontières*, the Spanish Red Cross, *Médicos del Mundo* and *Médecins du Monde*, RECOSA was closely aligned with RESA's scope and intervention areas. PDU RECOSA built on RESA's lessons, notably increasing the length of coaching from two to three years to help consolidate the new economic activities of households.

¹ *Renforcement durable de la résilience des communautés et des ménages vulnérables à l'insécurité alimentaire et nutritionnelle de la province du Yagha dans la région Sahel au Burkina Faso (RESA).*

² BRAC is the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, an organisation that has pioneered the development of the graduation methodology.

³ *Programme d'urgence pour la stabilisation des espaces transfrontaliers du GS Sahel (RECOSA).*

Disclaimer

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The research for this success story was conducted from January to April 2024, was based on project documentation, and presents the situation at that moment.



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