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**AN ASSESSMENT  
OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING  
INTO FOOD SECURITY INITIATIVES  
OF WEST AFRICAN  
INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS**

**Study on Gender Mainstreaming**

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## ABBREVIATIONS/ACRONYMS

AfDB	African Development Bank
AFRISTAT	Economic and Statistical Observatory for Sub-Saharan Africa
AGOA	African Growth and Opportunity Act
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
AU	African Union
BCEAO	Central Bank of West African States
BEI	European Investment Bank
WADB	West African Development Bank
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CLISS	Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECA/SRO-WA	Economic Commission for Africa/Sub-regional Office for West Africa
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
ECOWAP	Economic Community of West African States Agricultural Policy
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FAFS	Framework for African Food Security
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN
FEWS-NET	Famine Early Warning System Network
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICE	Intergovernmental Committee of Experts

ICTSD	International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IGO	Intergovernmental Organization
ILO	International Labour Organization
INSAH	Institute du Sahel
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LMA	Liberian Marketing Association
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MRU	Mano River Union
NAIP	National Agricultural Investment Plans
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
OMVG	Gambia River Basin Development Organization
PHC	Primary Health Care
RAIP	Regional Agricultural Investment Programme
REC	Regional Economic Community
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
SOP	Strategic and Operational Plan
SWAC/OECD	West Africa Club Secretariat
TIFA	Investment Framework Agreement
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USA	United States of America
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union
WAIGO	West African Intergovernmental Organizations
WAPP	West Africa Power Pool
WADB	West African Development Bank
WTO	World Trade Organization

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This desk report is the first building block of a large initiative aiming to integrate the gender dimension into the West African fight for food security. The core of the project is the introduction of the “gender mainstreaming approach” as a means to support human and economic progress in the subregion.

The present work was mainly undertaken to assess to which extent West African Intergovernmental Organizations’ (WAIGOs’) initiatives on food security take into account the gender dimension, and to identify potential related gaps. The report should lead to a “Gender audit” promoted as a basic evaluation and reshaping tool for a number of approaches and policies. The short- to mid-term objective is to feed a constructive dialogue on this issue among stakeholders and grass-roots actors. Their reflection should lead to a new social and political agenda including women at all levels of decision and actions.

The methodology used consisted of a review of relevant documents, mainly official references and scientific testimonies. Upstream, an analysis of the context was imperative. In this sense, the introduction situates the subregional profile and agricultural production potential. It also clarifies the guiding principles of the review (women’s roles, needs, and impacts) as well as knowledge relative to gender concepts and gender relations.

Prior to the presentation of WAIGOs’ concerns and programmes on food security, a general overview highlights the importance of population growth and the challenges it imposes to agricultural and economic productivity. Indeed, there are nearly 340 million inhabitants in the 15 countries of West Africa, and the annual growth rate is about 7 per cent, a level similar to the agricultural upsizing (6.89 per cent) of

last decade. In spite of the impressive economic development in Western Africa, undernourishment and hunger stay high among populations.

The consequences of food insecurity are alarming in many communities across the subregion, and women and children are more affected than men. About 35 per cent of children under five are stunted (the rates are higher in rural areas) and the wasting prevalence ranges from 5 to 10 per cent.

Food insecurity is largely a matter of insufficient agricultural productivity. The challenge is compounded by the huge growth of the population (more than double the global rate), and by the negative effects of HIV and AIDS, which affect the most productive segment of the population. In addition, food security initiatives developed in the area are constrained by rising world food prices, regional conflicts, and recurrent crises. The farmers have also to face the impacts of climate change, natural disasters, and multiple diseases. Moreover, and this is the actual topic of the present report, current challenges are closely linked to the integration of women in agricultural and alimentary chain.

The relationship between gender and food security is undeniable and of utmost importance. The double standard, which affects women's status and their role in agriculture, affects food security in all countries. In fact, gender inequity and the underestimated capacities of women are some of the most significant obstacles to social and economic development in West Africa. Acknowledging this reality, ECOWAS has long been stressing that "without a more inclusive approach, things can only improve very slowly."

This conviction is widely shared and has been clearly expressed in the context of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) launched in 2004<sup>1</sup>. The declaration stipulates the following: (a) Member States adopt and implement policies and legislation to ensure equal access to, and control and ownership of land by women; (b) The introduction of measures to facilitate women's access to credit, information, and skills training; (c) Member

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.nepad-caadp.net/>

States acknowledge that food security strategies imply necessarily the empowerment of rural women; and (d) The establishment of an African food bank reserve to be used in cases of emergency.

Through this progressive programme, African Heads of State have not only focused on agriculture-based development to battle food shortage and penury, but also bet on a gender-mainstreaming platform. However, in spite of the recognition of factors impeding women's right to land, credit, and decisional power, few actions have reflected their preoccupation. Although numerous initiatives have attempted to fight food insecurity in the region, thus far relatively few strategies have considered their impact on men and women, respectively. This concept is the pivot of the gender mainstreaming approach and strategy.

However, among the WAIGOs initiatives put in place over the last decade, many programmes and measures have considered women's role in agriculture and food security. Following a succinct portrait of five organizations<sup>2</sup> involved in the fight against hunger, several actions oriented towards women are presented. Some of them are clearly inspired by gender mainstreaming. Among those promising initiatives, the Gender Development Centre (ECOWAS and CILSS) and its training sessions have laid the foundations for a new framework.

In 2014, as part of the agricultural revamping movement, women's rights and involvement can gain importance and consideration. According to the gender mainstreaming approach, the needs, roles, and benefits of both men and women are to be taken into account. Decisions should always rely on serious analyses that target justice in sharing resources and power between women and men.

Based on international experience, and in accordance with the third Millennium Development Goal (MDG), the study recommends improvements in the following areas: (a) Commitment and accountability; (b) Capacity enhancement; (c) Suitable tools and guidelines;

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<sup>2</sup> Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), Mano River Union (MRU), Gambia River Basin Development Organization (OMVG), West African Development Bank (WASB), and Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS).

(d) Training in Gender mainstreaming; (e) Women empowerment; (f) Workload distribution; and (g) Experience sharing.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is one of the few regions on the continent to have an elaborated regional policy for agriculture and food security<sup>3</sup>. The pursuit of these policy objectives requires the integration of all intellectual, managerial, and labor forces. From this perspective, the present desk review proposes a tool for reflection.

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<sup>3</sup>The ECOWAP (ECOWAS Agricultural Policy)

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## ■ 1.1 West Africa Regional Profile

West Africa covers an area of approximately 6 million square kilometres and encompasses 16 countries, counting Mauritania. According to the classification in use by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), West Africa is one of the five subregions of the African continent comprising countries of the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo<sup>4</sup>. The ECA Sub-Regional Office for West Africa (ECA/SRO-WA), located in Niamey, Niger, serves these member States.

ECOWAS activities are directed towards strengthening development cooperation and subregional integration within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)<sup>5</sup>. The Community promotes development cooperation and subregional integration within the framework of NEPAD and internationally-agreed upon goals, including those set out in the Millennium Declaration. ECOWAS is one of the most important Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in West Africa, created to promote economic cooperation and reduce trade barriers among members<sup>6</sup>.

ECOWAS membership has remained relatively stable since its inception in 1975<sup>7</sup> and at the beginning fifteen West African States

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.uneca.org/sro/sro-wa>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.uneca.org/fr/nepad/pages/propos-du-programme-nepad>

<sup>6</sup> © 2009 - 2013 [www.atlas-westafrica.org](http://www.atlas-westafrica.org)

<sup>7</sup> © 2012 Jacobs University Bremen

have signed the 1975 treaty before a sixteenth, Cape Verde, joined the community in 1976. The number of countries went back to 15 when Mauritania decided to withdraw itself from the Community in 2000.

The total population of West Africa is estimated at 337,000 million and belongs to three language blocks: English (186,024 million people), French (148,028 million people), and Portuguese (21,147 million people)<sup>8</sup>. In addition to these languages inherited from the colonial era, a huge number of languages are spoken and constitute the daily and mother tongues of people.

English and French are more widely spoken than Portuguese. Although the majority of States in ECOWAS are French-speaking, English is the dominant language in reason of Nigeria's population, which counts for almost two-thirds of all inhabitants in the subregion. West Africa constitutes nearly 30 per cent of Africa's total population.

West Africa has one of the highest fertility rates in the world – around 6 births per woman. In 2013, Niger recorded the world's highest rate with 7.43 births per woman<sup>9</sup>.

## ■ 1.2 Agricultural Production Potential

West Africa is a highly diverse region in terms of agro-climatic conditions, agricultural production potential, and the distribution of vulnerable populations<sup>10</sup>.

Its agricultural production systems are characterized by a dual structure that combines subsistence farming and export-oriented agriculture. Traditional food crops, such as millet, sorghum, maize, rice, and cassava, are principally destined to national or regional consumption needs. The export crops introduced during the colonial

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<sup>8</sup> Central Intelligence Agency - The World Factbook - 2013 (estimation). <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2119.html> (Table annexed to document).

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.geoba.se/country.php?cc=NE>

<sup>10</sup> *Feed the future*, a US government publication on global hunger and food security initiatives.

period include cotton, groundnuts, cocoa beans, coffee, sugar, and cashew.

The agriculture sector accounts for 35 per cent of the regional Gross Domestic Production (GDP)<sup>11</sup> and comes after the services sector (37 per cent), whose share is growing due to the terciarization of the global economy.

In spite of a relatively minor percentage in gross domestic and regional production, agriculture is believed to be the best engine for generating sustained, rapid, and pro-poor economic growth. This conviction is shared widely on the African continent, and has been confirmed by the launch, in 2005, of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP)<sup>12</sup> in Maputo.

On this occasion, several African Heads of State had pledged to allocate 10 per cent of their budget to agriculture by 2008. Since then, this African-led initiative has clearly focused on agriculture-based development to end hunger, lower poverty, and reduce food insecurity. That commitment has been designed to put African countries on track to reaching the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG) by 2015.

Unfortunately, since 2007, results on the agricultural front have been seriously compromised by natural disasters. In a single year (2007), the West African subregion was hit on three different occasions, which severely affected food security and nutrition. Indeed, flooding and the early end of the rainy season followed the late and erratic start of the latter. The production deficit which ensued, coupled with the global trends of increasing prices for food and fuel, have led to an unusual escalate in prices of locally produced cereals and imported commodities. In 2013, the consequences still affect the countries, communities, and families.

The objective to reduce food insecurity has to face numerous challenges. One of the most prominent is access to water. Although West Africa is endowed with ample water resources, including rivers

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.feedthefuture.gov/country/west-africa-regional>.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.nepad-caadp.net/>

and river basins, only 4 per cent of total cultivated lands are irrigated. As a consequence, agriculture remains predominantly rain-fed.

Small farmers with poor access to agricultural technologies, information, and financial services dominate the sector. They have to contend with weather variability, soil degradation, and infestation by pests and diseases. The situation is expected to deteriorate significantly, as a consequence of global climate change.

The threat was addressed ten years ago by ECOWAS. “Without a more inclusive approach, things can only improve very slowly”, stated a 2004 Working Paper.<sup>13</sup> The authors support strategic development oriented towards sectors of intervention of the majority of populations, such as agriculture and the informal sector. Indeed, alongside agriculture, the informal economy must be considered in the analysis and targeting of food security.

### ■ 1.3 Women’s Status/Gender Relations

During last decades, West Africa has progressed on issues related to women empowerment and gender equality.<sup>14</sup> One of the key indicators of women’s empowerment is the enhanced participation of women in decision-making. Some ECOWAS countries have made notable progress by achieving 20 to 30 per cent or more in women’s participation in parliaments. However, gender inequality remains a concern, especially in terms of labour relations and income.

For many years now, ECOWAS has been cognisant of gender issues in agriculture. In West Africa, women’s rights to land ownership and control continue to be neglected, in spite of stakeholder sensitivity and the fact that agriculture is key to women’s livelihoods in rural areas.<sup>15</sup> In agriculture, discrimination against women is flagrant. Solutions should be considered not only in respect of women’s status

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<sup>13</sup>*The Social Dimension of Regional Integration in ECOWAS*, Working Paper No.49, Rene Robert, 2004

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.uneca.org/.../recent\\_economic\\_dvlp\\_sro\\_wa](http://www.uneca.org/.../recent_economic_dvlp_sro_wa)

<sup>15</sup> *Using Law for Rural Women’s Empowerment in West Africa* (WiLDAF-AO), 2013

and dignity, but also in order to achieve more balanced households and a better economy within the community. Downstream, all actors should share similar knowledge in terms of “Gender relations.”

Gender relations refer to the ways in which men and women relate to each other over the whole range of social institutions. The type of activities practiced by men and women influences access to resources, benefits, and decision-making. The typology of these activities underlies the “Gender roles” that men and women play.

The words “Sex” and “Gender” are commonly used interchangeably. However, to fully grasp the concept behind gender relations, it is important to understand that “Sex” refers to biological and physiological characteristics, while “Gender” refers to behaviours, roles, expectations and activities in society. This scientific breakthrough emerged in the 1970. Nowadays, comprehension of the terms “Gender” and “Sex” serves managers, politicians, civil servants, and policy makers planning for the present and future of their societies.

Based on this theory, the main differences between men and women reside in the procreation system and apparels. Any physical and intellectual human activity can be performed similarly by both sexes. This perception of equality has led to a revision of gender roles and can, without making a revolution, open new perspectives to women and men.

Needless to say, gender relations are a concern for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).<sup>16</sup> FAO defines gender relations as the ways in which society describes rights and responsibilities, and how men and women relate to one another. In agriculture as well as in other fields, gender roles tell what is considered appropriate behaviour or activity for men and women.

**Gender roles dictate the social scale and, as a result, socio-cultural patterns that influence** women’s participation and access to economic resources and responsibilities. The causes and effects of gender roles are poverty, illiteracy, and poor health, which are all

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<sup>16</sup> *Bridging the Gap*, FAOs in its programme for equality in agriculture and rural development, 2009.

affecting women. As for leadership and decision-making, women tend to generally stand out only within feminine-focused institutions, and have little impact on wider community matters.

In all labour situations, the hierarchical power relations between women and men tend to disadvantage women. Often accepted as “natural,” these gender hierarchies are socially determined relations, which are culture-based and subject to change over time. This necessity for change is now part of all stakeholders’ agendas, and major steps have been taken in the last few decades.

Progress and change depend on the will of higher levels of decision-makers, responsible for the adoption of standards and programmes, and, obviously, on the evolution of popular beliefs. These two elements cannot be considered separately as together they catalyse theories and practices leading to the revisited societal workings.

In 2013, no environment, universe, or field of activity could ignore the issues at stake in gender relations. Although they have been carried on and defined for centuries by a range of institutions,<sup>17</sup> they now figure as essential topics for the progress of humankind. It is a topical issue and, each day, the media focus on such examples and comment on them positively or negatively. From various standpoints, and often with opposite goals in mind, the concept of gender relations is drawn to reinforce or redefine the rules, standards, and practices that govern social institutions.

How about gender relations in the daily lives of women? Gender relations condition women in all moments and instances of their lives. Each day, women must deal with this reality as well as its consequences. For instance, a woman will be aware of this bias when bargaining at the market, when preparing dinner and distributing it among family members, or when invited to join a citizens’ meeting at night in the village. The transgressing of women’s accepted roles affects them socially, and sometimes even physically. A global and frustrating reality, it has a negative influence on women’s initiatives likely to improve the family and the community’s well being.

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<sup>17</sup> Such as the family, legal systems or the market.

Rigidities in the gender division of labour in agriculture and in other sectors limit the effective mobilization of women's work to support production for domestic use as well as for national and export markets.<sup>18</sup> Poverty reduction efforts are hampered by the traditional control over resources, targeted by women and generally aiming society's benefit.

The strategies for development in Western Africa cannot target the economy without analysing gender relations. A number of measures should rapidly be designed and implemented in order to support women's attempts to change the rules and practices in that respect.

States cannot rely solely on time and the effects of globalization. On the contrary, according to the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization,<sup>19</sup> the trade liberalization has historically posed a threat to the livelihoods of women producers. Moreover, globalization policies and practices often contribute to an increase in the economic marginalization of women in terms of ownership and access to credit.

## ■ 1.4 Gender and Food Security

As mentioned previously, gender describes what it means to be a man or a woman. "Gender expresses in one's behaviour and actions that are performed to fulfil society's expectations" (Hareg Consult, 2004)<sup>20</sup>. This description refers to all human activities including alimentation - one of the basic requirements to grow, work, raise a family, and participate in the community.

Within this life pattern, as far as the life needs are concerned, men and women are equally important. Their physical needs and productive potential should be considered in the same way. Nevertheless,

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.fao.org/docrep/007/ae501e/ae501e05.htm>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.ilo.org/fairglobalization/report/lang--cs/index.htm>

<sup>20</sup> [http://www.repository.uneca.org/bitstream/handle/10855/5413/bib.%2037433\\_1.pdf?sequence=1](http://www.repository.uneca.org/bitstream/handle/10855/5413/bib.%2037433_1.pdf?sequence=1)

men and women are expected to play specific roles, and are even considered as having different needs. Those paradigms have been socially constructed and dictate what one and the other should do or be. Additionally, the food security issue reproduces this social pattern and has an impact in fields, at the market and even around the family table. Moreover, major differences restrict women's access to resources, especially land, and the retribution for work. Double standard characterizes the way incomes and authority is shared.

Under those facets, the universal female subordination still corresponds to the statement made 40 years ago by an American anthropologist<sup>21</sup>. This situation seriously affects women's status as well as the nation's food security concerns. In fact, gender inequity and underestimation of women's capacities are some of the biggest obstacles to social and economic development. Everywhere in West Africa women lag behind men in terms of access to education, health services, economic opportunities, and income. In 2013, traditions, maybe more than the system itself, seem to limit their participation in decision-making and wealth creation.

To sum up, it has to be widely recognized that the patterns established in gender relations in West Africa not only seriously affect women's dignity and welfare, but also jeopardize the entire nation's quest for food security and welfare.

## ■ 1.5 How to define food security?

“Food security underlies the consumption, at any time, by all members of the household (men, women, boys, and girls) of an alimentation adequate in quality and quantity, for an active healthy life.” (Take Assefa ed, 1999)<sup>22</sup>. Households are food secure when they have year-round access to a safe amount and a variety of food. At the household level, “food security refers to the ability to secure, either from one's own production or through purchases, adequate food for meeting the

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<sup>21</sup> Ortner, 1974. [https://www.essex.ac.uk/sociology/documents/pdf/ug\\_journal/vol2/2009/SC276\\_MariaRayner.pdf](https://www.essex.ac.uk/sociology/documents/pdf/ug_journal/vol2/2009/SC276_MariaRayner.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/y4818e/y4818e09.htm>

dietary needs of all members of the household” (FAO, 2010). Defining food security at the household level enables the consideration of women in the food system - from production to consumption.

The concept of food security includes both physical and economic access to address people’s needs and preferences. In that way, a household should have the possibility to consider all its members at all times. The three main steps towards ensuring food security are food availability, food access, and food utilization.

**Food availability:** Food must be available in sufficient quantities, continuously and consistently. The concept refers to stocks and production in a given area, and the capacity to import food from elsewhere. It implies self-sufficiency of a household, of the community, and of the nation as a whole.

**Food access:** People must be able to regularly acquire food, through home and local production or importation. Food access suggests the availability of sufficient resources to obtain nutritious food, without resorting to emergency aid or other coping strategies. Food access refers equally to sharing practices within the household. Sharing is based on age, labour, health, and special circumstances, mainly for pregnant or breastfeeding women. The sex of family members is often seen as an indicator for alimentary distribution, although at any age the sex does not dictate the physiological needs. Limited access to food for girls and women in the family is the first condition leading to various health problems for themselves and the society.

**Food utilization:** Food utilization includes storage, processing, preservation, cooking, and consumption.

These three elements (food availability, food access, and food utilization) are fundamental when analysing food security. They must be examined from different points of view – at the individual, family, community, area, and country level.

Stakeholders and decision-makers are invited to see food security not only as a fight against hunger but also as a complex sustainable development issue. The question is, of course, related to agriculture,

but health, socio-economic development, education, environment are critically linked to gender.

The importance of considering gender in food security being now globally recognized, many governments and organizations work on this issue. New perspectives of analysis and revised indicators have been adopted to consider the gender mainstreaming approach. For instance, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)<sup>23</sup> adopted a gender policy in 2012. According to this policy, a project development has a deeper and a more sustainable impact when women are empowered, and when gender roles and relations are more equitable. To that end, the policy adopted by the IFAD imposes the following objectives for the design, implementation and evaluation of all projects:

- (a) Equal opportunities for rural women and men to participate in – and benefit from – economic activities;
- (b) Equality between women and men in decision-making to influence rural institutions and organizations; and
- (c) More equitable balance in workloads and in sharing economic and social benefits, between women and men.

The IFAD objectives are clearly inspired by the gender mainstreaming approach.

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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.ifad.org/>

## 2. GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND FOOD SECURITY

### ■ 2.1 Gender mainstreaming

The concept of gender mainstreaming is relatively new. It was first proposed at the 1985 Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi, Kenya. Gender mainstreaming was then recognized as the public concept of assessing the involvement of men and women in any planned policy action, including legislation and programs, in all areas and at all levels. Gender mainstreaming essentially offers a pluralistic approach that values diversity among both women and men.<sup>24</sup>

According to this historical resolution, the inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making is globally addressed. Governments and other public actors are invited to promote gender mainstreaming in all policies and programmes, in an active and visible manner. The decisions should be subordinated to analysis enlightening the effects on women and men, respectively.<sup>25</sup>

Gender analysis provides information in understanding the different patterns of involvement, behaviour, and activities that women and men have in economic, social, and legal structures. This analysis is interconnected with considerations to race, ethnicity, culture, class, age, disability, and/or other status. When seriously conducted, gender analysis can become pivotal to reaching justice among citizens.

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<sup>24</sup> Booth, C. and Bennett, (2002) *Mainstreaming in the European Union*, European Journal of Women's Studies 9 (4): 430–46.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/acdi-cida/acdi-cida.nsf/en/jud-31194519-kbd> – Gender analysis refers to the variety of methods used to understand the Relationship between men and women, their access to resources, their activities, and the constraints they face relative to each other.

Thus, the process of gender mainstreaming implies the re-evaluation of certain equality policies. Its implementation calls for a definition of what type of projects will benefit women as well as men. It emphasizes systemic attention to gender equality in developmental activities. In short, gender mainstreaming proposes to reshape and mainstream rather than marginalize women's activities. The approach focuses not only on women's equality but also on equality of genders.

The gender mainstreaming approach differs from other initiatives exclusively oriented towards women. While this type of project has yielded good results and contributed to boosting the confidence of women, it tends to remain a separate cluster of activities for women. Many organizations are convinced that significant changes cannot be achieved merely by adding marginal programmes for women.

During last decades, gender mainstreaming has highlighted lessons learned from slow progress in the achievement of real change. In addition, it has brought about a better comprehension of the gender's mechanical, gender's conditioning, and gender's resistances, even from women's point of view.

With the gender mainstreaming approach, the mobilization of legal instruments, financial resources, and capacity is essential to building balanced relationships between women and men. The coordination and synergy of all stakeholders should bring the issue of men and women, girls and boys, into the main system. Overall, the ultimate goal of gender mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality at various levels.

The gender mainstreaming approach does not refute or abjure the traditional equality plans of action. It completes and brings them up to date. In fact, gender mainstreaming keeps gender-specific activities and affirmative action, whenever women or men are at a particular disadvantage. To this end, gender-specific interventions can target women exclusively, men and women together, or only men, to enable them to participate in and benefit equally from development efforts. These measures have to be maintained in order to keep fighting direct and indirect consequences of past discrimination. Their *raison d'être* is not questioned, at least for the moment.

## ■ 2.2. Gender Audit

The first step of any gender audit consists in assessing the degree of implementation of gender mainstreaming in a given society or organization. It is ensured through various analyses (policies, legislations, regulations, programmes, projects) and evaluations of their effects on the status of women and men.

In short, a gender audit<sup>26</sup> considers whether practices and related support systems for gender mainstreaming are effective. It shows whether the guidelines established are followed. It gives a baseline as well as identifies critical gaps and challenges. It allows for persons, staff, and managers working under such initiatives to be listened to. Their experience is precious. Possible improvements and innovations are suggested and recommendations proposed.

A gender audit also documents good practices towards the achievement of gender equality and assumes that public policies have different impacts on men and women.

A successful gender audit will eventually lead to the modification of a number of policies and practices. It will highlight the commitment of management to gender mainstreaming, serve as a tool to analyse the allocation and repartition of resources, and evaluate the portion of the budget assigned to that extent.

## ■ 2.3 The Need for the Study

The ECA/SRO-WA initiated this study in order to review the extent to which gender is mainstreamed into food security strategies designed by intergovernmental organizations in West Africa, and to evaluate and address potential gaps in terms of causes, values, cultures, structure, and processes.

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<sup>26</sup> *ILO Participatory Audit: A tool for organizational change*. [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms\\_101030.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_101030.pdf). Undated.

This gender study can be considered as a platform for WAIGOs to review development challenges. Among those challenges, food insecurity and gender mainstreaming are seen as tightly linked. Supported by a body of knowledge and information, this platform could allow for efficient sharing of information, ideas, and innovative solutions.

From the outset, the study is founded on the awareness that gender issues disadvantage women in the food system, and as such its goal is to articulate recommendations in this respect.

## ■ 2.4 Objectives of the Study

### 2.4.1 General Objectives

The general objectives of the study were to:

- (a) Assess to what extent WAIGOs working on food security mainstream gender into their policies, practices, procedures, and resources;
- (b) Propose recommendations for gender mainstreaming; and
- (c) Strengthen the capacity of WAIGOs for enhancing agriculture and food-related activities, improving food security and mainstreaming gender into these processes.

### 2.4.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives were to:

- (a) Understand the general food security situation in the subregion;
- (b) Identify WAIGOs working on food security as well as learn about the gender sensitivity of their activities;
- (c) Pinpoint capacity gaps of WAIGOs in undertaking gender mainstreaming into food security;
- (d) Work out mechanisms to mainstream gender into food security endeavours by WAIGOs; and
- (e) Facilitate experience sharing among member States and suggest ways of collaboration to overcome possible challenges in the future.

## ■ 2.5 Methodology

### 2.5.1 Gathering the Audit Data

The study relies on secondary sources. Those documents first required an understanding of the food security situation in West Africa. It sought to gather and disseminate information on food security activities led by WAIGOs.

Relevant documents were identified and reviewed in order to provide the required data. The gender sensitivity of the activities was examined and possible gaps in undertaking gender mainstreaming were identified.

It is expected that the study would fuel discussions among WAIGOs on improved human and institutional capacities in gender mainstreaming and the fight against food insecurity.

Some initiatives presented in this report are likely to inspire WAIGO members. They can contribute to enhanced institutional capacities in this regard.

### 2.5.2 Data Analysis

Data compilation is based on paper and electronic documentation, which fed the analysis. Conclusions and recommendations for gender mainstreaming into food security are proposed to ECOWAS members States.



## 3. ASSESSMENT OF FOOD SECURITY IN WEST AFRICA

### ■ 3.1 Food Security Situation in West Africa

West Africa has made little progress in reducing food insecurity and malnutrition in the last two decades, states a FAO<sup>27</sup> report. About 35 per cent of children under five are stunted (the rates are higher in rural areas) and the wasting prevalence is 5 to 10 per cent. According to the report, malnutrition in the region is caused by agro-ecological, socio-economic, and demographic factors exacerbated by HIV and AIDS, desertification and a tremendous growth in the population. West Africa has one of the highest fertility rates with 6 births per woman, and it is expected that by 2030 its population will have risen from 226 million to 430 million.

The report also underlines that although food availability has generally improved, energy and protein supplies are still below requirements. The nutritional quality of local diets is insufficient for most people. Malnutrition caused by a low intake of foods as well as diseases are worse in Niger where nearly 50 per cent of the total population, mainly women, is undernourished.

Despite some progress, micronutrient deficiency continues to be a major public health problem in West Africa. Deficiencies in vitamin A and iron mainly affect women and children.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, iodine defi-

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<sup>27</sup> *Food Security and Nutrition Trends in West Africa – Challenges and the Way Forward*, Cristina Larimore and Ellen Muehlhoff, Nutrition Programme Services, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, Rome, Italy, Undated.

<sup>28</sup> Throughout the region 30-70%, Benin and Mali, more that 80% of U5 children and 60% of women anaemic.

ciency, in this same population, causes birth defects, impaired physical and mental growth, blindness, susceptibility to infections, and maternal and child mortality.

Although improved, carbohydrate and protein availability and intake remain below requirements for the majority of the people. Disparities in this regard exist between rural and urban populations. All countries are not affected at the same level. Indeed, Sahelian Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali are more touched than forested Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo.

Food insecurity and human security are tightly linked. In *Human Security in West Africa*<sup>29</sup>, Ivor Richard Fung considers endemic food insecurity as one of the sources of human insecurity. He demonstrates the relevance of the concept for West Africa, where, in addition to food insecurity, prevail extreme poverty, human rights violations, especially women's and children's, poor governance, proliferation of small arms, environmental degradation, illiteracy, and endemic diseases.

The States and Civil Society Organizations took strong initiatives towards the promotion of sustainable and collective security in the region, confirms the scientist's report. However, initiatives did not specifically address women's vulnerability, except for few references to reproductive health in the control of HIV.

For their part, Maxwell and Smith<sup>30</sup> examined the situation of food security in West Africa with a particular attention to households. Studying the economic situation for these households, they suggested a special focus on the skew intra-household distribution, which is mainly based on gender. They state that food security requires efficient<sup>31</sup> and equitable<sup>32</sup> operation of the food systems<sup>33</sup>. This double recommendation should underlie gender's analysis in food security issues.

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<sup>29</sup> *Human Security in West Africa: Challenges, Synergies and Action for a Regional Agenda* Workshop Organized by the Sahel and West Africa Club/OECD, Lome (Togo) 2006 Vol. 2 Documents.

<sup>30</sup> [http://web.ifad.org/gender/tools/hfs/hfspub/hfs\\_3.pdf](http://web.ifad.org/gender/tools/hfs/hfspub/hfs_3.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> Efficient: the need for all stages in the food system from production to final consumption to be well organized.

<sup>32</sup> Equitable: the benefits of production are equally distributed and that food should be available to all.

*Feed the World*<sup>34</sup> relates an important gender concern in West Africa. All obstacles set forth under the study are prevalent: inability of women to own land, less capital than men, lack of abilities in decision-making on household expenditure.

Although food insecurity is generalized, the study underlines disparities between countries. Thus, UNDP<sup>35</sup> reports that the Sahel region is particularly vulnerable, having experienced two severe food crises within less than five years (2005-2010). Other countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Senegal have lived critical food crises in 2010, less than five years after the 2005 crisis.

EWS NET<sup>36</sup> has examined the pastoral activities. The assessment was led in the western transhumance pastoral and north/central agro-pastoral zones. Even if the pastoral conditions are tough, they are not alarming. However, among those communities, agricultural production was approximately 50 per cent below average needs to meet essential purchases and increasing expenditure on food.

For instance, Mali's agro-pastoral belt experienced the most widespread agricultural and pastoral production deficits in 2012. Necessary additional revenue in households lays on labour migration.

In Niger above average prices have stressed livelihoods of the poorest households in localized areas that required emergency food assistance. In Nigeria, the conflict has had a negative impact on food security causing a reduction in exchanges and activities between regions.

According to Didier Tibi Zoungrana<sup>37</sup>, "West Africa is currently facing huge economic, social and political challenges, including issues

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<sup>33</sup> Food system: a combination of agro-ecological and socio-economic processes, which determine the production, marketing and consumption.

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.feedthefuture.gov/country/west-Africa-regional>

<sup>35</sup> *Exploring the Role of Social Protection in Enhancing Food Security in Africa*, Issue Brief: UNDP/Regional Bureau for Africa.2011.

<sup>36</sup> *Est Africa Food Security Outlook*, USAID, FEWS-NET (Famine Early System Network) 2012

<sup>37</sup> *Who is more protective of food security: The WAEMU or ECOWAS? Didier Tibi Zoungarana*, in The international centre for tourism and sustainable development (ICTSD), May 2013.

related to food security, which feature prominence.” Zoungrana highlights with concern the constant decrease in the number of agricultural households. He states that agricultural households represented 83 per cent of the population in 1960 and only 50 per cent in 2010.

This downward trend is likely to continue due, on the one hand, to the increasing rural-urban migration and, on the other hand, to the purchase of large areas of farmland by national and foreign private developers. If this continues, Zoungrana anticipates that the food insecurity and vulnerability will aggravate, stating that it is currently affecting around 33 million people. Moreover, the population growth in the region, which is expected to count 420 million inhabitants in 2020, will dramatically increase the food deficit and cause the deterioration of the nutritional status.

These data even go up to announce a 100 per cent<sup>38</sup> growth in the population between 2010 and 2050. Knowing that already the region holds the highest proportion of people suffering from hunger in the world, the situation is worth urgent set motion.

### ■ 3.2 Brief Profile of WAIGO’s and Gender Perspectives towards Food Security

West African intergovernmental organizations are primarily composed of sovereign States, and their mission is to foster economic integration activities, including trade, agricultural development, natural resource development and management. For the scope of this study, six WAIGOs working on food security issues have been identified, and their strategies analysed: ECOWAS, WAEMU, MRU, OMVG, BOAD, and CILSS. These WAIGOs are partnering with the ECA/SRO-WA and its technical support in their efforts to tackle food insecurity in the subregion.

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<sup>38</sup> Global growth rate announced 38 per cent.

### 3.2.1 Economic Community of Western African States

The mission of ECOWAS is to promote economic integration in all fields of economic activity, particularly industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial questions, social and cultural matters.<sup>39</sup> Founded in 1975, its membership comprises 15 countries.<sup>40</sup>

ECOWAS collaborates with the Establishing a Hunger-Free Initiative for West Africa<sup>41</sup> project and gets support from the FAO. This assistance is shared among government and non-government partners that work towards a hunger-free West Africa. The Establishing a Hunger-Free Initiative for West Africa aims to produce two major outputs:

- (a) Assist ECOWAS in adapting FAO capacity building material (e.g., e-learning on food security and the right to food) and reference guides to address the needs of West Africa. It also helps ECOWAS assimilate more recent concepts such as food sovereignty, the right to food as well as food and nutrition security; and
- (b) Strengthen the capacity of the ECOWAS Parliament<sup>42</sup> on food and nutrition security. Parliamentarians play a crucial role in preparing the national budgets and in monitoring their efficient utilization.

The process was initiated in 2001 when the ECOWAS Ministerial Commission on Agriculture and Food adopted a framework for the creation of a common regional agricultural policy (ECOWAP).

The implementation of ECOWAP coincided with an increasing interest in the CAADP established in 2003 by the African Union (AU) Assembly<sup>43</sup>. Through CAADP, the AU assembly aimed at raising agricultural productivity by at least 6 per cent per annum. To this end,

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<sup>39</sup> *Regional Programme for Food Security in ECOWAS* in Collaboration with FAO, 2002.

<sup>40</sup> Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

<sup>41</sup> [http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/righttofood/documents/project\\_f/doc/Hunger-Free\\_Initiative\\_WestAfrica-expected\\_output\\_en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/righttofood/documents/project_f/doc/Hunger-Free_Initiative_WestAfrica-expected_output_en.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> A regional parliament composed of national parliamentarians.

<sup>43</sup> *Regional approaches to food security in Africa*, Discussion paper: the CAADP and other relevant policies and programmes in ECOWAS, Jeske van Seters, Dolly Afun-Ogidan and Francesco Rampa, February 2012.

signatory parties planned a 10 per cent increase in public investments related to agriculture for the national annual budgets from 2003 to 2008.

The Heads of West African States adopted ECOWAP as the reference framework for CAADP implementation at the regional level in 2005. The policy's general objective is to "contribute in a sustainable manner to satisfying the food needs of the population, to economic and social development and to poverty reduction in Member States as well as to address inequalities between territories, areas, and countries."

This official declaration was followed by the adoption of a CAADP Regional Partnership Compact (2009)<sup>44</sup> and the Regional Agricultural Investment Programme (RAIP) (2011-2015). Those programmes focus on:

- (a) The promotion of strategic food value chains for food sovereignty;
- (b) The promotion of an overall environment favourable to regional agricultural development; and
- (c) The reduction of vulnerability to food crises and the promotion of stable and sustainable access to food.

All 15 ECOWAS member countries have signed national Compacts<sup>45</sup> and validated National Agricultural Investment Plans (NAIPs).

Under CAADP, each region or country can develop and implement its own initiatives. Linkages between trade and agriculture within CAADP are confirmed. Thus far, around 30 per cent of the investment needs in national investment plans are related to market development and access to chain's value.

Because of the awareness raised by the 2007-2008 and 2010 food crises, which plagued many parts of the world, ECOWAS revived ECOWAP, speeding up its implementation. The International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD) reviewed the most

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<sup>44</sup> <http://www.caadp.net/pdf/ECOWAP%20Regional%20Compact.pdf>.

<sup>45</sup> Compacts are agreements between stakeholders (public, private as well as donors) serving as a framework for partnerships to design and implement the required policy interventions and investment programmes.

recent developments of this regional agricultural policy and observed three major advances:

- (a) The implementation of regional reserves for food security;
- (b) The “Zero Hunger” initiative; and
- (c) The regional rice offensive.

The ICTSD confirms its commitment to those advances for the region and his faith in paving the way for the implementation of genuine market regulation mechanisms.

According to the initial objectives set out by ECOWAP, these regulatory mechanisms must improve the region’s lasting food security as well as ensure sufficient, stable, and worthwhile income to farmers.

In October 2011, in response to the serious food crisis that kept getting worse in Western Africa, a meeting of the technical committee for agriculture, environment and water resources was held in Abidjan. This meeting followed a decision to implement regional reserves for food security. On this occasion, participants insisted on two main initiatives:

- (a) The regional rice offensive; and
- (b) The “Zero Hunger” initiative in Western Africa.

The offensive to resume the growing of rice in Western African was launched as part of a more rapid implementation. The objective of the Western African “Zero Hunger” initiative is bold: to eliminate hunger and malnutrition by 2020. It is inspired by the Brazilian approach<sup>46</sup>, which has achieved a significant reduction of hunger and malnutrition.

In order to secure ownership of the initiative and assume their leadership, participants at the Abidjan meeting made recommendations to open the dialogue among high-level regional decision-makers. They suggested using this initiative towards reforming the governance system for food security and nutrition; one of the three points concerned a strong involvement of the local population.

Through this main point, ECOWAS recognized the need for a new commitment to people-centered policies. These policies would go

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<sup>46</sup> [www.ruralpovertyportal.org](http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org)

beyond poverty eradication, towards the creation of decent jobs, and in compliance with international labour standards. The gender-sensitive regional policies are part of this people-centered commitment.

The preoccupation for women's issues was not new to ECOWAS strategies. In 2004, a Working Paper<sup>47</sup> entitled *Social Dimension of Regional Integration* had recognized the challenge to capitalize on women's potential as contributors to broader development goals in West Africa. To that end, it proposed to increase the representation of women in regional policy and decision-making bodies. It suggested that particular attention be paid to the impact of economic and social policies on women in the region and to the promotion of women's mobilization initiatives as part of the community building process. The Paper acknowledged the full extent of the disadvantages faced by women living in West Africa beyond the potential negative effects of regional trade and economic integration. It insisted on the needs to address disparities in education, legal rights, health status, political, and other forms of representation.

In the wake, in 1993, the Revised ECOWAS Treaty addressed the need to create and harmonize coherent gender policies within member States as well as to identify and remove constraints inhibiting women's involvement in regional integration efforts. A strong recall of Article 69 advocates for the integration of gender-sensitive regional policies. It confirmed the importance of removing barriers to active participation of women in the community's economy, thereby fostering the future economic success of the sub-region. ECOWAS recognizes gender equality as an engine of regional integration. A full-fledged development objective has also been given to a Gender Development Centre (EGDC), a specialized agency of ECOWAS.

This shared purpose at the community level for the welfare of women is reflected in the commitments of individual ECOWAS States to international conventions on women and discrimination. Each of the 15 members is a party to the UN Convention on the Elimination

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<sup>47</sup> *The Social Dimension of Regional Integration in ECOWAS*, Working Paper No.49, Rene Robert, 2004

of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)<sup>48</sup> along with the ILO's Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)<sup>49</sup>.

Moreover, given the prominence of these legal instruments as a basis for pursuing gender equality, the technical committee on gender policy in ECOWAS requested that provisions on inclusion of gender discrimination's prohibition be included into all ECOWAS statutes. This commitment to include a gender dimension in the instruments and activities of the community is an important policy focus. Such ECOWAS rules and visions are geared towards gender mainstreaming. Even though, up to now, community gender-related activities have not addressed directly gender mainstreaming in food security, they still serve as entry points to women's empowerment.

This preoccupation was clearly expressed in May 2012 during a four-day ECOWAS Regional Workshop on the role of women in the search for food security. The objective was to develop a better understanding of women's contribution to the strategic food chain identified in the ECOWAS Regional Agricultural Investment Programme. The issues of gender and food security were seen as closely related to the agricultural sector, in terms of rice, maize and cassava cultivation, as well as to the production of livestock meat and fish.

Another recent initiative recognized disproportionate burden imposed on women due to a lack of access to modern energy services. In June 2012, a one-day training workshop on Sustainable Energy and Gender was conducted in order to stimulate awareness of gender issues and improve capacity to assess implications for different gender groups. The meeting also targeted energy policies and eventual entry points for incorporating a gender perspective into current regional and national policies.

### **3.2.2 West African Economic and Monetary Union**

The West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) is a trade zone agreement among eight countries: Benin, Burkina Faso,

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<sup>48</sup> <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>.

<sup>49</sup> [http://www.ilo.org/global/standards/WCMS\\_066962/lang-en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/standards/WCMS_066962/lang-en/index.htm).

Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo. It has been created to encourage internal development, improve trade deficits, set uniform tariffs for goods imported from non-member nations and create a regional stock exchange and a regional banking system<sup>50</sup> through the establishment of a legal and regulatory framework. WAEMU has established a common accounting system and periodic reviews of member countries the macroeconomic policies of member countries.

Six of the eight WAEMU member countries are eligible for trade benefits under the *African Growth and Opportunity Act* (AGOA)<sup>51</sup>. Four of these countries - Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Senegal - are also eligible to receive AGOA textile and apparel benefits. In November 2008, the United States and WAEMU held the third Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) Council meeting. The parties discussed cooperation in the World Trade Organization, AGOA implementation, regional integration, commercial issues, trade capacity building and technical assistance.

Under the auspices of WAEMU, the Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (SWAC/OECD) organized a technical workshop on Settlement of Regional's Statistics and Food Security Policy Design. The event was held in Ouagadougou, in February 2012, and brought together representatives of the following organizations: WAEMU, CILSS, AGRHYMET, AFRISTAT and FAO<sup>52</sup>. The participants agreed on the necessity to better integrate settlement and regional market dynamics into the development of food security policies. Discussions allowed highlighting the lack of homogeneous and coherent data at the regional level as well as the need to improve statistical concepts of agriculture and settlement dynamics. An improvement in terms of the coordination between regional and international organizations was underlined as well.

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<sup>50</sup> <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/West-African-Economic-and-Monetary-Union-WAEMU.html>

<sup>51</sup> <http://trade.gov/agoa/>

<sup>52</sup> *West African Futures, Settlement, Market and Food Security*, Joint Conclusions of the Technical Workshop, Regional Settlement Statistics and Food Security Policy Design WAEMU, 15-16 February 2012.

Agriculture plays a central role in the development of WAEMU member countries and contributed on average to about 36 per cent of the total GDP in 2004 (FAO, 2005)<sup>53</sup>. WAEMU comprises mostly a large rural population practicing subsistence farming and export-oriented agriculture. The zone includes significant land but much of it is infertile and plagued by erosion and degradation. The retreat of the public sector from the agricultural sector, combined with reduced donor support, has hindered agricultural development over the last two decades. An increase in food prices and a decline in revenue from crop exports have exacerbated the problem.

In WAEMU areas, agricultural production is weather-dependent and rainfall patterns are variable, thereby creating significant instability. Soil is degraded and low in nutrients with deforestation rates twice that of sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. Rates of deforestation are highest in Togo, which recorded a 4.5 per cent annual in 2005. Overall, agricultural areas under irrigation are limited in the region and there is low use of modern agronomic practices. For instance, there are far fewer tractors per hectare than there are in any other developing region and, as a result, yields per hectare are lower than those achieved in other developing countries.

Population growth is a major driver of deforestation and land degradation. A high population growth rate that stands at 3 per cent - significantly higher than the 2.5 per cent found across sub-Saharan Africa - places heavy demands on the ecosystems. Within the eight WAEMU countries, the population grew from 40 million to 80 million between 1980 and 2005.

The food deficiency that characterizes the WAEMU region represents a daily concern for more than 40 per cent of the population, who can hardly afford any increase in the price of food. The following factors contribute to food insecurity in the WAEMU region: low productivity, rural poverty, rapid urbanization, population growth, minimal diversification of rural income sources, and limited availability of agricultural products.

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<sup>53</sup> Agriculture, Rural Development and Food Security, FAO, 2005.

For those reasons, the vast majority of undernourished persons either cannot produce or afford to buy enough food. They have inadequate access to various means of production such as land, water, improved seeds and plants, and inappropriate technologies and credit. In addition, wars, civil strife, natural disasters, climate-related ecological changes, and environmental degradation have adversely affected millions of people in that area.

In the WAEMU region, while the production of gross food increased between 2000 and 2005, food production per capita fell. This demonstrates the difficulty experienced in outpacing population growth with domestic production.

In 2003, imports made up accounted for a 7 per cent share of food staple food consumption, especially with mainly wheat and rice largely imported. Wheat imports fulfilled nearly 75 per cent of total wheat consumption and milled rice imports met amounted to almost 36 per cent of rice consumption needs in WAEMU member countries. Rising food prices for these basic aliments entail has brought about a serious issue concerns on the part of for local consumers and as well as in the preparation of national budgets.

Gross production suffered additional setbacks in 2007-2008 due to a number of weather-related shocks. Past agricultural policies in many WAEMU member countries have promoted an expansion of crop exports to earn foreign exchange. For five of these countries, non-food production increases have outstripped food production increases since 2000.

A reduction in support for the agricultural sector by governments, multilateral organizations, and bilateral agencies further contributed to food insecurity. The stagnation of agriculture, especially in the food crop sector, was compounded by the public sector's steady retreat from its main Sustainable Bio-energy Development Programme. This program supported functions of marketing, seed supply, credit schemes and price guarantees from producers in WAEMU member countries. In this context, the overall impacts were as follows:

(a) Disengagement of the state from production, transformation, and commercialization;

- (b) Privatization of agricultural services replacing traditional functions of the state; and
- (c) Liberalization of prices and markets for products, agricultural inputs, and agricultural services.

After the public sector's withdrawal, investments in the rural sector stagnated and the private sector did not step in to replace state funding.

The common agricultural policy of WAEMU has identified the following three major challenges, which also serve as objectives under the common agricultural policy:

- (a) Feeding the population of the region against the backdrop of strong demographic growth and urbanization, while reducing dependence on the international market for food supplies;
- (b) Raising agricultural production in a sustainable manner via increased productivity; and
- (c) Reducing poverty in the rural sector by improving revenues and farmer status.

WAEMU has expressed its concern about women's autonomy in different ways. For many years now, its institutions for micro-finance (IMs) have benefited women. These IMs, in particular those targeting small and rural projects, aim to provide financing for common activities financing. Women are the main beneficiaries of those products. WAEMU has reported that, even with less profitability of the projects led under such loans, the recovery registers shows a best rate. However, despite excellent results, women's credit situation is alarming.

Gender concerns were apparent for the first time in the 2009 WAEMU Microfinance Analysis and Benchmarking Report<sup>54</sup>. This study showed a diminution tendency of women borrowers. It stated that between 2007 and 2008, their proportion passed from 54 per cent of the total borrowers to 46 per cent in IM small projects – rural and community- oriented. However, in projects targeting feminine clients, the women's part component seems seemed stable to between 80 per cent and 90 per cent. Inside the mutuality's, women's decreased presence is spectacular.

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<sup>54</sup> <http://www.themix.org/press-release/new-report-analyzes-microfinance-west-africa#ixzz2nZro1gm1>

Among the reasons stated for those retreats, the credit institutions, including IMs, seem to focus on borrowers who are able to afford larger amounts in order to optimize profitability. Women rarely meet such eligibility criteria. In fact, women generally borrow smaller amounts and often within group loans. Another reason for this decline is related to the termination of grant programmes designed for women. Those programmes provided attractive accessibility conditions.

All of these reasons have had a negative effect on women's capacity to invest in their work. When faced with a loan refusal, if they are determined to go on with their project, they often have to turn to smaller and more informal ways to obtain credit. The threat for usurious conditions is evident.

Experts consider that the gradual transition from group to individual credit in many IMs did not yield expected results due to an apparent mismatch between product supply and demand. The impact on women is a good indicator of such phenomenon and could be the first step toward a gender analysis.

To face the impact on women's credit, a new peer group was created, WAEMU Women, gathering IMs working with at least 75 per cent of women. WAEMU Women brings together IMs whose policies are oriented mainly or exclusively towards the feminine population.

With regard to the status of women, WAEMU added an annex to its Community Action Plan in order to reinforce the role of women<sup>55</sup>. One of the strategic orientations of this annex is aimed at women's poverty. The article published in 1999 (n. 03/99) focused on:

- (a) Improving women's access to factors and production's means and new technologies;
- (b) Boosting women's productivity in different sectors of development;
- (c) Increasing the consideration of for the contribution of women's contribution in the economy; and
- (d) Ameliorate building the economic and financial capacities of women in the States members of the Union.

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<sup>55</sup> <http://www.WAEMU.int> - Recommandation N° 03/99/CM/WAEMU

At the end of October 2012, the Committee on Women and Development of WAEMU held a Meeting of Experts in Johannesburg, South Africa. Women members of RESOPE-WAEMU<sup>56</sup> (Réseau des opératrices économiques des Etats membres de l'UEMOA) were accompanied by the Women's Development Director at WAEMU. She strongly pledged for the implementation of the recommendation of WAEMU' Ministers Council (article n. 03/99). Immediately after, this advocacy was reinforced by the Resident Director of WAEMU, who declared the intention to multiply efforts to assist RESOPE-WAEMU in its quest for the autonomy and welfare of its members.

Through its different instances and actions, the WAEMU Network supports the implementation of solutions tailored to the challenges faced met by women. Focus is also put on missions, reinforcement of their leadership, and the development of good governance practices. The economic mandate of WAEMU is a universal key for all women's issues. Moreover, its project's analysis table could be a pilot for gender mainstreaming implementation.

### **3.2.3 Mano River Union**

The Mano River Union (MRU) was established in 1973 and comprises Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire (which joined the Union in 2008). The organization covers an area with over 45 million inhabitants. The objective of the MRU is to promote regional integration with articulated targets in terms of trade expansion, fair distribution of benefits derived from economic cooperation, liberalization for the mutual trade of local goods, harmonization of the rates of import duties and other fiscal incentives.

Agriculture is prominent in the economy of MRU countries<sup>57</sup>. It contributes about one-third of their GDP and provides employment for approximately two-thirds of the economically active population. Over last years, conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone have caused rural farmers to lose almost all of their productive resources, e.g., seeds,

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<sup>56</sup> Created in July 2006, RESOPE is an international organization, non-politic and non-religious, without lucrative objectives. Its bureau is in Ouagadougou.

<sup>57</sup> *Report on Food Security and Sustainable Development: strategies for enhancing food security in the Mano River union*. Sub regional development centre for West Africa.

implements, and other assets. The precarious food security situation of neighbouring Guinea has also been affected.

The upward trend in food production in these countries could not keep up with the population growth rates. While urbanization accelerates urban population growth, the human force resources for food production is weakened. This population movement increases the demand for local as well as for imported food items, such as wheat, rice, canned fish, and processed livestock. Concurrently, the capacity of these countries to purchase imported goods has been hampered by shortages of foreign currency, problems related to balance of payments, and problems linked to the debt burden.

During the pre-conflict period, the MRU undertook a number of food production and agro-industrial projects in order to enhance food security. The strategies were guided by the potential of agriculture to reverse an increasing dependence on food imports, raise export earnings, as well as foster agriculture and industry linkage. These strategies were grouped into three major categories: (a) agro-industrial; (b) livestock and fishery development; and (c) training workshops and seminars.

A programme promoting the products' manufacturing and utilization of relevant technologies tackled the reduction of post-harvest losses. While manpower training was provided for mid-level livestock operators, it was interrupted due to war intensification. Liberian participants could not return to their stations and Sierra Leonean participants were restricted in their displacement.

Exemplary food production, processing and marketing projects were implemented in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Women's organizations were involved in food production, processing, storage and marketing in urban and rural areas. In rural areas, women's organizations were supported in their engagement commitment in upland rice and swamp rice cultivation of substitute diets like cassava. They increased their fishing in inland streams and rivers as well as at on the coast.

Women's associations in urban areas are relatively developed and possess the technical expertise that allows them to draft project proposals for funding, especially micro-credit financing. They are inten-

sely motivated by the objective of pooling resources together or enhancing their capacity to attract loans.

In Sierra Leone, selected projects were implemented by women's organizations gathering from 12 to over 1,000 women as well as a small number of men as associate members. Food production, processing, storage, and marketing are the major activities of the projects, including swamp and upland rice farming, vegetable gardening, and artisanal fishing. Bigger organizations undertook such tasks as job and skills training, including literacy, bookkeeping, as well as vocational training in health (e.g. midwifery).

Women were targeted for the following objectives as part of projects led in Sierra Leone on food insecurity:

- (a) Increase in agricultural and food production, processing, and storage; and
- (b) Empowerment of women (self-reliant and self-sustainable, earning capacity, improvement of the nutritional status of members and their families).

Women's organizations in rural areas are more successful in farming and receive substantial support from international NGOs. In urban centres, women's organizations are mostly involved in market gardening, fish processing and marketing. Assistance in managerial training and basic bookkeeping is also provided by NGOs to groups irrespective of their location.

The Liberian Marketing Association (LMA) was founded in the 1970s and is a nationwide organization with branches in heavily populated urban areas. Women's concern plays a pivotal role in LMA's actions, particularly in terms of storage and marketing of locally produced foods. In recent years, lack of funds to rehabilitate and improve its warehouses and markets was the major problem experienced by the LMA.

The following were exemplary practices delineated from the projects:

- (a) Active involvement on the part of women in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of projects dealing with agriculture, food production, processing and storage, as well as marketing;

- (b) The pursuit of women's empowerment through activities involving agriculture, food production, processing and storage, as well as marketing activities; and
- (c) The promotion of self-reliance among women.

Women's groups rather than individuals are often in a better position to compete for funds, credit and extension services as well as to pool resources in order to tackle food security and other sustainable development issues. The multi-sector nature of projects enables women to take advantage of inter-linkages (population, food security, and environment) and gender mainstreaming dimensions in sustainable development.

The study on strategies for enhancing food security<sup>58</sup> has identified and analysed past food productions as well as agro-industrial projects implemented by the MRU along with exemplary agricultural and food production, processing, storage, and marketing. In this report, four policy options and action programmes for enhancing food security in the MRU were proposed to domestic supply. The objective was to expand national food production through various means that were essential to women's empowerment and their food production projects.

Due to close linkages between food access and purchasing power, a reduction of poverty should be given priority in any policy that aims to enhance food security. Off-farm employment opportunities in rural areas and the improvement of income and employment conditions in urban informal sectors are also options to be considered.

Although women play key roles as food producers and providers in the countries, they face more difficulties than men do in accessing resources. Food strategies should thus address issues faced by vulnerable women - for instance, female heads of households with limited access to resources like land, labour, capital, credit, and extension services. In recognition of their valuable contribution to food security, women should be involved in the preparation, monitoring and imple-

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<sup>58</sup> Report on Food Security and Sustainable Development: strategies for enhancing food security in the Mano River Union. Subregional development centre for West Africa. Undated.

mentation of projects and programs involving agriculture, food production, processing and storage, as well as marketing.

Food security in the post-conflict period should be enhanced through legitimate cross-border trade of food commodities and livestock. Inter-country border trade would benefit from differences in climate and vegetation along with the food production mix between the north and south of MRU countries.

For many years now, the MRU has supported women's development associations in all member States. Programmatic activities have focused on building the capacity of women and on promoting their welfare through increasing food production and establishing skills training programs on weaving, baking and adult literacy, among others. A number of grants have also allowed certain groups to purchase a rice huller and construct a drying floor for rice. Additionally, the capacity in grants administration and financial management was supported. The extreme work's burden of women has been addressed through intervention's support. Time spent gathering firewood means less time spent on value-adding activities, which also needs to be analysed.

Thus as a result, the MRU is emphasizing that women need equal opportunities to improve themselves, socially and economically. The Union is aware that women and their energy needs are rarely well represented. Moreover, the MRU recognizes that women's access to sustainable energy is critical to the economic development of the region as well as to the success and sustainability of their initiative and the attainment of MDGs.

The MRU is therefore committed to promoting the full participation of women as key stakeholders at all levels of the decision-making process. It also aims to provide for proper integration of gender perspectives in planning, developing and implementing all energy-related dialogues, initiatives and policies as a means to promote sustainable energy for all.

In May 2013, a forum on Women's Economic Empowerment through Energy Access in the MRU Subregion was held in Sierra

Leone. MRU Ministers and the establishment of the MRU working group on Women and Sustainable Energy aimed the conference at the adoption of an Action Plan on Women's Economic Empowerment through Energy Access.

The ECOWAS Gender Development Centre in cooperation with ECREEE<sup>59</sup> will assist the MRU in disseminating the outcome of the conference across MRU and other ECOWAS Member States.

### **3.2.4 Gambia River Basin Development Organization**

The Gambia River Basin Development Organization (OMVG) is a natural resource development and management project. Its activities include hydro-power/hydroelectricity, flood control, relief, irrigation, and infrastructure development. This economic program was established in 1987 with membership of the following four States: The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Senegal<sup>60</sup>.

The three main thrusts of the OMVG concern energy, food security, and communications. The OMVG has carried out a number of studies, which have resulted in the recommendation of four sites for the potential design of hydroelectric power projects. These four sites are Sambangalou on the Gambia River, Fello Sounga and Saltinho on the Koliba/Corubal River, and Gaoual on the Kayanga/Geba River. The organization wishes to improve the socio-economic integration of its members through the development of these resources.

The overall objectives and outputs of the programme<sup>61</sup> intend to give impetus to agricultural production in order to support food security through the diversification of cereal production. It also seeks to promote exports via private initiatives and the protection of natural resources through the introduction of intensive and mixed farming.

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<sup>59</sup> <http://www.ecreec.org/fr>.

<sup>60</sup> Oregon State University, Programme in Water Conflict Management and Transformation, Institute for Water and Watersheds, 1987.

<sup>61</sup> African Development Fund: *Appraisal report, National Resource Development and Management Project*, Organization for the Development of the Gambia River Basin (OMVG), 2001.

The OMVG master plan defined programmes for the 2015 period with a view to achieving food security and addressing basic needs in terms of health, drinking water supply, education, credit and transport. More specific objectives involve reducing poverty, improving living conditions of the population and reviving women's activities. The African Development Bank (AfDB) has financed several operations of the OMVG including investments in electricity generation and transmission.

The OMVG's Revival of Women's activities recognized the major role played by women in agricultural production, especially grain, vegetable crops and livestock. Furthermore, it highlighted the domestic chores, which they have to accomplish, which leaves them no time to engage in productive activities or trainings. These measures were designed to help women in their organization and to raise awareness for problems related to the family and infant health. It tends to relieve women of some chores, thereby enabling them to develop marshlands to attain cheese industry's development and extension services<sup>62</sup>.

Provisions set out under the project to support women's associations involved the four countries (11 in Guinea, 11 in Guinea-Bissau, 8 in Senegal, and 6 in The Gambia) and the management of village committees. The initiatives invested efforts on functional literacy and training in animal health and production, especially of small ruminants, poultry and beekeeping.

Other initiatives concerned training for project officers and awareness rising. Once the needs were identified, extensive training was provided to groups or committees (in agriculture, livestock, forest, irrigation, and health) so as to achieve project objectives.

Under the subtitle *Impact on Women*, women are involved in the production of cereals and marketing. However, they face financial constraints from social prejudice and low income, preventing them access to credit. The project sought to provide women with the means to finance the purchase of agriculture/gardening equipment and to ensure the granting of developed plots. Most small ruminants and

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<sup>62</sup> In agriculture, livestock, marketing, processing, financing, etc.

poulties belong to women. Women process and market milk as well as honey and wax. The increase in grain and vegetable production is expected to have a positive impact on the diet and health of women and children. This will in turn contribute to the alleviation of poverty, improved food security, and lower infant and maternal mortality rates.

Health care based on Primary Health Care (PHC) is provided. It includes training of family assistants and paramedical staff, provision of logistic support to PHC, rehabilitation of health posts, as well as identification and training of PHC therapists. Establishment of a credit system and the facilitation of women's access to credits, take feminine needs into account. The ultimate goal is to increase production of agriculture, livestock, forestry, and milk.

### **3.2.5 West African Development Bank**

The West African Development Bank (WADB) is a regional financial institution established in 1973 with the mandate of promoting economic integration and balanced development among WAEMU member states, which are as follows: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Mali, Senegal, Togo, and Guinea-Bissau. The WADB finances a range of projects in various sectors including rural development, road infrastructures, telecommunications, energy, industry, transport, rural development, and tourism.

The Bank employs 223 people, all originating from WAEMU member countries. It is managed by a President assisted by a Vice-President, both appointed by the WAEMU Council of Ministers and the Board of shareholders. The WADB shareholding is composed of the eight WAEMU member countries, the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO), and non-regional members such as France, Germany, the European Investment Bank (BEI), the AfDB, Belgium, and more recently China. The Bank has a resident mission in Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Mali, and Senegal.

After four decades of cautious and increasingly diversified activities in providing financing to public and private sectors, the WADB has gained regional and international credibility. Its healthy balance sheet and reputation have enabled it to expand its membership and sources

of funding. The WADB is now the main Bank on the regional financial market.

Over its history, the WADB has supported numerous projects in agriculture with a concern for food security (irrigation system, crop insurance). At the dawn of its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the fight against hunger imposes itself as an increasing challenge. To that extent, on 13 November 2013, this problem was at the heart of discussions at the international forum held for the Bank's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Since 1973, the year of its inception, the WADB has invested FCFA 2.8 trillion in 700 development projects. This impressive record was brought to the attention of the Heads of State attending the meeting whose theme was Sub-regional development banks: new issues and new challenges.

The workshops underlining the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the WADB clearly focused on solutions to fight food and nutritional insecurity. Heads of State and stakeholders of various horizons examined ways and means to combat obstacles to productivity and sustain decent earnings for people. They established vulnerability factors and studied challenges to be faced. The orientations proposed show a strong will to ensure food security in the WAEMU region. Once again, a vigorous pledge for the respect of Maputo engagements was launched. Even if meeting reports do not underline any article on the role of women in Maputo's commitment, the approach focused on the utilization of existing knowledge, and was inclusive. In other words, the Maputo commitment remains the reference in that area.

### **3.2.6 Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel**

The Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) was created in 1973 during the first great drought. Nine countries are members of CILSS (Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Chad). Its executive office is located in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The mission of the CILSS is to mobilize the Sahel's population and the international community in order to facilitate the organization's work in various fields. The CILSS facilitates early warning services for rain-fed and

irrigated agriculture and it mainly centres its activities on basic food security and the use of natural resources.

In November 2013, CILSS and partner organizations<sup>63</sup> held the 29th Food Crisis Prevention Network Meeting (FCPN) in Abidjan. The final news release highlighted various elements of the situation at hand. Compared to the average of the last five years, the projected changes in agricultural production of Sahel and West Africa cereal production is estimated at 57 million tons, up by 16 per cent. The Sahel shows a production equivalent (+1 per cent) to the average maintained over the last five years, which is adequate to address the needs of the population, despite a 3 per cent annual increase in the population.

The pastoral situation is seemed satisfactory. However, livestock body conditions may deteriorate due to forage deficits in Niger, Chad, Mauritania, Senegal, and Mali, which could result in early transhumance of herds as well as conflicts.

The analysis of the food and nutrition situation, based on the Harmonized Framework (CH)<sup>64</sup>, shows that nearly 13 million people (in Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Niger, Senegal, Mauritania, Côte d'Ivoire, and Chad) are currently food and nutrition insecure, including 2.1 million people who require emergency humanitarian assistance. The main reasons for this are: (i) Low stocks for poor households; (ii) Limited food access; and (ii) Elevated acute malnutrition.

Moreover, the socio-political situation in northern Mali, Nigeria and the Central African Republic is fragile and precarious. On 12 November 2013, the region was also home to over 654,000 refugees and to more than 373,000 internally displaced persons whose food situation remains a concern.

On the nutrition front, the situation does not bode well with 20 areas in a nutritional emergency situation across Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Chad. In 2013, global acute malnutrition affected

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<sup>63</sup> ECOWAS, RPCA, Club du Sahel et de l'Afrique de l'Ouest.

<sup>64</sup> [http://www.ipcinfo.org/ipcinfo-countries/western-africa/en/+Harmonised+Framework+\(CH\)](http://www.ipcinfo.org/ipcinfo-countries/western-africa/en/+Harmonised+Framework+(CH))

4.5 million children under 5 years of age, including 3.4 million for the moderate form and 1.1 million for the severe form (SAM). From 2014 and onward, the nutritional situation could deteriorate, mainly during the lean period, in some parts of the Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Chad.

In hindsight, given that cereal production volumes are expected to be quite high in the region, especially in coastal countries, a lower production volume could be partially offset in some countries of the Sahel, thereby contributing to the improvement of food availability, provided that such markets function properly. However, the poorest households will continue to have difficulty accessing food, as prices will remain above the five-year average levels.

According to the 2013 Sahel Strategy<sup>65</sup>, the security and nutritional situation remains precarious for the most vulnerable and crisis-affected populations. Over 11.3 million people across the region continue to live in food insecurity, 1.5 million children under five suffer from Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM), and 3.4 million children under five and pregnant women suffer from Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM). High-risk areas are Northern Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Niger – all countries that host Malian refugees. Cereal prices remain very high. Indeed, in some areas, prices exceed the five-year average by 50 per cent.

As crises in the Sahel are becoming more frequent, families are increasingly forced to adopt negative coping strategies in order to deal with stress. For example, children are taken out of school, less quality food or seeds are consumed. Animals that might have been intended for reproduction are killed for sale. These negative coping strategies have long-term impact, which cannot be reversed with one good harvest.

In addition to the support provided in order to directly address the needs of the population in terms of food, the CILSS has shown interest in research and in training of the staff involved in the sector.

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<sup>65</sup> <http://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/ROWCA/Funding%20update/2013%20Sahel%20Strategy%20MYR%20DOCUMENT.pdf>.

Sustainable crop management, environmental protection, food and nutrition security and farming practices adapted to climate change are at the heart of their work.

Established in 2012, the AGRHYMET Regional Centre offers programs designed to provide countries with qualified and highly trained personnel and experts in sustainable land management and food security.

On 6th March 2013, CILSS and its technical institution, the AGRHYMET Regional Centre, launched a new platform dedicated to climate change and sustainable land management. The platform provides information concerning adaptation, particularly in the context of food security in CILSS and ECOWAS countries. It includes an agenda of upcoming events in the region, news from recent projects, and funding opportunities.

Gender and Agricultural Development is a great concern for the AGRHYMET Regional Centre. Over the past two years, the centre has been offering a two-week training on this issue and its multiple facets. The session was held in Niamey in partnership with DANIDA<sup>66</sup> and sought to prepare participants who worked or intended to work in CILSS member countries. This initiative can be seen as a breeding ground of a cohort of gender mainstreaming expert. Two sessions have already been offered in December 2012 and December 2013.

At mid-year, the objective of the original 2013 Integrated Sahel Strategy remained valid and targeted the “triple crisis” currently affecting the Sahel. Those crises were as follows:

- (a) The continued humanitarian impact of acute food shortage and the malnutrition crisis of 2012;
- (b) The underlying chronic nature of food insecurity, malnutrition, and the erosion of resilience in the region; and
- (c) The on-going current Mali crisis.

The Mali crisis has dragged significant displacement of IDPs within the country and drained an exodus of refugees to neighbouring countries.

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<sup>66</sup> <http://www.um.dk/en/danida-en/>

## 4. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This desk study has been led with the intention to present the main characteristics of the food security situation in West Africa, and to highlight the particular issues faced by women. In previous sections, activities undertaken by WAIGOs were presented along with the missions and objectives pursued. The data were compiled and analysed. A conclusion is proposed for subsequent stages of the gender audit.

The multifaceted impact of poverty on the populations is well documented. The causes of poverty and the consequent food insecurity are widely known, and became as major concerns for all WAIGOs. Over the years, an impressive number of initiatives have been led to fight food insecurity. The policies, actions and projects agriculture's oriented cover the whole spectrum of food's chains. The initiatives mentioned include financing, cultivation, consumption, transport, processing, and marketing. Moreover, the problematic fought by WAIGOs are linked to the whole range of natural, civil, commercial and environmental obstacles. Even if this report is not complete *per se*, it sheds light on the nature of the solutions proposed and it demonstrates how they were aligned to the challenges. These observations stem mainly from the analysis for the WAIGOs' strategies under scrutiny in the present study, and from additional national, regional or international documents.

Despite efforts put forth in the fight against food insecurity, the concerns regarding women's situation in West Africa are still valid. To that extent, there is a strong will to include women as full actors in and beneficiaries of the food chain. The desire to improve the situation in terms of women's equality takes many forms, e.g., actions plans, official strategies, programmes, and targets. Until recently, most of these initiatives targeted women in the framework of positive action.

However, the vision and practices relative to gender mainstreaming are rapidly spreading. In recent years, the promises to implement various actions and projects under this concept can potentially in-seminate changes in social and gender relations. Among positive full perspectives are training sessions or tools provided to staff, groups and individuals. The establishment of research centres as well as bodies and committees solely dedicated to women is promising, and will undoubtedly ensure support to local expertise on gender mainstreaming.

Among interesting initiatives, this report notes:

- ECOWAS and CILLS - Gender Development Centre and its training aiming the preparation of staffs and experts.
- WAEMU Microfinance Analysis and Benchmarking Report – which highlighted the problems of women borrowers.
- WAEMU Women – gathering IMs working mostly with women and WAEMU – Committee on Women and Development.
- MRU – Support to women’s organizations involved in food production.
- MRU - Forum on Women’s Economic Empowerment through Energy Access and adoption of an Action Plan.
- OMGV - Revival of Women’s and Impact on Women – support to women’s organization in four countries.

The study was also targeting potential gaps – hindering women’s participation in the food security issues. The gaps emerge mainly from initiatives (policies, actions, measures) conceived and elaborated leaving aside women’s needs and potential. The number of programmes dedicated to women demonstrates they were not forgotten, but they appear as parallel actors.

Yet, in many founding texts, the preoccupation for women and gender equality is present. Documents such as the *Revised Ecowas Treaty*, in *Maputo’s declaration*, are clearly gender mainstreamed. Have those objectives been put aside? Has the tradition hidden intentions? Have daily emergencies exceeded tomorrow’s imperatives? The answer could entail a mix of those reasons.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

### ■ 5.1 Commitments and Accountability

The fundamental requirements for gender mainstreaming are commitment and accountability. Recommendations under this category are only geared towards achieving this objective:

- (a) All stakeholders should acknowledge the pertinence of gender mainstreaming, with management and technical staff taking the lead;
- (b) An appropriate policy that directs gender mainstreaming in food security activities needs to be formulated. Adapting gender policy objectives of the FAD would be a useful approach;
- (c) Gender mainstreaming should be one of the review parameters for assessing reports in order to allow monitoring progress and identifying gaps for intervention purposes;
- (d) Gender mainstreaming monitoring should be part of regular reports and indicators should be integrated into the reporting formats of WAIGOs; and
- (e) Banks could design gender-sensitive policies, with gender-sensitive analysis and decisions involved in the provision of loans.

### ■ 5.2 Capacity Enhancement

Capacity of staff needs to be enhanced in terms of:

- (a) Understanding the full extent of food security and related gender dimensions through appropriate training or other forms of awareness raising activities;
- (b) Being able to undertake gender mainstreaming and to provide training, including gender analytical skills;

- (c) Allocating budget for gender mainstreaming at all WAIGO structure levels;
- (d) Developing women's capacity to better manage their business; and
- (e) Creating a structure for the follow-up of gender mainstreaming endeavours in WAIGO food security activities. This would require the following:
  - A gender unit at each WAIGO and a gender mainstreaming task force possibly under ECOWAS, which could enhance efforts by WAIGOs. The Gender Development Centre could play this role.
  - Unit staff hired to participate in planning and follow-up of project implementation, as well as to ensure that the necessary mechanisms are put in place to enforce gender mainstreaming more systematically in food security.
  - Consistent staff capacity development so that they can have the information and analytical skills required to demonstrate the importance of gender mainstreaming into food security and implement the mandates of the organizations.

### ■ 5.3 Suitable Tools and Guidelines

In order to undertake gender mainstreaming into food security, the necessary manuals and guidelines must be developed, made available, and marketed efficiently. These might include:

- (a) Gender mainstreaming brief with clear messages on its benefits into food security policies, programs and projects of WAIGOs and affiliate organizations;
- (b) Simple and user-friendly gender mainstreaming guidelines (and the appropriate training for staff using them);
- (c) Gender analysis tools used for collecting baseline data as well as for conducting gender analyses (an exercise that precedes gender mainstreaming) before the preparation of development projects. Tools must be developed by experts in consultation with staff and made available thereafter; and
- (d) The tools and guidelines should enable experts and/or staff with gender mainstreaming training to make administrative manuals such as performance evaluation, job description and staff selection procedures gender sensitive.

## ■ 5.4 Training in Gender Mainstreaming

Gender training should be given widely to core development staff using simple approaches. The training should be:

- (a) Based on needs assessment, which should be conducted to identify specific areas and to ensure that those needs are met;
- (b) Designed so as to include themes on Gender and Food Security, and sub-themes such as gender and agriculture, gender and animal husbandry, gender and natural resource management, gender and agricultural extension services, etc.; and
- (c) Prepared using material that builds on previous training sessions in order to provide trainees with practical skills. Those skills would allow them to ensure adequate follow-up relative to gender mainstreaming in project planning and implementation.

## ■ 5.5 Women Empowerment

Women need to be empowered in many areas of development including the following:

- (a) Economic Empowerment. Women need to have access to land and financial capital so as to be able to address extreme poverty among women. They also need to have access to agricultural extension services employment;
- (b) Social Empowerment. WAIGOs should ensure that women are empowered through:
  - Provision of education and health services;
  - Protection from gender-based violence, which constitutes a hindrance to the advancement of women and nations, particularly given its role in the spread of HIV/AIDS.
- (c) Decision-making. Women's participation in the decision-making process is critical for themselves and for their contribution to food security in terms of:
  - their ability to decide on food expenditure for consumption in the household;
  - family planning in order to assist in balancing food supply and demand, thereby benefiting society as a whole;

– food distribution among household members so that all members get their fair share.

## ■ 5.6 Workload Redistribution

(a) Educate household and community members on the importance of work reallocation among men and women;

(b) Improve the availability of food processing equipment, water points, and cooking fuel; and

(c) Ensure fair and balanced redistribution of the workload among male and female members of a household in order to ease the workload put on women.

## ■ 5.7 Experience Sharing

(a) Periodic meetings to allow for experience sharing with different WAIGOs and affiliated organizations, e.g., similar to that of the MRU;

(b) Strengthened working relationship among WAIGOs, affiliate organizations, and projects so as to facilitate experience sharing; and

(c) Experience sharing could also be ensured through communications or visits without necessarily having to meet at a conference.

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