



THE CASH LEARNING PARTNERSHIP



Cash Transfers and Resilience:

Strengthening linkages between emergency cash transfers
and national social transfer programmes in the Sahel

Discussion paper

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Foreword: This paper was prepared by Cécile Cherrier under the supervision of Yoann Tuzzolino of CaLP. The views and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the points of view and policies of CaLP, UNICEF or the European Commission.

Introduction

Although a heterogeneous region, **the Sahelian belt of West Africa is characterised by a situation of structural food and nutritional insecurity** that affects roughly half of the rural population. A booming population, climate change, social conflicts and a reduced availability of natural resources are the main causes for this. Hit by a number of shocks increasing in intensity and frequency, impoverished households are no longer able to protect their meagre capital and invest for the future. Welfare support (that is, regulated by the states within the region) restricted to periods of acute crisis, potentially bolstered by humanitarian responses (that is, supported by donors and international actors), cannot deal with this type of structural food and nutrition insecurity.

Following a growth in awareness among regional actors over the past few years, an increasing number of states have engaged in a movement which seeks to establish permanent social transfer programmes in order that aid to the most vulnerable people becomes more reliable and regular, and therefore more effective. At the same time, humanitarian actors have been led to extend their activities beyond simply the climaxes of crises, and tend to coordinate their responses in matters of emergency response and development. **Cash transfers are increasingly being used in humanitarian responses as much as in national social welfare programmes.**

In this context, it seems the right time to look at the possibility of improving links between emergency cash transfer programmes and national social transfer programmes, with a view to strengthening the resilience of the Sahel's population. So, echoing a recent case study commissioned by CaLP¹ on the possibilities of using national social transfer programmes to respond to humanitarian crisis², the question raised here is:

To what extent is it possible and desirable to use national social transfer programmes in order to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of the Sahel?

To offer some explanation for this question, CaLP, UNICEF and the European Commission came together to organise, with the financial support of OFDA³, the **first regional learning event** on the subject⁴. Bringing together around 50 actors from various backgrounds (humanitarian, state and private sector actors) who are involved in cash transfer programmes and policies, the workshop aimed to get a cross- perspective on the issues and make a joint analysis. Making such an analysis should help to lay the foundations for the subsequent development of a regional research and action programme looking into the relationships between social protection systems and humanitarian response in the Sahel.


This **discussion paper** has been inspired by the exchanges that took place during the course of the learning event. It seeks to extend the discussion to include other actors working within the region, as well as in other regions confronted with the same questions. It proposes an initial approach to the issue, presents some of the conclusions of the workshop and suggests several courses of action. Above all, its aim is to provoke reactions and encourage reflection. The problem is vast and this first initiative aims to set in motion a lengthier process of dialogue and discussion between humanitarian actors, state actors and other institutions involved in this issue.

Overview of the issue

➔ Basic concepts

Before going any further, the terms used in this document need to be agreed upon and some basic concepts must be clarified. The term “**cash transfers**” refers here to transfers of monetary value to poor or vulnerable individuals or households under the framework of aid interventions to populations, supported by public funds (state funds or international aid). The term covers several kinds of transfer: condition or unconditional cash transfers; cash-for-work; labour-intensive public works (LIPW); food vouchers, etc. For the purposes of this paper, the term does not include migrant remittances. Cash transfers are just one kind of tool that can be used in a wide range of situations and policy/operational frameworks, to achieve very different goals. There exists a grey area between the two – clearly defined – categories of *emergency* and *social* cash transfers (Table 1).

Table 1 Spectrum of usage for cash transfers: from humanitarian aid to social protection

				
Operational framework	One-time emergency cash transfer project	Seasonal cash transfer projects, 1+ year(s)	Longer-term regular cash transfer project	Social cash transfer system
Features				
Degree of regularity and reliability	None	Weak	Moderate	Strong
Guaranteed under law	No	No	No	Yes
Degree of financial viability (between crises)	None (funded by international humanitarian aid)	Weak (external funding and/or public contributions)	Moderate (fixed aid contribution and/or publically funded)	Strong (funded by taxes and levies)
Degree of state regulation	Very weak (administered by humanitarian actors)	Weak to moderate (sometimes extensively administered by TFPs)	Moderate to strong (sometimes extensively administered by TFPs)	Strong (fully state regulated)
Policy framework	Humanitarian crisis response aimed at saving lives	Food security, rural development and/or social protection strategy	Social protection and/or food security strategy	National social protection policy
Examples	Food vouchers following locust infestation	Shared Framework for Social Safety Nets in Northern Mali	“Jigisèmèjiri” Social Safety Net Project in Mali	Child Support Grant system in South Africa
Primary challenge for implementation	State-building: helping people in need without weakening the legitimacy and capacities of the state	Predictability: improving predictability to allow greater risk-taking by beneficiaries for better returns on investment	Building up institutions: ensuring financial viability, capacity for national implementation and positioning within legal framework	Momentum: ensuring permanent changes to the system and its integration into wider economic and social policy



Note: This spectrum is included for illustrative purposes. It should not be understood as a given sequence of events. A one-time project may not necessarily be destined to evolve into a longer-term project. Likewise, a longer-term project may not necessarily be supposed to develop into a social security scheme.

Source: Author.

The term “**emergency cash transfers**” refers to cash transfers provided within the context of emergency or recovery (post-emergency) responses organised by humanitarian actors with the aim of saving lives and preserving the livelihoods of populations affected by crisis. The term “**humanitarian actor**” is used here to refer to operators who are working within the sphere of international humanitarian aid (national and international non-governmental organisations, United Nations agencies, International Movement of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, donors, etc.) For the purposes of this paper, this term does not include national state authorities in charge of crisis response.

The term “**national social transfer programme**” refers to social transfer programmes that have been established under the auspices of state actors. The term “**social transfer**” is used here to refer to a non-contributory (no fee) transfer of resources (in cash or in kind) to poor or vulnerable individuals or households which is publically funded, direct, regular and reliable and aims to reduce their shortfalls in consumption and ensure access to basic goods and social services, to protect them from shocks (especially those of an economic and climatic nature) and, in some cases, to bolster their productive capacity. Unlike emergency cash transfers, social cash transfers are made available within the framework of national social welfare policy. The fact that they are state-regulated, regular and reliable means these transfers carry the status of *social* transfers. Ideally, these transfers should be enshrined in law and supported by a host of administrative, legal and financial mechanisms to transform them into a genuine social guarantee.

Social transfers are one tool used in “**social protection**”, defined here as all measures, public and private (which act in the public interest), which aim to: reduce people’s vulnerability to the risks and the impact of shocks; avoid the use of damaging coping strategies; and guarantee a minimum level of human dignity. Other important social protection tools include: contributory social insurance (retirement, workplace accidents, maternity, sickness etc.); social support services (family support services, second chance education, etc.); and social legislation and regulations

➔ **Opportunities and challenges**

At a global level, there are, on the whole, few (documented) examples of national social transfer programmes being used in response to a humanitarian crisis. At the end of 2013, within the context of the “Fit For The Future” research project commissioned by CaLP, a case study of two social transfer programmes was led – PSNP in Ethiopia and HSNP in Kenya.² In their conclusions, the authors called on all actors involved to analyse the associated opportunities and challenges much more closely than had been the case up until that point. What is more, the authors asked actors to lower their expectations, keeping in mind that the countries that are most liable to require a humanitarian response are also the most likely not to have a functional national social transfer programme for years, maybe even decades. In order to move on from the conceptual framework and envisage the practical details involved in the use of a national programme to provide humanitarian aid, it was proposed that **different scenarios** be considered: a “**vertical**” expansion of the national programme; a “**horizontal**” expansion of the national programme; simply **using the administrative framework** of the national programme; aligning a **parallel humanitarian response system** (Box 2).

Box 1 Links between national programme and humanitarian response: different scenarios

The list of scenarios given below is not at all exhaustive. It is included for illustrative purposes, not as a prescriptive set of goals.

A. Vertical expansion of the national programme

In this scenario, humanitarian response targets households that are already beneficiaries of the national programme and action consists of an increase in the value or the duration of the transfer. This may be envisaged where individuals or households who are beneficiaries of the national programme are also affected by crisis (e.g. a dramatic rise in food prices). This could also be considered where individuals or households who are beneficiaries of the national programme are not necessarily those who are (most) affected, within a pragmatic approach. If it is decided that it would be too complex, too expensive or that it would take too long to carry out precise targeting, the decision-makers could opt for this solution, counting on the trickle-down effect of additional transfers on people affected by the crisis (e.g. by means of traditional mutual aid mechanisms). Such was the case when, in order to provide a rapid response to the energy, food and financial crisis of 2008, some of the World Food Programme's country offices decided to extend the scope and/or the duration of their school canteen programmes.

B. Horizontal expansion of the national programme

In this scenario, the scope of the national programme is extended to other persons or households, according to the mechanisms governing the programme. It may involve a geographic expansion of the programme (into areas not traditionally covered by the programme) or registering new beneficiaries, according to identical or similar targeting mechanisms. This could potentially be coupled with vertical expansion (increasing the value/duration of transfers).

C. Use of the national programme's administrative framework alone

In this scenario, the characteristics of those affected by the crisis are judged to be fundamentally different to the targeting criteria used in the national programme but, because of its scope, the national programme makes for an interesting vehicle through which humanitarian aid could be provided. This is particularly true of certain emergency responses that were able to use the payment mechanism (the national network of post offices) of a social pension programme (targeting all citizens who are 65 years or older without referring to poverty criteria).

D. Alignment of a parallel humanitarian response system⁵

If there is no national programme or no capacity, for example, to extend the national programme rapidly to new areas, it may be worth considering, where there is a recurrent problem that tends to require a humanitarian aid response, developing a parallel system for humanitarian responses that are not only coordinated but that align as closely as possible to a policy framework and a national strategy (existing or assumed). In a scenario like this, it is envisaged that the response, thus established, could eventually be integrated into the national social welfare system. In countries where national capacities are very weak but people's needs are pressing and chronic, aligning a parallel system implies working in as compatible a way as possible with the governmental systems (e.g. using national budgetary classifications) even if national policies in this area have not yet been adopted. This also means making sure that all partners operate according to modalities (targeting, transfer types etc.) that are similar (for a given objective / target group) and compatible with the operational capacities of national institutions, with the aim of a progressive integration into the national system.

Source: Author.

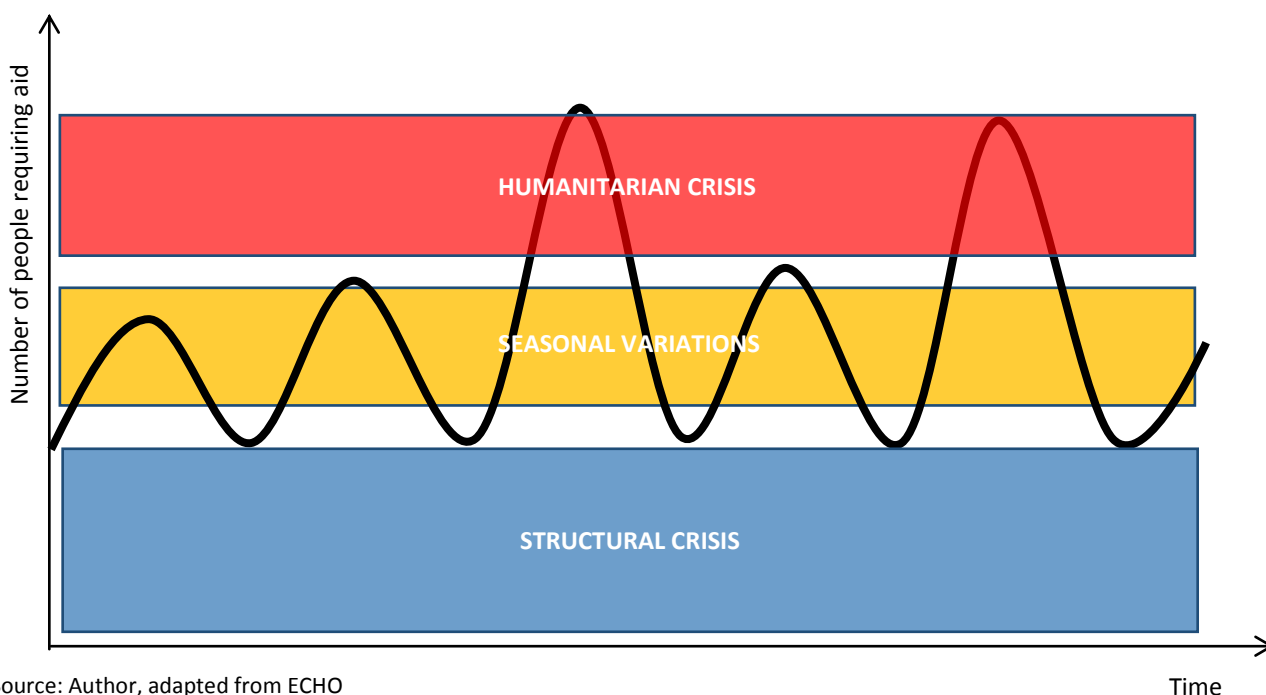
Using an existing national programme in a crisis situation can mean humanitarian aid is provided more quickly, more effectively, with better coordination and, therefore, with maximum impact. All the same, this poses a number of **practical issues**. For example, if the option of a vertical expansion seems appropriate, to what extent may humanitarian funds be channelled towards the national programme (issues of accountability, reporting, roles and responsibilities etc.)? If a horizontal expansion is planned, what role(s) could humanitarian actors play to facilitate/support such an expansion, and what are the obstacles they could encounter in the current humanitarian system (modes of financing, etc.)? If a parallel humanitarian response system is established, what is the best way to ensure its alignment with national guidelines and capacities?

Generally, national programmes are driven by political objectives and dynamics which may be at odds with certain **humanitarian principles**. For example, selecting beneficiaries for a national programme may be led by political considerations, or may simply follow a more general objective of social cohesion. This may compromise the idea of humanitarian assistance that would be purely needs-based. It may also be difficult for humanitarian actors, committed to respecting the principles of neutrality and impartiality, to operate in an environment that is, at least in part, guided by political motivations.

➡ The present situation in the Sahel

In light of the priorities in terms of humanitarian aid to the Sahel, it seems apt to focus the discussion on the use of cash transfers in response to food and nutrition crises.⁶ To do this, it should first of all be made clear that what are often classified as humanitarian crises are actually the result of a **chronic crisis with annual peaks** that are more or less heightened (Graph 1).

Graph 1 Fluctuations in the volumes of those requiring food aid in the Sahel



Source: Author, adapted from ECHO

In terms of the use of cash transfers in responding to food and nutrition crises in the Sahel, we can see a **clear progression** over the course of the last decade, with three particularly significant points to note:

- Cash transfers are being **used more and more** in humanitarian responses to food and nutrition insecurity in the Sahel. This is consistent with a fundamental worldwide trend in food aid. Cash transfers are increasingly being used in humanitarian responses as much as in national social welfare programmes. In the Sahel, a marked acceleration in this trend was noted in the crisis of 2012.
- Following a growing awareness over the past few years among regional actors, an increasing number of states have committed to **nationwide movements** aiming to establish permanent social transfer programmes, so that aid to the most vulnerable becomes reliable and regular, and therefore more effective. At the moment, state programmes are still in their infancy; their scope is restricted and the capacity of implementing bodies is limited. But now, the political will to establish them at scale, over time, seems assured.
- In order to prevent, mitigate and ensure efficiency in crises, and in the absence of national response mechanisms that tackle chronic vulnerability, humanitarian actors have been led to extend their interventions beyond simply the climaxes of crises, especially with the development of seasonal cash transfer projects, thus substituting state actors. Within this setting, humanitarian actors have worked on **coordinating approaches** when it comes to rescue and recovery responses in recent years, with the recent implementation of several shared frameworks (whether those are platforms, consortia or simply tacit agreements), such as the Niger Alliance (l'Alliance de Niger) or the Shared Framework for Seasonal Social Safety Nets in Northern Mali (Cadre Commun sur les Filets Sociaux Saisonniers au Nord Mali).

These developments have led to certain **"anomalies"** when it comes to the current situation, with:

- A **shift in responsibility** from state to humanitarian actors, who take *de facto* charge of households suffering from chronic vulnerability;
- A **high dependence** amongst vulnerable populations and states in the region **on humanitarian aid** – which, in terms of predictability (very short rounds of funding) and accountability (towards state authorities and citizens) all in all remains limited;
- **Parallel social safety net initiatives** – those run by humanitarian actors on one hand, and those run by state actors on the other.

Without a doubt, the evolution of the situation has reached **a pivotal moment**. Today, there are opportunities to correct the anomalies and improve aid efficiency for the peoples of the Sahel, thanks to:

1. On one hand, the **wealth of knowledge** available among humanitarian actors, with almost 10 years of experience in using cash transfers in the region ; and
2. On the other hand, national and supranational initiatives (pioneered by ECOWAS in particular) aimed at implementing national social transfer programmes (with a focus on prevention) which are being developed and which offer a real **prospect of sustainability**.

Strategic guideline proposals

➔ Long-term vision

To answer the question posed in the introduction, if it does not yet seem to be possible to use national social transfer programmes (which are still under development) to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of the Sahel, it seems desirable to build ties between emergency cash transfers and national social transfer programmes in future (if only to ensure better care of populations facing chronic vulnerability). In particular, governments should be able to carry out **their responsibilities in full** and provide **leadership** in matters of aid for people in situations of **chronic and seasonal vulnerability**. This requires a reversal in trends, so that humanitarian aid is no longer the norm when it comes to assistance for the vulnerable populations of the Sahel. A paradigm shift is necessary so that responses to seasonal crises are no longer perceived as incidents that interrupt the implementation of development programmes, but as a structural element of the Sahelian context. This dimension should be fully accounted for in development plans. The responsibility for populations affected by seasonal fluctuations should pass directly to the state, with support of development partners.

In general terms, this calls for the establishment of a **coordinated, integrated and dynamic national system** that is capable of providing (as far as national capacities allow) more regular, reliable and effective transfers for better assistance and strengthened resilience among populations. Such a system should allow adjustments to the assistance provided according to the fluctuations in the number of people affected and how severe the level of food and nutrition insecurity is (Graph 1). In a vision such as this:

- **A national social transfer system** is established for the territory as a whole in order to respond to chronic vulnerability;
- **Built-in mechanisms** for these programmes allow for responses to seasonal vulnerability by means of temporary expansion/contraction, according to peaks in demand;
- **Contingency plans** are in place for responding to sudden disasters (whether these are food crises or not) and extended periods of stress during systemic food and nutrition crises.

If it is possible to affirm such general principles, the calibration of a system such as this (who to target, with what types of transfers, for what specific purpose, etc.) cannot be determined except at national (and sub-national) level. A national social transfer policy is, in essence, an issue of a **vision for society**. Social transfers are intrinsically a mechanism for the redistribution of public resources, and defining a national policy in this area requires clarifying the inequalities that society intends to reduce through them. It is vital that all social transfer policies are inserted in a wider strategy of national development. Social transfers can help individuals to protect their livelihoods, but can also support changes in society (e.g. a transition of younger generations towards more sustainable livelihoods). This can only be defined by means of a **national consultation process**, notably in the context of movements that already exist – on the definition of National Social Protection Floors⁷, the development of the AGIR⁸ roadmaps or the Zero Hunger Initiative for West Africa⁹.

➔ Mid-term areas of work

Ensuring the transition from the current situation to the long-term vision that has been outlined above requires, in the mid-term, initiating work in a number of areas (Graph 2). First of all, achieving a vision such as this requires **building up the skills and the leadership of state actors**. In fact, it is under their authority that the following factors should be determined: national **objectives** with regards to cash transfers; the **mechanisms** required to reach and help, in an effective way, people in situations of chronic and/or seasonal vulnerability or those affected by a disaster; and the roles and responsibilities of different **actors** – state, humanitarian or private – in the implementation of these mechanisms according to the comparative advantages for each party.

All states in the Sahelian belt have now developed, or are in the middle of developing, a national social protection strategy. These include “social transfers” (in the form of direct transfers of resources or exemption from health/school fees) as key components. At this stage, very often, only the main outline has been drawn up and the exact details of the national social system are yet to be defined. It is important, especially for humanitarian actors, to be aware that planning such a system should not be seen as a purely technical activity (to be assigned to international experts). Planning decisions must take into account political and cultural attitudes. Particularly, **arbitration** may be necessary in order to ensure that there is a link-up of three points: technical concerns, with regards to evidence of efficiency and cost-effectiveness (“what works”); political concerns, with regards to voters, interests and institutions (“what is popular”); and rights-based concerns, with regards to universal principles and norms (“what is right”)¹⁰.

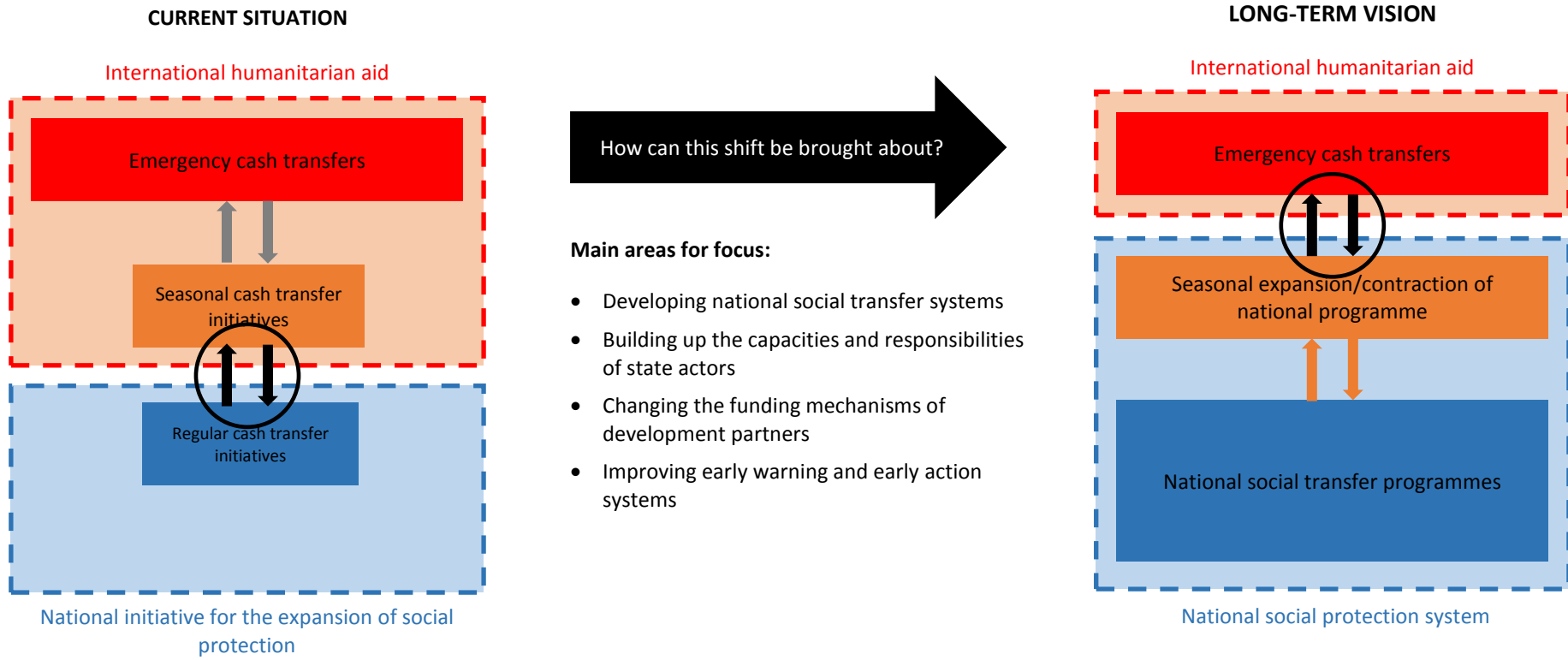
To ensure that a sustainable national social transfer system is established, objectives and mechanisms must be in line with **national financial, human and material resources**. Thus, only measures which can be sustainably funded by states and replicated at scale in the country long-term (with potential technical support and international funding in the mid-term) will be adopted. Humanitarian actors tend to have more means at their disposal than states and a transition such as this could result in lower levels of aid (but in more regular and reliable instalments) for populations. Though this is somewhat regrettable, it must be seen as an exit strategy with a view to a progressive withdrawal by humanitarian actors from the management of chronic and seasonal vulnerability – on the understanding that technical and financial partners will continue to support states whose material, human and financial resources remain limited, particularly in large-scale crises where the capacities of national response operations are exceeded.

At a regional level, ECOWAS (the Economic Community of West African States) has an important role in advocacy and technical support in the fields of social protection and food security. In particular, at the end of 2013, it launched the Regional Agency for Agriculture and Food (RAAF), whose mandate was to ensure the implementation of technical aspects of agricultural/forestry/pastoral programmes and investment plans in the region, and adopted the “Regional Social Safety Net Support Programme”, which will be monitored by the RAAF. Under this framework, a regional **training** and exchange plan for social transfers in West Africa is expected to be established at the beginning of 2015. There are still few managers and technicians who are trained in the use of cash transfer, a tool that is still new to the region. The language barrier is still a major obstacle to be overcome in this area, insofar as most resources are only available in English, and there is no permanent training programme in the region.

Graph 2

What are the mid-term areas for focus to achieve the intended vision?

Source: Author



In addition to state leadership, achieving the long-term vision that has been set out also requires **resolving several technical and operational difficulties**. These relate primarily to issues of funding, early warning and action, targeting, operationalisation at scale and coordination. These different issues are succinctly presented below.

1. Establishing **long-term, flexible funding mechanisms** to be able to cover varying responses to seasonal vulnerability.

Generally speaking, funding can be linked to the national social transfer system or directly linked to humanitarian actors. In the first scenario, a reserve fund, or perhaps risk financing mechanisms, may be established in order to respond to unforeseen events. As the case study carried out as part of the “Fit For The Future” research project emphasises, reserve funds are liable to be used during periods of crisis to compensate for a lack of funding to cover basic needs. Such was the case in Ethiopia, following which risk financing mechanisms were established. These were shown to be very effective in responding to the 2011 crisis, with funds being freed up much more quickly than they would have been through classic humanitarian emergency appeal mechanisms. In the second scenario, changes in mentality and practise amongst donors are needed to allow greater flexibility and to bridge the (artificial) divide between emergency response and development programmes. Long-term funding by humanitarian actors working to care for people in situations of chronic or seasonal vulnerability would make it possible to contribute meaningfully to the development of national skills. This could constitute an intermediary stage between humanitarian responses and action against the root causes of vulnerability. Other forms of funding may, of course, be considered (e.g. through private sector actors or the diaspora, or by means of insurance taken out by the states or by farmers’ groups).

2. Bringing reliable **information and early warning systems** into operation and reinforcing the connection between early warning and early action (unblocking contingency funds, performing needs assessments and (pre)-targeting, etc.)

A regular, early update on the situations facing households by means of reliable tools is indispensable for making decisions and mobilising funds in good time. Ensuring very early warnings should set risk mitigation strategies into motion prior to the crisis. Providing a firm basis of information should also mean an adequate, fair and dynamic social transfer system is put in place (targeting the most vulnerable, increasing supporting in times of crisis, adjusting transfer payments according to inflation, etc.). Major efforts have been made throughout the region to build up national early warning and information systems. Various tools have been tested to give the best answers possible to the key questions of decision makers (who, how much, where, when). However, there remain inequalities between countries and improvements can still be made. Monitoring systems must be linked with reference data in order to understand the impact of shocks on households and to be able to trigger possible alerts. There remains a need for better analysis of the causes, characteristics and consequences of poverty and vulnerability to food and nutrition security. Monitoring benchmarks have to be adjusted to the real economy of the Sahel – integrating new parameters, such as the price of agricultural labour and the price of firewood, etc. They must also take into account the emerging needs of social transfer programmes. The quality of basic data has to be improved, and data collection must be integrated as part of the work of national statistical services. The link between early warning and early action has to be backed up with sound, appropriate and effective contingency plans.

3. Developing and scaling **targeting mechanisms** which are acceptable to local people, rapid and effective in identifying (in a dynamic way) those who face chronic and temporary vulnerability.

One of the main challenges in using a national social transfer programme to respond to crisis is knowing whether the people affected by the crisis share the same characteristics as the programme's current beneficiaries. A vertical expansion of the programme (increasing the value of transfer payments to the same set of beneficiaries) will be easier than a horizontal expansion (increasing the number of beneficiaries). The location and the nature of the crisis will therefore have a great effect on the challenges in terms of targeting. For example, a national programme aimed at rural communities will be difficult to apply to an urban context, and a social pension programme aimed at older people may not be useful in responding to a crisis affecting poor households in certain areas. In several countries within the region, efforts have been undertaken to establish a database of national programme beneficiaries, and beyond that, of households that meet given poverty and vulnerability criteria (whether or not they are social transfer beneficiaries). This progress is important. However, the nature of poverty is dynamic, and classifying households according to "wealth ranking" criteria established two years earlier may no longer be relevant at the time a crisis occurs. And, of course, the people affected by a crisis are not necessarily those who live in severe chronic poverty. There is still a lot to be done on the issue of targeting. Several approaches are currently being developed: household surveys to identify homes facing extreme chronic poverty ("proxy means test"); community targeting and household economy analysis (HEA) to identify vulnerable households; identifying individuals in poverty who are eligible for free healthcare, etc. The challenges to be dealt with include: joint analysis of poverty and vulnerability profiles; coordination of approaches, criteria and tools; updating (refocusing) databases; integration into national systems, etc.

4. **Eliminating the bottlenecks** which currently hinder the implementation of national social transfer policies.

Though state actors have now committed to defining national social transfer policies, there is still a lot to do before these can really be implemented in the territory as a whole. This process operationalisation often comes up against the weakness in capacity that affects the national institutions in the territory (administrative delays, lack of skills, limited presence on the ground, etc.). Contrary to this, through their human and financial resources and their presence in the field alongside vulnerable communities, humanitarian actors have shown a great capacity for innovation (e.g. payments by mobile telephone) and a capacity for intervention in remote areas. Nowadays, a range of analysis tools is at their disposal in order to tailor the planning of cash transfer programmes: Cost of Diet (CoD) analysis; knowledge, attitudes and practises (KAP) study; dietary diversity score (DDS); urban food security assessment; etc. All of this can help remove the bottlenecks from national initiatives. In cases where a national programme cannot be extended to areas affected by crisis, humanitarian actors could intervene in line with said programme (for faster expansion, with future integration into the national system in mind) (e.g. developing new methods of intervention in areas that are difficult to access, or for nomadic populations). However, certain humanitarian actors may be reticent about the idea of operating within the framework of national policy and a number of practical questions (objectives, funding, reporting etc.) remain to be dealt with.

5. Building up **mechanisms of coordination** between actors on all levels.

The case study which was part of the “Fit For The Future” research project underlines the necessity of establishing certain, pre-agreed institutional and financial arrangements, such as the provision of information on the people affected for all actors, the availability of distribution mechanisms or additional resources that are ready for rapid mobilisation. To do this, robust coordination mechanisms have to be in place (internal coordination, between bilateral actors, between agencies and government, interdepartmental, etc.). In the Sahel, where vulnerable populations are mobile and circulate freely from one country to another, the issue of regional coordination is equally important.

➔ **Short-term focuses**

In the short term, getting started on projects such as these requires, first of all, **an increased awareness and a change in mentality**. At this key moment in the development of cash transfers in the Sahel, everyone must be fully aware of the responsibility of state authorities (central administration, decentralised services, locally elected representatives and local authorities) in assisting local people. It is vital to deal with the lack of knowledge which might still persist in the spheres of humanitarian, state and development work.

This could be done by means of **awareness-raising activities** (e.g. training workshops) to ensure a better knowledge of the cooperative and legislative frameworks which regulate the interventions of humanitarian and development actors, and by increasing the number of opportunities for meetings and exchanges between various parties who use cash transfers, so that they may get to know and understand one another. However, *ultimately*, this has to happen through **simple changes in behaviour** (e.g. taking care to *involve* local authorities in the development, implementation and monitoring of operations, and no longer simply *informing* them). Everyone has a responsibility: the local authorities, to provide leadership; humanitarian actors, to respect the authority of local institutions and representatives (in accordance with legal texts) and to assist them in establishing their leadership. **Incentive actions** to encourage changes in mentality and attitudes should be considered. In light of strengthening linkages between social protection systems and humanitarian response, it seems pertinent to: attempt to define a shared framework; engage in structural measures supporting the realisation of a shared project; carry out research work that is relevant to cash transfer users. Each of these three points of focus for work is explained below.

Sharing a particular tool is not enough to unite different actors who are driven by incentives, objectives and principles that sometimes differ. **A shared project** (or roadmap) must be drawn up between state, humanitarian and development actors, with a view to building ties between emergency cash transfers and national social transfer programmes in order to improve the prevention and management of food and nutritional insecurity on the Sahel. It is important to get a good grasp of the realities facing others before trying to deal with common spheres of work. Within a progressive approach, various potential activities are proposed to guide different actors to take the following course: **raising awareness** of the issue; **understanding** the concepts and the practical considerations; **proposing** concrete solutions; joint **validation**. Four key activities are presented below.

- a. Increasing the number of forums for exchange**, at local, national and regional level, between state, humanitarian and development actors, in order to break down barriers, standardise discourse and encourage mutual understanding of the contexts in which others are working – this can happen by means of simple actions:
- Inviting social protection actors to NGO forums dealing with cash transfers and vice versa;
 - Ensuring that forums for dialogue exist at all levels (from national to local) for all actors involved – whether they are concerned specifically with cash transfers or not;
 - Where applicable, establishing a specific consultation platform under the oversight of the state with technical and financial partners, NGOs, civil society actors etc. as a terms of reference for planning and coordinating transitions;
- b. Organising specific workshops at national level** in order to raise awareness among actors on the issue and ensure a shared understanding of the opportunities and challenges – this is in order to:
- Draw up a map of what exists in terms of cash transfer in each country, detailing the roles of different actors in each of the existing initiatives;
 - Clear up potential discrepancies between the political vision of change underpinning national social transfer initiatives and the principles of humanitarian action;
 - Put cash transfers back into the centre of national socioeconomic policy and reflect on how to strengthen ties by means of other mechanisms (e.g. entrepreneurship);
 - Support the leadership of state actors in forging a mid/long-term vision when it comes to cash transfers;
- c. Identifying areas of real synergy** with the aim of encouraging practical (rather than theoretical) reflection – it may be appropriate to adopt a sector angle (health, food, agriculture, etc.) – in order to:
- Identify (in each sector) possible clashes and synergies between emergency and development actions before, during and after acute periods of crisis;
 - Define a mid and long-term vision according to the specific characteristics of each country;
 - Determine which of the assorted tools and innovations which could have been tested in different contexts might be most appropriate, with a view to scaling up to national level (certain technologies cannot be transferred to national bodies at the moment since they are too expensive or complex);
 - Reflect on the role of NGOs as implementing partners for states;
 - Make use of the private sector’s growing interest to support the country’s development (payment agencies, first and foremost);
 - Establish roles and responsibilities according to the actors’ added value;
- d. Establishing a long-term transition plan** detailing the integration (or lack thereof) of non-state initiatives into the national system, with a gradual assumption of responsibilities by state actors (in terms of the number of people being supported and allocation of national resources), that eventually leads to a situation where emergency workers step in only when the need exceeds chronic and/or seasonal fluctuations.

Within a more systematic approach, it seems suitable to **engage in structural measures** in order to encourage the development and realisation of a shared project. This could be achieved by means of incentives (for donors in particular) or national capacity building activities. For example:

- **Encouraging a change in the approach of humanitarian actors**, especially those that are already involved in the management of chronic vulnerability:
 - Inserting a “social protection” module in emergency cash transfer training programmes;
 - Encouraging NGOs to “help governments help the people” by engaging in capacity building (e.g. national crisis management cells) and sharing lessons learned with state bodies as an essential component of exit strategies (e.g. by reviewing performance indicators);
 - Ensuring long-term, flexible funding for NGOs so that they can engage effectively in transfers of skills, but also so that they can achieve the best results in terms of resilience, beyond vital “life-saving” aid;
 - Stepping up the capitalisation of experiences and dissemination to other state actors, but also within humanitarian organisations (in order to ensure a basic level of knowledge of the Sahelian context is maintained in spite of personnel turnover);
 - Pooling advocacy efforts so as to limit the number of representatives for state actors (platforms, consortium, CaLP focal points etc.) and increase their impact (e.g. visits by parliamentarians);
 - Encouraging a change in the profiles of those who work within NGOs, with more people who have experience of national capacity development (with a knowledge of state bodies, anthropology, etc. and not just those from an “emergency worker” background);
- **Supporting the building up of national capacities** in a much more structural manner:
 - Conducting a capacity-building needs assessment in the different bodies involved (crisis management cells, institutions in charge of social protection, etc.);
 - Encouraging the secondment of domestic technicians and managerial staff to work on innovative projects;
 - Supporting training models that are more “field-focused” (rather than the classical “classroom” model of training) with more practical experiments (e.g. in pilot zones where technicians can put tools to use), so as to start building the capacities of technicians/civil servants right away;
 - Investing a lot more in the training of the next generation of national decision-makers, civil servants and technicians by working with schools and universities to ensure better understanding of the context, the actors involved and the new social support tools available (e.g. through partnerships with universities, with the private sector, etc. to ensure quality training that is centred on practise);
 - Investing in the assessment of the processes and impact of cash transfers, whilst encouraging the involvement of national research workers;

- **Improving modes of funding** for cash transfer initiatives:
 - Securing mid/long-term national funding for the management of chronic vulnerability – with provision being made in national budgets;
 - Planning for the creation of a shared fund to finance seasonal peaks in demand, with mechanisms integrated into the national plan/programme and/or long-term funding for humanitarian actors taking the lead on the issue of seasonal vulnerability;
 - Looking into the possibility of alternative methods of raising funds through private sector actors, diasporas, crowd funding, insurance etc.;
 - Ensuring funding for preventative measures (contingency plans) and assessments.

Finally, there should be an **escalation of research activities**. Several research topics apply as much to emergency cash transfers as to national social transfer initiatives – for example:

- Vulnerability and poverty profiles that shape policy guidelines and choice of targeting tools (e.g. cash transfers and/or health fee exemptions): what are the main types of vulnerability in the different livelihood zones? What are the immediate, underlying and root causes? Etc.
- **Targeting** mechanisms: how can methods that are both effective and acceptable to communities (without any adverse effects on social capital) be developed? How can urban areas be targeted? How can links be established between socioeconomic targeting and the targeting of other forms of vulnerability (e.g. malnutrition)? How can tools (HEA, PMT, etc.) be coordinated with a view to scaling up programmes? How can an updated (refocused) national database which is appropriate for periods of peak demand be put together? Etc.
- Effects of cash transfers on **social capital**¹¹: what are the traditional patterns of redistribution and cohesion? What are the effects of cash transfers on social cohesion? Etc.
- The use of cash transfers in the **prevention of acute and chronic malnutrition**, which is extremely prevalent in the sub-region: to what extent can we expect cash transfers to contribute to the improvement of the nutritional status of young children? What lessons can be learned from past experiences? Etc.
- Impact of cash transfers on regional and national **markets** in the context of the Sahel, characterised by food prices that are above the five-year average rate and marked seasonal variation: what has the effect of the massive expansion of cash transfers been? What is the best way to contribute to the stabilisation of the markets? Etc.
- Identifying and eliminating **bottlenecks** in the implementation of social transfer programmes: what are they? What are the roles of local and international NGOs? What are the roles of private sector actors? Etc.

Recommendations for immediate action

In light of the above, a series of immediate actions can already be recommended with the aim of further reflection, so as to end up with concrete and detailed operational and research recommendations for building linkages between emergency cash transfers and national social transfer programmes. Thus, actors are expected to:

- Ensure that reference documents on the same themes (concept of social protection, lessons learned from experiences in the Horn of Africa, etc.) are **translated** into French and disseminated, in order to allow as many as possible to take part in reflecting on this issue;
- Making up an **inventory** of initiatives that use cash transfers in the context of humanitarian response or national social support policies (primarily in responding to food and nutritional crises and chronic vulnerability) with: a description of the project (objective, approach, type of cash transfer used, scope, duration, etc.); funding and implementation system; institutional anchoring; contact person – the Cash Atlas¹² already lists a good number of cash transfers and a social safety net review has been carried out in most of the countries in the sub-region; it is therefore a case of compiling, updating and sharing this information.
- Compiling a **directory** of cash transfer practitioners in the sub-region, and proposing the set-up of a network using communication tools such as blogs, discussion forums, etc.
- Carrying out detailed **case studies** of experiences within the sub-region, looking to link emergency cash transfer programmes more closely with national social transfer programmes, presently or in the future (Shared Framework for Seasonal Social Safety Nets in Northern Mali; The Niger Alliance; gradual withdrawal by the WFP from school canteens¹³, etc.) so as to analyse: how and why these initiatives were established; what were the problems encountered at the start; what difficulties they now face going forward; how these are perceived by the different actors involved; what follow-up actions are being considered by different actors; etc.
- Organising **national consultation workshops** (under the auspices of the state) on this same theme to facilitate exchanges between actors and successfully outline a shared vision and plan for cash transfer users seeking to build up resilience – potentially taking advantage of existing developments, such as the formation of the AGIR roadmaps⁸ or national processes for developing social protection systems;
- Organising regional and/or national **technical workshops** on subjects that are important to the progress of this issue – first and foremost, for targeting;
- Encouraging **discussion with other regions**, especially the Horn of Africa and southern Asia, ensuring that key documents coming out of West Africa are translated into English and disseminated, for example through the CaLP network and social protection working groups.

Notes

- ¹ The Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) is a consortium of humanitarian organisations aiming to raise awareness and improve the quality of cash transfer programmes throughout the humanitarian sector. Currently, CaLP brings together the following organisations: Oxfam GB, Save the Children, the British Red Cross, Action Against Hunger/ACF International and the Norwegian Refugee Council. CaLP is supported by ECHO, USAID/OFDA, VISA, DFATD, DFID, SDC and the American Red Cross. More information may be found on CaLP's website: www.cashlearning.org.
- ² Case study carried out as part of the "Fit For The Future" research project and included in Appendix 3 (<http://www.cashlearning.org/resources/library/404-is-cash-transfer-programming-fit-for-the-future---annexes?searched=1>) as part of the final report (<http://www.cashlearning.org/2012-2014/-fit-for-the-future->).
- ³ OFDA (Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance) is USAID's (United States Agency for International Development) overseas office for aiding development.
- ⁴ This regional workshop on "links between emergency cash transfer programming and social safety nets in the Sahel" was held in Dakar on July 8th-9th 2014. All of the documents and presentations shared during the workshop can be downloaded on the "West Africa" page on CaLP's website: <http://www.cashlearning.org/afrique-de-l-ouest/afrique-de-l-ouest-1>.
- ⁵ The concept of "shadow system alignment".
- ⁶ Particular emphasis is placed on Senegal, Niger, Mauritania, Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso and the north of Nigeria, zones which are found in the Sahelian belt of West Africa.
- ⁷ For more information of the National Social Protection Floor, visit: <http://www.ilo.org/secsoc/areas-of-work/policy-development-and-applied-research/social-protection-floor/lang--en/index.htm>
- ⁸ Launched in Ouagadougou in December 2012, the Global Alliance for Resilience (l'Alliance Globale pour la Résilience or AGIR) – Sahel and West Africa – set itself the objective of "structurally and sustainably reducing food and nutritional insecurity by supporting the implementation of Sahelian and West African policies." Placed under the political and technical leadership of ECOWAS, UEMOA and CILSS, the Alliance is supported by existing platforms and networks, notably the Food Crisis Prevention Network (Réseau de Prévention des Crises Alimentaires or RPCA). A regional roadmap was adopted in April 2013. The process of drawing out National Resilience Priorities (Priorités Résilience Pays, or PRP-AGIR) from this regional roadmap, by means of inclusive national dialogues, is underway in different countries throughout the sub-region. More information is available on the Food Crisis Prevention Network website: <http://www.oecd.org/site/rpca/agir/>
- ⁹ For more information of the Zero Hunger Initiative for West Africa, launched by ECOWAS in 2012, go to: http://www.inter-reseaux.org/IMG/pdf/Faim_Zero_FR.pdf.
- ¹⁰ Devereux and White (2008) "Social protection in Africa: Can evidence, rights and politics converge?" (<http://www.kulima.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Conference-proceedings.pdf>).
- ¹¹ This echoes one particular study published recently by LASDEL (Laboratoire d'Études et de Recherches sur les Dynamiques Sociales et le Développement Local, or the Laboratory for Study and Research on Social Dynamics and Local Development), which presents evidence of the adverse effects of cash transfers on communities due to a lack of accountability within traditional structures, which could result in conflict. See "Les transferts monétaires au Niger : la manne et les soupçons": http://www.lasdel.net/resulta1.php?id_article=241.
- ¹² The Cash Atlas can be consulted online: <http://www.cashlearning.org/information-sharing/cash-mapping-tool>.
- ¹³ To plan and coordinate its progressive withdrawal from school canteen projects within several countries in the region, the WFP is using the SABER framework (System Assessment and Benchmarking for Education Results), which may prove useful in the creation of a dynamic for the handover of responsibility.