
Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Trust Fund: linking humanitarian cash assistance and national social protection systems

Burkina Faso case study

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Executive summary

Background to the research

The Sahel region hosts some of the poorest countries in the world and is facing one of the most complex crises globally. The region struggles with the combined effects of climate change and recurrent climate-related shocks, widespread chronic and seasonal food insecurity, high rates of malnutrition, conflict, and forced displacement. The needs of affected populations largely exceed what can be provided by the local community and national and international resources, and this has given rise to a call for innovative and more effective ways of working to address these needs.

Since the 2000s, and with the support of development partners, new social protection policies and programmes have been developed, including: long-term, regular cash transfer programmes for extremely poor households; seasonal cash transfers; long-term, labour-intensive public works programmes; school feeding programmes; health fee waivers; and initiatives to set up general health insurance. Humanitarian assistance (which has frequently become a 'routine' response) and nascent national social assistance systems are often present on the ground at the same time, addressing similar needs, and in many cases working through the same organisations. Social assistance and humanitarian assistance are often provided to the same groups of highly vulnerable people – people affected by cyclical and recurrent adverse climate conditions and socioeconomic inequalities; people who are internally displaced by violence or climate-related shocks; and refugees fleeing from armed conflict across international borders.

There is renewed commitment by development and humanitarian actors to join forces in providing social assistance and humanitarian cash assistance, especially for particularly vulnerable groups. Commitments also include the strengthening of policy and operational collaboration. To support this effort, a global research agenda is coalescing around the nexus between humanitarian cash transfers and national social protection systems.

The Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Programme (SASPP)¹ aims to help poor and vulnerable households become more resilient to the effects of climate change, and to expand the reach of shock-responsive cash transfer programmes in six Sahel countries: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal. It includes a learning agenda to inform political dialogue and to support the operationalisation of the humanitarian–development nexus.

This report focuses on Burkina Faso and is one of six country-level case studies. A synthesis report will distil the lessons from across the six countries. The research is funded through the SASPP Multi-Donor Trust Fund and seeks to contribute to the SASPP by providing operationally relevant and practical analysis and recommendations to enhance the

¹ www.worldbank.org/en/programs/sahel-adaptive-social-protection-program-trust-fund

collaboration between programmes and actors, with the overarching goal of addressing the needs of populations more effectively and efficiently.

The key focus of this research is on the linkages between humanitarian cash transfer programmes and social safety nets. As a result – and it is important to state this – the emphasis is on the convergence of the two systems (or parts thereof), and not on their respective performance. The research assesses whether enhanced cooperation between humanitarian and national actors could be achieved, and if so, how. It does this by assessing existing levels of convergence between social safety nets and humanitarian cash assistance at several levels, including those of the policy and legal framework, governance structure, programme design and objectives, financing streams, etc., and by looking for practical entry points for further alignment. The six country-level case studies and the synthesis report seek to showcase experiences and lessons learned in the Sahel region, and to provide recommendations for further action.

Studied programmes in Burkina Faso

This research is based on secondary literature analysis and 27 key informant interviews. The Burkina Faso case study focuses on lessons that can be learned in a highly complex context. Climate change and growing insecurity are the key drivers of food insecurity and displacement. Burkina Faso is experiencing one of the fastest-growing internally displaced persons (IDPs) crises globally. The response to climate-related shocks is being provided at the same time as the support for IDPs, often in the very same regions.

The research describes the *modus operandi* used by three different types of programme and groups them into the three domains: 1) social safety nets; 2) lean season assistance; and 3) support to IDPs. The Burkina Faso case study studied the following programmes:

Social safety nets:

- **The *Projet Filets Sociaux* (PFS)** is by far the largest social protection project in country, currently covering approximately 78,700 recipients, approximately 20,000 of them IDPs. It is funded by the World Bank and includes elements of shock response (seasonal payments during the hunger period).
Germany – through its development bank *Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau* (KfW; German Development Bank) – and **France** – through its *Agence Française du Développement* (AFD; French Development Agency) – are piggy-backing on this project by implementing relatively similar social transfer projects through the same Project Implementation Unit. Germany is aiming to support 10,000 recipients over a period of three years in the South-West. France is planning to support 10,000 households in Ouagadougou and will continue the support so far provided by PFS to 10,000 recipients in four communes in the East, including 15–20% IDPs.
- **Child-sensitive social protection (United Nations Children’s Fund; UNICEF):** The project commenced in 2019 and the first cash transfers occurred in June 2020. The project is funded by Sweden and supports 3,700 households. It will run until December 2022.

Lean season assistance:

- **Seasonal cash transfers by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO):** FAO runs the largest lean season assistance, supporting approximately 17,330 households with cash transfers and other livelihood support activities.
- **‘Emergency development’ support provided by *Terre des hommes* (Tdh) and *Action Contre la Faim* (ACF):** Together, these two non-governmental organisations (NGOs) support 2,850 households with cash transfers during the lean season over a period of three years. This is part of a multi-sectoral EU-funded programme that sits between humanitarian and development work, and aims at improving the living conditions in border areas affected by the conflict at the same time as improving social cohesion.

Support to IDPs:

- **Humanitarian cash transfers by the World Food Programme (WFP):** WFP considerably scaled up its emergency operations in 2020 and currently supports approximately 41,000 households across all regions affected by displacement. Owing to limitations on overall resources, WFP distributes only a reduced transfer value.
- **Humanitarian cash transfers by Burkinabé Red Cross (BRC):** In partnership with the Belgian Red Cross and with funding from the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO), the BRC supported 4,352 IDPs in 2021 for a period of three months through an electronic voucher scheme.
- **Humanitarian cash transfers by Oxfam:** With funding from ECHO, Oxfam supported 4,250 displaced households in the Sahel region in 2021 over a period of three months. While the project was initially meant to use cash, the organisations switched to commodity vouchers after conducting a market assessment.

Key findings

Assistance for very poor and vulnerable people can be placed on a continuum of delivery options (see Section 3.1).² It ranges from completely parallel systems where there is no integration between humanitarian and national programmes, through alignment with existing social protection programme elements, to piggy-backing, whereby certain of these elements are also being used by humanitarian cash assistance. Full integration exists where national social protection systems lead and guide all cash assistance. However, actors do not have to choose one approach over another: they can pick and combine different options. Moreover, certain delivery functions can be more fully integrated than others. This approach is set out in the paper ‘Unbundled: A Framework for Connecting Safety Nets and Humanitarian Assistance in Refugee Settings’, developed by Oxford Policy Management, together with the World Bank.³ The research uses an ‘unbundled framework’ to describe existing levels of convergence between social safety nets, lean season assistance, and support to IDPs.

² O’Brien, C., Cherrier, C., Watson, C., and Congrave, J. (2018).

³ <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/32467>.

There is agreement among key stakeholders that there is currently no national social safety net in Burkina Faso, but there are nascent building blocks, put up with the support of international actors. There are also elements of national guidance that outline how social transfers should be implemented. The key policy framework for social protection is the *Politique Nationale de Protection Sociale* (PNPS) (National Social Protection Policy), adopted in 2013 and valid until 2022.⁴ It formulates a vision for social protection in Burkina Faso and has two main objectives: (1) to develop adequate and sustainable protection mechanisms against idiosyncratic and exogenous shocks through the use of safety nets; and (2) to extend social insurance coverage to informal and agricultural sectors. The *Secrétariat Permanent du Conseil National de Protection Sociale* (Permanent Secretariat of the National Council on Social Protection) is the government institution for the administrative and technical coordination of the PNSP. Most stakeholders are aware of the PNPS and of efforts to establish a common methodology to register and select beneficiaries for social transfers. But there is no overarching government-led safety net programme that sets overall references.

Overall, the research found varying degrees of convergence: different programmes follow government guidance (where it exists) to very different degrees. There is generally some degree of harmonisation within the same domain of activities (social safety nets, lean season assistance, or assistance for IDPs), but there are also exceptions to the rule.

At the national level (see Section 3.3.1), there is good harmonisation of policy. The PNSP guides policy on social protection. The annual *Plan de Réponse et de Soutien aux Populations Vulnérables à l'Insécurité Alimentaire et à la Malnutrition* (PRSPV) (National Response and Support Plan to People Vulnerable to Food Insecurity and Malnutrition)⁵ guides the response to food insecurity, including seasonal lean season support. Emergency response activities are guided by the law on the prevention and management of risks, humanitarian crises, and disasters.⁶ The *Secrétariat Permanent du Conseil National de Secours d'Urgence et de Réhabilitation* (SP/CONASUR) (Permanent Secretariat for the National Council for Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation) is a specific institution within the *Ministère du Genre, de la Solidarité Nationale et de la Famille* (MGSNF) (Ministry of Gender, National Solidarity and Humanitarian Action) in charge of all support to IDPs. Since the crisis intensified and the humanitarian cluster system was activated in 2019, SP/CONASUR has been part of the annual humanitarian response planning and subscribes to the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2021.⁷

The programmes studied broadly follow compatible objectives (see Section 3.3.2), which is a point of convergence, but seek to reach them with different means, which is partly due to donor preferences and constitutes a barrier to stronger convergence. Social protection, lean season assistance, and support to IDPs all have their own sources of funding and follow their own governance structures and distinct coordination mechanisms. Coordination has been identified as absolutely essential, but is currently not sufficiently strong. There seems considerable optimism with regards to making progress on further

⁴ Burkina Faso (2012).

⁵ Burkina Faso (2021).

⁶ Burkina Faso (2014).

⁷ UN OCHA (2021).

strengthening of the coordination within the same type of programme (safety nets, lean season assistance, and IDP support). The interview partners were less optimistic with regards to improving coordination between the different types of interventions, as this would require more harmonisation on the Government side first, which is seen as being hampered by the institutional landscape in place.

Section 3.3.3 looks at the design elements of the programmes, such as underlying vulnerability assessments, targeting design, transfer values, and conditionality. The *Cadre Harmonisé*⁸ and the HRP are the reference documents that are used by most of the humanitarian programmes in their needs assessment processes. There is no similar shared reference for the safety net projects, as they each use a different methodology to assess needs and to prioritise geographic intervention areas, often influenced by donor preferences and policy.

A design element that connects programmes studied is the shared commitment to cash and the absence of conditionality for any of the transfers. Almost all actors (except Oxfam and BRC) transfer the assistance through mobile money and almost all (except PFS) conduct monthly transfers. **The differences in the design** relate to the targeting process, and the transfer values, frequency, and duration. They differ within the group of studied safety nets and within lean season assistance and support to IDPs.

The **targeting methodologies** applied by the different programmes differ significantly from the methodological guidance established by the SP/CNPS through its so-called 'consensual methodology' for beneficiary registration and pre-identification for assistance. It was developed in 2015 with the participation of several national structures and is thus considered to be consensus within government. Though actors outside the Government participated at the time, they do not or no longer share the notion of a consensus. Some are openly opposed to it. Only UNICEF still uses it today, while most of the other actors have adjusted it in the meantime or no longer use it at all. A presidential decree signed in September 2021 created a Technical Secretariat tasked with building up a *Régistre Social Unique* (RSU) (Unique Social Registry) that allows for the identification of households that are potentially eligible for different social protection and poverty eradication programmes, but the work of the Secretariat has not yet started.

The varying approaches to selecting beneficiaries for lean season assistance cause less tension as all actors except PFS apply the Household Economy Approach (HEA) in agreement with the *Cadre Harmonisé* methodological approach. There are divided opinions on whether IDPs should also be registered in and targeted through the new registry. For the time being, SP/CONASUR is the only agency which can register them, but there is no harmonised policy on beneficiary selection among registered IDPs.

There is no government guidance regarding the **transfer value** for safety nets in the PNPS. The mid-term evaluation of the policy deplores the lack of harmonisation, but does not highlight the need to set guidance. However, there is government guidance on the transfer value and frequency, as well as on the duration of the lean season assistance; most of the programmes studied follow it. But there is poor harmonisation among programmes providing

⁸ *Cadre Harmonisé* (2021).

cash to IDPs. The HRP strongly advocates for the adoption of a multi-sectoral approach to cash, but most projects continue with a heavily sector-focused transfer value and there is no alignment. Government actors are seriously concerned about the lack of harmonisation of the transfer values as it causes tensions in the communities. However, some of the operational partners downplay this source of tension and defend their ways of setting the values.

Until very recently, there was no harmonised reference tool and no agreed way of calculating the income gap for targeted households which should be covered by a cash transfer. To address this issue, the Cash Working Group (CWG) established a task force in October 2020 to develop a common and agreed methodology. It worked over almost a year and developed a Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB), an MEB per region, and sector of expenses; and calculated the income gaps by household status, by sector, and by type of activity (emergency relief, recovery support, or support for chronically vulnerable households). The final report, published in November 2021,⁹ establishes a total value of FCFA 113,725 per month as the minimum expenditure for a family of seven people. It estimates the average income gap to cover those expenses at FCFA 61,090 for residents and FCFA 71,849 for IDPs, but also sees strong regional differences. The study calculates sectoral gaps, the one for food expenses being determined as FCFA 34,041. Participating actors have strong hopes that the operational guidance that comes with the report will be followed and will lead to a stronger harmonisation of the values across different humanitarian programmes. The document also explicitly mentions the need to reflect on how these values relate to the values provided by social safety nets.¹⁰

Within the delivery chain (see Section 3.3.4), there is very limited government guidance, apart from the difficult topic of registration. There is strong, principled agreement across programmes that a national social registry is a key building block within a national social protection system and a useful instrument for humanitarian programmes, especially in a context of continued insecurity and where the crisis is protracted. But at the same time, the exact method of managing the registration of potentially eligible beneficiaries has been, and continues to be, a strongly contested subject; there are currently four different major databases managed by different institutions.

The fact that almost all actors deliver their payments electronically and largely use the same financial service providers is a point of convergence across a large variety of programmes, but this synergy could be leveraged more strongly in the future. All agencies also highlight the close involvement of the local social services, where these teams exist, which is another point of convergence. The other elements of the delivery chain are implemented either in parallel (e.g. accountability to affected populations, and monitoring and evaluation) or where there is no government guidance.

Convergence is not an end in itself but can be a strong enabler of better responding to growing needs in times of very limited resources. The study discusses the added

⁹ Cash Working Group (2021b, forthcoming).

¹⁰ The documents recommends, 'poursuivre la réflexion pour dégager l'arrimage entre MEB et le système national de protection sociale' (CWG, 2021b forthcoming, p. 28).

value of stronger convergence (see Section 4) along four dimensions: 1) strategic implications; 2) resource implications; 3) risks; and 4) sustainability considerations.

Strategic implications (see Section 4.1):

While the nexus between humanitarian and development programmes is often referenced in documents, it was not equally present during the interviews. The actors implementing the programmes studied apply a policy of geographic delineation of intervention zones to manage the complexity of the context and the high level of need. This leads to a narrow geographic approach to implementation and limited consideration for linkages or harmonisation.

A key strategic shift would be to seek more strongly complementarity between interventions. Instead of *dividing* the territories and caseloads of affected populations, agencies could move towards *sharing* the burden. Currently, different programmes in similar geographic areas seek to avoid the same household receiving assistance from different programmes. While this logic makes sense within the group of similar programmes, it does not enable the linking of immediate humanitarian support with longer-term approaches, and obliges beneficiaries to choose between a higher but short-term benefit versus longer-term but lower support. This ‘either/or’ approach could be replaced by a concept of ‘layering support’ according to need, both in terms of transfer value and the duration of the intervention. Instead of dividing zones, agencies could share groups of affected people and jointly agree on support packages that can be provided by different actors depending on the objective of their programmes, the degree of vulnerability of a household, and available financial resources. This approach could also include a horizontal expansion where existing social safety nets cannot cover an adequate percentage of people in need of assistance, or where an external shock has led to more people passing the threshold of being eligible for assistance.

The focus would thus move from ‘avoiding double-dipping’ to ‘ensuring adequate layering’ of support. This concept of layering support requires a regular assessment of individual levels of need and an adjustment of support – in terms of transfer values and duration, but also with regards to complementary interventions and conditional forms of support that could be an exit strategy for less vulnerable people. Authorities and communities must be properly informed ahead of time before these changes occur to generate understanding and buy-in for this new approach. The layering of support and harmonisation of approaches might need to be implemented in phases in order not to overburden the actors and to achieve progress step by step. Due to a higher existing degree of harmonisation within the lean season assistance, a temporary vertical and (where necessary) horizontal expansion of safety net support during the lean season seems easier to achieve. With regards to the support for IDPs, which is a more complex task, the excellent first steps of closer collaboration between the World Bank and WFP could be used to pilot the approach to learn lessons.

At an operational level, several programmes rely on the same communal social services and partly the same local NGOs, but this point of convergence is currently not fully utilised. The communal social services, where they exist, and local organisations very frequently work across different domains and programmes, but this connecting role is currently not leveraged to achieve more convergence. A systematic mapping of these local

actors, their involvement in respective programmes, and their capacity would be a first step to taking them and their contribution more seriously, and to better using and supporting that existing synergy. On the other hand, actors need to make sure they do not overburden these local structures.

Resource implications (see Section 4.2):

The current scattering of actors and programmes is a very costly way of operating: If further harmonisation of transfer values is achieved, based on the MEB study, the costs per beneficiary will increase, at least in the short term and particularly for supporting IDPs. Therefore, it is even more important to ensure that the transaction costs decrease, to ensure that coverage does not fall victim to improved adequacy of the transfers. One way of reducing transaction costs would be to enter into shared agreements with financial service providers, saving money by jointly negotiating administration fees on increased volumes of transactions. There is optimism that a social registry will reduce the costs of targeting, but experience from key actors regionally points towards rather higher costs, at least in the short term.

Risk implications (see Section 4.3):

The report identifies several risks related to further convergence: Key informants raised concerns regarding the continued political independence of safety net projects if they are further scaled up. An advantage of the current non-alignment of programmes is seen in the fact that they are largely protected against political interference at the national level, though there are reports of biased processes at the local level. Some actors are worried that one overall national safety net, under which all available financing would be grouped, would come under much higher political pressure than the current smaller programmes.

The current practice of dividing beneficiary caseloads rather than sharing the burden across programmes risks leaving highly vulnerable IDPs with insufficient support, if they are only covered by the PFS and are, as a consequence of that support, excluded from further (and more adequate) humanitarian assistance.

There is a risk that the new institutional set-up for building the registry will not be able to benefit from existing knowledge and expertise. Existing operational information, knowledge, and experience on what works and what does not with regards to registration practices risks getting lost if key staff who have so far been involved disengage from the future process.

Sustainability implications (see Section 4.4):

Progress towards more convergence is thus neither a quick fix nor an easy win: There is already a history in Burkina Faso of attempts to converge social safety net interventions and humanitarian cash, especially for lean season assistance. But these suggestions have gained little traction in the past. Focusing efforts on harmonising registration, targeting, and transfer values is important, at the same time as forging a strong nucleus of actors who are willing to visibly and sustainably converge their operations, and thus lead by example. A continuous steady multi-year process seems the more realistic option than over-ambitious short-term targets.

Key recommendations

Convergence can be a strong enabler of a better response to growing needs when resources are very limited. The following recommendations highlight the most important steps in the short, medium, and long term.

Short-term actions

Improving coordination within domains and systematically across domains: There are a number of practical steps that the different stakeholders could take in the short term. This includes seeking stronger harmonisation within the respective domain (social safety nets, lean season assistance, and support for IDPs) and systematising the dialogue across domains. The process around the MEB study creates momentum that should be captured to increase the transparency of the methodology on how to calculate transfer values, including for the 2022 lean season assistance, and ideally harmonise them at least within the same type of programme. Discussions across the different types of programme could be systematised to ensure that coordination is happening on a regular basis, is fully inclusive, is less dependent on key individuals, and is supportive and empowering of government prerogatives to set guidance and coordinate activities. Donors could lead by example and further harmonise their respective programme objectives among similar programmes and intensify their dialogue across domains. It is important to regularly monitor beneficiary preferences regarding the transfer modality. If indeed a shift is occurring towards preference for in-kind assistance, if only in certain regions, this should be duly taken into consideration when planning future assistance.

Inclusive advocacy for a comprehensive national social safety net: Key actors have already joined forces to advocate for a comprehensive national safety net. This is an important next step. The identification of elements beyond the registry (for example, joint outreach to communities or harmonising feedback mechanisms) could help to avoid focusing on the most disputed topic, thereby overcoming a barrier to progress on other building blocks. An inclusive process will ensure that smaller actors do not perceive the process as a hidden way of crowding out their activities, but as an attempt to jointly build something new. Key actors already have the right mindset, which is a promising start.

Building a stronger evidence base on how to layer support strategically and communicate adequately with communities about this policy: Actors should develop systematic ways to cross-check lists of beneficiaries,¹¹ and in order to get a better understanding of existing overlaps, all actors could systematically ask potential and actual beneficiaries whether they receive support from other programmes. The sharing of beneficiary data could improve and still respect concerns over data protection. Where beneficiaries do receive more than one type of assistance, the impact of these benefits could be analysed to learn lessons on the actual impact of additional assistance; this could also be compared to groups which receive only a single transfer or no support at all. Learning from the evidence, actors could develop a 'layering policy', clearly establishing a systematic way to complement different transfers within common intervention areas, thus sharing the burden

¹¹ There is also no unique identifier that would allow systematic identification of people across different lists, although the World Bank is providing support on this topic (see also Section 3.3.5).

and providing adequate support, instead of seeking to mutually exclude each other's beneficiaries. Interview partners highlight the importance of clearly communicating such a new approach to communities and local authorities.

Acknowledge local social services and local organisations as a point of convergence and support them more systematically: Local social services, where they exist, and local NGOs have been identified as de facto points of convergence across different programmes. This potential for stronger convergence at the local level could be leveraged more strategically, through more systematic mapping of the existence of local social services and their need for capacity strengthening and funding, as well as through a mapping of partnerships with the same local organisations across different programmes. This would be a starting point for systematising experiences of local social services and local NGOs, giving the local partners a stronger voice in the policy dialogue, and thus reinforcing feedback from communities. Donors could consider funding a mapping of existing feedback and complaint mechanisms, their respective strengths and weaknesses, and their potential for harmonisation and collective use.

Seize very practical operational opportunities for joint approaches: Operational agencies could seize operational opportunities for joint initiatives that would enhance day-to-day collaboration around very tangible added value, such as the joint contracting of financial services, the harmonisation of key tools (e.g. for post-distribution monitoring), and the conducting of joint assessments (e.g. on cash feasibility or beneficiary preferences regarding transfer modality).

Medium-term efforts

The establishment of the RSU is not a quick fix and not a purely technical process: Given the centrality of the process it should be approached with care. A political economy analysis could help us to better understand the political economy behind the decision to place the registry in the MGSNF. Instead of focusing on purely technical questions from the start, the process could begin with confidence-building measures first and might benefit from external facilitation. Positive examples from other registration processes should be captured and future users of the registry should be involved from the very start. The interoperability of databases also needs to be considered from the beginning of the process.

The long-term vision

Shifting to adaptive social protection remains the right vision but will take some time: In the long run, a shock-responsive national social protection system, one that provides adequate support and that adapts both its transfer value and also its caseload when external shocks occur, is the right vision for Burkina Faso. All national and international actors are committed in policy terms to greater national ownership and to supporting a government-led social protection system better able to support citizens, including those affected by natural hazards and by displacement. Moving towards that needs to remain a long-term vision and objective, and while realising it in full may take some time, progress can still be made at both strategic and operational levels.

Table of contents

Acknowledgements.....	i
Executive summary.....	ii
List of tables, figures, and boxes	xiii
List of abbreviations	xiv
1 The context, scope, and methodology of the research.....	1
1.1 The context of the overall research	1
1.2 Objectives of the research	2
1.3 Scope of the research.....	2
1.4 Methodology.....	2
1.5 Specific scope of the Burkina Faso case study.....	3
1.6 Limitations	3
2 Burkina Faso: context and overview of social protection and humanitarian assistance	4
2.1 Main characteristics of the shocks and their impact on vulnerable populations.....	4
2.2 Overview of key social protection and humanitarian assistance programmes	6
3 Analytical framework, key findings, and conclusions.....	10
3.1 Analytical framework.....	10
3.2 Overview of alignment levels	11
3.3 Main findings and conclusions.....	14
4 The ‘value of convergence’ and its policy and operational implications: recommendations for short-term actions, medium-term efforts, and the long-term vision.....	41
4.1 Strategic implications	41
4.2 Resource implications.....	43
4.3 Risk implications	45
4.4 Sustainability implications.....	46
4.5 Recommendations	47
References.....	53
Annex A List of key informants.....	55

List of tables, figures, and boxes

Table 1:	Overview: a summary of the current extent of convergence	11
Table 2:	Needs assessment and geographic targeting: social safety nets.....	20
Table 3:	Needs assessment and geographic targeting: lean season assistance.....	20
Table 4:	Needs assessment and geographic targeting: assistance for IDPs	20
Table 5:	Beneficiary selection: social safety nets.....	22
Table 6:	Beneficiary selection: lean season assistance.....	22
Table 7:	Beneficiary selection: assistance for IDPs	25
Table 8:	Transfers: social safety nets.....	27
Table 9:	Transfers: lean season assistance.....	28
Table 10:	Transfers: assistance for IDPs	29
Table 11:	Beneficiary management information system: social safety nets	31
Table 12:	Beneficiary management information system: humanitarian cash transfers	31
Table 13:	Registration: social safety nets.....	34
Table 14:	Registration: lean season assistance.....	34
Table 15:	Registration: assistance for IDPs	34
Figure 1:	Continuum of delivery options	10
Figure 2:	Existing databases and number of registered individuals.....	33
Box 1:	World Bank support, with funding from Germany and France.....	7
Box 2:	EU's Emergency Development Programme in border areas.....	8
Box 3:	The SP/CNPS's 'consensual methodology'	24

List of abbreviations

ACF	<i>Action Contre la Faim</i> (Action Against Hunger)
AFD	<i>Agence Française du Développement</i> (French Development Agency)
BRC	Burkinabé Red Cross
CWG	Cash Working Group
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Office
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FCFA	<i>Franc de la communauté financière d'Afrique</i> (West African financial community Francs)
HEA	Household Economy Approach
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
INSD	<i>Institut National de la Statistique et de la Démographie</i> (National Institute for Statistics and Demography)
KfW	<i>Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau</i> (German Development Bank)
MEB	Minimum Expenditure Basket
MGSNF	<i>Ministère du Genre, de la Solidarité Nationale et de la Famille</i> (Ministry of Gender, National Solidarity and Humanitarian Action).
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PFS	<i>Projet Filets Sociaux</i> (Safety Net Project)
PMT	Proxy Means Testing
PNPS	<i>Politique Nationale de Protection Sociale</i> (National Social Protection Policy)
PRSPV	<i>Populations Vulnérables à l'Insécurité Alimentaire et à la Malnutrition</i> (National Response and Support Plan to People Vulnerable to Food Insecurity and Malnutrition)
PUD	<i>Programme Développement d'Urgence</i> (Emergency Development Programme)
RSU	<i>Régistre Social Unique</i> (Unique Social Registry)
SASPP	Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Programme

SE/CNSA	<i>Secrétariat Exécutif au Conseil National de Sécurité Alimentaire</i> (Executive Secretariat for the National Food Security Council)
SP/CNPS	<i>Secrétariat Permanent au Conseil National de Protection Social</i> (Permanent Secretariat for the National Social Protection Council)
SP/CONASUR	<i>Secrétariat Permanent du Conseil National de Secours d'Urgence et de Réhabilitation</i> (Permanent Secretariat for the National Council for Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation)
Tdh	<i>Terre des hommes</i>
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Programme

1 The context, scope, and methodology of the research

1.1 The context of the overall research

The Sahel region hosts some of the poorest countries in the world and is facing one of the most complex crises globally. The region struggles with the combined effects of climate change and recurrent climate-related shocks, widespread chronic and seasonal food insecurity, high rates of malnutrition, conflict, and forced displacement. The needs of affected populations largely exceed what can be provided by the local community and national and international resources, and this has given rise to a call for innovative and more effective ways of working to address these needs.

Since the 2000s, and with the support of development partners, new social protection policies and programmes have emerged, including: long-term, regular cash transfer programmes for extremely poor households; seasonal cash transfers; long-term, labour-intensive public works programmes; school feeding programmes; health fee waivers; and initiatives to set up general health insurance. Humanitarian assistance (which has frequently become a ‘routine’ response) and nascent national social assistance systems are often present on the ground at the same time, addressing similar needs, and in many cases working through the same organisations. Social assistance and humanitarian assistance are often provided to the same groups of highly vulnerable people: people affected by cyclical and recurrent adverse climate conditions and socioeconomic inequalities; people who are internally displaced by violence or climate-related shocks; and refugees fleeing from armed conflict across international borders.¹²

There is renewed commitment by development and humanitarian actors to join forces in providing social assistance and humanitarian cash assistance, especially for particularly vulnerable groups. Commitments also include the strengthening of policy and operational collaboration. To support this effort, a global research agenda is coalescing around the nexus between humanitarian cash transfers and national social protection systems.

The Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Programme (SASPP) aims to help poor and vulnerable households become more resilient to the effects of climate change and to expand the reach of shock-responsive cash transfer programmes in six Sahel countries: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Senegal. It includes a learning agenda to inform political dialogue and to support the operationalisation of the humanitarian–development nexus. This study is part of this endeavour, being one of six country-level case studies.

The objective and scope of the research are described below. Each country case study follows the same methodological approach (set out in this chapter). However, each case

¹² To date, more than 3.8 million people have been forcibly displaced in the countries included in this study (877,773 refugees and over 2.1 million Internally Displaced People, IDPs). In 2021, 9 million people are estimated to be in need of emergency food assistance.

study is tailored to focus on specific shocks and aspects of programming and identified by national stakeholders as presenting valuable entry points for this research agenda.

1.2 Objectives of the research

The key objectives of this research are to:

- identify the most effective connecting points for alignment between social safety nets and humanitarian assistance, with a focus on cash-based assistance;
- identify the key enablers, barriers, and blockages, and assess the potential for convergence and its added value; and
- provide strategic, policy, and operational recommendations to support SASPP, but also to contribute to the global debate on how to leverage these instruments to better respond to crises and shocks.

1.3 Scope of the research

The research concentrates on the SASPP countries – Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Mali – and on cash-based interventions as the main area of convergence between humanitarian assistance and social safety nets. The focus is on whether enhanced cooperation between humanitarian and national actors could be achieved, and if so, how, and what added value this would generate. The case study countries ensure coverage of the main needs and crises in the region, ranging from forced displacement to climate-related shocks. Given that the respective significance of different risks and operational priorities differs between countries, a country-specific analysis is conducted as part of the case studies.

1.4 Methodology

The key focus of this research is on the linkages between humanitarian cash transfer programmes and social safety nets. As a result – and it is important to state this – the emphasis is on the convergence of the two systems (or parts thereof), and not on their respective performance. Individual programmes will not be judged based on their quality or how well they reach their objectives: rather, they will be examined for their potential – as a whole programme or in parts – to align with government-led social safety nets.

The analysis follows a three-step process:

- Step 1 describes the existing humanitarian cash assistance and social safety net programmes along their delivery chains.
- Step 2 identifies key enablers and barriers and assessing potential advantages and risks for (further) convergence.
- Step 3 provides recommendations on how to leverage the potential of convergence to better address needs.

1.5 Specific scope of the Burkina Faso case study

The Burkina Faso case study focuses on lessons that can be learned in a highly complex context, where the response to climate-related shocks occurs at the same time as the support for IDPs, often in the very same regions most affected by drought and irregular rainfall. Contrary to most of the other case studies, the research does not single out one particular crisis context, but considers the ongoing social safety net projects, the lean season assistance, and cash transfers supporting IDPs simultaneously.

In the absence of a fully-fledged national social safety net, the research focuses on the level of alignment with those elements of a national social protection system that exist, mainly a legal and policy framework, a coordination structure, and elements of a national registration and targeting procedure. As described in Chapter 3 below, there is no flagship national social safety net in place. But there are key elements, such as a national policy, a coordination framework, and elements of a registration and targeting procedure, which are being taken as reference points during the analysis.

Because of the multitude of projects being currently implemented, both in terms of social safety nets and of humanitarian cash transfers, the research team had to select a limited number of them. Regarding the safety nets, two have been considered, one funded by the World Bank and the other implemented by the United Nation's Children Fund (UNICEF) with funding from Sweden. Size was one selection criterion among the humanitarian programmes; however, only the World Food Programme (WFP) and FAO surpass the initial minimum threshold of supporting at least 5,000 households. In order to ensure a more representative spectrum of implementing partners, not only UN agencies, it was decided to add the BRC, Oxfam, and the PROGRES consortium, which has Tdh and ACF as the main cash transfer programme implementers.

1.6 Limitations

The context of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that most of the work was conducted remotely, which created some limitations in terms of access to stakeholders. The case study was led by an international consultant who worked remotely due to travel restrictions. She worked in close collaboration with a national expert based in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, jointly conducting 28 interviews with key informants (see the full list of informants in the annex). This permitted the team to draw on different perspectives (promoted by the gender balance in the team), and to complement remote work with targeted, direct interaction with key stakeholders. But some requests for interviews remained unanswered. Challenges in terms of accessing documentation were mitigated by the excellent support provided by the Burkina Faso World Bank team.

The research team broadened the scope and included the response to different types of shocks (drought and insecurity). But due to the limited time available, differences in accompanying measures (e.g. additional support on nutrition, hygiene, income generation, etc.) which supplement a number of the studied cash programmes and mostly target women could not be taken into consideration. Nor did the research look at cash-for-work activities.

2 Burkina Faso: context and overview of social protection and humanitarian assistance

This section provides a general overview of the main characteristics of the shocks that affect Burkina Faso, and of the impact they can have on vulnerable populations. This is followed by an introduction to the main social protection and humanitarian cash programmes.

2.1 Main characteristics of the shocks and their impact on vulnerable populations

Burkina Faso – the name literally means the ‘land of honest men’ – is a landlocked country in West Africa with poor human development indicators. The latest available statistics (2018) show 41.4% live below the poverty line and three out of four citizens live around the poverty line.¹³ The economic downturn created by the COVID-19 pandemic added 300,000 people to the extreme poor in 2020 alone.¹⁴ World Bank simulations suggest that another 60,000 people will be added to the extreme poor in 2021. Poverty is highest among children and the elderly. Burkina Faso’s high rate of poverty is accompanied by low human development indicators, with the country ranking 182nd out of 189 countries in the 2020 Human Development Index.¹⁵ But some progress has been seen over the last years, e.g. life expectancy at birth has increased from a mere 49.5 years in 1990 to 61.6 years in 2019.

Burkina Faso’s economy had seen many years of economic growth before the COVID-19 pandemic, but the GDP growth rate is offset by a very rapidly growing population. Burkina Faso experienced sustained economic growth rates exceeding 6% during the early 2000s and up to 2014, primarily due to its main export commodities of cotton and gold. A political crisis in 2014–15 slowed the economy, but growth picked up again in 2016–17. Income inequality fell between 2003 and 2014, and the country was able to substantially reduce extreme poverty, despite high population growth. Burkina Faso has one of the highest fertility rates in the world, with 5.4 children per woman. Despite its relatively high growth rate, the economy has not created enough jobs for the rapidly growing workforce, 80% of which is employed in agriculture.

Climate change and growing insecurity are key drivers of food insecurity and displacement. Burkina Faso is experiencing one of the fastest-growing IDP crises globally, mostly affecting remote and already disenfranchised areas. The past two years have seen a sharp deterioration in the security situation across Burkina Faso’s northern and eastern regions (large parts of the East, Central North, North, Sahel, and Boucle du Mouhoun regions) due to the presence of non-state armed groups – many with cross-border ties to extremist groups or movements in neighbouring Mali and Niger. At the

¹³ World Bank, Vandeninden, F., Grun, R., and Semlali, A. (2019), p. 13.

¹⁴ World Bank (2021a), p. 42.

¹⁵ United Nations Development Programme (2020).

end of November 2021, the country had 1.5 million IDPs, the large majority of all IDPs in the central Sahel region, and 20,000 refugees, mostly from Mali. The insecurity has deeply affected the provision of basic social services in the affected areas, which were already severely underdeveloped before the crisis. The most vulnerable groups in particular have limited access to health and education services, and already deeply overstretched water resources in the communities hosting the displaced are overwhelmed. The humanitarian response in Burkina Faso has been expanding, reaching three times as many people in 2020 as in 2019. But it is struggling to cover sufficiently the ever-increasing numbers of IDPs, with a quality response that reflects the increasingly protracted nature of the conflict and the need to focus on building resilience.

Food insecurity and malnutrition remain at alarming levels, especially in areas affected by insecurity. Around 1.65 million (8% of the population) currently need food assistance and 2.63 million people (12% of the population) are projected to be food insecure at the peak of the next lean season, when food stocks will be at their lowest (June–September).¹⁶ A national nutrition survey conducted in 2019 showed a global acute malnutrition rate of 8.1%, with even higher rates in certain regions such as the Sahel.¹⁷ Agriculture and livestock are the key livelihood activities in rural areas, both of which are vulnerable to climate change, recurring disasters, and the degradation of natural resources. Rivalries between farmers and pastoralists around access to land, water, and pasture are often a source of local inter-communal conflict.

The heavy dependence on agriculture makes the country vulnerable to climate change. According to the Red Cross Climate Centre, the country is among the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change. The rainfed agriculture on smallholder farms is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate variability. The length and intensity of the rainy season is becoming increasingly unpredictable, and the use of irrigation facilities remains limited due to their high cost. Burkina Faso ranks 156 out of 181 countries in the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative index.¹⁸ This ranking indicates that it is the 25th most vulnerable country to climate change and the 39th least prepared country.

About 78% of the population faced at least one shock over the preceding year, while 47% faced more than two shocks; however, only 2.4% of households affected by a shock receive support from either the Government or a non-governmental organisation (NGO).¹⁹ **The impact of shocks disproportionately affects women.** The most common types of shocks in Burkina Faso are covariant shocks, especially droughts and floods, affecting a community as a whole and generally leading to the use of negative coping strategies, in particular by the poor. Funding is largely insufficient to respond to growing needs, and existing social safety nets have very limited capacity to respond to shocks.²⁰ Inequality between men and women in Burkina Faso is very high; the country ranks 147 out of 162 countries on the 2019 United Nations Development Programme

¹⁶ *Cadre Harmonisé* (2021), p. 7.

¹⁷ UN OCHA (2021).

¹⁸ The Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative index summarises a country's vulnerability to climate change and other global challenges in combination with readiness to improve resilience. For more information, see <https://gain-new.crc.nd.edu/>

¹⁹ World Bank, Vandeninden, F., Grun, R., and Semlali, A. (2019), p. 15.

²⁰ World Bank, Vandeninden, F., Grun, R., and Semlali, A. (2019), p. 16.

Gender Inequality Index. Women have also tended to be more affected by the economic ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic because they work predominantly in the informal sector, which is affected by lockdown measures. Women are, furthermore, at greater or increased risk of gender-based violence in times of crisis and suffer disproportionately from the impact of climate change.

2.2 Overview of key social protection and humanitarian assistance programmes

There is wide agreement among key stakeholders that there is no national social safety net in Burkina Faso. Most stakeholders are aware of the PNPS and efforts to establish a common methodology to register and select beneficiaries for social transfers. But there is no overarching government-led safety net programme²¹ that establishes overall reference points. This was confirmed in the stock-take report that the World Bank published in 2019:

Strong efforts have been made toward a more comprehensive and inclusive social protection approach. However, the institutional arrangements and interministerial coordination mechanisms – the prerequisite and foundation of an effective social protection system – remain weak. Most programs continue to operate in silos, with little communication between sectors and few attempts to explore synergies.²²

There are, however, nascent building blocks, put up with the support of international actors, and elements of national guidance on how social transfers should be implemented, described in detail in Chapter 3.3 below. And there are a number of social safety net projects, some of which work explicitly on supporting the construction of a national social protection system. The biggest is a joint initiative by the Government and the World Bank, officially called *Burkin Naong Saya*, but in the interviews and the literature more frequently referred to as the *Projet Filets Sociaux* (PFS) (Social Safety Net Project). Germany and France piggy-back on that project with their funding of social transfers. There are several other longstanding similar initiatives, but they are much smaller. UNICEF has the largest safety net project among the UN agencies; its project is also systematically analysed in Chapter 3.²³

²¹ One donor interviewed reported that they looked in vain for a government cash transfer programme they could support. After not seeing progress on this question over several years, they opted for funding a UN agency.

²² World Bank, Vandeninden, F., Grun, R., and Semlali, A. (2019), p. 40.

²³ WFP has recently started a pilot safety net project in urban areas too, reaching 1,436 households. Save the Children has a small safety net project, covering only 563 households. Due to the relatively small size, these projects have not been systematically included in the analysis.

Box 1: World Bank support, with funding from Germany and France

The World Bank has supported the *Projet Filets Sociaux (PFS) (Safety Net Project)* since it began in 2014. It committed initially US\$ 56 million; additional financing of US\$ 110 million was approved in 2019 and a third additional financing of US\$ 30 million was approved in 2021. The objectives of PFS are: 1) to increase the access of poor and vulnerable households to safety nets; and 2) to lay the foundations for an adaptive safety net. The first component includes support for actual transfers, including for vertical and horizontal expansions during the lean season, as well as a package of economic inclusion measures (village saving associations, training, and productive cash grants). The second component includes support to key tools, especially a social registry. PFS is mainly funded by the World Bank through credits and grants, as well as co-financing grants from the SASPP Multi-Donor Trust Fund.

PFS is managed by a Project Implementation Unit, hosted in the *Ministère du Genre, de la Solidarité Nationale et de la Famille (MGSNF)* (Ministry of Gender, National Solidarity and Humanitarian Action).

As of 2022, another World Bank-funded project, the Burkina Faso Emergency Local Development and Resilience Project, will also contribute funding so that nine additional communes can be covered.

Two other donors use the same Project Implementation Unit for implementing their social transfer projects, seeking strong operational convergence with the World Bank initiative, but focusing on distinct objectives, with different accompanying measures, and pursuing targets in a specific region. The ***Agence Française du Développement (AFD)*** (the French Development Agency) has a budget of €17 million to support very poor urban households in Ouagadougou and to continue the PFS support in four rural communes in the East, with the objective of stabilising these areas. The work in Ouagadougou has already started with the identification of beneficiaries; the support in the East is still being processed. **Germany (through its development bank – KfW)** has provided a budget of €20 million for ‘cash transfers for food insecurity and nutrition’ over a period of three years (2021–2023). Germany is not investing in building the national social protection system and is focusing more strongly on nutrition outcomes.

Humanitarian programmes mostly work in the traditionally food insecure north and north-east of the country, where armed violence causes widespread displacement. Some cash transfer projects are implemented only during the lean season (June/July–August/September²⁴); others focus on displaced populations. The former support roughly one third of all cash beneficiaries, the latter two thirds. There are many organisations doing both types of activities, i.e. lean season assistance and response to displacement. WFP has by far the largest operation, followed by the FAO. Among the NGOs, Oxfam has a significant caseload, as has the BRC. Tdh and ACF are part of the PROGRES consortium working on an ‘Emergency Development Programme’.

²⁴ The PRSPV sets the lean season from July to September, the HRP sets it from June to August.

Box 2: EU's Emergency Development Programme in border areas

The EU supports a large-scale *Programme de Développement d'Urgence* (PUD) (Emergency Development Programme) in border areas of Burkina Faso (and neighbouring countries) with a total funding envelope of approximately €39 million. It aims at strengthening resilience to crises over the long term and contributing to social cohesion. The PUD finances multi-sectoral interventions in order to improve the living conditions of vulnerable populations through improving nutrition, food security, and access to basic social services. These actions follow an integrated approach, by means of conflict transformation, peace promotion, citizen participation, and adaptation of local governance instruments. The same cohort of people is supported over three years as part of a graduation model.

Each of the five funded consortia implements seasonal cash transfers. In total, the programme reaches approximately 15,000 households, which receive cash over a period of three months per year. PROGRES is one of five consortia that are funded from PUD, but acts in an autonomous way.

Because of the multitude of projects being currently implemented, both social safety nets and humanitarian cash transfers, the research team had to select a limited number of them. Size was one selection criterion; however, only WFP and FAO surpass the initial minimum threshold of supporting at least 5,000 households. It was then decided to add BRC, Oxfam, and the PROGRES consortium in order to ensure a more representative spectrum of implementing partners.

The following programmes were analysed as part of the case study²⁵ and are grouped into three domains: 1) social safety nets; 2) lean season assistance; and 3) support for displaced populations.

Social safety nets:

- **PFS:** This started in 2014 and is by far the largest social protection project in the country, currently covering approximately 78,700 beneficiaries, including approximately 20,000 IDPs. It covers five regions with the highest levels of chronic poverty and child malnutrition (East, North, Middle-East, Middle-West, and Sahel). Its biggest part is funded by the World Bank and includes elements of shock response through seasonal additional payments.

Germany and France are piggy-backing funding by implementing similar social transfer projects through the same Project Implementation Unit. Germany is aiming to support 10,000 recipients over a period of three years in the South-West. France is planning to support 10,000 households in Ouagadougou and will continue the support so far provided by PFS to 10,000 recipients (including 15–20% IDPs) in four communes in the East. These two projects converge with PFS in terms of the core transfers, but have different objectives and related accompanying measures; neither includes a shock-responsive element.

- **Child-sensitive social protection (UNICEF):** The preparations for this project started in 2017 with a regional vulnerability assessment. The actual project commenced in 2019 and the first cash transfers occurred in June 2020. The project supports 3,700 households in the Boucle du Mouhoun region and will last until December 2022.

²⁵ The emergency relief for new IDPs was not included in the analysis as it generally lasts for less than three months, which was one of the selection criteria used across all six case studies.

Lean season assistance:

- **Seasonal cash transfers by FAO:** FAO runs the largest lean season assistance, supporting approximately 17,330 households with cash transfers and other livelihood activities. The seasonal transfers are mainly intended to protect livelihood assets during the difficult lean season.
- **‘Emergency Development’ support provided by PROGRES (Tdh and ACF):** Together, the two NGOs support 2,850 household with cash transfers during the three months of the lean season, over a period of three years. This is part of a multi-sectoral programme that sits between humanitarian and development work and aims at improving the living conditions in border areas affected by conflict, at the same time as improving social cohesion.

Support for displaced populations:

- **Humanitarian cash transfers by WFP:** WFP considerably scaled up its emergency operations in 2020 and currently supports approximately 41,000 households with cash transfers across all regions affected by displacement.²⁶
- **Humanitarian cash transfers by BRC:** In 2021, BRC, in partnership with the Belgian Red Cross, supported 4,352 IDPs for a period of three months through an electronic voucher scheme. Beneficiaries could buy food at local shops with the vouchers.
- **Humanitarian cash transfers by Oxfam:** With funding from the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO), Oxfam supported 4,250 households in the Sahel region in 2021 over a period of three months. While the project was initially meant to use cash, the organisations switched to commodity vouchers when the market assessment revealed that beneficiaries would not be able to buy a full ration at the budgeted transfer value.

²⁶ WFP also provides cash as part of other activities (resilience-building and nutrition) and recently started a pilot social safety net. In order to limit the report to a reasonable number of programmes studied, these other activities are not systematically included in this report.

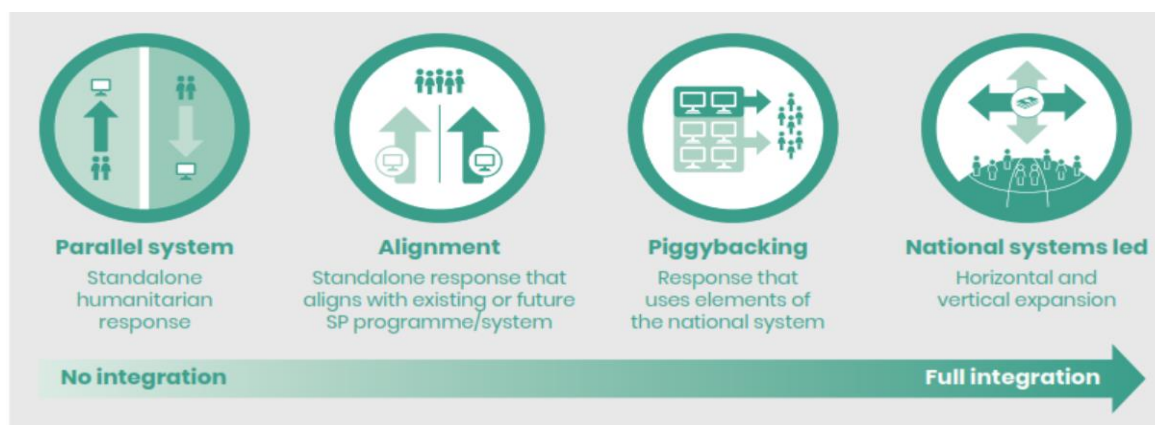
3 Analytical framework, key findings, and conclusions

This chapter analyses the current level of convergence between different social safety net projects and between different humanitarian cash transfer programmes. Where pertinent, the latter are divided into lean season assistance and support for IDPs. It describes, where they exist, effective connecting points and differences with elements of government systems, e.g. the overall policy framework, coordination structures, and the methodology for registering and targeting beneficiaries. The analysis also identifies key enablers of, and barriers to, further closer harmonisation across different types of programme.

3.1 Analytical framework

Assistance for very poor and vulnerable people can be placed on a continuum of delivery options.²⁷ It ranges from completely parallel systems, where there is no integration between humanitarian and national programmes, through alignment with existing social protection programme elements, to piggy-backing, whereby certain of these elements are also used by humanitarian cash assistance. Full integration exists where national social protection systems lead and guide all cash assistance. However, actors do not have to choose one approach over another: they can select and combine different options. Moreover, certain delivery functions can be more integrated than others.

Figure 1: Continuum of delivery options



This approach is set out in the paper ‘Unbundled: A Framework for Connecting Safety Nets and Humanitarian Assistance in Refugee Settings’, developed by Oxford Policy Management, together with the World Bank.²⁸ This paper identifies a ‘harmonisation menu’ that can be applied across every element of the social protection delivery chain, including high-level design choices.

²⁷ O’Brien, C., Cherrier, C., Watson, C., and Congrave, J. (2018).

²⁸ <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/32467>. Further research has recently been completed on the topic, especially by the Social Protection Approaches to COVID-19 expert advice helpline team and the EU-funded Social Protection across the Humanitarian–Development Nexus (SPaN) team.

The research uses this ‘unbundled framework’ to describe the *modi operandi* used by the different programmes studied; these programmes fall within the three domains of social safety nets, lean season assistance, and support to IDPs. In the absence of a fully-fledged national social safety net, the report provides an overview of the level of alignment with those elements of a national social protection system that exist. This descriptive step is followed by an analytical process that identifies enabling and constraining factors at four different levels: national policy; programme objectives; programme design; and the delivery chain.

The research acknowledges that convergence is not a goal in itself, and that it does not always result in beneficial outcomes. The study uses four dimensions to assess what potential value greater convergence could add: relevance, resource implications, risks, and sustainability. The outcome of this step is a qualitative assessment of whether – on balance – the potential advantages to be gained from further convergence outweigh the risks and barriers that have to be overcome, and where this convergence would add most value.

The case study also identifies possible emerging trends and patterns in the findings and conclusions, and provides recommendations for next steps. The main recommendations provided at the end of the report highlight how stronger harmonisation among and between different social safety net projects, lean season assistance, and support to IDPs can be further leveraged to better address needs and respond to crises in this very fragile context.

3.2 Overview of alignment levels

In the absence of a fully-fledged national social safety net, this section provides an overview of the level of convergence with those elements of a national social protection system that exist. The analysis is conducted along 16 different dimensions, starting from the policy and legal framework, moving to programme objectives and design, and ending with the implementation elements.

The main points emerging from the analysis are discussed in more detail in the subsequent section, which sets out the main findings and conclusions.

Table 1: Overview: a summary of the current extent of convergence

	Parallel system	Alignment	Piggy-backing	National system
Legal and policy framework				All safety nets (PNPS)
				All lean season assistance (PRSPV)
				All assistance to IDPs (HRP)
Financing	All programmes have an individual source of funding; no government funding			
Governance		PFS	UNICEF	

	Parallel system	Alignment	Piggy-backing	National system
		Oxfam WFP CRB		
		PROGRES (Tdh/ACF)	FAO	
Coordination			PFS UNICEF	
		PROGRES (Tdh/ACF)	FAO	
		CRB	Oxfam WFP	
Programme objectives			PFS(AFD) PFS (KfW), UNICEF (PNPS)	PFS (WB) (PNPS)
				All lean season assistance (PRSPV)
				All lean season assistance (PRSPV)
Poverty/vulnerability assessment		PFS (KfW) PFS (AFD) UNICEF	PFS (WB)	
			PROGRES (Tdh/ACF)	FAO
				WFP Oxfam CRB
Price and market analysis		WFP Oxfam CRB		
Targeting design, eligibility, and qualifying criteria	PFS (WB/KfW/AFD)			UNICEF
		PROGRES (Tdh/ACF)	FAO	
	PFS (WB)	WFP CRB	Oxfam	
Transfer value, frequency, and modality	No government reference			
	PROGRES (Tdh/ACF)			PFS (WB) FAO
	PFS (WB)	WFP Oxfam		

	Parallel system	Alignment	Piggy-backing	National system
		CRB		
Conditionality				All programmes are unconditional
Beneficiary management information system	PFS (WB/KfW/AFD)			UNICEF
	FAO PROGRES (Tdh/ACF)			
	WFP Oxfam CRB			
Outreach and communication	No government reference available. All programmes have their own channels but involve local staff from MFSNF.			
Registration and enrolment	PFS (WB/KfW/AFD)			UNICEF
	PFS (WB)	PROGRES (TdHh/ACF)	FAO	
		PFS (WB) WFP CRB	Oxfam	
Payment and delivery	No government reference in place.			
Accountability to affected populations	PFS (WB/KfW/AFD)	UNICEF		
	FAO PROGRES (Tdh/ACF)			
	WFP Oxfam CRB			
Monitoring and evaluation	No government reference available. All programmes have their own systems, but report results to government.			

As shown in the table, there are few clear patterns of convergence: different programmes follow government guidance (where it exists) to different degrees. There is generally some grade of harmonisation within the same domain of activity (social safety net, lean season assistance, or assistance for IDPs), but there are also exceptions to that rule.

At the national level, there is good harmonisation of policy and with regards to the overall objectives. Governance and coordination show a mixed picture, with mostly blended forms of structures, some set by government, others functioning in parallel; in some cases, two mechanisms complement each other.

At the design level, the *Cadre Harmonisé* and the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) serve as the reference for needs assessments for most of the humanitarian programmes, but there is no similar shared reference for the safety net projects. The lean season assistance programmes generally use Household Economy Approach (HEA) targeting criteria recommended by the Government, but there is no standardised targeting design for social safety nets nor for IDP support. There is also a broad range of practice – from fully parallel to fully harmonised – with regards to transfer values and frequency.

Within the delivery chain, only UNICEF fully follows government references for beneficiary management and registration. All other elements are implemented either in parallel or without government reference.

3.3 Main findings and conclusions

This section clusters the most important findings and discusses them under two overarching questions. 1) What and where are the most effective points of alignment? 2) What are the key enablers of, and barriers to, further convergence? The ‘added value of convergence’ with regard to strategic and resource implications, risks, and sustainability is discussed in the following chapter.

3.3.1 National context

Policy and legal framework

The key policy framework for social protection is the *Politique Nationale de Protection Sociale* (PNPS) (the National Social Protection Policy), adopted in 2013 and valid until 2022. It formulates a vision for social protection in Burkina Faso²⁹ and has two main objectives: (1) to develop adequate and sustainable protection mechanisms against idiosyncratic and exogenous shocks through the use of safety nets; and (2) to extend social insurance coverage to informal and agricultural sectors. The policy has six pillars in total, the first aiming at improving social transfers to the poor and vulnerable in order to ensure their food security and their protection against shocks. There are also two pillars focusing on strengthening institutional and operational capabilities. IDPs are not mentioned in the PNPS as the framework was developed before the current displacement crisis started.

The reference document guiding the response to seasonal food insecurity is the annual *Plan de Réponse et de Soutien aux Populations Vulnérables à l’Insécurité Alimentaire et à la Malnutrition* (PRSPV) (National Response and Support Plan to People Vulnerable to Food Insecurity and Malnutrition).³⁰ The PRSPV is developed by all food security actors under the leadership of the *Secrétariat Exécutif du Conseil National de Sécurité Alimentaire* (SE/CNSA) (Executive Secretariat for the National Food Security

²⁹ By 2023, the country should have reached the following status: ‘Le Burkina Faso, une nation solidaire qui dispose d’un système doté de mécanismes adéquats et pérennes de protection des populations contre les risques et les chocs.’ Burkina Faso (2012), p. 26/27.

³⁰ Burkina Faso (2021).

Council), and provides directions in terms of objectives, geographic and household targeting priorities, and monitoring and evaluation procedures, as well as an estimate of the total costs. The PRSPV is based on the results of the *Cadre Harmonisé*.³¹ For 2021, it estimated a budget of approximately USD224 million, including a total of USD46.3 million for cash transfers. It explicitly recognises the high vulnerability of IDPs to seasonal and general food insecurity and undernutrition.

Emergency response activities are guided by the law established in 2014 on the prevention and management of risks, humanitarian crisis, and disasters.³² The law also created a specific institution within the *Ministère du Genre, de la Solidarité Nationale et de la Famille* (Ministry of Gender, National Solidarity and Humanitarian Action) (MGSNF) – the *Secrétariat Permanent du Conseil National de Secours d’Urgence et de Réhabilitation* (SP/CONASUR) (Permanent Secretariat for the National Council for Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation). This is the only agency mandated to oversee humanitarian assistance to IDPs. Since the crisis intensified and the humanitarian cluster system was activated in 2019, SP/CONASUR has been part of the annual humanitarian response planning and has fully subscribed to the HRP 2021. However, the HRP 2022 has not been endorsed by the Government.³³ On the other hand, a number of recently adopted anti-terrorism laws cause additional difficulties for access and compliance with humanitarian principles.³⁴

Financing

There are almost as many sources of funding as there are programmes and donors paying into similar initiatives, which sometimes aim at different objectives. The main humanitarian programmes are financed from various sources. There is coordination among donors and some leverage their funding as a connecting factor.

The PFS, funded mainly by the World Bank, is by far the largest of the programmes that have been studied and has also been the longest running. There are two other donors – France and Germany – that are aligning their funding with the implementation structure of PFS, although they follow different objectives and are based on a different needs analysis, which limits full harmonisation within that initiative. UNICEF’s donor for the safety net project is Sweden.

Humanitarian funding has seen a steep increase since the crisis intensified; ECHO is a main donor of the studied programmes. The Financial Tracking Service of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)³⁵ registered a 267% increase in humanitarian funding in 2020 compared to 2019. Financial requirements for the HRP 2021 stood at USD607.8 million; this represents the largest request for humanitarian

³¹ From the *Cadre Harmonisé* at the IPC Global Platform (www.ipcinfo.org): ‘The Cadre Harmonisé [...] is a unifying tool that helps to produce relevant, consensual, rigorous, and transparent analyses of current and projected food and nutrition situations. It classifies the severity of food and nutrition insecurity based on the international classification scale.’ For the latest results in Burkina Faso, see *Cadre Harmonisé* (2021).

³² Burkina Faso (2014).

³³ Establishing the reasons for this change is beyond the scope of the current research.

³⁴ UN OCHA (2021), p. 11

³⁵ See OCHA Financial Tracking Service: <https://fts.unocha.org/countries/36/summary/2021>

funding in Burkina Faso since 2011. OCHA has recorded a total of USD334.1 million received so far in 2021 for the provision of humanitarian relief in the country.³⁶ On the recipient side, the WFP has received by far the biggest share (33.6%), followed by UNHCR (16.7%) and UNICEF (5.4%).

Humanitarian funding is also complemented by multi-year and multi-sectoral development funding that aims to bridge the gap and link relief and development. The EU is the largest such donor with its PUD in border areas of Burkina Faso and neighbouring countries, with a total funding envelop of approximately €39 million. Several of the NGOs funded through this programme also implement humanitarian projects.

Donors coordinate their activities, and there are examples where funding is specifically leveraged to stimulate stronger convergence between social safety nets and humanitarian cash transfer programmes. There is a sectoral donor working group (see the following section below). ECHO, for example, seeks to influence the technical quality of the cash transfer programmes and encourages partners to engage in the harmonisation of transfer values, seek linkages with safety net projects, conduct joint cash feasibility studies, and improve value for money through reduced transaction costs. Other donors pursue mainly sectoral objectives and are less involved in pushing for harmonisation across the domains.

Governance and coordination

Social protection, lean season assistance, and support to IDPs all follow their own governance structures and have distinct coordination mechanisms.

The *Secrétariat Permanent du Conseil National de Protection Sociale (SP/CNPS)* (Permanent Secretariat of the National Council on Social Protection) is the government institution for the administrative and technical coordination of the PNSP. It is located in the office of the Prime Minister. Twice a year, the SP/CNPS invites partners working on social safety nets to discuss implementation issues and requests reports in order to put together a yearly summary of advancement of the PNSP. In addition to coordinating the sector, the SP/CNPS also implements certain activities, e.g. parts of UNICEF's safety net project.

The government lead agency for emergency response is SP/CONASUR. It is part of the MFSNF and is directly attached to the minister's office. At national level, the Secretariat coordinates humanitarian actors, and similar structures exist also in some of the regions. But it is also an operational agency: it registers IDPs and provides direct assistance, e.g. through the distribution of food assistance provided by the Government.

The government lead agency for the lean season assistance is the SE/CNSA. It is part of the Ministry of Agriculture. The main mission of the SE/CNSA is to contribute to the prevention and management of food and nutritional crises. It develops the PRSPV, is

³⁶ The US alone contributed 38.6% of this funding, followed by the EU (14%) and Germany (11.4%), with several other countries each contributing around 5% (the UK, Japan, Denmark, France, and Canada).

strongly involved in the annual humanitarian response planning cycle,³⁷ sets guidance for the implementation of the lean season support activities, and coordinates their implementation.

Donors and lead agencies implementing safety nets coordinate within the sectoral dialogue group on ‘Work, Employment and Social Protection’, which has a sub-group on social protection, chaired by the World Bank. The group is a good forum for dialogue but the participants interviewed expressed the view that it could be stronger in its common messaging vis-à-vis the Government. Government actors, in contrast, expressed concern regarding the strong pull that the group has developed and which some perceive as a tool to influence government officials. This perspective culminates in very different views on the recently created task force for the new social registry. The international actors see it as an effective way of harmonising their views and bundling technical expertise; government actors see it as an attempt to capture the development of the new registry.

The humanitarian cluster coordination structure was activated in 2019 and government agencies have the role of co-chairing the respective clusters. Most of the humanitarian cash assistance falls under the Food Security Cluster. Technical questions regarding humanitarian cash transfers are coordinated within the Cash Working Group (CWG), co-led by WFP, FAO, and ACF. Until 2019, lean season assistance was coordinated in a Food Security Working Group; with the activation of the cluster system in 2019, it is now integrated into the work of the Food Security Cluster, which also coordinates humanitarian food security humanitarian assistance to IDPs. The SE/CNSA is a member of the Strategic Advisory Group to the cluster. There is a collaborative dynamic and both sides show good will in sharing information. Most humanitarian organisations still conceptualise their cash assistance as food security interventions, though there is a push, including from key donors, to shift the design towards multi-purpose cash assistance. Technical questions related to cash transfers that span various sectors are discussed in the CWG.³⁸ Participation is mostly limited to international NGOs; no government actors take part in the meetings.

The programmes studied seek to integrate themselves into these structures and mechanisms, but key informants see their effectiveness as mixed. Coordination has been identified as absolutely essential but is currently insufficient. The interviews repeatedly brought up the key areas where coordination is necessary but not fully achieved: agreement on intervention zones; targeting methodologies to ensure people do not benefit from several similar programmes; target values and transfer costs; and communicating the design features to communities to avoid confusion, tension, and jealousy on the ground. There are certain elements of coordination around these topics but they often depend on the good will and extra effort of agencies and individual staff because the coordination

³⁷ The HRP chapter on food security is an annex to the PRSPV 2021, which showed government ownership of the humanitarian planning cycle and resulting documents. However, it is not included in the 2022 plan as it has not been endorsed by the Government.

³⁸ Mobilising sufficient staff capacity for assuming this task has been a struggle over recent years when key staff members had to take on two roles at the same time. A dedicated technical lead arrived in September but there is still no information management officer in place, which is a prerequisite to improve the mapping of interventions and is a request put forward by governmental and operational actors.

mechanisms in place are not yet sufficiently developed and do not ‘cross the line’ between safety nets and humanitarian operations.

There seems considerable optimism with regards to further strengthening coordination within the same type of programme (safety nets versus humanitarian interventions). The security context is a challenge, though, as it jeopardises agreed ways of working, especially among humanitarian actors. Key informants have seen an improvement in the coordination within their respective domain, e.g. among the different safety net projects and between different humanitarian cash transfer programmes. They also acknowledge an ongoing dialogue among donor agencies. But the security context is a constant challenge, particularly for actors supporting IDPs, as agreed roles and procedures are jeopardised and consecutively changed when zones become inaccessible and actors move their operations to other areas.

The interview partners were less optimistic with regards to improving coordination between the different types of intervention as this would require more harmonisation on the Government side first, which is hampered by the institutional landscape in place. Actors report difficulties in reaching out beyond their own domain, i.e. staff implementing safety nets talking to humanitarian actors and vice versa, even when they are located within the same organisation. One key reason highlighted for this is the divided institutional landscape on the Government side, with low integration of policies and coordination between institutions. However, WFP and the World Bank, for example, signed a memorandum of understanding in 2020 to systematise their collaboration and together support the Government in building the new registry and strengthening the capacity to implement adaptive social protection interventions. The aim is to directly harmonise their respective programmes and see how caseloads supported initially by WFP could be included in PFS’s programme when WFP’s assistance comes to an end.

3.3.2 Programme objectives

Social safety nets focus in general on chronic poverty. Humanitarian cash transfers focus either on supporting people affected by displacement, responding to a broad scale of need, or responding specifically to critical levels of food insecurity during the lean season. The different programmes broadly follow compatible objectives, which is a point of convergence, but seek to reach them by different means, which is a barrier to stronger harmonisation.

Though the different safety net initiatives align overall with the PNPS, they differ in their precise objectives. The PNPS defines social safety nets as ‘non-contributory, regular and predictable direct transfer programmes targeting the poor or vulnerable individuals, i.e. individuals unable to meet their own basic needs, or at risk of falling into poverty due to exogenous shocks or socioeconomic circumstances, such as age, disease, disability or discrimination, *and which aim to directly increase their consumption or access to basic social services.*³⁹ The World Bank funding for PFS focuses broadly on increasing the access of poor and vulnerable households to safety nets, and adds the additional aim of laying the foundations for an adaptive safety net. The French and German projects are narrower in

³⁹ Burkina Faso (2012), p. 4, translation by the author; emphasis added.

their objectives as they focus specifically on improving the food security and nutrition status of the population, especially children. France also aims at building a social protection system with its contribution, while Germany does not. The objective of UNICEF's safety net project is to mitigate multidimensional poverty experienced by children and to improve their access to basic services. Sweden, which is the main funder of UNICEF's safety net project, also explicitly focuses on building a social protection system; one of its activities is to provide technical assistance to SP/CNPS to strengthen its capacity to set strategic guidance and coordinate actors.

The seasonal food insecurity programmes all support the annual PRSPV in achieving its objective of 'contributing to the food and nutritional security of vulnerable populations through the implementation of appropriate and harmonised food assistance and livelihoods protection measures'.⁴⁰ Both lean season operations that were analysed as part of this study support that objective, but they differ in the ways that they are planning to reach it (see Section 3.3.3).

The HRP argues in favour of using humanitarian cash for multiple purposes, and thus places the tool under a very broad strategic objective: 'In 2021, 1.3 million people receive emergency humanitarian assistance in order to reduce morbidity and mortality, mitigate suffering and strengthen the protection of civilians in accordance with international humanitarian law and human rights law in the six priority regions.'⁴¹ However, the analysis shows that humanitarian actors still place cash transfers predominantly within the food security sector and thus under the objective of facilitating access to food, either for IDPs or people in a critical stage of food insecurity (during the lean season, i.e. in line with the PRSPV). All activities supporting IDPs that were analysed for this study have this objective, though as with lean season programmes, they differ in the ways that they want to achieve it.

3.3.3 Programme design

The sole design elements that connect all studied programmes are the shared commitment to cash and the absence of conditionality for any of the transfers. Almost all actors (except Oxfam and BRC) transfer the assistance predominantly through mobile money and almost all programmes (except PFS) carry out monthly transfers. Furthermore, there are strong commonalities among the humanitarian cash programmes with regards to need assessments as they all start from either the *Cadre Harmonisé* analysis – for assistance during the lean season – or from the multi-sectoral needs assessments, in the case of displacements. There are no linkages with the needs assessments that underpin safety nets which refer to poverty surveys conducted by the *Institut National de la Statistique et de la Démographie* (INSD) (National Institute for Statistics and Demography), some of them dating back many years.

The differences in the design relate to the targeting process, the transfer values, frequency, duration, and modality. They differ both within the group of studied safety nets and within the humanitarian transfer programmes studied.

⁴⁰ Burkina Faso (2021), p. 7.

⁴¹ UN OCHA (2020), p. 46.

Poverty and vulnerability assessment and geographic targeting

The way that programmes assess needs and how they select geographic areas of intervention are often closely related. The analysis shows that there is little harmonisation within the group of safety nets and no reference set by the Government. However, there is a strong degree of harmonisation of needs assessments in the group of humanitarian cash transfers guided by government.

Table 2: Needs assessment and geographic targeting: social safety nets

	Government reference	PFS (WB)	PFS (AFD)	PFS (KfW)	UNICEF
Needs assessment	n/a	National poverty survey (INSD)	Focus on urban poverty and the stabilisation of relatively safer regions	Food security and nutrition assessment in preselected region	Poverty study in preselected region
Geographic targeting	n/a	Drawing communes of lot	Security and access	Established German presence, security, and access	Multidimensional poverty of children

Table 3: Needs assessment and geographic targeting: lean season assistance

	Government reference	PFS (WB) seasonal top-up	PROGRES (Tdh/ACF)	FAO
Needs assessment	<i>Cadre Harmonisé</i>	<i>Cadre Harmonisé</i>	<i>Cadre Harmonisé</i>	<i>Cadre Harmonisé</i>
Geographic targeting	Zones in Phases 3–5 (Phase 3: Crisis; Phase 4: Emergency; Phase 5: Famine)	Existing intervention areas (vertical expansion) or additional zones in phases 3–5 (horizontal expansion)	Zones in Phases 3–5 and existing presence in areas	Zones in Phases 3–5 and complementarity with other livelihood programmes

Table 4: Needs assessment and geographic targeting: assistance for IDPs

	Government reference	PFS (WB) IDPs	WFP	Oxfam	BRC
Needs assessment	Multi-sectoral analysis (REACH) / humanitarian needs overview	Large number of IDPs identified by SP/CONASUR	Displacement patterns in six priority regions of the HRP	Cadre Harmonisé and displacement patterns	Displacement patterns in six priority regions of the HRP
Geographic targeting	Areas most affected by displacement	Areas most affected by displacement and low	Areas most affected by displacement and low	Own assessment in most affected provinces	Donor preference; availability of resources;

	Government reference	PFS (WB) IDPs	WFP	Oxfam	BRC
		presence of other actors	presence of other actors		presence of other actors

The analysis shows that there is little harmonisation within the group of safety nets as they apply different criteria, which are often influenced by donor preferences and policy. On the contrary, there is a strong degree of harmonisation of needs assessments in the group of humanitarian cash transfers. But they also apply slightly different criteria when selecting the actual areas of intervention.

A key guiding principle for the geographic targeting carried out by the safety nets is to stay outside each other's zone of intervention, although there is some overlap of actors within areas affected by displacement, especially in those areas that offer comparably better security and easier access.

Price and market analysis

Among the actors implementing the programmes studied, only WFP, together with the *Société Nationale de Gestion du Stock de Sécurité Alimentaire* (National Food Security Stock Management Agency) conducts a regular price and market analysis;⁴² however, this covers only agricultural markets. Some NGOs do individual market assessments and cash feasibility studies before starting an intervention. Donors would welcome more such initiatives done in a joint manner, and highlight the need to include a market systems lens, a risk assessment angle, and a structured process, so that the market data can be used to inform possible adjustments of transfer values.

Targeting design, eligibility, and qualifying criteria

The targeting design is unique to each of the programmes, with only the UNICEF safety net and the Oxfam humanitarian cash transfer fully using guidance established by the Government. This guidance includes the so-called 'consensual methodology' for social safety nets and lean season assistance. There is also a government reference for targeting assistance to IDPs.

The tables below show the key elements of the targeting design, i.e. the selection criteria and the procedure used to validate preliminary lists put together based on these criteria. PFS is the only actor using Proxy Means Testing (PMT). Most humanitarian organisations apply a targeting methodology inspired by the HEA for the lean season assistance and status where this support goes to IDPs.⁴³

⁴² Bulletin conjoint d'information sur les marchés au Burkina Faso.

⁴³ The Food Security Cluster has drafted standard operating procedures for the targeting of food security-related humanitarian assistance, but these have not been officially validated.

Table 5: Beneficiary selection: social safety nets

	Government reference	PFS (WB)	PFS (AFD)	PFS (KfW)	UNICEF
Beneficiary selection criteria	‘Consensual methodology’: Criteria related to household characteristics, composition, habitat, livelihood assets, and access to social services	PMT and threshold → all pregnant women/women with children under 15 years living in households that are within the threshold	Ouagadougou: PMT and threshold → all pregnant women/women with children under 15 years in households that are within the threshold East: takeover of PFS (WB) beneficiaries; possibility to add IDPs from CONASUR lists	PMT and threshold → all pregnant women/women with children under two years in HH that are within the threshold	Government criteria; exclusion of beneficiaries receiving support from another safety net
Beneficiary lists validation	Community	Community	Community	Community	Targeting committee

The criteria used by PFS lead to the fact that almost all recipients of funding are women.

A common message used to justify this approach to men in the communities is that women usually carry the greatest responsibility for the care and nutrition of children. Women’s role in caregiving work is known and accepted. While this reinforces gender stereotypes about women’s and men’s roles in the household, it has been useful to deflect potential tensions within the household and community resulting from men not being the main recipients.⁴⁴

Interview partners highlighted that PMT might not be the best way to select the beneficiaries for a safety net programme that pursues a nutrition-related objective. However, the concern for alignment within the PFS initiative took precedence over this concern.

Table 6: Beneficiary selection: lean season assistance

	Government reference	PFS (WB) seasonal top-up	PROGRES (Tdh/ACF)	FAO
Beneficiary selection	IDPs: CONASUR Host communities: SP/CNPS ‘consensual methodology’	PMT and threshold → all pregnant women/women with children under 15 years and persons fulfilling additional	HEA: Very poor and poor households; if needed, sub-criteria related to age of children	IDPs: status Host community: HEA ‘light’

⁴⁴ Perezniето, P. and Holmes, R. (2020), p. 17. However, women over child-bearing age are excluded as recipients.

	Government reference	PFS (WB) seasonal top-up	PROGRES (Tdh/ACF)	FAO
	(the same as for social safety nets)	criteria, such as old age and disability, living in households that are within the threshold		
Beneficiary lists validation	n/a	Community	Community	Resource persons in villages

As can be seen, the methodologies applied differ significantly from the reference established by the SP/CNPS through its so-called ‘consensual methodology’ for beneficiary registration and pre-identification for assistance.⁴⁵ It is called ‘consensual’ because it was developed with the participation of several national structures and is thus considered to be consensus within government. Though actors outside the Government participated at the time, they do not or no longer share the notion of a consensus. Some are openly opposed to it. Some agencies tested it in full or in part, with mixed experiences.⁴⁶ Only UNICEF still uses it today; most of the other actors have adjusted it in the meantime or no longer use it at all. The original intention was to create a tool that would act as a strong converging force, though the authors were aware from the start that its success would strongly depend on the ‘credibility and interest given by the Government and all actors’.⁴⁷ Contrary to the original intention, the methodology has developed an opposite dynamic, led to tensions, and resulted in splintering key actors.

⁴⁵ Secrétariat Permanent Conseil National de Protection Sociale (2015).

⁴⁶ The only written evaluation that the research team found was commissioned by Save the Children (Save the Children, UNICEF, and Ouedraogo, S. (2018)).

⁴⁷ Secrétariat Permanent Conseil National de Protection Sociale (2015), p. 29.

Box 3: The SP/CNPS's 'consensual methodology'

In February 2015, the *Conseil National de Protection Sociale* (National Council for Social Protection) adopted a methodology that was developed by several different actors active in social assistance at the time, drawing on experiences from various ministries and WFP. The so-called 'consensual methodology' mixes elements of registration with elements of targeting and beneficiary selection. The reference document sets out the steps to register people, provides a definition of vulnerability, and establishes a list of beneficiary selection criteria that is informed by the HEA approach but also includes monetary poverty indicators.

A key feature of the methodology is the requirement for a poor household to come to a certain registration location, often the communal social services, and self-declare its situation. Households who do not have a single member who is mobile are meant to be visited at home. According to the methodology, the household information is captured and cleaned, and eligible households are selected by 'targeting committees', although there is no further detail about how these are composed or operate. The village assembly is then asked to validate the preliminary lists, and those selected become part of a 'unique registry' and are potential beneficiaries for social assistance programmes. Potential complaints should be handled by the social services, i.e. the same institutions who put together the lists.

To ensure that the registry remains dynamic, a three yearly update was planned, although this has not yet been enacted to date. The registry that resulted from applying the methodology currently includes data from of 525,668 persons originating from 118 communes (out of the 351 in the country); 140,113 of these persons (26.7%) have been validated as 'vulnerable', belonging to just under 18,000 households.⁴⁸ Not all community validation processes have been completed yet, however. In the communes where the process has been completed, 34.4% of the people listed have been validated as eligible for assistance, but the percentages within a commune vary considerably – from the lowest percentage of 7.4% to the highest of 74.4% – which raises concerns about whether the same measurements have been applied across the communes.

The key advantage of this methodology was its alignment with the institutional, administrative, organisational, and spatial distribution of government infrastructure, logistics, and human resources. The authors of the methodology highlighted that the Government can use its own resources to conduct the process, that decentralised structures would be empowered, and that it would be overall a relatively cheap process, because the households interested share the costs by travelling to the registration points. This requirement was also seen as incorporating the desired self-targeting element, potentially discouraging better-off households, who would not want to make the effort.

An evaluation of the methodology commissioned by Save the Children showed that some of these criteria relied on false assumptions. No budget was identified to logistically support the data collection; instead of feeling empowered, decentralised structures saw this mainly as additional work that took a long time (they could process a maximum of ten households per day). They requested to be paid extra for doing the extra work, but there were no additional funds available. Furthermore, as higher levels of state administration were not involved in the process, they did not instruct the lower levels to cooperate.

A presidential decree signed in September 2021 put an end to the tussle and created a Technical Secretariat within the Cabinet of the Minister of the MFSNF. The Secretariat is tasked with building up a 'Régistre Social Unique' (RSU) (Unique Social Registry) that allows for the identification of households that are potentially eligible for different social protection and poverty eradication programmes. The decree rules that all actors offering social services to poor and vulnerable households will be obliged to sign a data-sharing protocol with the RSU, to give priority to the registered households when offering support and to inform the RSU about their beneficiaries. The Secretariat will also develop a

⁴⁸ There are no IDPs in the registry as the SP/CNPS insists on keeping the chronically poor distinct from those seen as 'temporarily poor' due to displacement. Hence the database established by CONASUR for the IDPs is in no way connected to the SP/CNPS registry.

‘community targeting methodology’. The decree offers various avenues for registration, listing routine inscription by social workers, mass inscription campaigns, and ‘any other validated methodology’ as possible options. The head of the Secretariat was nominated only at the end of November, so the actual work has not yet started. The development partners’ coordination group on social protection created a ‘task force’ on the RSU earlier in the year, to jointly support the process and to allow them to speak with one voice. But that group has not made much progress yet, due to the delays in the start of the Secretariat’s work; some interview partners raised questions regarding the task force’s status and role in the process.

The RSU should theoretically be able to support the streamlining of the registration processes for social transfers, but the lack of support for the earlier methodology may create barriers in the short term. Interviewed stakeholders confirmed their principled commitment to a social registry but highlight the need to reach a new agreement on the methodology. The process that will start once the Secretariat is operational represents a window of opportunity to turn the page and seek a new consensus.

The varying approaches to selecting beneficiaries for lean season assistance seem to cause less tension because the key government actor, the SE/CNSA, is mostly interested in seeing the HEA approach being used across programmes, something that all actors agree on.

There are divided opinions on whether IDPs should also be registered in and targeted through the new registry.⁴⁹ For the time being, SP/CONASUR is the only agency which can register them (see section on registration below) but there is no harmonised policy on beneficiary selection among registered IDPs. SP/CONASUR states that as a government actor, it cannot apply any selection criteria as this would be seen as a discriminatory practice. They thus insist on assisting all IDPs based on their status and as long as resources allow, hence ensuring equality. Humanitarian actors, on the other hand, apply the principle of equity, using criteria to select only the most vulnerable, but each agency uses a different set of criteria.

Table 7: Beneficiary selection: assistance for IDPs

	Government reference	PFS (WB) IDPs	WFP	Oxfam	BRC
Beneficiary selection	Status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IDP Hosting IDPs 	Adapted PMT and additional categorical criteria (disability, old age)	Hybrid criteria (HEA+PMT), starting from Food Security Cluster list but further adapted	IDPs: Status / HEA light after three months of displacement Host community: HEA ‘light’	Own set of criteria → scoring based on weights → ranking
Beneficiary lists validation	None	Village assembly	n/a	Villages assembly	Verification of a sample; village

⁴⁹ The fact that both the SP/CONASUR and the new technical secretariat for building the registry have been placed within the cabinet of the minister should facilitate inter-institutional dialogue on this question.

	Government reference	PFS (WB) IDPs	WFP	Oxfam	BRC
					assembly validation

Transfer value, frequency, and modality

All programmes share the commitment to cash,⁵⁰ which is a strong connecting factor and largely corresponds to beneficiary preferences. Almost all cash is provided as mobile money, except by Oxfam, which recently changed to vouchers based on the results of a market assessment, and BRC, which uses electronic vouchers in most areas. The use of cash instead of in-kind assistance wherever possible is undisputed across all programmes and groups of stakeholders.⁵¹ By 2012, the PNPS had already formulated a preference for cash, and in 2021 the HRP established a target of providing 50% of all food security assistance as cash.

This approach reflected beneficiary preferences, but there are signs of a shift towards a preference for in-kind assistance, at least in the most insecure regions. The NGO Ground Truth Solutions collected feedback from IDPs on their preference for cash or in-kind assistance across different humanitarian programmes in Burkina, and found that, on average, 87% of affected persons preferred cash.⁵² However, there are also significant regional differences; in some areas, such as the Sahel, only 46% of the displaced opted for cash. In May 2021, WFP found that the preference for cash that had been strong in May 2020 (with 66% of the interviewed beneficiaries preferring cash) had declined to only 33% one year later in the four provinces covered by a comprehensive post-distribution monitoring survey.⁵³ The two main reasons for this are the increase in food prices and the growing inaccessibility of markets due to insecurity. This finding confirms the importance of not only conducting cash feasibility studies and market monitoring, but also regularly consulting the affected populations on their preference. Oxfam is the only actor which has recently changed from cash to vouchers because beneficiaries would not have been able to buy the intended quantity of food at the originally budgeted transfer value if cash had been given.⁵⁴ This example stresses the importance of monitoring the possible erosion of beneficiary purchasing power.

There is no government guidance regarding the transfer value for safety nets in the PNPS. But the PRSPV provides government guidance on the transfer value and frequency, as well as on the time period for the lean season assistance. Most actors followed this in 2021. There is poor harmonisation among programmes providing

⁵⁰ The PRSPV includes guidance to transfer 70% of the food basket in kind and 30% in cash, but key informants emphasised that this rule is kept flexible and that the modality should depend on context and beneficiary preferences.

⁵¹ The government-funded assistance to IDPs is provided exclusively in-kind, though, since SP/CONASUR has no budget for cash assistance.

⁵² Ground Truth Solutions, UN OCHA, H2H Network (2020), p. 9.

⁵³ The survey was conducted mainly in the Centre-North (72% of the respondents), East, North, and Sahel. WFP (2021d), p. 14.

⁵⁴ As they operate in Sahel, they are fully in line with the expressed preference of the affected people there.

cash to IDPs. Furthermore, there is no policy guidance for whether regular safety net transfers should be set high enough to – or can be expected to – prevent safety net beneficiary households from needing extra assistance during the lean season. The precise duration of the assistance for IDPs and criteria to effect an exit from humanitarian assistance and segue it into a longer-term safety net programme are not systematically defined.

Except for WFP and BRC, all programmes provide a fixed transfer value by household, irrespective of the actual family size. This approach, while facilitating agency operations, disadvantages larger families, which, on average, already suffer from higher levels of poverty.⁵⁵

Transfer value of safety nets

The PNPS has not established a transfer value nor a methodology for how it should be calculated. The mid-term evaluation of the policy deplores that fact that there is no standard amount, but does not highlight the need to set guidance.⁵⁶ Though aiming to achieve different objectives, several donors use the same transfer value, despite voicing doubts in the interview that a poverty-related transfer value would be adequate to reach objectives specifically related to food insecurity and nutrition. Another key informant highlighted the need ‘to be pragmatic’ since the desire to harmonise across the different projects implemented by the same Project Implementation Unit and to reduce the administrative complexity of implementation weighed more heavily than those concerns.

Table 8: Transfers: social safety nets

	Government reference	PFS (WB)	PFS (AFD)	PFS (KfW)	UNICEF
Value (FCFA)	n/a	35,000 per quarter (from March 2022 also an intervention in Ouagadougou with a value of 45,000)	45,000 per quarter (Ouagadougou) (+nutritional supplement in-kind)	35,000 per quarter	48,000 per quarter
Frequency		Quarterly	Quarterly	Quarterly	Quarterly
Duration		36 months	36 months	Still open (max. 27 months)	31 months
Modality	Cash	Cash (mobile money)	Cash (mobile money) ⁵⁷	Cash (mobile money)	Cash (mobile money)

⁵⁵ ‘La taille du ménage est un facteur important dans l’analyse de la pauvreté. En effet, la pauvreté croit avec le nombre de personnes du ménage, les individus des ménages les plus pauvres sont les individus des ménages de taille importante (8 personnes et plus).’ INSD (2015), p. 36.

⁵⁶ ‘Au niveau des transferts monétaires, il n’y a pas de montant fixe ou standard pour tous les bénéficiaires.’ UNICEF and Institut de Management Conseils et Formation (2020), p. 52.

⁵⁷ AFD allows the transfer of cash only through Orange Money as this was the only service provider agreeing to vet recipients according to counter-terrorism legislation.

PFS initially calculated a transfer value in 2018 of FCFA 10,000 per month; this was meant to bridge 80% of the poverty gap for the average poor household and 68% of the rural poverty gap.⁵⁸ It has since been increased by almost 17%. UNICEF calculated its value based on the assumption that 20% of the needs of a household should be covered, using the statistical data from the *Enquête Multisectorielle Continue* (Living Standards Measurement Study) in 2014.⁵⁹ All safety net beneficiaries receive assistance over several years, but the exact duration is highly dependent on administrative procedures and project end dates.

Transfer value of the lean season assistance

The PRSPV 2021 set the recommended transfer value at FCFA 35,000, which was the value followed by most partners, and the amount was intended to be sufficient to provide a diet that provides 2,100 kcal per person per day. All partners stick to the guidance of providing assistance over three months, though timeliness is not always respected.⁶⁰

Table 9: Transfers: lean season assistance

	Government reference (2021)	PFS (WB) seasonal top-up	PROGRES (Tdh/ACF)	FAO
Value (FCFA)	35,000	35,000	25,000	35,000
Frequency	n/a	Twice (in addition to one regular transfer)	Monthly	Monthly
Duration	3 months	2 months (in addition to one regular transfer)	3 months	3 months
Modality	n/a	Cash (mobile money)	Cash (mobile money)	Cash (mobile money)

The definition of the period for the lean season differs between the PRSPV and the HRP. They both see a need to assist for three months, but according to the HRP the support should start in June; according to the PRSPV, it should start in July. A harmonisation would bring more coherence, also with regards to the *Cadre Harmonisé*, which also uses the period June–August.

The PRSPV 2022⁶¹ (forthcoming) increases the recommended transfer value to FCFA 49,000, which is significantly higher than the food security-related gap identified by the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) study (FCFA 34,041). However, the MEB study did find significantly higher food security gaps in certain regions (e.g. around FCFA 40,000 in the Boucle du Mouhoun, Centre-North, and North). But, most importantly, the MEB study only looked at regional differences and different categories of recipients; it did not consider seasonal fluctuations in the gap, which could be a justification for setting a higher seasonal

⁵⁸ World Bank (2014), p. 70.

⁵⁹ Institut national de la statistique et de la démographie (INSD) (2015).

⁶⁰ This is also reported to happen in the PFS: only 56% of the payments were made on time in 2020.

⁶¹ Burkina Faso (2022).

value. A clearer articulation of the reason behind the 2022 PRSPV value would bring more transparency and explain the variations.

Transfer value of assistance for IDPs

The values are not aligned for assistance to IDPs. The HRP calculates the food security-related cash transfer projects with an amount of USD16 per person per month, which is equivalent to FCFA 9,300, or 65,100 for the average household. The HRP strongly advocates for the adoption of a multi-sectoral approach to cash but most projects continue with a heavily sector-focused transfer value.⁶² But even the recommended food security transfer value is generally not followed by the programmes studied.

Table 10: Transfers: assistance for IDPs

	Government reference	PFS (WB) IDPs	WFP	Oxfam	BRC
Value (FCFA)	HRP sets 9,300 per person (65,100 for an average household of seven persons)	11,666 (35,000 per quarter per household)	Approximately 28,000 per household (4,000 per person, which is 50% of the standard ration) ⁶³	Household food basket (equivalent to 35,000)	23,000–69,000 (depending on size of household)
Frequency	n/a	Quarterly	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly
Duration	As long as resources allow to support everyone affected (emphasis on equity)	36 months	Not defined	3 months	2–3 months
Modality	Cash or in-kind, depending on context and the preferences of IDPs	Cash (mobile money)	60%–70% cash (mobile money) 30%–40% cash in envelopes	Paper vouchers (quantity)	Cash (mobile money)

Government actors are seriously concerned about the lack of harmonisation of the transfer values, while some of the operational partners downplay this source of tension in communities. Interview partners from government agencies systematically highlighted that different transfer values cause tensions among recipients, who do not understand why some receive less than others.⁶⁴ Local authorities find it difficult to manage these situations. Several key informants gave examples of areas where people did not want to be registered by one agency because another agency offered a higher amount. Partners are aware of the discrepancies and report having been in discussion with other actors.

⁶² 'La multisectorialité des besoins urgents aujourd'hui justifie l'engouement de la communauté humanitaire et les acteurs de développement vers une réponse basée sur les transferts monétaires à usages multiples, c'est-à-dire qui contribuent à couvrir l'ensemble des besoins de base monétisables des bénéficiaires' (OCHA 2021, p. 45).

⁶³ As of January 2021, WFP had to reduce its support to only half of the standard ration and equivalent transfer value, due to severe funding constraints.

⁶⁴ AFD is funding a 'do no harm' study which, among other issues, will look at this topic.

However, actors defend their way of calculating, citing operational reasons to justify the difference and maintain their respective value. There are several examples (e.g. UNICEF, Save the Children, and WFP) where even within one agency different programmes transfer different amounts, which they justify by the different objectives of the programmes, though they acknowledge that it is difficult for communities to understand those nuances.

Until very recently there was no harmonised reference tool and no agreed way of calculating the income gap for targeted households that should be covered by a cash transfer. To address this issue, the CWG established a task force in October 2020 to develop a common and agreed methodology. Under the leadership of the SP/CNSP and composed of members from government institutions, UN agencies, and NGOs, as well as technical staff from INSD, the task force worked over almost a year and developed a MEB, an MEB per region and sector of expenses, and calculated the income gaps by household status, by sector, and by type of activity (emergency relief, recovery support, or support to chronically vulnerable households). The final report, published in November 2021,⁶⁵ establishes a total value of FCFA 113,725 as the minimum expenditure for a family of seven people. It estimates the average income gap to cover those expenses at FCFA 61,090, but also sees strong regional differences. In the North, for example, which is highly affected by insecurity, the gap is FCFA 73,256. The study also calculates sectoral gaps, the one for food expenses being determined as FCFA 34,041. Participating actors have strong hopes that the operational guidance that comes with the report will be followed and will lead to a stronger harmonisation of the values across different programmes. The document also explicitly mentions the need to reflect on how these values relate to the values provided by social safety nets.

The finalisation of the report offers a window of opportunity to rally stakeholders behind the methodology, and government key informants expect this guidance to be followed in the future. The projects submitted as part of the HRP 2022 were already screened for alignment with these values, and a workshop was organised in December 2021 with safety net actors to start the process of reflection on matching the values. However, some key informants disagree with the methodology used in the study, so it will be necessary to get people on board rather than assuming that they all automatically agree with the report.

Finally, different time frames and delays in administrative procedures are two other barriers to a more harmonised programme design. Interview partners highlighted that the safety net projects follow relatively cumbersome administrative procedures and thus take a longer time to come into effect. But once up and running, they are implemented over several years. Humanitarian programmes, by contrast, are rapidly set up but end very quickly as well. These two very different processes represent a clear barrier to more harmonisation.

⁶⁵ Cash Working Group (2021b, forthcoming).

Conditionality

Conditionality is a connecting factor as all studied programmes were providing unconditional assistance. Conditional cash, e.g. cash-for-work activities, was not included in the research.

3.3.4 Implementation and delivery systems

There is very limited government guidance regarding the delivery chain, apart from the difficult topic of registration. But almost all actors deliver their payments electronically and largely use the same financial service providers; this is a point of convergence across a large variety of programmes. But this synergy could be leveraged more strongly in future.

Beneficiary management information system

Each studied programme has its own way of handling and storing beneficiary data, as shown in these tables. None of the systems are interoperable at this stage.

Table 11: Beneficiary management information system: social safety nets

Government reference	PFS (WB/KfW/AFD)	UNICEF
SP/CNPS database	Own management information system	SP/CNPS database

Table 12: Beneficiary management information system: humanitarian cash transfers

Government reference	FAO	PROGRES (Tdh/ACF)	WFP	Oxfam	BRC
SP/CONASUR database	Cash View	Excel	SCOPE	Excel	Red Rose

Outreach and communication

Community outreach and communication is a central element of most programmes and shows a certain level of alignment. Community validation of the beneficiary lists is an important step in the targeting process and involves strong communication efforts.

Each actor has its own way of communicating with affected populations. Several programmes have partnerships with local and/or community-based organisations whose added value lies in their strong and longstanding presence in certain areas, which facilitates access, particularly in areas affected by insecurity. These organisations have developed close ties with the communities, especially the different village committees, sometimes even with individual households and local authorities. While this role is the same across the programmes studied, there is little synergy as the selected local partners mostly vary from region to region, although some work in more than one programme. Some agencies select their partners based on comparative added value, e.g. WFP, while others identify them through a tender procedure, focusing more on financial parameters, e.g. PFS. The

importance of strengthening this role and investing in more communication and engagement with communities was showcased by the finding that only 12% of WFP's beneficiaries interviewed in May 2021 said they knew how the targeting was done.⁶⁶

All agencies highlight the close involvement of the local social services, where these teams exist, which is a point of convergence. Furthermore, some of the local NGOs partner with more than one international organisation, but this fact has not yet been exploited as a point of convergence. Although all organisations work closely with the local social services, where they exist, this collaboration seems to receive little specific attention. Only UNICEF has an explicit focus on strengthening the capacity of these teams. They also ensure capacity strengthening of their two local partner organisations. One of these two partners also cooperates with WFP on their safety net programme. Within PFS, local organisations support the cash transfers through closely accompanying and supporting beneficiaries. They also implement other supplementing activities related to various themes, such as nutrition, family planning, and women's empowerment. FAO and most of the international NGOs conduct their community outreach through local NGO partners. The PROGRES consortium works with two local organisations who have the principal role of community outreach, whereas Oxfam works through a local partnership with two organisations which each also cooperate with WFP. Notably, there is no systematic mapping of partnerships or partner organisations' capacity, which would be a first step to utilising their experience in multiple programmes as an explicit point of convergence.

Registration and enrolment

There is strong principled agreement across programmes that a national social registry is a key building block within a national social protection system and a useful instrument for humanitarian programmes, especially in the event of continued insecurity and a protracted crisis. But, at the same time, the exact method of managing the registration of potentially eligible beneficiaries has been and continues to be a strongly contested subject. There are opposing opinions on whether IDPs should be included or not and how to keep such a registry up to date.

Building a social registry has a long history in the country and parallel approaches to registration have resulted in the existence of four major databases, each owned and managed by a different institution. The PNPS drafted in 2012 does not mention the term 'registry' but includes the 'development of innovative and shared targeting practices'⁶⁷ as a strategic orientation. Its logframe contains an indicator for an integrated data management system. The preparatory work began in 2015 with the launch of PFS, which identified the targeting methodology and the related development of a registry as key building blocks for a national safety net system.⁶⁸ By 2014, the Project Appraisal Document expected that 'these building blocks will be designed for scale-up to other safety nets, emergency programs, or social programs or other regions of the country. Hence, by investing in adaptable and scalable administrative systems, the project aims to bridge the gap between safety nets and the humanitarian response system.'⁶⁹ The initial target was to register 40,000 beneficiary

⁶⁶ WFP (2021d), p. 14.

⁶⁷ Burkina Faso (2012), p. 28 (translation by the author).

⁶⁸ World Bank (2014), p. 10.

⁶⁹ World Bank (2014), p. 41

households within the first three years. Today, the beneficiary database of PFS holds data on 1,065,186 persons, who are all deemed eligible for social assistance; this figure represents approximately 5% of the total population.

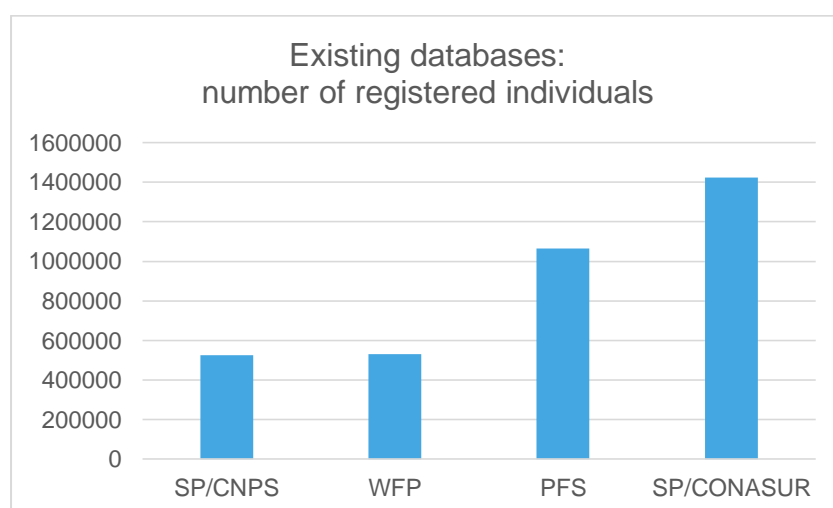
Simultaneously in 2014, the SP/CNPS started to develop the ‘Consensual Methodology’, which gradually led to building a database in the Secretariat by consolidating the lists generated by various actors applying the methodology. At the end of 2017, Save the Children and UNICEF had accompanied a self-registration process based on the methodology in 18 communes which WFP and Oxfam had contributed to. Yet no legal basis for this list has been established. Today this list holds data on 525,688 persons, though not all of them have been validated as potentially eligible, and no updating has taken place since the list was first started.

The main actor registering IDPs is the SP/CONASUR whose lists are systematically used as the starting point by all partners providing assistance to IDPs. SP/CONASUR uses a questionnaire that was developed with the humanitarian actors and includes questions focusing on a variety of needs and reflecting possible sectors of assistance. SP/CONASUR is currently using the third version of the questionnaire, which is the result of a joint lessons learned workshop in June 2021. By end of August 2021, this database held information on 1,423,378 displaced persons. SP/CONASUR also has another list for families hosting IDPs; this includes less detailed data (mainly the household size).

A further database is owned by WFP, which has been registering people in need of humanitarian assistance since 2019. In 2020, 75,760 IDP households (approximately 530,000 people) were included in their database SCOPE.⁷⁰

Hence, there are currently four sets of lists, as summarised in Figure 2.⁷¹

Figure 2: Existing databases and number of registered individuals



⁷⁰ WFP (2021b).

⁷¹ The donor group is currently preparing a study to look into the details of existing databases and how to use them in the process of building the new registry. Unfortunately, there is no gender-disaggregation of the data available.

The different social safety nets and humanitarian cash programmes all have a methodology for starting their beneficiary selection with some form of list, to which they then apply the selection criteria described above (Section 3.3.3). As shown in the tables below, some of them follow government guidance and start from government lists (either SP/CNPS, in the case of UNICEF, or SP/CONASUR for all assistance to IDPs), whereas others, including PFS, do not generate their own lists.

Table 13: Registration: social safety nets

Government reference	PFS (WB)	PFS (AFD)	PFS (KfW)	UNICEF
SP/CNPS: self-registration with communal social services	Blanket registration in selected villages	Blanket registration in selected arrondissements / earlier PFS (WB) process	Blanket registration in all villages in selected communes	Lists generated by SP/CNPS through communal social services

Table 14: Registration: lean season assistance

Government reference	PFS (WB) lean season top-up	PROGRES (Tdh/ACF)	FAO
IDPs: SP/CONASUR Host community: refers to SP/CNPS	The same beneficiaries as for regular safety net (seasonal vertical expansion)	Village targeting committees refer households based on poverty criteria defined by village assembly (using HEA methodology)	IDPs: SP/CONASUR lists Host community: targeting committees refer households based on HEA criteria

Table 15: Registration: assistance for IDPs

Government reference	PFS (WB) IDPs	WFP	Oxfam	BRC
SP/CONASUR	SP/CONASUR lists filtered by PFS criteria	Starting from SP/CONASUR lists but also own registration, where deemed necessary	IDPs: SP/CONASUR lists Host community: initially blanket registration (simplified SP/CNPS questionnaire), now targeting committee	Own survey among people on SP/CONASUR lists

The mapping shows that the approaches to registration differ significantly, particularly within the social safety net projects and with regards to lean season assistance for host communities. On the contrary, there is strong convergence within the support to IDPs as the SP/CONASUR lists are the starting point for all assistance to IDPs. Where the methodologies differ, especially for safety nets, actors highlight technical concerns, mainly regarding the use of self-reporting as the starting point for the SP/CNPS lists, which is heavily criticised. The costs associated with blanket registration procedures are brought forward by those defending self-registration. Both sides are of the opinion that the other methodology causes delays and criticise the respective questionnaires as being

too lengthy and cumbersome. Due to the long years of diverse approaches and increasingly entrenched opinions, the discussion is no longer purely technical and has turned into a power struggle over who owns this key tool.

There is no questioning of the SP/CONASUR registry for IDPs as the agency holds the sole mandate of registering IDPs and its standard operating procedures are effectively enforced. Key informants confirmed that the lists have a high level of credibility and provide the information that actors need to apply their selection criteria. However, independent media raise concerns over the fact that the Government alone is in charge of registering IDPs as there are reports about the abuse of such power.⁷²

The government has long identified the need to harmonise the process within social assistance and has recently laid out the next steps to do this. After a long period of uncertainty about who will own the national social registry, the President finally signed a decree in September 2021 creating a Technical Secretariat within the MGSNF. Key informants welcomed the fact that the longstanding problem of institutional ownership has been settled and have awaited the nomination of the head of the Secretariat to start re-engaging in the process. Unfortunately, the long delay surrounding the decision seems to have led to hurt feelings that should be acknowledged before embarking on the purely technical process of developing the registry.

A number of actors are worried that useful experience in collecting the data that exists within the SP/CNPS will be lost if the new registry starts from zero. They also highlight the time it will take to reach a usable product, as many estimate a process of at least three if not five years. In order to ensure that the future users will buy into the product, many partners interviewed stressed the importance of a transparent and inclusive process right from the start.

Payment and delivery

Payment systems are very similar: except for Oxfam and the BRC, all other programmes use mainly mobile money to deposit cash into mobile phone accounts. The main financial service providers are Orange Money, Wizall, and Yup. There is limited joint analysis of the respective strengths and weaknesses of different providers.

In the past, most of the cash programmes were still using cash in transit and envelopes, but with the growing insecurity, and given that digital payment services are well developed in the country, mobile money became the preferred delivery mechanism.⁷³ Before the current crisis, most cash was provided in envelopes, at a relatively high cost. With growing insecurity, most agencies changed to mobile money, which is safer for all parties involved. WFP and UNHCR conducted a capability assessment of financial service providers and shortlisted nine providers for a tendering procedure. Mobile money operators performed well, with a high number of users and a good local footprint. Currently,

⁷² See, for example, a report in *The New Humanitarian* dating 16 July 2021:

www.thenewhumanitarian.org/investigations/2021/7/26/sex-for-food-aid-allegations-in-burkina-faso

⁷³ 'Burkina Faso has the largest mobile money market [in the region], its transactions accounting for 58% of GDP.' Pulver, C. (2021), p. 35.

almost all studies programmes work with Orange Money, many also with Wizall and/or Yup. Several programmes have contracts with more than one provider, depending on the region. Key informants deplore the absence of a joint analysis of the efficiency, effectiveness, feasibility, and beneficiary preferences related to the different services offered.

Partners highlight that there is a certain risk of overburdening the capacity of the providers and the network as many organisations are contracting the same services but are not yet using their combined negotiation power. The increased volume of humanitarian transactions has brought additional suppliers into the market, and this additional competition, as well as attempts to jointly negotiate contracts (e.g. by all UN agencies together), has brought the tariffs and service fees down to a certain degree. More joint tendering, especially by NGOs, is one of the priorities of the CWG in 2022. It will build on the lessons learned in 2018, when actors looked at ways to jointly contract service providers. PFS has already successfully used its negotiating power, and fees have dropped from 5% of the value of the transfer for cash delivery to 1.5–2.9%. More payment points were established, and mobile network coverage extended or strengthened in the Sahel region in particular.⁷⁴

All banks, microfinance institutions and Orange Money require a valid identity card with photo (e.g. a national identity card) and proof of residency to open an account. To cash out, receive remittances, and open a mobile money account, a valid identity card with photo is needed. This is particularly an issue in rural areas,⁷⁵ where a high percentage of people do not have a valid national identity card, especially among IDPs. SP/CONASUR offers support in this regard by facilitating access to identity cards, as do PFS and many of the international humanitarian actors. Wizall allows beneficiaries to withdraw money simply upon receipt of an SMS code without opening a digital account. WFP requests Orange to produce SIM cards for its beneficiaries, and cooperating partners assist them in opening a mobile money account. WFP highlights this contribution to increasing the financial inclusion of IDPs as this also allows them to receive remittances or save money in their mobile wallet. Despite these advances, however, approximately 30–40% of the people supported by WFP still receive cash in envelopes, due to the poor network coverage in certain areas and the lack of cashing-out facilities.

A few agencies have switched (back) to vouchers as a result of a market assessment that concluded that cash was not cost effective in their areas of operation. BRC is the only organisation among the studied programmes that uses Red Rose⁷⁶ to deliver electronic vouchers. Recipients of the vouchers can use them to buy goods from local retailers. Oxfam uses paper commodity vouchers that state the quantity of different commodities that a beneficiary household is entitled to receive at a local shop.

⁷⁴ Pulver, C. (2021), p. 18.

⁷⁵ Interview partners reference a larger urban/rural divide than that between men and women.

⁷⁶ For further information, see www.redrosecps.com

Accountability to affected populations

There is no alignment of the mechanisms ensuring accountability to affected populations as each programme uses its own approach. However, all key informants highlight the involvement of the local social services teams.

The different safety net projects have partnerships with local organisations to ensure outreach to communities; this also frequently includes handling feedback and complaints. Several programmes establish committees at the village level that play a key role in beneficiary selection and also in handling complaints.⁷⁷ There is limited information on whether the composition of the committees has to follow certain rules, e.g. include a minimum percentage of women, people living with disabilities, old age people, etc. Some agencies run toll-free phone lines and have a well-developed system to log, treat, and track complaints. Recurring problems in receiving the codes for electronic transfers are a major reason for complaints, especially in areas with poor network coverage. Some actors report frequent complaints by people left out; those who have free hotlines also report receiving calls that concern other programmes, to which they then refer the caller.

But not all existing feedback mechanisms seem well used. PFS, for example, reports only 156 complaints for the period November 2020–September 2021, i.e. less than 0.2% of the recipients made a complaint, which is a very low rate. The World Bank has identified the need to strengthen the grievance mechanism in 2022. WFP reports only on the type of calls that their call centre receives but not the number: 'In 2020, 60 percent of the calls consisted of various requests, 28 percent were to acknowledge WFP's assistance and 5 percent were inquiries, while complaints represented 1 percent of calls.'⁷⁸ Ground Truth Solutions, an international NGO specialising in accountability to affected populations, found in an August 2020 survey that 18% of the interviewed women and 29% of the men knew how to log a complaint if needed.⁷⁹

Efforts are ongoing to strengthen joint accountability mechanisms,⁸⁰ including on sexual exploitation and abuse. A working group on community engagement and accountability aims to support and coordinate approaches to ensure increased commitment and collective accountability towards affected communities. A particular area of concern is the reporting on attempts to sexually exploit or abuse displaced populations, especially women and girls. This is a risk that occurs around all programmes, but is particularly high for interventions that involve selecting a limited number of beneficiaries for free transfers of money or assets. The UN country team seeks to establish a simplified but more effective joint complaint/investigation mechanism where concerns and allegations can be raised in a safe manner.

⁷⁷ In other countries, these two tasks are often kept separate to ensure the independence of the accountability function. The 'consensual methodology', for example, tasks the same team that carries out the registration with handling any possible complaints.

⁷⁸ WFP (2021c), p. 30.

⁷⁹ Ground Truth Solutions, UN OCHA, H2H Network (2020), p. 19.

⁸⁰ A harmonisation of the complaints mechanism among different safety nets and humanitarian cash programmes was also already recommended by SP/CNPS and FAO in 2019 (Premier Ministre/FAO (2019)).

Monitoring and evaluation

Each of the programmes studied follows its own methodology for monitoring and evaluation, and there is little guidance set out by government institutions, apart from regular requests for intermediate updates (for actors supporting IDPs) and input for consolidated yearly reporting (lean season and social safety nets).

The **PNPS** includes an annex with a logframe for the first three years, but the mid-term evaluation of the policy found that there is no systematised data collection and reporting system in place.⁸¹ The task falls under the SP/CNPS, but the Secretariat prepares only a yearly consolidated report for the meeting of the CNPS, to which other actors are requested to contribute. The reports track spending, beneficiaries, and physical and financial execution rates but are based on partial and non-aligned data. A study on key indicators for monitoring the implementation of the PNPS was commissioned by the SP/CNPS in collaboration with UNICEF in 2019 and resulted in a list of key indicators accompanied by a mechanism for collecting information. However, this system has not been launched so far.

The PNRPV 2021 includes a section on monitoring and evaluation which foresees joint monitoring missions to the field and two annual learning workshops, and mentions an external evaluation. It was not possible to get access to the documentation on similar activities conducted in previous years.

The SP/CONASUR requests actors supporting IDPs to report their activities, but is not satisfied with the frequency and comprehensiveness of the reporting. This is cited as a key obstacle to avoiding the duplication of assistance to the same people.

A key joint initiative to monitor the evolution of the humanitarian situation in the border region of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger is implemented by REACH.⁸² The initiative collects, analyses, and shares multi-sectoral bimonthly updates on humanitarian needs, access to basic services, and population displacements. The CWG does not yet have a comprehensive mapping of who intervenes where, but the Food Security Cluster captures most of the information (although it is not systematically disaggregated by transfer modality).

There is no equivalent joint initiative for social safety nets. In 2019, the World Bank commissioned a stock-taking exercise of the entire social protection sector that provided a full picture of related programmes and the underlying system. The report found that ‘few programs are designed with an M&E [monitoring and evaluation] component, and no harmonized M&E system exists.’⁸³ There has also been no joint logframe agreed among the three main donors to the PFS.

Instead, each actor has its own monitoring and evaluation system. Almost all do post-distribution monitoring exercises, capturing beneficiary feedback on the process of cash transfers, the use of the cash, and overall satisfaction. Attempts to harmonise these tools

⁸¹ ‘Les entretiens avec l’ensemble des acteurs indiquent qu’il n’existe pas de mécanisme systématique de suivi et évaluation spécifique aux interventions mises en œuvre dans le cadre de la PNPS avec un système de référence d’indicateurs, des instruments de collectes, une répartition des rôles et responsabilités dans le rapportage et les périodicités de rapportage.’ UNICEF and Institut de Management Conseils et Formation (2020), p. 58.

⁸² For further information, see www.reach-initiative.org/where-we-work/burkina-faso/

⁸³ World Bank, Vandeninden, F., Grun, R., and Semlali, A. (2019), p. 79.

and exchange information on coverage and results largely depend on individual agencies' efforts in reaching out to other actors.

A key concern of all actors is to avoid the same beneficiaries receiving assistance from two or more programmes, while others receive no support at all. Numerous key informants highlighted the fact that there is no systematic way to ensure that people do not receive assistance twice, other than the delineation of geographic zones of intervention. Few organisations currently ask their beneficiaries whether they receive assistance from other programmes. UNICEF asked the question and found that 13.3% of the initially selected beneficiaries had already received support from another programme. These households were then excluded. Oxfam reports that 1.7% of their beneficiaries receive other support. The precise degree of overlap beyond these two specific examples⁸⁴ is unknown, and no lessons have been learned in this regard. Some actors point out that local social services should be the firewall against 'double-dipping', but others emphasise that they would be overburdened with this task and it should instead be the responsibility of everyone. Improving the exchange of beneficiary data and making progress on the interoperability of databases would be a key step forward.

3.3.5 Cross-cutting issues

Data and information

None of the databases used to store beneficiary data are interoperable at this stage. Lists are shared in Excel formats but there is no systematic way of doing this, nor are there harmonised data protection protocols in place.

As mentioned above, there are currently four main databases, in addition to the beneficiary lists held by each operational actor. The partners who were interviewed frequently mentioned that there is no organised data-sharing process in place. Cross-checking beneficiary information is done on a bilateral basis only. There is also no unique identifier that would allow for the systematic identification of people across different lists, although the World Bank is providing support on this topic.⁸⁵ The Presidential decree regulating the new registry tasks the new Technical Secretariat to develop clauses on data protection and data-sharing protocols.

The exchange of beneficiary data between humanitarian organisations and government agencies is seen by some of the former as problematic in areas where tensions, such as between different communities and ethnic groups, are high and where government troops are party to conflict. They cite concerns over humanitarian principles and protection risks.⁸⁶ Government actors, on the other hand, do not follow the argument as the original beneficiary data on displacement comes from them. Donors also raise questions

⁸⁴ ACF reports that 'only a handful' of beneficiaries received support from others; this was considered as being a tolerable number, and hence these households were not excluded.

⁸⁵ 'Linkages will be established with the West Africa Unique Identification for Regional Integration and Inclusion (WURI) operation with the aim of ensuring that households are uniquely identified in the Social Registry.' World Bank (2021d), p. 18.

⁸⁶ Such concerns are reflected both in the literature on humanitarian cash transfers, such as Cash Learning Partnership (2021), as well as in more general literature on safety nets, e.g. Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (2020).

regarding this policy. Technical solutions are required that allow for the exchange of information for coordination purposes without putting any beneficiary groups at risk.

Capacity

The World Bank, WFP, and UNICEF are the principal actors aiming to strengthen the capacity of different government actors. UNICEF, together with the International Labour Organization, receives funding from the European Union to strengthen the management of public expenditure in the social protection sector.⁸⁷ This also covers technical assistance for targeting and a specific objective focusing on the better integration of humanitarian interventions and the social protection system. The Swedish funding for UNICEF's social safety net project also includes technical assistance for the SP/CNPS to strengthen its coordination capacity, and funding for the reinforcement of government social services in the area of operation.

The World Bank invests significant effort in institutional support for the MGSNF as limited institutional capacity has been identified as a substantial implementation risk.⁸⁸ The World Bank is also planning to strengthen the Early Warning System, which is already supported by the WFP, who also support other government institutions, including SE/CNSA. The joint action plan agreed between WFP and the World Bank includes several specific activities aimed at jointly reinforcing the institutional capacity for disaster risk management, disaster financing, and adaptive social protection.

Capacity strengthening also occurs among humanitarian agencies. The CWG does not only have a coordination function but the recently arrived coordinator is also frequently solicited to organise and/or provide technical assistance to build capacity within humanitarian agencies. An example of good practice for building local capacity was set by the British Red Cross, which had a one-year project training the BRC in the tools and standard operating procedures for the use of cash transfers and successfully assisted in scaling-up the use of cash within the BRC portfolio.

⁸⁷ UNICEF and International Labour Organization (2020).

⁸⁸ World Bank (2021d), p. 24. Government actors contest this judgement.

4 The ‘value of convergence’ and its policy and operational implications: recommendations for short-term actions, medium-term efforts, and the long-term vision

Convergence is not an end in itself but rather a way to better address structural and cyclical needs in a resource-constrained environment. While Chapter 3 described the status quo in respect of convergence, this chapter discusses the added value of stronger convergence along four dimensions: strategic implications; resource implications; risks; and sustainability considerations. It concludes by setting out a number of recommendations; these have been grouped into short-, medium-, and longer-term recommendations.

4.1 Strategic implications

This subsection on strategic implications assesses where further convergence would or could be a real game-changer, and for whom and at what level, given that the need to assist people during the lean season is largely predictable and that patterns of displacement have become recurrent and risk becoming protracted.

The context in Burkina Faso is highly fluid and is marked by an overlapping of needs caused by insecurity and slow-onset disasters, mostly affecting the same regions, coupled with high levels of chronic poverty and structural vulnerability to shocks. The massive increase in displacement is still a relatively recent phenomenon; it has resulted in an increase in humanitarian actors. Coordination structures are still underdeveloped and, as shown above, there is limited harmonisation among similar interventions and little convergence between social safety nets, lean season assistance, and support for IDPs.

While the nexus is often referenced in documents,⁸⁹ it was not often referenced in the interviews, where stakeholders instead emphasised their way of working in their respective area of operation. A key strategic shift would be to apply a logic of complementarity by layering support⁹⁰ in shared zones, either through a temporary vertical expansion or, where necessary, a horizontal expansion of the longer-term safety net support. The context of structural, seasonal, and violence-induced needs is highly complex; the scale of needs is huge compared to the limited resources, capacity, and access to insecure areas. Agencies respond to this challenge by focusing on established intervention areas, delineating intervention zones and implementing their own approaches where they operate. Where more than one actor is present, especially in areas with easier access, concerns over the lack of harmonisation arise, including by donors, but

⁸⁹ Every sector chapter of the HRP, for example, has a nexus paragraph; the EU highlights it in its financing for the Programme Développement d’Urgence; UNICEF highlights it as a ‘guiding priority’; WFP emphasises it in its Annual Report; and the UN and Interpeace wrote a full report on the opportunities for a triple nexus (Nations Unies Burkina Faso and Interpeace (2021)).

⁹⁰ McLean, C., Carraro, L., Barca, V., and Alfors, L. (2021), p.13.

organisational policy and particularities currently take precedence. This approach does not facilitate a flexible and agile response that makes the best use of scarce resources, and aims to build on the strengths of different actors and to find synergies between the different programmes.

Instead of focusing only on *dividing* territories and caseloads of affected populations, agencies should more often consider moving towards *sharing* the burden by layering and adding together their support to different groups in different areas over different periods of time. While newly displaced people need to be strongly supported for the initial period of displacement, the safety net approach becomes more pertinent the longer the displacement lasts. With insufficient humanitarian resources, the more durable but possibly limited support offered by safety nets could be complemented, not replaced, by a top-up for those assessed as being in continuous need of additional assistance. Actors should consider ending a 'one size fits all' approach to 'their' beneficiaries in their area of intervention, and could instead come together to determine who needs what kind of support over what period of time, and how this need can be standardised and reconciled with the resources available.

The focus would thus move from 'avoiding double-dipping for some beneficiaries' to 'ensuring adequate layering' of support for a greater number of vulnerable households. Currently, different programmes in similar geographic areas seek to stop the same household from receiving assistance from different programmes. While this logic makes sense within the group of similar programmes, it does not enable the linking of immediate humanitarian support with longer-term approaches, and obliges beneficiaries to choose between a higher but short-term benefit versus a longer-term but lower support – or to be subject to such a choice being made by intervening organisations. This 'either/or' approach could be replaced by a concept of 'layering support' according to need, both in terms of the value and the period of intervention. Instead of dividing zones, agencies could jointly agree on support packages that could be provided by different actors to the same household, depending on the objective of their programmes, the degree of vulnerability of a household, and the available financial resources. This could also include a horizontal expansion where existing social safety nets cannot cover an adequate percentage of people in need of assistance, or where an external shock has led to more people passing the threshold of being eligible for assistance.

This concept of layering support requires a more frequent and refined individual needs analysis and has to be well communicated to authorities and beneficiaries. It follows the principle of equality instead of equity and presupposes that status (categorical targeting of IDPs) guides support only during an initial period. It requires a regular assessment of individual levels of need and an adjustment of support – in terms of transfer values and duration, but also with regards to complementary interventions and conditional forms of support as an exit strategy for less vulnerable people. Authorities and communities need to be properly informed ahead of time before these changes occur, to generate understanding and buy-in for this new approach. It is important to switch to such a different approach soon before emergency mindsets and entitlement mentalities become too entrenched.

The layering of support and the harmonisation of approaches might need to be implemented in phases in order not to overburden the actors and to achieve progress step

by step. Due to a higher degree of harmonisation within the lean season assistance, it seems easier to achieve a temporary vertical and, where necessary, the horizontal expansion of safety net support. With regards to the support for IDPs, which is a more complex task, the excellent first steps of closer collaboration between the World Bank and the WFP could be used to pilot the approach to learn lessons. Efforts towards the further harmonisation of transfer values could gain traction by seizing the momentum created by the MEB study.

At the same time, it is important to install a systematic and inclusive exchange process across the different programmes to ensure a more fluid exchange of information, with a mindset of sharing rather than delineating interventions areas and approaches. The three coordination frameworks – for social protection, lean season, and assistance to IDPs – need to interact in a way which is structured, but does not overburden the actors and detrimentally impact the quality of the discussions. The inclusive dialogue should be both central and decentralised as the operational touchpoints are more explicit at the local level.

At an operational level, several programmes rely on the same communal social services and partly the same local NGOs, but this point of convergence is currently not fully utilised. The communal social services, where they exist, and local organisations frequently work across different domains and programmes, but this connecting role is currently not leveraged to achieve more convergence. A systematic mapping of these local actors, their involvement in respective programmes, and their capacity would be a first step to taking them and their contribution more seriously and to better using and supporting this existing synergy. On the other hand, actors need to make sure they do not overburden these local structures, especially by confining them to the role of ‘sole firewall’ against the abuse of support. Currently, UNICEF is the only actor studied that explicitly acknowledges the need to strengthen local government social services. Some NGOs have explicit commitments to support local partner organisations. This approach, however, should be more systematised.

4.2 Resource implications

In this section we discuss the resource implications that emerge from attempts to create greater convergence, and the trade-offs that should be considered when thinking about whether these efforts are useful – and for whom.

The current scattering of actors is a costly way of operating. This is demonstrated also by the fact that it was hard to identify large enough programmes that fulfilled the size criteria of this research. The funding landscape of the programmes analysed shows that there is one enormous programme, the PFS. WFP is the biggest humanitarian actor, followed by a large number of smaller operations within each of the three domains. Dividing donor resources into small grants was likely necessary at the beginning of the massive scale-up of the humanitarian intervention in 2019 and 2020, when international humanitarian actors were building up organisational capacity and were strengthening their presence across the country. Given that stronger capacity has now been built, this might no longer be the best way to use the very scarce resources; it effectively hinders a stronger push towards more convergence. A consolidation of funding within the respective programme domains could lead to economies of scale at the same time as being a clear incentive for the strategic

shift described above. For donors this would mean considering joining forces with other donors more systematically.

If further harmonisation of transfer values is achieved, based on the MEB study, the costs of the operation per beneficiary will increase, in particular for the support to IDPs. The MEB study calculates a gap for IDPs (FCFA 71,849 for an average household of seven people) and sets a reference value for different sectors. If the MEB value is adjusted for IDPs, WFP's operation – covering only the food gap – would increase from currently FCFA 4,000 per person to FCFA 4,857, an increase of 21%. For PFS's support to IDPs, calculated by household and designed as multi-purpose support, the transfer value would increase from the current monthly equivalent of FCFA 11,666 per household to FCFA 71,849, an increase of 616%. The seasonal fluctuation of the income gap is not considered in the MEB study; hence, it is difficult to compare the value of the lean season assistance to the MEB.

Therefore, it is even more important to ensure that the transaction costs decrease, to ensure that coverage does not become a victim to improved adequacy of the transfers. One element of reducing transaction costs would be to enter into shared agreements with financial service providers, enabling savings by jointly negotiating administration fees on increased volumes of transactions. Donors could encourage their partners, especially those funded as consortia, to improve value for money through joint tendering procedures or even by developing a joint payment platform.

A change in the approach to actual versus generic household size would have cost implications as well. Currently, only WFP, and to a certain extent the BRC, apply an actual household size approach. On the one hand, adequacy would improve if larger families receive a higher transfer value, although there is a potential for abuse by beneficiaries claiming to have more children than they actually have, and such an approach requires a much more agile and frequent updating of the underlying beneficiary registration process. This issue could be a topic for immediate policy harmonisation within each domain and could be approached at the same time as aligning the eligibility criteria.

Some actors expressed optimism that a social registry will reduce the costs of targeting. 'Social safety net programs in Burkina Faso have their own intake and registration processes. These processes can be costly, so integrating them across different programs is an efficient way to reduce costs.'⁹¹ The experience of actors with the SP/CNPS methodology, and those reported from other countries that have elaborate registry processes, point towards rather higher costs, at least in the short term. Partners interviewed criticised the long and cumbersome procedures and the delays caused by the current questionnaire. They also highlighted the need to be able to use any revised tool in areas with restricted access.

⁹¹ World Bank, Vandeninden, F., Grun, R., and Semlali, A. (2019), p. 87. A similar optimistic view is expressed by the World Bank on the occasion of the third additional financing for the PFS (World Bank (2021d), p. 26.).

4.3 Risk implications

In this section we discuss the risks associated with linking humanitarian assistance and social safety nets, i.e. what strengths of the respective systems could be reduced or even lost, what unintended harm could be caused, and who would be negatively affected. The perception of whether (further) convergence is risky is highly dependent on the political context in a country, but also on perceptions, previous experience, and the trust that exists between the different actors, and the way they work together.

An overarching risk relates to the future evolution of the context. As will be seen in the section below on sustainability, earlier efforts to harmonise approaches were suspended when the current insecurity started and disrupted established intervention approaches.

Key informants raised a concern regarding the continued political independence of safety net projects if they reach an even bigger size. An advantage of the current non-alignment of programmes is seen in the fact that they are largely protected against political interference at the national level, though there are reports of biased processes at the local level.⁹² Some actors are worried that one overall national programme, grouping together all available financing, at least for social safety net purposes, would come under much higher political pressure than the current smaller programmes.

The current practice of dividing beneficiary caseloads, rather than sharing the burden, risks leaving highly vulnerable IDPs with insufficient support if they are only taken in by the PFS and are, as a consequence of that support, excluded from further and more adequate humanitarian assistance. As described above, instead of focusing on avoiding double-dipping, actors could more strongly focus on defining ways of complementing support, at the same time as ensuring that minimum standards defined for humanitarian assistance are not compromised for those in need of that support. Lead humanitarian agencies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross⁹³ have developed strong guidance that could be used to find an acceptable context-specific solution.

Operational risks relate mostly to the process of achieving progress in a limited number of key steps, mainly in the registration and targeting process. There is a risk that the new institutional set-up for building the registry will prevent it from benefiting from existing knowledge and expertise. As described above, the longstanding conflict around the use – or not – of the ‘consensual methodology’ and the co-existence of a number of parallel registries left scars, and there is a risk that these will continue to overshadow the development of the new unified registry. Existing operational information, knowledge, and experience on what works and what does not work with regards to registration practices risks being lost if key staff who have so far been involved disengage from a future process. This could cause an even longer delay in the process, and operational agencies who currently align with the existing SP/CNPS methodology fear a long period of limbo and uncertainty. International actors should engage in this new process not only with a technical approach but also with an understanding of the political economy. The roadmap that needs

⁹² ‘Les influences sociales et politiques sur les critères de choix des personnes vulnérables ont été signalées par les ménages dirigés par les femmes.’ UNICEF and Institut de Management Conseils et Formation (2020), p. 49.

⁹³ For more information, see [ICRC Handbook on Data Protection](#).

to be developed with the new Technical Secretariat could ensure that those parts of the registration process that work, e.g. the way that IDP registration is done, is maintained as long as necessary, until the new registration and targeting methodology has been developed. Otherwise, there is a risk of losing the limited alignment with government guidance that has been attained by humanitarian actors.

However, this conclusion does not imply that the reported concerns about the methodology should not also be addressed in the short term, especially with regards to the related risks of sexual exploitation. A risk mapping of the registration processes would help to establish the scale of the reported problem of sexual abuse and exploitation. It would also ensure that these are immediately addressed. Future revisions of the methodology should ensure systematic prevention and, where such abuse and exploitation are still happening, swift and transparent reporting and adequate follow-up.

A final operational risk relates to the potential overburdening of financial service providers. Their services are requested by a large number of actors and if demand becomes too high, the quality of their services might suffer, which is ultimately a risk for people receiving the assistance.

4.4 Sustainability implications

In this section we discuss what could be put in place for progress to be made in terms of achieving greater convergence that will last in the long run, and to support the development of national systems.

There is a history of attempts to harmonise social safety net interventions and humanitarian cash, especially for lean season assistance. But those suggestions gained little traction. A stronger harmonisation of approaches was already evoked in the project appraisal of the PFS in 2014. FAO commissioned a full report on this topic in 2018, which was finalised in 2019, shortly before the comprehensive stock-take report on social protection commissioned by the World Bank. Reflecting the still more limited complexity of the context at that time, the latter concluded that the country already possessed the requisite building blocks for shock-responsive social protection: ‘With some improvements, these can be used to help the country face acute climate-induced hardship on a regular basis, providing a transition from humanitarian assistance to national systems.’⁹⁴ With the massive deterioration of the security context, which brought in a large number of new actors and distracted much of the attention, the optimism of that time has waned. The mid-term evaluation of the PNPS was already less positive; it identified an ‘important gap’⁹⁵ in harmonisation and recommended ‘coercive measures’⁹⁶ to force all actors to align with government priorities and use the SP/CNPS targeting methodology. But the most recent sectoral overview published by the World Bank in April 2021 still finds a strong fragmentation

⁹⁴ World Bank, Vandeninden, F., Grun, R., and Semlali, A. (2019), p. 92. The same report was over positive regarding the obstacles linked to building a social registry: ‘Some technical constraints have been identified; these can be overcome, provided the various stakeholders continue to align their agendas’ (p. 40).

⁹⁵ UNICEF and Institut de Management Conseils et Formation (2020), p. 20.

⁹⁶ UNICEF and Institut de Management Conseils et Formation (2020), p. 69.

of social assistance programmes.⁹⁷ Actors need to be aware of this history to set adequate expectations for the process ahead.

Progress towards more convergence is neither a quick fix nor an easy win. It is important that actors stay focused in order to achieve sustainable convergence at least in a limited number of aspects. A nucleus group of actors could lead by example. The continuation of fragmented responsibilities within government and the recent reshuffling of key political actors jeopardises progress, and actors need to be aware of the risk of regular backlashes. Focusing efforts on harmonising registration, targeting, and transfer values is important, at the same time as forging a strong nucleus of actors who are willing to converge, visibly and sustainably, their operations and thus lead by example. A ‘coalition of the willing’, including actors from all three domains, could develop a realistic roadmap and a two-way communication with government actors. A continuous, steady, multi-year process seems the option that is more realistic than over-ambitious, short-term targets.

Key informants are concerned that the potential for the Government to take over the social assistance beneficiaries in the long run will diminish if the transfer value increases. The trade-off between adequacy and sustainability is well known from other countries. Studies commissioned by the World Bank and by Sweden show that the fiscal space for financing social transfers would be available if current ways of spending public resources on social protection activities became more efficient, aligned with poverty, and better targeted.⁹⁸

4.5 Recommendations

The nexus is not yet an operational reality in Burkina Faso. The actors implementing the programmes studied apply a policy of geographic delineation of respective operations, rather than seeking complementarity. Approaches to implementation vary considerably. There is room for improvement regarding harmonisation among similar projects, for intensifying outreach beyond a single organisation’s operations and for more effective coordination across the different types of programme.

The following recommendations highlight the most important steps required to achieve further progress towards burden sharing and stronger convergence.

4.5.1 Short-term actions

Improving coordination within domains and systematically across domains

There are a number of practical steps that the different stakeholders could take in the short term. This includes seeking stronger harmonisation within the respective type of programme – social safety net, lean season assistance, or support to IDPs –

⁹⁷ World Bank (2021a), p. 43.

⁹⁸ World Bank, Vandeninden, F., Grun, R., and Semlali, A. (2019), p. 72.

especially around the transfer value, and systematising the dialogue across these domains.

The process around the MEB study creates momentum that should be seized to harmonise transfer values⁹⁹ and to advocate for a multi-purpose cash approach.

- The seasonal transfer values were the most closely harmonised so far. It is important that changes in the way that the value is calculated are made in a transparent and inclusive way, to ensure that actors continue with the achieved level of convergence. Donors should ensure that those seasonal programmes that still transfer a different value align as soon as possible, and at the latest by the next submission of proposals. However, there is a discrepancy in the payment calendar: the PRSPV sets the lean season from July to September, while the HRP sets it from June to August. Harmonising the period is recommended as a relatively quick win.
- The CWG is the right forum for the discussion of transfer values given to IDPs, but it could further broaden its outreach to gain a wider membership, including government actors and local organisations. A convening process of ‘moral commitment’ could help create a ‘coalition of the willing’ who buy into the concept of multi-purpose cash, adopt harmonised values, and actively communicate and promote this commitment. The shift to transfers values adjusted to actual household size could also be included in this process.
- Safety net projects could start by publishing and discussing their respective methods for calculating the transfer value and for monitoring its adequacy, to generate evidence on impact (including a disaggregated analysis by gender, age, and disability).
- Donors across all types of programmes can play a stronger role by incentivising attempts to seek stronger harmonisation; they could consider putting an end to funding where partners are unwilling to reflect on adjustments.
- It is important to regularly monitor beneficiary preferences regarding the transfer modality. If indeed a shift is occurring towards a preference for in-kind assistance, if only in certain regions, this should be taken into consideration when planning forthcoming assistance.

Dialogue across the different types of programme could be systematised to ensure it is happening on a regular basis and becomes less dependent on key individuals.

- There are already good bilateral and trilateral initiatives for discussion across agencies and programmes. But it seems important to broaden the group of agencies – governmental and non-governmental – participating in these discussions, and to structure them in a way that makes them a regular occurrence and ensures that they are supportive and empowering of government prerogatives to set guidance and coordinate activities.

⁹⁹ In 2019, the analysis of the potential for harmonisation, conducted by SP/CNPS and FAO, made a similar recommendation: ‘Pour répondre aux besoins d’harmonisation, à partir de ces propositions, les différentes organisations ayant des PTM [Programmes des transferts monétaires] similaires doivent pratiquer les mêmes approches de ciblage ainsi que les mêmes montants et périodicités de distribution.’ Premier Ministre and FAO (2019), p. 30.

- The dialogue across programmes could be used as a vehicle to improve accountability to affected population as a shared responsibility of all actors, regardless of the type of intervention that they are conducting. Particular aspects could be identified that merit collective action, such as the need to improve awareness and safe reporting of cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, especially around registration processes.
- Donors could lead by example and further harmonise their respective programme objectives among similar programmes and improve their dialogue across domains.

Inclusive advocacy for a comprehensive national social safety net

Key actors have already joined forces, advocating for a comprehensive national safety net. This is an important next step that needs to be conducted in a coherent way, duly taking into consideration the concerns over data protection.

- It is important that this process takes into consideration that different stakeholders have different associations with the term 'national programme'. Terminology is important and it is recommended to refer to this process as 'building a national safety net' instead of 'building a national programme'.
- Humanitarian actors have voiced concerns about sharing data with government actors. This needs to be taken into account; however, guidance developed by agencies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross could be used to find adequate ways to establish safe ways of data-sharing.
- It should be defined what other elements could be part of this process beyond the registry – for example, joint outreach to communities or harmonising feedback mechanisms. This would avoid focusing too much on the most disputed topic, which could become a barrier to making progress on other building blocks. An externally facilitated process might be helpful.
- An inclusive process can ensure that smaller actors do not perceive the process as a hidden way of crowding out their activities but as an attempt to jointly build something new. Key actors seem to be aware of this point, which is promising.
- There are three main international actors all explicitly supporting government institutions: the World Bank; WFP; and UNICEF. It is important to ensure that they speak to the Government with one voice and use their respective resources strategically to complement each other and avoid duplication.
- The short-term expansion of the PFS into new areas should be done upon thorough consultation of existing other activities, especially in urban areas.

Building a stronger evidence base on how to layer support, and communicating adequately with communities about this policy

Actors seek to avoid overlapping their efforts by delineating intervention zones. This reduces their ability to strategically complement each other through a clear and appropriately communicated concept of layering support.

- In order to establish a better understanding of overlaps, all actors could systematically ask potential and actual beneficiaries whether they receive support from other programmes. Where beneficiaries do receive more than one type of assistance, the impact

of this additional support could be analysed, and also compared to groups who receive only a single transfer or no support at all.

- Where overlaps exist between very similar programmes, this is perceived by many as ‘double-dipping’. Actors should thus develop systematic ways to cross-check lists of beneficiaries. This process should not be further delayed – the new RSU may take some time to come into effect. Examples from other countries show that this is technically feasible without exposing beneficiaries to protection risks and/or violating humanitarian principles.
- Learning from the evidence, actors could develop a ‘layering policy’, clearly establishing a systematic way to complement different transfers within common intervention areas, thus sharing the burden and providing adequate support, instead of seeking to mutually exclude each other’s beneficiaries. Many (though not all) interview partners indicated interest in this concept and showed themselves open to further technical discussions.

Local social services and local organisations as a point of convergence

Local social services, where they exist, as well as local NGOs, are points of convergence across different programmes and play an important role in reaching out to communities.

- Actors could pay more attention to the fact that local structures, governmental or non-governmental, already work across the different domains and thus offer the potential for stronger convergence at the local level.
- Social services play an important role but do not exist in all communes. Thus, it would be useful to map what services they provide, which geographical areas they cover, what their capacity is, and what gaps they have. It is recommended to include this topic in advocacy work with the Government and donors.
- A mapping exercise of local NGOs would show where different initiatives work through the same organisations. This would be a starting point for systematising their experiences, giving the local partners a stronger voice in the policy dialogue and thus reinforcing feedback from communities.
- Donors could consider funding a mapping of existing feedback and complaint mechanisms, community knowledge about them, their respective strengths and weaknesses, and the potential for harmonisation and collective use.

Seize practical operational opportunities for joint approaches

Operational agencies could seize practical opportunities for joint initiatives that would enhance day-to-day collaboration around very tangible benefits. Donors could consider funding such joint approaches.

- The CWG could consider developing standard operating procedures, including, for example, ways of working with financial service providers, the utilisation of data, applying counter-terrorism legislation, etc.
- Actors could opt for joint tender procedures to recruit financial service providers and achieve better terms and conditions by leveraging their combined transaction volumes. UN agencies have already shown that this is possible in Burkina Faso, and NGOs could

pilot similar initiatives, at least in those areas where they all use the same provider. Practical steps to move towards a common payment platform could be taken, such as assessing the feasibility, timeframe, cost implications, etc.

- Organisations, especially those funded from similar sources, could aim for a more systematic exchange of and harmonisation of operational tools, such as Post-Distribution Monitoring questionnaires, market and cash feasibility assessments, surveying beneficiary preferences for transfer modalities, best practices in managing community feedback and complaints, strengthening of capacity of local partner organisations, etc.

4.5.2 Medium-term efforts

The establishment of the RSU is not a quick fix and not a purely technical process

Key informants expressed very different opinions on and expectations towards the speed of the RSU process. Given the centrality of the process in the overall policy debate, but also for ongoing cash transfer operations, it is important to approach the process carefully.

- A political economy analysis could help to clarify the political economy behind the decision to place the registry in the MGSNF and the consequences of this for other actors.
- Instead of focusing on purely technical questions from the start, the process could begin with confidence-building measures first, to ensure that some of the bitter feelings resulting from power struggles over recent years are overcome.
- Positive examples from other registration processes should be captured. The evolution of the questionnaire used by the SP/CONASUR is a good example of a collaborative process that led to broad ownership of the final product.
- Future users of the registry should be involved from the very start. Similar to the development of, e.g. smartphone applications, users should be invited to test beta versions early in the process.
- The future interoperability of databases needs to be considered from the beginning. This is a technically complex question but also touches on the mandates, purpose, and ownership of programmes, and these aspects need to be considered in an appropriate way.

4.5.3 Long-term vision

Shifting to adaptive social protection remains the right vision but will take some time

In the long run, a shock-responsive national social safety net that provides adequate support, which adapts both its transfer value and also its caseload when external shocks occur, is the right vision for Burkina Faso. However, it needs more than only

‘some improvements’¹⁰⁰ to make this happen. Many actors are already on board with regards to the concept of adaptive social protection; others might need more information on the topic. Some interview partners seem slightly over-optimistic regarding the possible speed of harmonising ongoing operations, building the blocks for a functioning national safety net, and making it shock-responsive all at the same time. Given the long history of limited success in achieving further convergence in Burkina Faso, it is recommended to take a step-by-step approach, building on incremental change and acknowledging the risk of possible backlashes on the way.

¹⁰⁰ World Bank, Vandeninden, F., Grun, R., and Semlali, A. (2019), p. 92.

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Annex A List of key informants

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World Bank Country Team	Matthieu Lefebvre	Task Team Leader
World Bank Country Team	Geoffrey Baeumlin	Humanitarian Action Specialist
World Bank Country Team	Diane Kiemdé Traoré	Senior Social Protection Specialist
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SP/CONASUR	Florent Bakouan Ypene	Permanent Secretary
SE/CNSA	Léopold Nanema	Executive Secretary
General Directory for Humanitarian Action / MFSNF	Bico Kadiatou	General Director
PFS Burkin Naong Saya	Emile Zabsonre	Coordinator / Head of Programme Management Unit
WFP	Désiré Amougou	Cash Transfer Officer
WFP	Pascal Mougou	Cash Transfer Officer
WFP	Therese Tingueri	Programme Assistant CBT
WFP	Marie Noanne Laida	CWG Coordinator
WFP	Ailo Manigat	Social Protection Officer
WFP	Outman Badaoui	Head of Research, Analysis and Mapping
Food Security Cluster	Sarka Vlckova	Cluster Coordinator
FAO	Lionel Ouédraogo Boureima	Cash Transfer Specialist / Co-lead CWG
UNICEF	Bamporiki Patient Maganya	Humanitarian Cash Transfer Specialist
UNICEF	Boukari Ouedraogo	Humanitarian Cash Transfer and Social Protection Specialist
UNICEF	Chrystian Solofo-Dimby	Chief Social Policies Section
UNICEF	Francis Oubda	Social Protection Specialist
Embassy of Sweden	Aboudoulaye Sanou	Programme Manager, Public Finance and Inclusive Growth
European Union	Michel Savel	Programme Manager Resilience
ECHO	Delphine Buyse	Head of Office
KfW	Melanie Rudl	Portfolio Manager Health, Education and Social Protection West Africa
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (UK)	Heidi Gilert	Humanitarian Advisor
AFD	Carlos Soto	Project Manager

Organisation	Interlocutor	Position
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Conseil Santé	Gustave Nébié	Social Protection Expert
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ASMADE (Association Songui Manegré/Aide au Développement Endogène)	Nathalie Zoro	Programme Officer
ASMADE (Association Songui Manegré/Aide au Développement Endogène)	Frank Midi	Monitoring and Evaluation Officer
BRC	Valérie Kissu	Focal Point Cash Transfers
Save the Children international	Mamadou Yougbare	Social Protection Specialist
Tdh	Romain Tankoano	Food Security and Livelihoods Coordinator
Tdh	Pierre Fichter	Coordinator of PDU Consortia Coordinating Cell
OXFAM	Ange Boris Bationo	Emergency Food Security and Livelihoods Manager Co-Facilitator of the Food Security Cluster
ACF	Safoura Gnankene	Coordinator PROGRES
AGED (implementing partner of PFS)	Drabo Boureima	Project Coordinator
BURCASO (implementing partner of PFS)	Désiré Rouamba	Project Coordinator
Wizall	Savadogo Abdoul Kader	Focal Point Cash Transfers
Orange Money Burkina Faso	Balboné Mahamadi	Focal Point Cash Transfers