“If the Drumbeat Changes, the Dance Must Also Change”
Using a Gender-Integrated Approach to Enhance Household and Community Resilience to Food Insecurity in the Sahel

Policy Analysis Exercise

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This PAE reflects the views of the author and should not be viewed as representing the views of Mercy Corps nor those of Harvard University or any of its faculty.
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Key Definitions and Acronyms

Key Resilience Terms:
Absorptive Capacity – the ability to absorb the negative impact of shocks and stresses. The capacity to cope with change in the short-term.

Adaptive Capacity – the ability to make proactive and informed choices about alternative strategies based on an understanding of changing conditions. The capacity to manage change in the medium-term.

Disturbance – may come in the form of rapid-onset shocks (such as earthquakes and floods), slow-onset shocks (such as drought, human disease epidemics, plant pest outbreaks, and conflict), or longer-term stresses (such as environmental degradation, political instability, conflict, price inflation). By itself, a shock or a stress is not a disaster; it can, however, trigger a disaster because of underlying physical, social, economic, or environmental vulnerabilities. A disaster occurs when households, communities, institutions, or governments are unable to cope with a shock or stress.

- Idiosyncratic disturbances – those that affect only certain individuals or households.
- Covariate disturbances – those that affect an entire population or geographic area.

Exposure – a function of the magnitude, frequency, and duration of a shock or stress. Duration only refers to the actual shock itself, not the resulting impact, which may be short- or long-term.

Negative coping strategies – strategies that erode productive assets and undermine future options, making it more difficult to cope with the next shock or stress.

Positive coping strategies – the strategies that households and communities use, based on available skills and resources, to face, manage, and recover from adverse conditions, emergencies or disasters in the short term.

Resilience – the capacity of communities in complex socio-ecological systems to learn, cope, adapt, and transform in the face of shocks and stresses.

Sensitivity – refers to the degree to which an individual, household or community will be affected by a given shock or stress. Sensitivity, or susceptibility, differs from exposure in that it reflects different underlying causes of vulnerability to shocks.

Shocks (or hazards) – rapid or slow-onset discrete events with a clear beginning and end. For example, floods and droughts constitute discrete environmental shocks.

Stresses – a long-onset pressure or condition faced by a population (that may or may not be recognized). Includes climate change, environmental degradation, political instability, along with other non-discrete events.
**Transformative Capacity** – the ability to rely on governance mechanisms, policies, regulations, infrastructure, community networks, and formal mechanisms that constitute the enabling environment for innovation and systemic change. The capacity to manage and benefit from change in the long-term.

**Vulnerability** – how various social groups or communities exposed to shocks and stresses are affected and how they differ in terms of their sensitivity and coping capacity, with an emphasis on how spatial, physical, and social characteristics influence vulnerability.

**Other Key Definitions:**
**Empowerment** – results from an equitable increase in access to assets and increased intra-household bargaining power over the distribution of these assets.

**Gender equality** – a state in which an individual’s rights, responsibilities, and opportunities are not defined by his or her gender. This state does not depend on equality of outcomes, but rather on equality of the determinants of outcomes.

**Gender integration** – Identifying and addressing gender differences and inequalities during program and project planning, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

**Acronyms Referenced:**
DFID – Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
ECHO – European Community Humanitarian Office
FAO – Food and Agriculture Association of the UN
IFAD – International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFPRI – International Food and Policy Research Institute
IFRC – International Federation of the Red Cross
OFDA – Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
UNISDR – United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
USAID – United States Agency for International Development
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Executive Summary

The Sahel, an arid region stretching from Mauritania to the Sudan, is a complex environment in which individuals, households, communities, and systems are facing crises of increased frequency, severity, complexity, and interconnectedness. A common concern with humanitarian responses to recent disturbances in the region is that investments of hundreds of millions of dollars have addressed immediate needs but have not increased the capacity of affected populations to withstand future shocks and stresses or reduced their exposure and sensitivity to such events. In fact, disturbances have eroded the effectiveness of traditional coping mechanisms, leaving individuals, households, and communities at increased risk to future shocks.

To better help vulnerable communities prevent, cope with, and recover from shocks and stresses that contribute to chronic food and livelihood insecurity, Mercy Corps has highlighted resilience as a top priority for the Sahel in FY 2014. Accordingly, it is working to build a comprehensive understanding of the key systems within which communities reside, the threats they face, and their existing vulnerabilities and capacities for resilience. This understanding will be used to develop and test theories of change to help Mercy Corps better identify which capacities are most important for supporting resilience “at which stage, for whom, and for which types of shocks.”

Although a variety of environmental, economic, and social factors—including structural barriers and unequal power dynamics based on ethnicity, religion, class, and age—must be addressed to ensure a truly resilient Sahel, this Policy Analysis Exercise (PAE) explores the connection between gender and resilience. The resilience literature has begun to identify common “building blocks” of resilience; however, little analysis has been conducted on how gender and power influence these determinants, or on how gender inequality should be addressed in resilience programming. Therefore, two primary questions are explored in this PAE:

- Will integrating gender, empowering women and girls, and promoting inclusion in Mercy Corps’ programming in the Sahel lead individuals, households, and communities further along the resilience pathway?
- What steps must Mercy Corps take to integrate gender and address gender inequality in its resilience-focused efforts?

This PAE begins to tackle the question of resilience “for whom” by examining the differing vulnerabilities and capacities of men, women, boys, and girls in the Sahel. In exploring how gender and resilience are linked, three primary findings are notable:

- Gender influences sensitivity to disturbances and, even within the same household, individuals will be differentially impacted by shocks and stresses.
- Men, women, boys, and girls are not only differentially affected by shocks, but they also differ in their perceptions of the impact of shocks.
- Gender also influences the skills, strategies, and mechanisms individuals use to cope and adapt to disturbances.

Applying findings from a wide range of academic and policy literature, as well as gender...
analyses and field research completed in Mali, Niger, and Northern Nigeria, this PAE has conducted a gender analysis of the key determinants of resilience and developed a theory of change that can be tested on the ground – in a variety of program settings – to strengthen Mercy Corps’ evidence base. This theory examines the link between gender integration, increased access to and control of capital, empowerment of women and girls, inclusion in decision-making, and resilience, at both the household and community levels.

To assess gaps in the agency’s ongoing efforts to build resilience in the Sahel, the theory of change was applied to three of Mercy Corps’ current and past programs: Sawki, Educating Nigerian Girls in New Enterprises (ENGINE), and Market Improvements and Innovative Linkages (MILK). Several key findings included that:

- Programs do not demonstrate a complete understanding of differing gender vulnerabilities to shocks and stresses in the Sahel, and have not analyzed the groups, assets, and livelihood activities that are most exposed to, and likely to be negatively impacted by the disturbances (and whether these differ due to gender roles and responsibilities).
- Programs do not demonstrate a complete understanding of the capacities and coping mechanisms used by different gender groups or examine which gender groups have access to existing opportunities in the broader social, ecological, or market systems to enable communities to better cope and adapt to change.
- Program activities do not adequately address women and girls’ lack of political capital. Few of Mercy Corps’ interventions in the Sahel target the need for women and girls’ increased power and capacity to participate in, as well as access and influence, formal and informal political systems and governance processes.
- Programs do not include interventions to build beneficiaries’ bridging and linking social capital, which have been theorized to be especially important in enabling individuals, households, and communities to respond to shocks and stresses.
- Even when activities to promote women’s participation at the community-level are built into programming, additional steps are needed to ensure women are actively engaged and able to influence decision-making.

In response to these identified gaps, this PAE provides recommendations for both programming and process to implement the theory of change in Mercy Corps’ future efforts in the Sahel. Some of the key program recommendations advise Mercy Corps to:

- Provide opportunities for women and girls to build bonds by creating and/or strengthening “safe spaces” and support networks, including through tontines and village savings and loans associations (VSLAs).
- Strengthen women and girls’ connections to groups and networks across and outside their communities.
- Strengthen women and youth’s links to informal and formal governance structures, and work with communities to empower women and youth in collective action processes, including disaster risk reduction, natural resource management, conflict management, and social protection processes.
- Increase women and girls’ access to and control over productive inputs (land, financial services, agricultural tools, etc.), resources, services, and technologies.
Recommendations for integrating gender into Mercy Corps’ resilience-building processes include:

- Designing and implementing a gender assessment as part of a Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) prior to program design and conceptualization.
- When possible, partnering with and building on the work of local women’s organizations – including informal organizations – who have a wealth of untapped information.
- Developing indicators to monitor progress and to better measure and evaluate empowerment, inclusion, and resilience.

Women and girls across the Sahel face structural inequality and limited access to resources and decision-making, which often leads to their increased vulnerability to the range of reoccurring shocks and long-term stresses in the region. Despite the challenges they face, women and girls, alongside men and boys, have unique knowledge and skills to contribute to “bouncing back better” in the face of disturbances. Although shocks and stresses can cause terrible destruction and tragedy, in some instances they open up opportunities for positive change, enabling women and men to take on new and more progressive gender roles. As the Hausa proverb suggests, “If the drumbeat changes, the dance must also change.”

Seizing the opportunities that disturbances offer, however, requires aid organizations to recognize that women and girls possess experience and skills that can be used to prepare for, respond to, and recover from crises. A gender-integrated approach that empowers women and girls, while also engaging men and boys, will be crucial for achieving long-term positive change and transforming deeply entrenched inequality in the Sahel. Mercy Corps’ programs are stronger when they understand and work with communities to address the relative inequalities and vulnerabilities faced by men, women, girls, and boys. Such an approach not only reduces harmful vulnerabilities, but increases the coping and adaptive abilities of individuals, households, and communities affected by shocks and stresses. Integrating gender into Mercy Corps’ efforts will enable the agency to enhance resilience in the Sahel and support the communities in which it works to become more productive, secure, and just.
Introduction

The Sahel - an ecological transition zone between the Sahara Desert to the north and the savanna to the south (see Figure 1) - is a region in transition. In recent years, communities throughout the Sahel have experienced profound political, economic, and environmental changes. Ecosystem degradation, severe droughts, and unchecked population growth have placed tens of millions of individuals at risk of “catastrophic” food and livelihood insecurity.¹ Market distortions (e.g. dramatic increases in the prices of food staples) and generally weak public institutions have further constrained the ability of poor, rural households to meet their basic needs.² In addition to these factors, ongoing ethnic, territorial, and political conflicts have caused mass migration and population movement, which has only served to heighten tensions as especially vulnerable populations are forced to compete for access to critical resources including health services, education, water, land and pasture.³

Recent, repeated, large-scale disasters in the Sahel – and the plight of millions of households experiencing protracted crises – have drawn the attention of policy makers, humanitarian agencies, and development actors. However, the response to such catastrophes has failed to account for the fact that the widespread food insecurity, chronic instability, and mortality in the region are not due to isolated climate trends or conflict, but rather are the result of complex interactions between political, economic, social, and environmental factors.⁴ Such approaches have also failed to systematically account for the connection between inequality, exclusion, and increased sensitivity to disturbances in the Sahel.

Although a variety of environmental, economic, and social factors – including structural barriers and unequal power dynamics based on ethnicity, religion, class, or age – must be addressed to ensure a truly resilient Sahel, this Policy Analysis Exercise (PAE) proposes that it is impossible to build resilience in households and communities without also addressing systemic gender inequality.

Mercy Corps in the Sahel

Mercy Corps is an international development organization that works in over 40 countries around

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¹ Gubbels, Peter. (2012).
³ Gubbels, Peter. (2012).
the globe to alleviate suffering, poverty, and oppression by helping people build secure, productive, and just communities. It began its work in the Sahel in 2005 with a focus on assisting the households most vulnerable to the food crisis in Niger. Since then, through a combination of private foundation and US government funding, the organization has expanded its activities to the neighboring areas of Northern Nigeria and Northern Mali.

Mercy Corps has recognized that despite saving lives, previous emergency and development responses to recurrent shocks and stresses in the Sahel have not enabled affected populations to adapt in a way that reduces their exposure and sensitivity to similar events in the future. To better help vulnerable communities prevent, cope with, and recover from shocks and stresses that contribute to chronic food and livelihood insecurity, the organization has highlighted resilience as a top priority in FY 2014.

Seeking to help communities in the world’s toughest places turn the inevitable shocks and stresses of change — social, economic and ecological — into opportunities to thrive, Mercy Corps defines resilience as the capacity of communities in complex socio-ecological systems to learn, cope, adapt, and transform in the face of shocks and stresses. In line with its Vision for Change, Mercy Corps “partners with communities as they leverage market, governance, and civil society levers to reduce vulnerabilities and increase collective agency for resilience.” It strives to understand how complex systems support or constrain the communities it serves, and to ensure that the poor and vulnerable are fully integrated into resilient systems.

In 2013, Mercy Corps created a “Resilience Hub” in the Sahel to develop, implement, measure, and evaluate theories of change for building resilience in the region. In FY 2014, each of Mercy Corps’ Resilience Hubs has been tasked with building a comprehensive understanding of the key systems within which communities reside, the threats they face, and their existing vulnerabilities and capacities for resilience. The agency believes this analysis is critical to the development of an evidence base for what constitutes building resilience at household, community, and system levels over time. This evidence base will be used to develop and test theories of change to help Mercy Corps better understand which capacities are most important for supporting resilience “at which stage, for whom, and for which types of shocks.”

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5 Mercy Corps. (November 2013)
6 Mercy Corps (June 2013)
7 Mercy Corps (November 2013)
8 Mercy Corps (June 2013)
9 Mercy Corps, Strategic Roadmap: Fiscal Year 2014.
10 Mercy Corps, Resilience Hubs, Quarter 1 Progress Report
11 Mercy Corps, Resilience Hubs, Quarter 1 Progress Report
Purpose of the Research

In its 2014 Resilience Strategy, the Sahel Hub identified gender inequality as one of three underlying and interrelated issues increasing vulnerability and food insecurity in the region,\(^{12}\) suggesting that further understanding the question of resilience “for whom” will be critical for Mercy Corps’ response in the Sahel. As a guiding principle for the design and implementation of resilience-focused programming, the Hub has highlighted the need to “promote inclusivity” by recognizing and responding to the different needs, capabilities and aspirations of various populations, especially the most vulnerable (women, children, orphans, elderly, displaced).\(^{13}\) It has also emphasized the need to “empower women and girls” by improving their access to basic services and productive assets and strengthening their roles in community and household decision-making.\(^{14}\) To operationalize these principles, and address gender inequality as an underlying factor of vulnerability, Mercy Corps will need to ensure gender is successfully integrated into its resilience-focused efforts throughout the Sahel.

A gender-integrated approach makes men’s, women’s, boys’, and girls’ concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs. A gender-integrated approach to resilience addresses gender-specific vulnerabilities to identified shocks and stresses and builds on gender-specific capacities, while also understanding that perception, exposure, and sensitivity to disturbances is gender-differentiated.

This PAE was conducted to assist the Sahel Hub in examining how gender influences resilience. It will begin to tackle the question of resilience “for whom” by examining the differing vulnerabilities and capacities of men, women, boys, and girls in the Sahel. Applying findings from a wide range of academic and policy literature, as well as gender analyses and field research completed in Mali, Niger, and Northern Nigeria, it will develop a theory of change that can be tested on the ground – in a variety of program settings – to strengthen Mercy Corps’ evidence base.\(^{15}\) This theory will examine the link between gender integration, empowerment of women and girls, inclusion, and resilience, and the PAE will apply the proposed theory to Mercy Corps’ current programming in the Sahel to assess gaps in the agencies’ ongoing efforts to build resilience. Finally, this PAE will provide recommendations and steps for implementing this theory of change in Mercy Corps’ future programming in the Sahel.

Two primary questions are explored in this PAE:

- Will integrating gender, empowering women and girls, and promoting inclusion in Mercy Corps’ programming in the Sahel lead individuals, households, and communities further along the resilience pathway?
- What steps does Mercy Corps need to take to integrate gender and address gender inequality in its resilience-focused efforts?

\(^{12}\) Mercy Corps identified conflict, governance, and gender as issues affecting all systems in the Sahel.
\(^{13}\) Mercy Corps, Sahel Resilience Strategy
\(^{14}\) Mercy Corps, Sahel Resilience Strategy
\(^{15}\) See Methodology section in Appendix 1 for detail on methods used
Gender and Resilience as a Differentiator

At this time, no donor or organization has defined a concrete strategy for gender integration in resilience-building initiatives, presenting both an opportunity and a challenge. Although several peer organizations are examining the connection between gender inequality and vulnerability, this PAE will set Mercy Corps apart by exploring whether programs that integrate gender can enhance household and community resilience.

Too often, “the gender dimensions of vulnerability [and resilience] are at best weakly reflected in program design or at worst treated superficially or even overlooked altogether.” This is problematic, because – as this PAE will demonstrate – there is a strong body of evidence showing that the ways in which men, women, boys, and girls experience risk, their capacities to deal with shocks, and the coping mechanisms used, are distinct.

Many in the development field have expressed concerns regarding “the inability of the concept of resilience to handle analytically, or even more simply to capture, issues around power.” While this is a fair critique, some organizations are beginning to factor the concepts of power and inequality into their resilience frameworks, especially when looking at the underlying causes of vulnerability. Although explicit mention of gender is rare, when it has been considered in frameworks, it is often discussed as a factor that contributes to inequality, power imbalances, and, ultimately, increased vulnerability. For example, DFID has included in its principles for enhancing disaster resilience that it must, “understand and plan for the fact that women, children, older, and disabled people, and politically marginalized groups are disproportionally impacted.”

This is an important first step. Still, the positive attributes of gender have been almost completely left out of the current resilience discourse. There has been almost no reference to how gender can contribute to increased adaptive capacity or resilience.

This PAE will provide Mercy Corps not only with an understanding of how gender impacts vulnerabilities in the Sahel, but also with insight into how a gender-integrated approach can support its efforts to strengthen resilience to identified shocks and stresses in the region. Such an understanding will help the agency better target its interventions in the Sahel so they meet the differing needs and risks faced by women, men, girls, and boys, while also recognizing and seizing upon their respective capacities for adaptation.

16 Overseas Development Institute
18 For more detail on the discourse used by Mercy Corps’ peer organizations and donor institutions, see APPENDIX 2.
19 Department for International Development (DFID). (2011)
Background and Context

A Chronically Vulnerable Sahel

Agriculture is the main livelihood for the majority of people in the Sahel, however, many of the poorest rural households barely cover 20% of their food needs through farming. Reduced harvests and re-occurring food crises have put the Sahel at an escalating risk of food insecurity. Recurrent drought has become a feature of the Sahel’s changing climate – the 2012 crisis came shortly after similar drought-related crises in 2010 and 2005, as well as a food price crisis in 2008. Humanitarian efforts in 2012 and 2013 mitigated the impact of the most recent food crisis and enabled nutrition care for over 1.6 million acutely malnourished children. However, persistently high food prices, rapid population growth, and the consequences of conflict and insecurity in the region have prevented any improvement in the current food security situation and millions face food insecurity and malnutrition on an almost permanent basis, regardless of the quality of harvests.

According to Mercy Corps’ Sahel Resilience Strategy, the effects of global climate change have become increasingly apparent in the region in the form of desertification, erratic precipitation – not enough, too much, or not at the right time – pest infestations, and disrupted agricultural cycles and livestock migration patterns. These pressures have contributed to further encroachment into fragile ecosystems, overgrazing, and unsustainable land use practices and reduced fallow periods. As a result, conflict frequently revolves around land management and use, as farmers cultivating crops encroach upon pastoral grazing land or water points while pastoralists graze their animals on cultivated land and utilize waterholes in fields and villages. Furthermore, due to inconsistent enforcement of environmental laws, pastoralists and farmers contribute to natural resource degradation, for example through unsustainable use of wood to meet their energy needs, hunting and poaching, and impinging upon protected natural reserves. Finally, broader security concerns have caused substantial population movement in recent years, which has only served to heighten tensions and instability as especially vulnerable populations are forced to compete for access to critical resources.

To ensure households and communities are better able to mitigate and respond to recurring and compounding crises in the Sahel, Mercy Corps will strive to strengthen the resilience of the region’s most vulnerable population groups. Building the resilience of vulnerable households and communities requires helping people cope with current change, adapt their livelihoods, and improve governance systems and ecosystem health so they are better able to avoid problems in the future. This requires not only helping people through direct implementation of assistance programs at multiple levels, but also facilitating change through promotion of improved policies and adaptive practices.
Gender Inequality in the Sahel – Further Entrenching Vulnerability to Food Insecurity

According to gender analyses conducted by Mercy Corps from June 2013 to November 2013 in Mali, Niger, and Nigeria, gender inequalities are perpetuated by factors such as poverty, lack of necessary health services, low levels of education, and early or forced marriage for girls.

### Inequality and the Sahel – An Overview of the Numbers

- **2013 Human Development Index**: Out of 187 countries, Mali is ranked 182, Niger is ranked 186, and Nigeria is ranked 153.
- **2013 Global Gender Gap report**: Out of 136 countries, Mali is ranked 128, Nigeria is ranked 106 (Niger not ranked).
- **2012 Social Institutions and Gender Inequality Index**: Out of 86 countries, Mali is ranked 86, Niger is ranked 72, and Nigeria is ranked 79.
- **2012 UNDP Gender Inequality Index**: Out of 148 countries, Mali is ranked 141, Niger is ranked 146 (Niger not ranked).

To promote resilience, efforts must **address the structural causes of gender and inequality that entrench vulnerability**. Pervasive discrimination — in education, health care, employment, and control of property — inevitably makes women and girls more vulnerable to shocks and stresses in the Sahel. Therefore, programming to develop coping skills and adaptive capacity must go alongside programming that tackles the systemic inequality that make marginalized groups more vulnerable in the first place. “This means challenging the social, economic, and political institutions that lock in security for some, but vulnerability for many [others].”

### Why Focus on Gender?

Research reveals that disturbances and crises often reinforce, perpetuate, and increase inequality, making already-bad situations even worse for marginalized gender groups, especially women and girls. In the Sahel, men, women, boys, and girls all experience vulnerabilities to shocks and stresses that decrease their capacity to adapt to negative impacts and adversely affect their capacity to contribute to mitigation. Women and girls, however, are often exposed to additional, gender-specific, barriers — due to socially constructed gender roles and power relations — that consistently render them more vulnerable to the impacts of disturbances. These barriers amplify their vulnerability and undermine their ability to cope with effects of disasters. They also prevent them from utilizing their specific skills and knowledge to improve adaptation outcomes for their

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26 UNISDR, UNDP, and ISDR. (June 2009), pg iv.
households and the broader community. Consequently, understanding resilience requires a closer scrutiny of the power relations that determine who in any given society has access to which resources, who makes decisions, and who is excluded.

Gender influences sensitivity to disturbances and, even within the same household, individuals will be differentially impacted by shocks and stresses. Individuals are often affected by disturbances in accordance with their roles and responsibilities. (See Appendix 3 for an overview of gendered roles and responsibilities in the Sahel.) For example:

- Environmental shocks and stresses in the Sahel have contributed to higher work burdens, especially for women and girls. Drought and erratic rainfall have increased their workload on family farms and in gathering water for animals. In general, women and girls’ livelihood activities become more difficult as less water is available. In addition, the lack of potable water can cause women and girls’ reproductive responsibilities to become more burdensome and can render meeting family sanitation needs become more difficult.

- Security conditions and conflict have differentially affected men and women. Young men are at major risk of exploitation and manipulation by militant groups, whereas women and girls are more likely to be exposed to abuse and face higher risk of sexual violence. During conflict, women and girls face increased insecurity in traveling and engaging in gathering activities for firewood or water, and while engaging in certain types of markets.

- Men who own and care for livestock are often directly affected by cattle rustling and by drought that reduces the availability of good forage for their herds. These shocks can put men at greater risk for exposure to conflict over resources and land. Cattle rustling also impacts women and youth by affecting dairy production and related revenues.

- Human diseases are likely to have a disproportionately large effect on women and girls, as they are often affected not only by their own illnesses, but are also responsible for taking care of other sick family members.

28 Schalatek, Liane and Katya Burns, (June 20, 2013).
30 IFAD. 2010.
Men, women, boys, and girls are not only differentially affected by shocks, but they also differ in their perceptions of the impact of shocks. While there is typically broad agreement on weather-related hazards, each group prioritizes those hazards that most directly affect them. For example, in focus group discussions in Niger, women, but not men, identified diseases that affect poultry as one of the most important threats in their community.\(^{31}\) This is illustrative of poultry’s importance for women’s livelihoods, as smaller livestock are more likely to be one of the few resources they control. These smaller animals are also more likely to be sold or used to meet needs in the face of recurrent crises (e.g. chickens are quicker to raise and the eggs can be sold) making them essential for women’s ability to cope during difficult times. Boys in peri-urban areas in Mali were the only group to cite teacher strikes and interruptions in schooling as one of the key shocks they face,\(^{32}\) and men in Niger and in Mali cited community-level threats such as conflict over resources (due to lack of land, migrating pastoralists, or refugees from Northern Mali) – perceived threats which align with their roles as heads of household and leaders in the community.\(^{33}\)

In interviews with women’s organizations in the Sahel and beyond, Oxfam Canada found that women identify risks that are often absent from “mainstream resilience frameworks.” Women emphasize “risks that originate at the household level, that are rooted in gender inequality, and that are exacerbated by cultural stereotypes about women’s roles and ability to engage in decision making. They also [cite] barriers to building resilience that are linked to sexual stereotypes, care responsibilities and time poverty.”\(^{34}\) Mercy Corps’ gender analyses reported similar findings – for example, women and girls in focus groups identified divorce, widowhood and forced marriage as some of the biggest threats to their lives and livelihoods.\(^{35}\) These idiosyncratic shocks often result in women losing their assets, especially in cases where marriage is governed under customary laws that do not protect women’s rights to property or resources.\(^{36}\)

**Gender also influences the skills, strategies, and mechanisms individuals use to cope and adapt to disturbances.** The coping and adaptation strategies of men, women, girls, and boys vary considerably, and women and girls often face constraints that limit their capacity to respond to hazards. Generally, strategies for coping align with gender roles and livelihoods patterns, which are often more restricted for women and girls. Gender analyses in the Sahel have found that women and girls in rural areas typically have livelihoods that are heavily dependent on natural resources, yet they lack the information, decision-making power, and influence that is necessary to adapt to the effects of climate-related disturbances and ensure conservation of natural resources. Unequal access to and control over productive and financial resources were also found to limit women and youth’s ability to adapt to shocks and stresses. As a result of limited

\(^{31}\) FGD with women, Maradi: listed Bird flu as major threat, with consequences such as loss of poultry stock, and loss of revenue source. Girls: said they only controlled their own clothes, poultry and small animals.

\(^{32}\) FGD with boys, Kati: older boys cited teacher strikes at The University of Bamako as one of the most important threats they face since it impacts their ability to access education

\(^{33}\) Mercy Corps FGD near Filingué and Maradi.

\(^{34}\) Oxfam Canada. (September 2013)

\(^{35}\) MC Focus Groups Women Filingué, Women and Girls Maradi.

\(^{36}\) Peterman. (2010).
access to credit or control over productive resources, women may be less able to diversify or utilize improved varieties (crops and small livestock) that are better adapted to drought or pests. They also face major barriers to technical assistance (e.g. extension services are typically male-dominated, and when offered to women, their limited mobility may impede their access) and appropriate technologies (e.g. women need technologies that are tailored to smaller plots and reduce their time burden).37

Despite these hurdles, women and girls are finding ways to cope with disturbances in the Sahel. They are adjusting to changing social and natural environments, organizing to collectively address problems, drawing on traditional knowledge, and improvising skills to face difficulties.38 In some cases, however, they have to resort to negative coping mechanisms that put them at risk or increase their sensitivity to future shocks.39 Research from Oxfam Canada has termed this the “no other choice” approach to resilience.40 Poverty and marginalization do not necessarily mean passivity in the face of shocks or stresses,41 however with few options or opportunities, women and girls are often forced to resort to the least bad alternative out of a range of bad alternatives available to them. In all three villages in Mali where focus groups were held, women were identified (by men, women, and youth) as those facing the “heaviest burdens” during crises, primarily because they are tasked with “sustaining” the family.42

Examples of coping mechanisms cited during focus groups included:

- Selling assets
  - Small livestock typically owned and used for income generation by women and youth are often sold first.
- Borrowing money from relatives or other community members
  - Reliance on family, friends, and neighbors for financial loans or gifts is a crucial component of surviving economic hardship in the Sahel.43
  - Utilizing social networks is a vital coping strategy for the rural poor, especially women, who are neglected in terms of necessary governmental assistance.44 Tontines – informal savings and loans groups where money is pooled and distributed on a rotating basis – were often cited by focus groups as a “safety-net” that women can rely on when they are unable to meet their basic needs.

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37 Olawoye et. al. (2010), pp 8-10.
39 Negative coping strategies – erode productive assets and undermine future options, making it more difficult to cope with the next shock or stress.
40 Interview with Lauren Ravon, Oxfam Canada, March 17, 2014
42 FGDs with men, women, boys and girls in Kati, Sanankoroba, Golo.
43 FGD participants mentioned there is a certain level of shame associated with asking in-laws for a loan, so that is often a last resort.
44 The gender dimensions of social capital in the Sahel is explored further in Appendix 7
Nonetheless, the amount of money the tontine is able to loan at one time is quite small, and some women report that their husbands sometimes force them to take out a loan on their behalf, but do not provide them with the means to repay this loan, hurting their status within the group. In addition to loans, focus groups also cited coping strategies such as sharing and rotating meals with neighbors.

- Reducing food intake
  - Women report reducing the amount they eat and ensuring that their children and husbands are fed first; they also report foraging for wild plants to supplement meals.
  - Men report going outside the household to find food.

- Taking children out of school
  - To save money on school fees and to have children help with household income-generation, families may take children out of school. While focus groups report an equal likelihood of taking girls or boys out of primary school, girls were more likely to be taken out of secondary school during a difficult time.

- Prostitution
  - Various focus groups cited that some women and older girls in villages resort to prostitution during shocks and stresses.
  - In Mali, older girls reported dating multiple men to get money and gifts (such as food) during lean times. They noted that they are often expected – and cannot refuse – to have sex with these men, and keep the fact that they have numerous boyfriends hidden from their parents.

**Spotlight on Distress Migration: A Gendered Coping Strategy with Gendered Impacts**

Throughout the Sahel, lack of economic opportunity, conflict, and worsening environmental conditions have resulted in male migration within and across borders. Because they are expected to be the “breadwinners” of the family and are typically more mobile than women and girls, migrating for income-generating opportunities has become a common practice for men and boys and recent crises have resulted in men migrating for longer periods (sometimes even permanently). This practice results in various risks for men and boys, including but not limited to:

- Taking out high-interest loans to cover travel costs (that they are unable to pay back);
- Danger in travel (insecurity around certain travel routes);
- Illicit employment (extremist groups, trafficking);
- Multiple sexual partners, increasing risk of HIV infection and spreading HIV; and
- Weakened links to community and related safety nets.

Male migration may lead women, girls, and other household members left behind to take on new roles (e.g. managing food stocks). These changes can create opportunities to challenge

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45 FGD with women - Diago; Sanakoroba; Gala.
46 FGD with women, Gala. It should be noted that girls are less likely to be enrolled in secondary school to begin with, especially if the secondary school is outside the village and requires significant travel, or if the girl is married off at a young age.
47 FGD with older girls, Sanakoroba
discriminatory social norms, but can also exacerbate vulnerabilities (e.g. increased responsibility for household needs without necessary control over resources or decision-making power). As men who migrate contribute less and less to family incomes, women are expected to expand their productive role to earn additional income for their households. The International Fund for Agricultural Development explains:

As women increase their contributions of farm labor and household maintenance, they are also becoming responsible for more decision-making if long-term migration means that major decisions, such as the purchase or sale of livestock or changes in cropping patterns, cannot wait for the men’s return. **Women are becoming de facto heads of households, and this is increasing the vulnerability of families to extreme poverty as women assume traditionally male responsibilities without the same levels of access to financial, technological and social resources.** Women’s workloads and responsibilities have become greater, but women have not enjoyed a corresponding rise in influence and opportunities.48

For example, in the Maradi and Zinder regions of Niger, men decide how much and when to draw on food and cereal stocks. When men migrate elsewhere for work, they will leave women and children at home, with only a small portion of cereals and no access to the remaining stock, due in part to stereotypes that women would “waste” the food.49 As a result, women and children may go hungry during the lean season, while food stocks remain.

Migration, therefore, has not only increased the risks faced by men and boys who are migrating, but has also increasingly left women and girls with a larger productive burden to meet family needs, often without the resources or power to do so.

**Why Focus on Resilience?**

As previous sections have described, the Sahel is a complex environment in which individuals, households, communities, and systems are facing crises of increased frequency, severity, complexity, and interconnectedness. A common concern with responses to recent disturbances in the Sahel is that investments of hundreds of millions of dollars in humanitarian assistance have not increased the capacity of affected populations to withstand future shocks and stresses or reduced their exposure and sensitivity to similar events.50 In fact, disturbances have eroded the effectiveness of traditional coping mechanisms, leaving individuals, households, and communities at increased risk to future shocks.

The concept of resilience highlights the need to strengthen the abilities of individuals, households, and communities to withstand and adapt to a broad range of risks. Resilience is commonly understood as the ability to “bounce back”, or “bounce back better,” and return to a stable state in which some entity (e.g. individual, household, community, or broader system) existed before a disturbance. The disturbance could be a collective shock shared by a large group of people (covariate shock) or a shock experienced only within a given household or community (idiosyncratic shock).51

49 Mercy Corps, Niger Gender Assessment.
50 Frankenberger, Tim, et al. (October 2013), Pg 3.
51 Frankenberger, Tim, et al. (October 2013)
The actual impact of any given shock or set of stressors is largely determined by the **magnitude of the hazard** itself, combined with the **vulnerability** to the shock and the **capacity of those affected to withstand** them.\(^{52}\) In the most catastrophic case, a shock can completely overwhelm a community to the point of collapse. At a less extreme level, a society may eventually recover, but diminished livelihoods and resources may leave affected populations worse off and more vulnerable than before.\(^{53}\) In the face of stresses and shocks, resilient households and communities are prepared and able to take anticipatory action to avoid major losses, and in the event that crisis results, they are able to respond effectively and build back better than before.

The **Resilience Loss Recovery Curve** (see Figure 2) demonstrates how functions decline as communities respond to a disaster (blue and pink areas). A more resilient community can better anticipate threats and collectively take action to minimize the impact of shocks and stresses, so when a disturbance hits, they are better able to absorb the shock. Thanks to adaptive measures, it takes less time for them to bounce back, and the community incurs some losses (blue) but avoids additional losses (pink). Resilient communities may also find opportunities to transform themselves and grow in the face of a shock or stress. Thus, a resilient community may return to a level of function existing before the disturbance (Line B), or it may return to a “new normal” at a higher level of functioning (Line A). Ultimately, this cycle repeats itself both before and after each disturbance resulting in opportunities to incrementally increase resilience and comprehensively reduce losses over time.\(^{54}\)

Therefore, Mercy Corps’ emphasis on building resilience in the Sahel offers a window of opportunity to work with individuals, households, and communities so they are better equipped to absorb, adapt, and transform in the face of disturbances. If successful, Mercy Corps will assist vulnerable communities to “bounce back” better, quicker, and at a lower cost to all.

**The Building Blocks for a Resilient Sahel**

The understanding of resilience is still evolving as more and more development and humanitarian organizations begin to adopt resilience-building interventions. **Appendix 4** lists a number of prominent definitions of resilience offered by leading organizations and institutions in recent years and **Appendix 5** discusses several defining factors of resilience that are common across these organizations. Critical to this understanding is an examination of the determinants or factors

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\(^{52}\) USAID. (December 2012).

\(^{53}\) USAID. (December 2012).

\(^{54}\) Milone & MacBroom, Inc. (September 2012).
that enable individuals, households, communities and systems to absorb, adapt, and transform in the face of shocks and stresses. Identifying the factors that determine a household’s or community’s capacity to respond or recover to disturbances will allow aid organizations to better target programs to support and facilitate resilience. Although the resilience literature has begun to identify common “building blocks” of resilience, which are explored below, little analysis has been conducted on how gender and power influence these factors. This section will highlight the current thinking on the most critical determinants of resilience, and will discuss if and how these determinants are gendered.

**Resources, Assets, and Capital**

The ability or capability to be resilient has often been linked to access and utilization of human, social, financial, physical, natural or political capital.\(^{55}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The six types of capital</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Human capital:</strong> Human capital includes educational attainment and health status, which shapes the ability of individuals and households to absorb the negative impacts of a shock and to successfully adapt to changing social, economic, and environmental conditions. At the community level, human capital reflects the collective level of access to skills, labor, knowledge, and health. As such, human capital is compromised in households and communities where unequal gender norms and power relations result in underinvestment in education and health infrastructure for certain gender groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Financial capital:</strong> Financial capital refers to the financial resources households and communities use to achieve their economic and social objectives. It includes cash and other liquid assets (e.g., savings, credit, remittances, etc.) as well as insurance schemes that increase “the ability…of individuals, groups, and communities to absorb disaster impacts and speed up the recovery process.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural resource capital:</strong> Natural capital refers to a household’s or community’s natural resources: environmental stocks from which resources useful for livelihoods are derived.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical capital:</strong> Physical capital includes basic infrastructure (e.g. transportation, shelter, energy, communications, and water systems, health facilities, and markets), production equipment, and other material means that enable people to maintain safety and enhance their relative level of well-being.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political capital:</strong> Political capital consists of the power and capacity to participate in, as well as access and influence formal and informal political systems, decision-making, and governance processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social capital:</strong> Social capital can be described as the quantity and quality of social resources (e.g. networks, membership in groups, social relations, and access to wider institutions in society) upon which people draw in pursuit of livelihoods. “Close interaction between people through tight-knit communities, the ability to rely on others in times of crisis, and open communication between stakeholder groups are all generally seen as signs of well-developed social capital.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Bonding** — Bonding social capital is best described as “horizontal” ties between individuals who are similar to each other and may live within close proximity to one another
- **Bridging** — Bridging social capital connects members of one community or group to other communities/groups. Bridging social capital often crosses lines, boundaries, and groups, and makes a direct contribution to community resilience in that those with social ties outside their immediate community can draw on these links when local resources are insufficient or unavailable. Additionally, because contact with close friends and relations is more regular, interaction with those outside of one’s immediate network is more likely to provide new perspectives and resources.
- **Linking** — is seen in trusted social networks between individuals and groups interacting across explicit, institutionalized, formal boundaries in society. Linking social capital is often conceived of as a vertical link between a network and some form of authority or power.

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\(^{55}\) IFRC. (June 2012).
Tangible and intangible assets allow individuals, households, and communities to meet their basic needs, and a greater diversity of assets reduces vulnerability to shocks. Different resource sets or assets do not function in isolation, but work together to collectively reduce the impact of shocks, such as a drought, or long-term stresses, such as climate change. According to Frankenberger et al., higher levels of absorptive and adaptive capacity result from the ability of households and communities to access and utilize capital in a way that allows them to respond to changing and unforeseen circumstances. "As such, the most vulnerable households and communities are those that have deficits in one or more of these resources and therefore have limited capacity to absorb the negative consequences of shocks and/or stresses and to engage in adaptive livelihood strategies."

When measuring livelihood assets at the household or community level, Frankenberger et al. argue that it is essential to address four critical questions:

- What is the extent and quality of each form of capital?
- Which populations have access to the capital?
- Which institutions control access to the capital?
- How does the current status of the capital contribute to or constrain resilience?

To adequately answer these questions, an analysis of the “gendered” allocation of capital must be conducted. Such an analysis considers how assets are allocated between men, women, girls, and boys, and examines differences in access to resources and in control over how resources are used. Access is defined as the opportunity to make use of a resource while control is defined as the power to decide how a resource is used and who is able to use it.

**The Gender Asset Gap**

Access to and control over the capital necessary for adaptation varies within communities and households, and is influenced by external factors such as policies, institutions and power structures, including gender norms. Although Mercy Corps’ gender analyses in the Sahel found that access to and control over assets varies by region, ethnicity, and religion, patterns demonstrating that women, girls, and to some extent, male youth are more disadvantaged also emerged in each country analysis. (See Appendix 6 for this PAE's analysis of trends regarding access and control in the Sahel and Appendix 7 for an overview of the findings regarding gendered deficits in capital) These findings are supported by the feminist and development literature, as scholars have increasingly recognized a “gender asset gap,” in which marginalized gender groups – particularly women, girls, and, in some cases, boys – have less access to and control of capital than their adult male counterparts. Household members of different genders may have access to different types and levels of assets and may have obtained them through different pathways (which are often gendered and influenced by social norms and biases). Individuals’ asset holdings may also have different implications for bargaining power within the household.

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57 Frankenberger et al. (October 2013)
58 Frankenberger et al. (2012)
59 Frankenberger et al. (October 2013)
60 For the purposes of this PAE, assets and capital are used as interchangeable terms and refer to both tangible and intangible resources.
61 IFPRI. (Feb 2014)
deficits in capital are theorized to make individuals, households, and communities less able to cope and adapt to shocks, addressing the gender gap in assets is key to reducing vulnerability and improving absorptive and adaptive capacity.

This PAE theorizes that programs that address the gender asset gap by increasing marginalized gender groups’ access to and control over the six types of capital will result in increased abilities to engage in more remunerative and sustainable livelihood and coping strategies (leading to strengthened individual resilience), as well as greater empowerment, inclusion, and influence in household and community decision-making.

Ultimately, marginalized populations’ increased access to capital, along with more inclusive decision-making about the utilization of capital, will lead to greater household and community resilience.

To further develop this theory, the six types of capital and their related assets have been divided into three, interdependent pathways of empowerment:

- Financial, Physical, and Natural Capital – Empowerment through increased access to and control over financial, physical, and natural resources.
- Human Capital – Empowerment through increased access to and control over knowledge, skills, and information.
- Social and Political Capital – Empowerment through increased access to and influence in market systems, decision-making structures, and governance institutions.

These pathways of empowerment are connected and reinforce each other. For example, the ability of women and girls to secure physical, financial and natural resources is inextricably tied to their ability to build their human, social, and political resource base.

**Capacity for Collective Action**

In addition to resources, assets, and capital, the resilience literature suggests that “the extent to which communities can effectively combine social capital and collective action in response to shocks and stresses is a defining feature of community resilience.” A community is resilient when it can function and sustain critical systems under stress; adapt to changes in the physical, social, and economic environment; and be self-reliant if external resources are limited or cut off. In discussing the community-level factors that are necessary for achieving resilience, Frankberger et al. emphasize the collective actions that must be performed to restore and maintain essential

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62 Frankenberger et al. (2012)
63 Multiple meanings and usages of the concept of “empowerment” have been suggested in the literature. Some authors define empowerment in terms of underlying phenomena, such as capacities, agency, self-esteem and self-confidence, autonomy, public and private voice, status in household and community, and economic prowess and visibility. Others label groups as empowered when they increase their assets (income, land, possessions), others when these groups have achieved positions of community leadership, and still others when their agricultural and commercial productivity improves to some degree, even if they do not have complete independence or joint decision-making control over assets and activities. **For the purposes of this PAE, “empowerment” results from an equitable increase in access to assets and increased intra-household bargaining power over the distribution of these assets, as well as their domains of control and benefits.**
64 Frankenberger, et al. (October 2013)
65 Frankenberg, et al. (October 2013)
community-based processes and institutions. In their “Community Resilience Framework,” (see Appendix 8) Frankenberger et al. highlight five main areas of collective action where communities play a significant role:

- Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)
- Conflict Mitigation
- Social Protection
- Natural Resource Management

Collective action, therefore, plays a vital role in many aspects of community interactions that manage resources, reduce risk, and ultimately, enhance community resilience. However, one of the most significant limitations to collective action’s ability to meet community needs is “the entrenched biases in community norms and expectations that disenfranchise certain categories of people.”

Marginalized groups, including the poor, religious or ethnic minorities, and women and girls, may face significant constraints in their attempts to participate in collective action. They may not be accorded membership or be able to participate, or their participation may be only nominal or passive. As a result, collective action projects risk capture by elites or a select, powerful few who promote inequitable participation and benefit distribution. The result, then, is that collective action may benefit the already well-off while perpetuating the status quo and impoverishment of marginalized groups.

This is not to say, however, that women and girls in the Sahel are not actively engaging in collective activities. Between community clean-up days, tontines and savings groups, garden co-ops, and informal groups that share and rotate childcare duties, millet grinding, and shea butter production, women in the Sahel are self-organizing and combining efforts. Nonetheless, in focus group discussions, women frequently commented on their exclusion from community-level decisions and processes, particularly those related to the public sphere, and noted that their collective activities and groups are often related to management of their private sphere duties.

The theory of change proposed in this PAE will examine “inclusion” as a necessary social dimension and key leverage point for collective action and enhanced community resilience. It will argue that the greater participation and influence of women and girls in community-level processes will not only provide real opportunities to foster women’s empowerment, but will also be instrumental in reaching community objectives.

What Do We Mean by Inclusion?

- Shared decision-making and governance
- Diverse participation in community-based groups
- Ability to influence group’s objectives

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68 Examples from FGDs in Mali (Sanakoroba, Diago, Galo). For more, see “Social Capital” section of Appendix 7.
Gender Integration and Resilience: A Theory of Change

Gaps between males and females – including unequal access to education and income opportunities, unequal access to land and other productive resources, and discriminatory social practices that limit rights and opportunities for women and youth to fully participate in society – result in different levels of exposure and sensitivity to shocks and stresses. Although evidence from around the globe suggests that women and girls play a critical and potentially transformative role in addressing food insecurity within their households and communities, throughout the Sahel they continue to face cultural, political, and financial obstacles that limit their time, mobility, access to and control over resources, and influence. These obstacles inhibit their capacity to absorb and adapt to disturbances such as drought, conflict, and natural resource degradation, resulting in an over-reliance on negative coping mechanisms, which, in turn, further hinders their prospects – and the prospects of their households and communities – for building resilience. Importantly, these obstacles also typically result in the exclusion of women and girls from household and community decision-making, which is theorized to impede the abilities of households and communities to mitigate and recover from disturbances. Therefore, to improve the resilience of vulnerable populations in the Sahel, agencies must address and transform the systems and practices that have entrenched gender inequality. Committing to gender integration in all aspects of the program cycle is the first step in doing so.

This section will outline a theory of change that links gender integration in programming to enhanced household and community resilience to the shocks and stresses that lead to food insecurity. The proposed theory of change posits inclusion as a necessary social dimension and key leverage point for household and community resilience. It also highlights the importance of increased access to and control of capital for transforming unequal relationships and systems and ensuring the empowerment and influence of excluded and vulnerable groups in the Sahel. This section will first address how the theory applies at the household level, then examine how it applies at the broader, community level. Specifically, it will examine the links between:

- A gender-integrated approach and the ability of agencies to develop longer-term strategies and implement programs that address gender inequality and deficits in capital;
- Increasing access to and control of capital and the empowerment of excluded gender groups (particularly, women and girls);
- The empowerment of women and girls, and their increased inclusion and influence in household and community decision-making (factors which are mutually reinforcing); and
- The increased inclusion and influence of women and girls in household and community decision-making and enhanced household and community resilience.

It is critical to note that this PAE is not suggesting that gender integration is the only means for building resilience. While this theory hypothesizes that programs that successfully integrate gender, empower women and girls, and

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70 As this section will describe, studies have shown that women’s increased influence in household and community decision-making results in more sustainable and better food security outcomes. This is a nascent field of study, however, and Mercy Corps should continue to build its evidence base on the importance of inclusion.
71 To develop a theory of change, this PAE used the “TANGO Resilience Assessment Framework” developed by Frankenberger et al. (see page 1 of Appendix 8) and the “Community Resilience Framework” developed by Frankenberger et al. (see page 2 of Appendix 8). Mercy Corps’ theory of change for gender integration was also referenced, and it is expected that the theory proposed in this section will be used and considered in conjunction with Mercy Corps’ broader theory (see page 3 of Appendix 8).
promote inclusion will be better positioned to enhance household and community resilience to food insecurity, it does not claim that is the only way to do so, nor that these steps by themselves will be successful. Instead, this theory should be viewed as an approach to enhance Mercy Corps’ ongoing resilience-focused programming and should be implemented in coordination with programming that seeks to diversify livelihood opportunities and coping strategies, increase access to necessary community services and goods, and transform governance systems.

**Gender Integration and Household Resilience**

The Theory Applied at the Household Level

If Mercy Corps’ uses a gender-integrated approach\(^{72}\) and gender is integrated into all aspects of the program cycle, then gender-specific needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities will be better understood, and structural inequalities, including deficits in the capital necessary to absorb, adapt, and transform in the face of shocks and stresses, will be better addressed in programming.

If gender-specific needs, vulnerabilities and capacities are understood, and program activities\(^{73}\) address structural gender inequalities, including deficits in capital, then Mercy Corps will be able to influence three, interdependent pathways of empowerment, by increasing marginalized groups’ (often women and girls’) access to and control of:

- Financial, Physical, and Natural Capital – Empowerment through increased access to and control over financial, physical, and natural resources and assets.
- Human Capital – Empowerment through increased access to and control over knowledge, skills, and information.
- Social and Political Capital – Empowerment through increased access to and influence in social networks, market systems, decision-making structures, and governance institutions.

If Mercy Corps’ program activities increase women and girls’ access to and control of:

- financial, physical, and natural resources and assets
- knowledge, skills, and information
- social networks,\(^{74}\) decision-making structures, informal and formal governance institutions, and safety-nets

then these excluded groups will be more empowered to utilize both tangible and intangible assets in order to:

- diversify their livelihood opportunities and their strategies for coping with disturbances; and
- participate in and influence household and community decision-making.

If women and girls have increased influence over **household decision-making** (and they are able to utilize more diverse livelihood opportunities and strategies for coping), then the ability of the **entire household** to absorb, adapt, and transform in the face of shocks and stresses will be increased.

If **households** have increased capacity to absorb, adapt, and transform to shocks and stresses, **households** will be more resilient.

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\(^{72}\) This also includes fulfilling Mercy Corps’ commitment as detailed in the agency’s Gender Policy and Procedures, and ensuring women, men, girls, and boys are more equitably engaged as stakeholders.

\(^{73}\) This includes activities that raise awareness, challenge gender dynamics, and influence gatekeepers

\(^{74}\) Includes enhanced opportunities for bonding, bridging, and linking social capital
Critical Assumptions in this Theory

- Integrating gender into programming leads to a better understanding of beneficiaries' needs, and allows agencies to craft more responsive programs.
- Increasing access to and control of resources, assets, knowledge, information, social networks, and governance institutions leads to empowerment and enables marginalized groups, especially women and girls, to influence household decision-making.
- Increasing access to and control of resources, assets, knowledge, information, and social networks leads to empowerment and enables marginalized groups to have more diverse and sustainable livelihood and coping strategies.
- When marginalized groups have more influence over household decision-making, the household's ability to absorb and adapt to shocks and stresses will be increased.
- When marginalized groups have more diverse and sustainable livelihood and coping strategies, the household's ability to absorb and adapt to shocks and stresses will be increased.
- Increased household capacity to absorb, adapt, and transform in the face of shocks and stresses leads to more resilient households.

Evidence to Support Assumptions

Integrating gender into programming leads to a better understanding of beneficiaries' needs, and allows agencies to craft more responsive programs.

Evaluations of development interventions over the past 30 years provide evidence that interventions that are not specifically designed and implemented to address gender constraints will not see any such impact. Instead, the evidence is overwhelming that they will further embed the structures that maintain gender inequalities and women's disempowerment. Furthermore, gender-integrated approaches have been shown to enhance productivity and income for families, ensure more equitable access to reliable infrastructure services, contribute to poverty reduction and economic growth, and promote health and empowerment. Demand-driven, participatory approaches to development that empower women as well as men lead to more efficient and sustainable projects and programs.

Increasing access to and control of resources, assets, knowledge, information, social networks, and governance institutions leads to empowerment and enables women and girls to influence household decision making.

Narrowing the gender-asset gap and increasing women and girls access to assets, directly improves their wellbeing by reducing their vulnerability and enhancing their health, self-esteem, and sense of control. It has also been shown to lead to improved outcomes for a range of development indicators not only for women, but also for their families and communities. Increasing women and girls' control over assets – including land and both physical and financial assets – has positive effects on a number of important development outcomes for the household, including food security, child nutrition, and education, as well as for women's own well-being and empowerment. In the post-project evaluation of Mercy Corps' Market Improvements and Innovative Linkages (MILK) program in Niger (funded by the U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance), women discussed that since they were bringing money into the household, they were more highly engaged in the decision-making process.

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75 USAID. (2013)
76 World Bank. "Gender and Social Development — Gender Dimensions of Infrastructure."
77 Meinzen-Dick, R., et al. (2011)
78 Meinzen-Dick, R., et al. (2011)
with their spouse than they had been prior to participating in the MILK program.\textsuperscript{79}

The positive benefits of activities that create opportunities for women and girls, and increase their access to and control of capital, is a newer field of study. Despite this, important cases of impact have been documented. For example, the important intergenerational effects of female education have been recognized and educated women are shown to contribute to the welfare of the next generation by reducing infant mortality, lowering fertility, and improving the nutritional status of children. In a study by Smith and Haddad using cross-country nationally representative data, it was determined that increases in women’s education (investment in human capital) have made the greatest contribution to reducing the rate of child malnutrition, responsible for 43 percent of the total reduction.\textsuperscript{80} Furthermore, education has been shown to positively temper unchecked population growth. In Mali, women with secondary education or higher have an average of 3 children, whereas those with no education have an average of 7 children.\textsuperscript{81} Because the expanding population in the Sahel places an enormous strain on education and health services, production, and natural resources, this finding suggests that increasing women and girls’ human capital can help alleviate some of the stress on household and community resources. Furthermore, research on gender differences in human capital since the 1990s has repeatedly shown that gender inequality in education reduces national per capita income growth. Recent research on gender disparities in education, employment, economic opportunities, and political participation are consistent with these findings – gender inequality is associated with lower growth and with higher levels of hunger.\textsuperscript{82} The United Nations estimates that every year of schooling has the potential to increase a girl’s individual earning power by 10 to 20 percent, while the return on secondary education is even higher, at 15 to 25 percent.\textsuperscript{83}

These and other studies make a convincing case that closing the gap between men’s and women’s ownership of assets is not only important for women’s empowerment and well-being, but is also a necessary step towards achieving global development goals. It is important to note that there are certain risks associated with increased access and control of resources, especially when activities do not use a holistic, gender-integrated approach that engages both men and women. Activities intending to increase female financial capital and the profitability of female-led ventures (through, for example, the introduction of labor-reducing technologies) can lead to encroachment of men into traditionally female roles. An example of this was documented in Nigeria: “When cassava processing was mainly done manually, it was exclusively a female-dominated business. As mechanized graters were introduced, men took over the business but left the manual frying of the cassava to women.” Therefore, Efforts to increase access to assets and improved livelihood opportunities should be coupled with efforts that increase sensitization of gatekeepers and increase the negotiating power of women.\textsuperscript{84}

Increasing access to and control of resources, assets, knowledge, information, and social networks leads to empowerment and enables marginalized groups to have more diverse and sustainable livelihood and coping strategies.

It has been concluded that “empowering women is the key to ensuring food and nutrition security in the developing world” and that “reducing gender disparities promotes better food and nutrition security for all.”\textsuperscript{85} Through an extensive review of the literature linking gender equality, poverty, and economic growth, USAID

\textsuperscript{79} The Improve Group. December 2012.
\textsuperscript{80} Smith (2000).
\textsuperscript{81} UNESCO. (2010).
\textsuperscript{82} Meinzen-Dick, R., et al. (2011)
\textsuperscript{83} USAID (October 2013)
\textsuperscript{84} Idowu Yetunde Ajani, Olubunmi, May 2008.
\textsuperscript{85} IFPRI. (2005).
found that there is “ample evidence to suggest that greater gender equality in [access to and control over] resources...can reduce the likelihood of a household being poor [and that gender equality plays] a key role in cushioning households from the impact of macroeconomic shocks and keeping households from falling into poverty.”

Evidence demonstrates that female labor force participation plays a key role in cushioning households from the impact of macroeconomic shocks and keeping households from falling into poverty.

Women with adequate access to food production sources, independent sources of incomes, and the capacity to control food preparation and consumption are found to be better able to improve their household’s food security and nutrition. A 2009 study examined the role of Sudanese women in improving household food security and suggested that rural women are more likely than men to effectively use available local resources in diversification strategies.

Examples from the Sahel support this claim and suggest that increasing women and girls’ access and control of capital results in more positive adaptation and livelihood strategies. In Nigeria, for example, it was found that educated mothers are more likely to adopt health-seeking behaviors such as immunization, suggesting a link between increased human capital and activities to prevent the outbreak of disease.

Furthermore, findings from the post-project evaluation of Mercy Corps’ MILK program indicate that entrepreneurial training for women made the most difference in helping participants, and their networks, cope with the subsequent food crisis.

When marginalized groups have more influence over household decision-making, the household’s ability to absorb and adapt to shocks and stresses will be increased.

A review of the literature shows that poverty and hunger are reduced when women gain more intra-household bargaining power, more control over decision-making, and more autonomy in the use of their time and the income that they generate. There is strong evidence that the level of maternal endowments and degree of empowerment within the household are two of the most influential factors determining child health and nutrition, especially during shocks and stresses.

A 2013 study conducted by Mercy Corps found that during the 2010-2011 drought and famine in Southern Somalia, women with more power over decisions in their homes had the confidence to negotiate with elites to gain access to essential services and were thus better able to feed and care for their children. “Female involvement in household decision making was strongly linked with greater household dietary diversity and less distressful coping in the face of the complex crisis. This suggests that resilience programming should consider women as untapped adaptive capacity, rather than only as a vulnerable group, and should seek to strengthen female engagement in productive decisions.”

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86 USAID. (October 2013)
87 USAID. (October 2013)
88 USAID. (December 2012).
89 World Bank. “Gender and Development,” p. 70.
91 USAID. (October 2013)
92 USAID. (October 2013)
93 Mercy Corps. (November 2013)
Gender Integration and Community Resilience

**Critical Assumptions in this Theory**

- Increasing access to and control of resources, assets, knowledge, skills, information, social networks, and governance institutions leads to empowerment and enables marginalized groups to participate in community processes.

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### The Theory Applied at the Community Level

If Mercy Corps' uses a gender-integrated approach and gender is integrated into all aspects of the program cycle, then gender-specific needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities will be better understood, and structural inequalities, including deficits in the capital necessary to absorb, adapt, and transform in the face of shocks and stresses, will be better addressed in programming.

If gender-specific needs, vulnerabilities and capacities are understood, and program activities address structural gender inequalities, including deficits in capital, then Mercy Corps will be able to influence three, interdependent pathways of empowerment, by increasing marginalized groups' (often women and girls) access to and control of:

- **Financial, Physical, and Natural Capital** – Empowerment through increased access to and control over financial, physical, and natural resources and assets
- **Human Capital** – Empowerment through increased access to and control over knowledge, skills, and information
- **Social and Political Capital** – Empowerment through increased access to and influence in social networks, market systems, decision-making structures, and governance institutions.

If Mercy Corps' program activities increase women and girls' access to and control of
- financial, physical, and natural resources and assets
- knowledge, skills, and information
- social networks, decision-making structures, governance institutions, and safety-nets

then these excluded groups will be more empowered to utilize both tangible and intangible assets in order to engage in community-level processes, and will have the resources, assets, and skills necessary to actively participate.

If women and girls are better engaged and have the resources, assets, and skills necessary to influence community processes, then critical processes for community collective action – especially those that are needed to respond to shocks and stresses in the Sahel such as:

a. disaster risk recovery (DRR);

b. natural resource management (NRM);

c. conflict management; and

d. social protection

will be more inclusive.

If these processes are more inclusive, community collective action will be more sustainable, and ultimately, more effective in the long-term.

If communities are able to take effective and sustainable collective action in response to disturbances, they will be less sensitive to shocks and stresses and ultimately, more resilient.
Assumes that marginalized groups have the desire and self-confidence to participate, and that an enabling environment exists (i.e. gatekeepers approve of their participation).

- Increasing the participation of marginalized gender groups in community processes will result in more inclusive governance of community assets and services and more inclusive DRR, NRM, conflict management, and social protection processes.
  - Assumes that women and girls will be actively engaged in these processes and will have influence over decisions.
- Inclusive community-level processes have better outcomes/results (i.e. are more sustainable and effective).
- Sustainable and effective community collective action leads to enhanced community resilience to shocks and stresses.

**Evidence to Support Assumptions**

**Increasing access and control of resources, assets, knowledge, and information leads to empowerment and enables marginalized groups to participate in community processes.**

According to the World Bank, interventions can facilitate women’s community leadership by building their human and social assets.\(^94\) Evidence also suggests that communities treat women and girls differently when they have higher economic earning potential. This implies that developing economic and financial assets is a particularly effective way of achieving empowerment.\(^95\) From 2000 to 2004, the Global Livestock Collaborative Research Support Program provided pastoralist women’s savings and loan groups in southern Ethiopia with capacity building programming – including literacy and numeracy skills and microenterprise training – as part of its Pastoral Risk Management (PARIMA) project. As a result of this initiative in impoverished communities on the Borana Plateau – hard-hit by drought in 1983-1985, 1991-1993, and 1998-1999 – women (and communities as a whole) facing the 2005-2008 drought cycle were more resilient to chronic drought, with preserved assets, access to income, and improved food security. Poor women overcame domestic burdens and emerged as leaders, using a community-based approach to tackle the issues identified by their communities. They engaged in local collective action, inspired by their participation in cross-border tours between their communities and those of Kenyan women leaders. The emergence of female leaders among the inhabitants of the Borana Plateau shows that traditional gender roles are not always static: “It was...highly unexpected given that women have been typically relegated to performing menial tasks and having a low social profile in this society.”\(^96\)

**Increasing the participation of marginalized gender groups in community processes will result in more inclusive governance of community assets and services and more inclusive DRR, NRM, conflict management, and social protection processes.**

There is little evidence to show that affirmative action actually increases the presence of marginalized groups such as women in effective leadership roles, suggesting that merely requiring a group be a part of community structures doesn’t achieve “inclusion.” Studies have found that despite the fact that gender quotas are typically met by municipal governments’ affirmative action programs, women are often not given influential positions and are not able to exercise meaningful power.\(^97\) This is partly due to a lack of formal education, a lack of decision-making power relative to men, and time constraints due to their dual productive and reproductive roles in the

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\(^{94}\) World Bank, FAO and IFAD. (2008).
\(^{95}\) Glennerster, Rachel and Kudzai Takavorasha. (May 2010).
\(^{96}\) Ferris, Elizabeth, Daniel Petz and Chareen Stark. (March 2013).
\(^{97}\) USAID. (October 2013)
Therefore, in order to increase marginalized groups’ ability to influence community decision-making, structural barriers to equality – including deficits in capital, and constraints on time and mobility – must be addressed. This supports the Theory of Change’s logic that women and girls must be empowered to utilize both tangible and intangible assets in order to engage in community-level processes and need access to the resources, assets, and skills necessary to actively participate in community affairs.

Mercy Corps has worked with communities in Niger to better manage scarce natural resources in the face of climate change. This includes the creation and strengthening of water management committees, grazing land monitoring committees and Community Land Tenure Commissions. Although Mercy Corps has emphasized gender-balanced participation, there remain challenges in the meaningful participation of women and youth in these bodies, especially where gender norms restrict their access to a particular natural resource. In the 16 water committees supported by Mercy Corps, 40% of members are female. One female member of a water management committee described the central role of women and the cross-gender collaboration in maintaining well sites: women and girls organize regular cleanups around their three wells to ensure the sites remain sanitary, while men and boys help maintain well sites through labor intensive (clearing plants) or dangerous repairs (removing buckets or debris from within the wells). In contrast, women are less represented on the seven grazing monitoring committees (20%) and the 50 Community Land Tenure Commissions (25%) supported by Mercy Corps. Although the quality of participation in these bodies has not been studied in-depth, women’s lack of decision-making power at the household level over land and major productive resources most likely contributes to their marginalization in community-level management.

Inclusive community-level processes have better outcomes/results (i.e. are more sustainable, effective)

Although the role of gender in collective action is a nascent field of study, evidence implies that inclusive community action, and meaningful engagement of women in local decision-making about natural resources, has also been shown to yield positive outcomes for their communal livelihoods and in some cases to lead to increased solidarity and conflict mitigation.

- Agarwal found that the presence of women on forest committees, the percentage of the forest committee that were women, as well as the willingness of women to speak up in meetings, all significantly correlate with improved forest conditions (as measured subjectively by foresters, researchers, and community members and by more objective measures from satellite imagery).

- In a study that analyzed a total of 46 men’s, mixed, and women’s NRM groups (33 rural programs in 20 countries of Latin America, Africa, and Asia), Westermann et al. found that “collaboration, solidarity, and conflict resolution all increase in groups where women are present. In addition, norms of reciprocity are more likely to operate in women’s and mixed groups. Similarly, the capacity for self-sustaining collective action increased with women’s presence.”

- In their study of the development of women-only, men-only and mixed-sex organizations for community management of floodplain and fishery resources in Bangladesh, Sultana and Thompson discovered that compliance with rules limiting fishing in protected areas is higher when both men and women are actively

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98 USAID. (October 2013)
100 Mercy Corps gender analysis, Niger.
101 Mercy Corps gender analysis, Niger.
involved in the management groups. Involving women in fishery management is associated with greater community wide acceptance of management rules and reduced conflict because much of the pressure to ensure community compliance with the rules comes from women, who control what is cooked, discuss fish catches in group meetings and decide to catch or not catch fish. However, men’s participation is also vital for ensuring compliance because men are better able to guard the fish sanctuaries at night when it is unsafe for women to do so.¹⁰⁴

- Were et al. attribute, in part, the effectiveness of community water projects (measured by the successful operation of pipe water supply) in the Western Kenyan highlands to a division of labor characterized by complementary gender roles and reciprocity. As principal users of domestic water supplies, women report vandalism and breakages in pipes while men impose sanctions against rule-breakers and fix broken pipes.¹⁰⁵

Women's leadership has the potential to impact development for all, but it especially impacts the welfare of women and children.¹⁰⁶ For example, women's leadership in local collective-action groups helps regulate access to natural resources, such as water, that, in turn, impacts their agricultural productivity and capability to provide good nutrition for the household.¹⁰⁷ In Nigeria, including women in the design, implementation, and monitoring of a watershed management project (as well as on management committees) resulted in reduced travel times for water collection, allowing local women to spend more time on income-generating activities, such as farming and marketing, and providing more time for women and girls to attend school.¹⁰⁸

Literature in the development field suggests that women and girls are key to a society’s social fabric and hence, its capacity for resilience. Their roles in shaping behavior and transmitting culture and knowledge through kin and social networks, can be critical to risk prevention and response efforts, if they are given the opportunity to fully participate.

The Need for Additional Research
Although the assumptions underlying this PAE are supported by logic and anecdotal field experience, more research is needed. Such research should apply robust qualitative and quantitative methodologies to these assumptions to confirm their validity in this context.

¹⁰⁶ Quisumbing and Pandolfelli. (2010).
¹⁰⁷ USAID. (October 2013)
Applying the Theory of Change

Using the Theory of Change outlined in the previous section, this section will analyze three of Mercy Corps’ programs in the Sahel – Sawki, MILK, and ENGINE. Criteria for analysis will be developed from the proposed Theory of Change and, after assessing how well program activities and objectives fit this criteria, this section will summarize major learnings and provide recommendations for future gender and resilience programming.

Mercy Corps programming in the Sahel

Three of Mercy Corps’ programs in the Sahel\(^{109}\) were selected for analysis – two that are currently in process (Sawki and ENGINE), and one that was completed in 2011 and evaluated in 2013 to assess longer-term impact (MILK). All three programs include activities that aim to enhance household or community resilience, and all three incorporate a gender component (though in varying degrees). Sawki and ENGINE explicitly consider gender and female empowerment as mechanisms for enhancing household and community-level resilience in their proposal narratives (and in program design), whereas MILK was less focused on this connection at the outset of its program.\(^{110}\) (For an overview of each project and a description of activities that were used in this assessment, see Appendix 10.) Brief descriptions of each of the programs are below:

- **Sawki – ongoing (2012-2017)**: a five-year, $30 million USAID-funded program to reduce food insecurity and malnutrition among vulnerable populations in Niger. In partnership with Helen Keller International (HKI), Africare, the Government of Niger, local NGOs, and the National Institute of Agronomy Research (INRAN), Sawki aims to deliver an integrated and comprehensive package of activities, with a special emphasis on empowering women and adolescent girls’ as household decision-makers to combat malnutrition and build resilience. The project’s two strategic objectives are to:
  1. Reduce chronic malnutrition among pregnant and lactating women and children under five (with an emphasis on children under two); and
  2. Increase the local availability of and households’ access to nutritious food by diversifying agricultural productivity, rural households’ income, and increasing resilience to shocks.

- **Educating Nigerian Girls in New Enterprises (ENGINE) – ongoing (2013-2016)**: a three-year, £6.8 million project with support from the Coke Foundation, DFID, Nike Foundation, and d.light, employing “a ground-breaking approach to resilience in Northern Nigeria with empowered adolescent girls at the center.” ENGINE’s theory of change states that when marginalized Nigerian girls complete a full education cycle and are supported by gatekeepers they will be more skilled employees and have increased earning power and increased decision-making authority, thereby building the resilience of the overall household. ENGINE activities support three primary objectives:
  1. Ensure marginalized in-school girls improve their learning outcomes in a supportive

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\(^{109}\) For more detail on Mercy Corps current and past programming that has been “resilience-focused”, see Appendix 9 for brief program descriptions from Mercy Corps. (November 2013a).

\(^{110}\) Although not explicitly called out in the project design, this connection would be noted in mid-term and final project evaluations, and further tested in the 2013 post-project evaluation.
environment by participating in weekly Safe Space activities over a nine-month period to receive academic tutoring as well as employment readiness skills including financial education and leadership skills.

2. Increase girls’ economic assets and their influence on household decision making through access to education, increased learning, and direct linkages to economic activities.

3. Work with gatekeepers to enable girls access to and involvement in learning and economic opportunities.

- **Market Improvements and Innovative Linkages (MILK) – completed (2009-2011):** was a two-year, $2,375,980 economic recovery program designed in response to the 2008 food crisis. MILK was designed to increase the purchasing power of vulnerable households through short-term Cash for Work (CFW) activities while revitalizing an important dairy value chain in urban Niamey, Niger. The program worked to increase availability of affordable, locally-produced, nutritious dairy products that prior to the program did not meet consumer demand in urban areas. The program also strengthened linkages between producers, vendors, and consumers, and increased resiliency of program beneficiaries to future shocks to ensure sustainability. The MILK program was made up of three main components:
  1. CFW activities to help vulnerable households address immediate needs;
  2. Organizational support to peri-urban dairy cooperatives/groups to increase availability of fresh milk; and
  3. Support to women entrepreneurs in solidarity groups, to foster resilience against future shocks.

**Criteria for Application:**

Based on the proposed Theory of Change, the following criteria will be used to assess Mercy Corps’ ongoing resilience-programming in the Sahel.

- Does the program use a gender-integrated approach to understand the needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities of men, women, girls, and boys?
- Does the program acknowledge structural inequalities and attempt to address them not only through activities to empower women and girls, but also through activities to engage gatekeepers and raise awareness?

- Does the program increase access to and control over financial, physical, or natural assets?
- Does the program increase access to and control over knowledge, information, skills, or other human assets?
- Does the program increase beneficiaries’ access to informal and formal networks, and promote bonding social capital, bridging social capital, and linking social capital?
Sawki and ENGINE are models for how Mercy Corps can successfully integrate gender into program design. Both programs demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the roles and responsibilities of men, women, boys, and girls, and analyze how gender roles differentially impact livelihoods. Each program also analyzes how institutions, policies, and systems limit opportunities and entrench inequality for certain gender groups, and programming is designed to address these structural inequalities. This is typically accomplished indirectly, but in some cases, directly — for example, in Sawki where, in light of women’s low land ownership and access (especially to arable land), advocacy towards village leaders and husbands was conducted to allow women to access plots of land for vegetable gardening activities. While both programs have a general focus on women and girls (the latter being the primary focus for ENGINE), they both acknowledge the need to engage men, boys, and other gatekeepers.

MILK also successfully fulfills the gender integration criteria, though it misses the mark in some areas. A needs assessment was completed prior to the creation of the project proposal and the
program design accounted for women’s reproductive roles and increased time burdens, emphasizing the need to provide childcare so women can participate in programming. Furthermore, it was clear from interviews with beneficiaries in post-project evaluations that men and other decision-makers were adequately engaged in the beginning of the project so they understood the value of having women participate in the program. It was less clear, however, whether the program attempted to raise awareness or to address structural inequalities that inhibit women and youth’s empowerment and inclusion. While factors such as household influence and decision-making ability were measured in the post-program evaluation, this outcome did not appear to be an intentional goal or objective of the project at the outset.

Although all three programs adequately assessed gender needs, comprehensive analyses of vulnerabilities to disturbances and capacities to respond were mostly absent from program design. Assessing structural inequalities and gender norms is a key step in identifying factors that may compound vulnerability to a disturbance. However, an examination of the shocks and stresses faced in the project areas, and how different gender groups perceive, are impacted by, and withstand these hazards, is vital. In its project design, ENGINE does not include much explanation of how girls’ needs shift during shocks and stresses, or how the program intends to address these vulnerabilities. How are girls, and their assets (including those the ENGINE program plans to increase), impacted by the chronic shocks and stresses faced in Northern Nigeria? How does ENGINE predict its program outcomes will enable girls, their households, and their communities to better withstand these disturbances?

In contrast, Sawki includes a robust examination of the different shocks and stresses faced by communities living in its program areas, which touches on how vulnerabilities differ among population groups (pastoralists vs. agriculturists, men vs. women). For example, program activities designed under Strategic Objective 2 (see Appendix 10 for more details) ensured the differing impacts of disturbances on men and women were taken into account so that training in business and production techniques could be targeted for their specific vulnerabilities, and Early Warning Systems (and related response plans) can be designed to meet the needs of all members of the community. Sawki’s analysis on the differential capacities of men, women, boys, and girls to respond to these disturbances (and how program activities will strengthen these capacities) could be improved, however, by and large, Sawki is a great example of successful gender integration in resilience program design.

**Summary of Major Gaps in Gender Integration:**

- Programs do not demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of differing gender vulnerabilities to shocks and stresses in the Sahel. They have not analyzed the groups, assets, and livelihood activities that are most exposed to and likely to be negatively impacted by the disturbances faced in the Sahel, nor have they examined whether these varying assets and livelihood activities differ due to distinct gender roles and responsibilities.
- Programs do not demonstrate a complete understanding of the capacities and coping mechanisms used by different gender groups or examine which gender groups have access to existing opportunities in the broader social, ecological, or market systems to enable communities to better cope and adapt to change.
Increased Access to and Control of Capital

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Again, Sawki is a model program when assessed against the criteria from the proposed Theory of Change. The program recognizes that increasing status is the first step toward empowering women within their household and communities, and provides women with the means to contribute to household revenues and assets and participate in community life. Over the course of the program, women and girls are expected to increase their human assets through participation in functional literacy, nutrition, and livelihood trainings; augment their financial assets through income generation; and supplement their social assets through representation in community structures such as village-level land commissions. To address time and mobility issues, the program will work with women to find ways to decrease their workload through easier access to water (both potable water and garden wells), as well as labor-saving devices and technology, respectively increasing their natural and physical capital.

ENGINE includes activities that aim to increase the human capital of girls by increasing their access to education as well as their business training and skills. The program also increases girls’ financial capital and economic assets by increasing their employment opportunities and connecting them into various value chains. Through its partnership with d.light, ENGINE also intends to increase access to solar lamps, improving women and girls’ access to energy and natural capital, while simultaneously reducing the need for fuel wood and charcoal (saving time that would be spent collecting firewood and reducing the amount of deforestation and other climate impacts).

In addition to its Cash for Work component, MILK provided start-up grants, training in business management, and regular mentoring and coaching to over 2,500 beneficiaries (over 97% of whom were women). These activities served to increase both financial and human capital through increased financial resources and enhanced business knowledge and financial skills. The MILK entrepreneurial support project also required participants to work in solidarity groups, which functioned as tontines or informal saving and lending groups, ultimately increasing participants’ bonding social capital. This requirement was a key aspect that contributed to the success of the project as it increased the sustainability of the intervention, created ongoing systems of support for beneficiaries, and provided them with the means to continually reinvest and grow their businesses through collective saving activities. At the end of the project, beneficiaries reported improvements in their networks of support and cooperation, which they later described as vital to
Spotlight on Findings from the MILK Program

Overall, the beneficiaries in MILK’s entrepreneurial assistance experienced increases in their incomes, purchasing power, and ability to provide for their families. At the programs end:

- All of the women (100%) interviewed in the program assessment, reported that they had fewer debts as a result of participating in the project
- Nearly all (95%) reported increases in their income since the project started
- Beneficiaries reported that as a result of the business training they received, they understand the need to divide the income they received into capital, savings, and money to spend on expenses
- 95% of women also reported improvements in the number of meals they are able to provide for the members of their household.
- Many of the beneficiaries (80%+) reported other tangible positive outcomes such as being able to send children to school, purchasing potable water, attending to health needs, and making purchases for their home and business.

In a post-project evaluation conducted 1.5 years after the program had ended (during the 2012 food crisis), women entrepreneurs supported by the program showed the strongest savings and debt management, maintained or had increased income levels during the 2012 crisis period, sustained success with group saving during the recent crisis, and were more able to provide financial support for their friends and family.

Programs seem to be the weakest in increasing political capital and certain types of social capital – crossing lines, boundaries, and groups – is theorized to make a direct contribution to community resilience in that those with social ties outside their immediate community can draw on these links when local resources are insufficient or unavailable, and interaction with those outside of one’s immediate network is more likely to provide new perspectives and resources. Furthermore, little attention is devoted to strengthening linking capital (i.e. forming social ties to those with power) and activities rarely provide beneficiaries with the capacity to gain access to resources, ideas, and information from formal institutions beyond the community. There are a few exceptions to this, however. For example, in the ENGINE program, girls are connected with Coca-Cola, d.light, and other non-traditional value chains, linking them with employers and institutions from outside the community. Sawki intends to increase women’s representation in community structures such as village-level land commissions and Early Warning System (EWS) committees, and will connect these community-level bodies with relevant ministries within the Government of Niger.

111 All three programs include some form of a mentorship component, which could ostensibly provide a bridge between groups but should be strengthened. SAWKI includes program activities that intend to connect and build networks of traders, agro-vets, and producers.
112 Frankenberger et al. (October 2013)
Empowerment and Inclusion

Summary of Major Gaps in Increasing Access and Control of Capital:

- Program activities do not adequately address women and girls’ lack of political capital. Few of Mercy Corps’ interventions in the Sahel target the need for women and girls’ increased power and capacity to participate in, as well as access and influence formal and informal political systems and governance processes.

- Programs do not include interventions to build beneficiaries’ bridging and linking social capital, which have been theorized to be especially important in enabling individuals, households, and communities to respond to shocks and stresses.

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Sawki’s activities intend to increase the status of women and girls and directly impact their negotiating power and decision-making abilities, so they can make the appropriate decisions for themselves and their households in terms of health, nutrition, and finances. ENGINE similarly intends to increase the status and decision-making influence of girls within the household by increasing their financial and human capital. Although it may not have been intentional at the outset of the program, MILK’s female beneficiaries shared that they have experienced improvements in their autonomy in decision-making, self-confidence, and family harmony. The following personal account reveals a sense of appreciation from one of the program’s grant recipients, Madam Mariama Adama Maiga, age 53:

“This project has helped bring openness and peace to my home. When the process of preliminary identification started, we were all involved in the meetings and discussions. Even though my husband is the head of the family, I was well informed about what was going to happen. We discussed together about me joining the Mercy Corps’ start-up grant component, and the implications of performing well, or else, I shall be held responsible for the failure of our entire group of nine people. Previously, he did not consider such things to be my business, and as such he would never have wished for miracles for me... But thank God, I’m now seeing myself as not only a part of the family, but one that can contribute to decision-making in the home.”

113 MILK post-program evaluation
When tested against criteria regarding participation and influence in community processes, Mercy Corps' programs prove quite weaker. Sawki is the only program that includes activities that directly attempt to increase women’s participation in community-level bodies. Even so, it is unclear whether these activities will be able to also increase women’s influence and voice in these bodies, or if they will merely increase women’s presence. Additional steps should be taken to ensure women and girls have the opportunity to actively participate at the community-level.

Summary of Major Gaps in Increasing Participation and Influence:
- Few of Mercy Corps’ interventions target women’s increased access to and participation in community bodies and structures.
- Even when activities to promote women’s participation at the community-level are built into programming, additional steps should be included to ensure women are actively engaged and able to influence decision-making.

Limitations of Analysis
Before proceeding with recommendations it is important to note the various limitations of this analysis. The assessment of program activities was limited to a review of project proposals (narratives and budgets), performance monitoring plans, and, when possible, post-project evaluations. It is not exhaustive. Furthermore, given that two of the programs are currently ongoing, it is impossible to test the outcomes that are particularly relevant for criteria concerning increased access and control, empowerment, and inclusion. Instead, the analysis considered whether activities targeting these areas were included in the program design and whether these outcomes have been projected as expected results from the program activities. To adequately assess these criteria, appropriate measures and indicators should be built into program evaluations.
Recommendations

Based on the previous analysis, this section will outline recommendations for integrating gender into Mercy Corps’ resilience-focused efforts in the Sahel. Recommendations will be provided on two levels:

- Key considerations for incorporating a gender approach in Mercy Corps’ resilience-focused programs; and
- Key considerations for incorporating a gender approach in Mercy Corps’ institutional processes.

While recommendations have been crafted for the specific context of the Sahel, many of these can be adapted and applied to other regions, contexts, and technical areas.

Recommendations for Incorporating Gender into Resilience Programming

Provide opportunities for women and girls to build bonds by creating and/or strengthening “safe spaces” and support networks, including through tontines and village savings and loans associations (VSLAs). The resilience literature emphasizes the importance of social capital, and the “solidarity groups” promoted by Mercy Corps’ MILK program were found to be a critical mechanism for coping with future shocks. In focus groups conducted in the Sahel, both women and girls report a lack of time and space to gather, seek support, and stay informed. Mercy Corps programming should seek to reduce burdens on time and promote opportunities for women and girls to meet, share information, and strengthen ties.

Programs should strengthen women and girls’ connections to groups and networks across and outside their communities. Mercy Corps current programs do not include interventions to build beneficiaries’ bridging and linking social capital, which have been theorized to be especially important in enabling individuals, households, and communities to respond to shocks and stresses. Activities to enhance the social capital of women and girls should also include opportunities for bridging social capital. This could include programming that, for example, connects male and female savings groups or co-ops within a village. It could also include programming that provides opportunities for women’s producer associations from nearby villages to connect through information exchange and market programs. Reinforcing women’s expertise through peer learning exchanges would create the opportunity to transfer their practices and skills to other risk-prone communities. Peer learning exchanges are powerful collaborative learning tools that support the rapid transfer of knowledge and practices, and reaffirm women’s leadership, knowledge, and experience.

Strengthen women and youth’s links to informal and formal governance structures, and work with communities to empower women and youth in collective action processes, including DRR, NRM, conflict management, and social protection processes. Inclusive community processes, particularly around resource management, have been shown to be more effective and sustainable. Yet across the Sahel, women and youth are typically excluded from community-level governance systems. Their anemic participation on such committees often stems from unequal control over resources, and ultimately limits their participation in responding to shocks and stresses. Mercy Corps should facilitate the creation of inclusive community structures that equitably engage
men, women, girls, and boys. At the same time, Mercy Corps should ensure programming addresses the structural inequalities and norms that typically inhibit women and youth from influencing community processes, including excessive burdens on time, lack of mobility, and insufficient access and control of resources.

Where possible, help women and girls improve their access to and control over productive inputs (land, financial services, agricultural tools, etc.), resources, and technologies to contribute to greater resilience in the face of shocks and stresses. Unequal access to productive inputs and physical, financial, and natural resources has constrained women and girls’ ability to cope with and adapt to climate change and environmental degradation. Examples of programming to address this include increasing access to improved seeds and hardier animal breeds, as well as agricultural techniques or technologies that mitigate the effects of drought or floods, and opportunities to access loans and invest in other livelihoods activities (diversification strategy).

- Mercy Corps should promote gender-sensitive agricultural research and technology development. This should include promoting the participation of men, women, (and, where appropriate, boys and girls) in the design and testing of technologies to better gear them towards the needs of different groups across livelihood zones. Further study will be necessary to understand the differentiated effects new technologies will have on men, women, boys, and girls. For example, agricultural techniques that emphasize decreased time spent preparing farm fields (often men and boys’ responsibility) will decrease men’s work burden, however the benefits for the rest of the family (women and girls) are not necessarily evident, as it depends how that time gained is spent by men and boys. When possible and appropriate, technology to reduce the workloads of women and girls should be promoted.

- Mercy Corps should also promote gender-sensitive extension- and technical-service provision, to ensure knowledge and information about sustainable agricultural practices and techniques reaches women and girls. Programming should also support capacity-building opportunities for women-led producer groups and cooperatives (which tend to be more informal and have fewer resources than male-led groups).

Ensure programming aimed at improving women and girl’s skill-building, economic opportunities, and empowerment is coupled with programming that engages gatekeepers. Programs must ensure an approach that seeks support from surrounding community members and minimizes the potential for backlash to changes around gender roles and access to and control over resources. Gatekeepers can include husbands, mothers, fathers, mothers-in-law, male relatives, and co-wives, as well as faith and traditional leaders. Assessments of power structures and relationships should inform this process, and gatekeepers should be informed and engaged early in program implementation (if not during initial program design). Mercy Corps should draw on Sawki and ENGINE as effective models of gatekeeper engagement in future program design.

Mainstream protection in programming, with a focus on women and girls. Although not explicitly covered in this PAE, women and girls in the Sahel are vulnerable to sexual exploitation
and abuse, and may face increased risk during shocks. Mercy Corps should consider how programs will increase or decrease vulnerability of women and girls to gender-based violence (GBV). To do so, Mercy Corps should work with target communities to minimize these protection risks in programming and capitalize on partnerships with organizations working in social protection (e.g. referral systems for GBV survivor support services). In line with Do No Harm principles and MC Gender Procedures, programming at a minimum must ensure it does not increase risks of GBV.\textsuperscript{114}

Although much of this analysis focuses on addressing the marginalization of women and girls, programming should also target and create opportunities for young men and boys, who are particularly vulnerable groups in the Sahel and need further engagement. Low levels of education, lack of employment and livelihood opportunities, as well as a marginalized role in household and community decision-making, hampers youth’s abilities to contribute to household and community resilience. In the face of poor economic conditions, young men may migrate in search of employment and/or turn to illicit activities in some areas, exposing themselves to exploitation or other risks. Mercy Corps should explore new opportunities to contribute to skill-building, literacy, and vocational training for young men. Low levels of education and basic literacy skills hamper youth’s ability to gain access to employment, full access to information, and make informed decisions about health and nutrition. Programming targeting these basic skills should be coupled with and reinforce other youth-related programming, such as increasing access and demand for youth employment. Mercy Corps should increase access to and demand for youth employment. In Niger, Mercy Corps already has experience in livelihoods and vocational training for youth (e.g. the SKYE program in Agadez region) that it can build upon. However, Mercy Corps should also seek to increase the demand (employment opportunities available) as well as the supply (training/skill building) for youth employment. Mercy Corp’s ENGINE program in Nigeria partners with businesses such as Coca-Cola and d.light Solar Design to increase opportunities for girls to be hired in existing value chains. Similar programs for boys and young men should be researched.

Recommendations for Incorporating Gender into Mercy Corps’ Processes

The following recommendations were designed to align with Mercy Corps’ program lifecycle and will cover the following phases and processes:

- Program Identification and Design
- Program Set-Up and Planning
- Implementation
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- End of Program Transition

\textsuperscript{114} See MC Gender Procedures for additional information and resources. In northern Agadez for example, MC staff cited that some women and girls limited their movements in target areas because they expressed feared violence or sexual harassment by armed groups.
**Program Identification and Design**

**Design and implement a gender-assessment as part of a Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) prior to program design and conceptualization.** In order to adequately assess how gender influences vulnerabilities to shocks and stresses, as well as capacities to respond, field teams will need to incorporate a gender assessment into any tools designed for a VCA. To get a full understanding of the context, the disturbances faced, and the differing needs of individuals, households, and communities, the following questions should be considered when crafting a tool for VCA:

**Assessing Vulnerability**

- What are the assets and livelihood activities that are most exposed to, and likely to be negatively impacted by, the primary hazards identified?
  - Are certain gender groups more dependent on these vulnerable assets or livelihood activities than other groups?
- What are the most important underlying/structural factors – including disparities in social and economic power – that create or perpetuate these vulnerabilities?
- How are roles and responsibilities gendered? Do certain roles put individuals at increased risk of exposure or at increased sensitivity to the primary hazards identified?
- Are certain gender groups marginalized from processes (at the household, community, or system-level), and, if so, does this marginalization increase their vulnerability to the primary hazards identified?
  - Do local governance structures support vulnerable local communities (particularly women, elderly, infirm, children) to actively participate in risk reduction decision-making, policy-making, planning, and implementation processes?

**Assessing Capacity**

- What are the most important capacities that enable vulnerable groups to cope with and adapt to the primary shocks and stresses without suffering long-term negative developmental impacts?
- What opportunities exist in the broader social, ecological, or market systems to enable communities to better cope and adapt to change?
  - Which gender groups have access to these opportunities?
- What forms of collective response has the community used to cope with shocks and stresses?
  - Which gender groups are included in any collective response? Why?

Gender assessments should also include an analysis of social power and relationships within households and communities so programming does not create a backlash and/or deteriorate women’s and girls’ relationships with their male counterparts. Finally, when conducting gender assessments, and the broader VCA, it is necessary to separate Focus Group Discussions by sex and age to gather the necessary information. For example, separate focus group discussions should be held for men, women, boys, and girls, and female staff members should be responsible for collecting data from female beneficiaries.
Program Set-up, Planning, and Implementation

Ensure project staff – including project management and field teams – have received training on gender sensitivity. During interviews, field staff identified that a lack of gender training and gender analysis tools were barriers to integrating gender in programs. All program staff should be familiar with Mercy Corps’ Gender Policy and Mercy Corps’ Gender Procedures, and gender training should be incorporated into each new employees’ orientation to Mercy Corps (and be refreshed periodically).

When possible, partner with and build on the work of local women’s organizations – including informal organizations. Mercy Corps should engage and partner with women’s civil society organizations in the Sahel, many of whom have critical information, experience, and access to vulnerable populations. Women’s community-based organizations understand the social conditions of vulnerability facing local women and have vital local knowledge, social networks, and insight into community history that is needed for vulnerability assessments. They are likely to be a good source of information about trends and patterns on social vulnerability, such as the proportion of women who are unemployed or heads of households. Such groups also know both the difficult living conditions of women and their families and the coping strategies they use to stay afloat. In many cases, they have connections that are multigenerational and deeply rooted, especially in remote communities. Women’s community organizations typically know which women and families will be most hard hit and to whom they will turn for help.115

Monitoring and Evaluation

Develop indicators to monitor progress and to better measure and evaluate empowerment, inclusion, and resilience. Monitoring data should be disaggregated by sex and age throughout the course of programming, and mid-term and final evaluations should include specific analysis of behavior changes towards women. Participation in community and household decision-making should be monitored, and a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods should be used to evaluate whether influence has increased at the household and community-levels. Additional gender indicators should be monitored over the course of the programming, and adjustments should be made as necessary.

End of Program Transition

Develop an exit strategy that takes into account the safety of participants and sustainability of development gains after project completion. Gender relations are often precarious, especially in times where communities are facing shocks and stresses, so Mercy Corps should strive to ensure that its exit from a community does not destabilize relations.

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115 Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response. (February 2008).
Next Steps and Conclusion

“The need for an inclusive and holistic approach to vulnerability reduction and resilience building has never been more urgent and the effectiveness of gender approaches never more evident.”

Women and girls’ relatively unequal access to resources and decision-making often leads to their increased vulnerability to the range of reoccurring shocks and long-term stresses faced in the Sahel. Structural inequalities often limit their ability to mitigate the negative effects of disturbances such as conflict and climate change. Nonetheless, women and girls are critical to their communities. “While they may not hold positions of visible political leadership, women are key to a society’s social fabric and hence, its capacity for resilience.”

Women often shape communities through kin and social networks, which are important to risk prevention and disaster response efforts. Despite the challenges they face, women and girls, alongside men and boys, have unique knowledge and skills to contribute to “bouncing back better” in the face of disturbances.

Despite the destruction and tragedy they can cause, in some instances, shocks and stresses open up opportunities for positive change, enabling women and men to take on new and more progressive gender roles. Seizing the opportunities that disturbances offer, however, will require aid organizations to recognize that women and girls possess experience and skills that can be used to prepare for, respond to, and recover from crises. “The widespread recognition of their vulnerability has perhaps tended to prevent policy makers and practitioners from valuing and employing women’s skills and readiness to act.”

The empowerment of women and girls, and the engagement of men and boys, will be crucial for achieving long-term positive change in the Sahel. Shocks – natural and man-made, sudden and foreseen – can undermine the foundations of communities throughout the region, but may also provide opportunities to begin to transform deeply entrenched inequality. As the Hausa proverb suggests, “If the drumbeat changes, the dance must also change.”

This PAE set out to answer whether or not a gender-integrated approach, along with the promotion of empowerment and inclusion, would enable Mercy Corps to build household and community resilience in the Sahel. Using evidence from Mali, Niger, and Northern Nigeria, it explained that gender is crucial to understanding the perceptions of and vulnerabilities to disturbances, along with the coping mechanisms used by men, women, boys, and girls. It analyzed the resilience literature and using evidence from the Sahel, conducted a gender analysis of the key determinants of resilience. This, in turn, was used to develop a theory of change that can be tested by Mercy Corps’ Sahel Hub to strengthen its evidence base on resilience (see Appendix 11 for additional research questions and next steps for testing the theory of change). This PAE then applied the proposed theory of change to Mercy Corps’ current programming in the Sahel to

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117 Ferris, Elizabeth, Daniel Petz and Chareen Stark. (March 2013).
119 Oxfam Programme Insights. (October 2012).
assess gaps in its ongoing efforts to build resilience. Finally, it provided recommendations for implementing this theory of change in Mercy Corps’ future programming in the Sahel.

The practices and policies of aid organizations have seen much progress on the issue of gender in recent years, but “there are still many examples of humanitarian and development work which could have delivered better results...had gender analysis and planning with gender equality in mind been central to relief operations.”

Mercy Corps’ programs are stronger when they understand and work with communities to address the relative inequalities and vulnerabilities faced by women, girls, boys, and men. This will not only reduce harmful vulnerabilities, but increase the coping and adaptive abilities of individuals, households, and communities affected by detrimental shocks and stresses. Such work is critical to fulfilling Mercy Corps’ commitments to gender equity and resilience, and to achieving its mission to build productive, secure, and just communities.

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120 Hoare, Joanna et al. (2012).
Appendices

Appendix 1: Methodology and Limitations

To facilitate this research, a literature review was conducted, along with a review of existing data on gender inequalities in Mali, Niger, and Nigeria. Key stakeholder interviews with experts, peer and donor organizations, Mercy Corps staff, and focus groups with beneficiaries were also conducted.

Literature Review

There is a growing body of work on the concept of “resilience” in development efforts, and during this project a literature review was conducted to develop a baseline understanding of current best practices and definitions of resilience. Research has also been conducted on the current shocks and stresses faced by households and communities in the Sahel (examining the cases of Mali, Niger, and Nigeria), along with an analysis of how gender inequality in the Sahel impacts different livelihood outcomes. Please see the Bibliography at the end of this report for a list of documents referenced.

Interviews

Interviews with key members of Mercy Corps staff at headquarters and in the field were conducted to better understand Mercy Corps’ approach to resilience and its work in the Sahel. Interviews with peer organizations and donor institutions were conducted to understand how others are defining and approaching resilience and how they view the relationship between gender and resilience. These interviews also intended to assess what mechanisms are being advanced by peer organizations as being critical to building resilience (in the Sahel), and targeted both gender specialists and resilience experts. Finally, several key informant interviews were conducted with leaders of non-governmental and governmental organizations in Mali.

Mercy Corps staff:
- Shannon Alexander, Director, Resilience, Governance and Partnerships
- Jon Kurtz, Director, Research and Learning
- Lisa Robbins-Garland, Acting Deputy Country Director, Niger
- Sarah Wardwell, West and Central Africa Resilience Advisor
- Sebastien Fesneau, Country Representative, Mali
- Tate Munro, East Africa Resilience Advisor
- Mohamed Bathily, Mercy Corps Representative in Gao, Mali

Peer Organizations, Donor Institutions, Experts:
- Bonifast Diallo, Director of Pathways Program in Mali, CARE International
- Korotoumou Konfé, Gender Advisor, USAID Mali
- Soumaila Sogoba, Program Coordinator, OXFAM Saving for Change
- Shannon Strother, Chief of Social Policy, UNICEF Mali
- Kyla Neilan, fellow, myAgro
- Dr. Judi Aubel, Founder, The Grandmother’s Project
- Lauren Ravon, Senior Policy Advisor, Oxfam Canada
- Tim Frankenburger, President, TANGO International
Other Key Informant Interviews:
- Djingarey Maiga, President of Femmes et Droits Humains, Mali
- Yacouba Doumbia, Benkadi, Community Association in Sanankoroba, Mali
- Dr. Mariam Maiga, President of Women’s Movement for Peace and National Reconciliation, Mali
- Madame Simone Niantao, Tuareg woman from Northern Mali
- Madame Yaba Tamboura, Technical Advisor, Malian Ministry of Women Children Protection

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)
Focus group discussions with men, women, and youth were conducted in Mali in January 2014. The questions aimed to solicit participants’ views of:
- Environmental risks and the implications these have for livelihood opportunities, coping strategies and household roles and responsibilities of men, women, boys and girls;
- Lifecycle-related stresses, such as expenses related to marriages, births, or funerals;
- Costs associated with ill-health, and the ways these are distributed among men and women (e.g. do coping strategies have differential implications for assets owned by men compared with women?);
- Time use patterns of men, women, girls and boys, and how these are distributed between paid and unpaid work within and outside the household, as well as leisure time;
- Intra-household balance of power and decision-making, ownership and use of resources and assets, including productive assets;
- Informal safety nets and coping strategies, such as support from neighbors and friends, funeral societies, savings clubs, religious institutions, distress sale of assets, migration, and remittances sent by family members, access of loans;
- Opportunities for participation in social networks, local politics, and decision-making mechanisms related to social programs

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<tr>
<th>N.</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Focus Groups</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kati village, Kati cercle</td>
<td>Koulikoro</td>
<td>1.1 Women</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.2 Female Youth*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.3 Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.4 Male Youth*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Diago village, Kati cercle</td>
<td>Koulikoro</td>
<td>2.1 Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sanankoroba village, Kati cercle</td>
<td>Koulikoro</td>
<td>3.1 Women</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.2 Female Youth*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.3 Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.4 Male Youth*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Galo village, Banamba cercle</td>
<td>Koulikoro</td>
<td>4.1 Women</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.2 Men</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Although the majority of youth FGD participants are between 15-30, the term youth is culturally flexible and sometimes includes those 30 years and above.

Gender Analyses
This PAE also heavily relied on gender analyses conducted by Mercy Corps (through employee Lisa Robbins-Garland) in Mali, Niger, and Nigeria from June 2013 to November 2013. The methodology for these three analyses is outlined below.

Mali
The research informing the gender analysis included the following:

- Desk Review of relevant research and program documents
- 17 Key Informant Interviews conducted in Bamako, Mali
- 1 Focus Group Discussions with members of Réseau des femmes leadeurs des régions du nord

Niger
The research informing the gender analysis included the following:

- Desk Review of relevant research and program documents
- 15 Key Informant Interviews, conducted in Niamey, Filingué and Maradi, October 2013 with external actors, as well as at least 10 interviews with Mercy Corps Niger staff.
- Six Focus Group Discussions, conducted with communities in two regions (Tillabery, Maradi)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>N.</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Focus Groups</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Baourataoua village, Maradi town</td>
<td>Maradi</td>
<td>1.5 Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.6 Female Youth*</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.7 Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.8 Male Youth*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tarkassa village, Filingué town</td>
<td>Tillabery</td>
<td>2.1 Women/ Female Youth</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.3 Men/ Male Youth</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Although the majority of youth FGD participants are between 15-30, the term youth is culturally flexible and sometimes includes those 30 years and above.

Nigeria
The research informing the gender analysis included the following:

- Desk Review of relevant documents
- Fifteen Key Informant Interviews (KII), conducted in Abuja and Jos
- Nine Focus Group Discussions (FGD), conducted with pastoral and farming communities in two local government areas (LGA) in Plateau State. FGD citations will be referred to by the Community (e.g. Bisichi Farmers) and sex/age disaggregation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N.</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>LGA</th>
<th>Focus Groups</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bisichi – Pastoralists</td>
<td>Barkin Ladi</td>
<td>1.9 Women (22 persons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and Agro-pastoralists (5</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.10 Female Youth* (18 persons)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>separate groups)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.11 Men (17 persons)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.12 Male Youth* (27 persons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.13 Male Religious Leaders (5 persons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bisichi – Farmers (2</td>
<td>Barkin Ladi</td>
<td>2.1 Female Youth* (9 persons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>separate groups)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.3 Men/ Male Youth (13 persons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Washek – Pastoralists</td>
<td>Bokkos LGA</td>
<td>3.1 Women/ Female Youth* (8 persons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2 separate groups)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.3 Men/ Male Youth (13 persons)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Although the majority of youth FGD participants are between 15-30, the term youth is culturally flexible and sometimes includes those 30 years and above.

Limitations
It is important to note that the current analysis has several major limitations. It is a snapshot of the context and should not be considered exhaustive. Continued research and refinement is needed to
develop a fuller understanding of the context and the vulnerabilities and coping mechanisms of households and communities from a gender perspective. Due to the wide scope of the analysis – covering diverse groups, regions, and subjects – research was unable to capture the level of detail necessary for targeted interventions. More targeted assessments (including vulnerability and capacity assessments) are essential for developing a gender analysis that can be used in future resilience programming.
Appendix 2: Peer and Donor Approaches to Gender and Resilience

This section looks at two of Mercy Corps’ peer organizations (Oxfam and ActionAid) and one of Mercy Corps’ institutional donors (US Agency for International Development – USAID) to analyze how gender has been included in organizational approaches to resilience.

Oxfam, perhaps the most outspoken organization on how inequality and power imbalances have hindered resilience, has argued that:

- “Inequality is hardwired into crises.” Those who are marginalized — because of their caste, color, class, age, ability or gender — are likely to suffer more from shocks.
- Resilience “must go beyond the dry, technical fixes that have dominated the discussion so far. Building skills and capacity must go alongside tackling the inequality and injustice that make poor women and men more vulnerable in the first place. This means challenging the social, economic, and political institutions that lock in security for some, but vulnerability for many, by redistributing power and wealth (and with them, risk) to build models of shared societal risk.”
- The endemic discrimination that women face — in education, health care, employment, and control of property — inevitably makes them more vulnerable.
- Efforts to promote resilience must address the structural causes of gender and income inequality that entrench vulnerability.


Oxfam Canada has received funding (CA $62,930) from the International Development Research Centre to conduct gender and resilience research (project dates are from May 2013 until October 2014). The research project, entitled “Resilience in the Face of Food Insecurity and Food Crises: A Gendered Perspective,” will be based on interviews conducted with two dozen women’s organizations in ten countries. Among the project’s goals include creating structured opportunities to share experience and knowledge across the international aid sector to assist with the development and progress of “effective, gendered, and integrated approaches.” Early findings from the research include:

- Risks and threats to food security: While Oxfam Canada’s research found some commonalities with the literature on resilience, most women’s organizations identified risks that are absent from mainstream resilience frameworks (e.g. women’s limited access to land, effects of widowhood, health, violence against women, male migration, etc.). They emphasized risks that originate at the household level, that are rooted in gender inequality, and that are exacerbated by cultural stereotypes about women’s roles and ability to engage in decision making. They also spoke of barriers to building resilience that are linked to sexual stereotypes, care responsibilities, and time poverty.
- Definitions of resilience: The organizations that Oxfam Canada interviewed systematically spoke of resilience in terms of the capacity to make decisions and to take action in the face of risks and threats. Their definitions of resilience included technical capacity, but also awareness of one’s own rights, self-confidence and agency. Many women’s organizations also spoke of women having no other choice but to be resilient and to sacrifice for the wellbeing of others in the face of adversity. They spoke of women’s resilience with awe, but also explained that women’s coping strategies often go hand in hand with a sense of powerlessness to bring about change.
- Ways of working and resilience building strategies: Organizations that were interviewed spoke of the need to address gender inequality as a structural barrier to resilience, not simply as a compounding factor of vulnerability. They defined their resilience-building...
strategies as being rooted in a holistic, responsive approach to programming that addresses the wide range of risks women face. They suggested a two-pronged approach, focused on both technical capacity to withstand shocks and secure livelihoods, and shifts in gender power relations. They spoke of their capacity to harness the informal solidarity that already exists among women at the community level, and to foster collective organizing as a rampart against shocks. They also identified their efforts to challenge sexist attitudes and beliefs as a means of strengthening overall community resilience in the long term.


ActionAid’s resilience efforts are centered on addressing the underlying causes that make people vulnerable to shocks and stresses. Their analysis claims that vulnerability is primarily caused by three factors:

1. **Social exclusion** – In society, people face discrimination and the denial of rights due to patriarchal values and on the basis of their gender, class, ethnicity, religion, race, caste, age, or sexual orientation. Within these communities, women are particularly oppressed due to patriarchy; while children, people who are displaced, disabled, elderly or living with HIV or AIDS are further marginalized. This limits their participation and excludes them from the economic, social and political life of their communities and societies, making them more vulnerable to the impacts of shocks and stresses.

2. **Lack of skills, access to basic services and economic opportunities** – Access to basic services such as education, healthcare, information, social protection, finance, early warning and fair and stable markets, for example, has a direct correlation with the capacity to withstand shocks. Lack of appropriate skills to save life and inadequate economic opportunities to adopt sustainable and diversified livelihoods increases people’s vulnerability and stop them from escaping the vicious cycle of poverty.

3. **Lack of assets and secured access to natural resources** – People require assets such as a safe house, but also other resources and capacities to prepare for and respond to disasters. People living in poverty who lack secured access to natural resources such as land, forests, water, and biodiversity, have limited capacity to withstand the impact of shocks and stresses. Land use change, dispossession, the overexploitation of natural resources, unsustainable farming, and food production/distribution practices are responsible for further enhancing their vulnerability.

The inter-relationship between these three underlying causes demonstrates that just belonging to a socially excluded group alone can make a social group hugely vulnerable to shocks and stresses, but if that group also has a lack of skills, access to basic services and economic opportunities, then they become even more vulnerable. This can be compounded even further by their lack of assets and secured access to natural resources. The underlying causes of vulnerability arise primarily from **unequal and unjust power**, which leads to **lack of governance** and **unjust social attitudes**. These three mutually reinforce each other. Individually or together, they deepen the institutional perpetuation of inequality and injustice.

ActionAid firmly believes that the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) towards resilience provides sustainable long term solutions for people and communities who are the most vulnerable, and whose lives and livelihoods are under the constant threat of destruction. ActionAid’s HRBA approach centers around poor and excluded people to ensure that they have skills, assets, access to natural and access to basic services and economic opportunities. This is achieved through strengthening active agency, i.e. supporting people living in poverty to become conscious of their rights, organize and claim their rights, and hold duty bearers to account. ActionAid’s HRBA builds on international human rights law, but goes beyond a legal or technical approach to rights.
ActionAid supports people to analyze and confront power imbalances and we take sides with people living in poverty, challenging abuses of power at the local, national or international level.

To address the vulnerabilities caused by natural and human-made as well as conflict-related stressors, ActionAid believes it is imperative that any response or intervention that seeks to resolve the problem addresses the core issue of an already existing power imbalance and inequality that gets compounded at times of crises, with disproportionate impact on women. Any such intervention has to primarily address the restoration of people’s power, and women in particular, to seek solutions to their problems through a three-pronged approach that empowers them, builds solidarity, and campaigns to create a global environment wherein people in distress lead specific actions to bring about a desirable change in their lives. A people centric approach to resilience that reinforces one’s inherent power within is therefore a prerequisite to building a society that is resilient to future shocks and stresses.


USAID is the only organization analyzed in this research that mentioned the need for gender-integrated approach to resilience efforts not only because such an approach will reduce inequalities and vulnerabilities, but also because it will seize upon the unique skills and capacities of different groups within the population. In outlining its conceptual framework for resilience, USAID argues that:

- In developing a resilience strategy, “attention should be paid to different groups within communities; for example, investing in youth, who play increasingly prominent and intergenerational roles as agents of recovery and change, should be seen as foundational to reducing risk.”
- We must also provide relief and promote development in ways that more effectively reduce gaps between males and females and involve and meet the different needs of men and women. Despite the fact that women often face a range of unique challenges in areas of recurrent crisis – and often bear the heaviest burden of shocks and stresses – they also possess enormous individual and collective capacity to help themselves, their families, and their communities. A 2009 study examined the role of Sudanese women in improving household food security and suggested that rural women are more likely than men to effectively use available local resources in diversification strategies. Furthermore, women with adequate access to food production sources (i.e., agricultural land, home gardens, and backyard plots), different sources of incomes, and the capacity to control the choice of foods being prepared and consumed are better able to improve their household’s food security and nutrition.
- Approaches that systematically and visibly reduce key gender gaps and ensure that women are given the tools, resources, and opportunities to lead and participate are critical to the success of our efforts to achieve sustainable change.
- Research shows that shocks due to disasters reinforce and perpetuate gender inequality, as shocks can disproportionately affect women’s access to income, assets, and other resources. As there are significant differences in how women cope with shocks as opposed to men, we will employ an approach that reduces gaps between males and females, empowers women, and promotes inclusive growth.

Appendix 3: Overview of Gendered Roles and Responsibilities in the Sahel

Throughout the Sahel, men are traditionally considered the heads of households and responsible for decision-making in the private and public spheres. Men typically control most or all of the decisions about major household purchases and resources, and are also responsible for making major decisions about the health and education of their children. Although the male head of household is responsible for household financial decisions, women can also play important roles in managing household finances and resources, especially those resources under their control. Women throughout the region are increasingly making decisions about how their own earnings will be used.

Men tend to dominate leadership positions at all levels (national, state, local, and community), and are seen as primarily responsible for public affairs and decision-making. Women and youth are often under-represented in formal, traditional, and religious institutions, although there are some examples of women community leaders and elected officials, as well as active youth organizations. Women are often responsible for social obligations in the community (e.g. marriages, baptisms, visits to sick relatives), and older female community members may be involved in dispute resolution, or sit on school, hospital, or certain natural resource management committees. However, presence does not necessarily guarantee full participation in decision-making, especially if women are in a minority position. Boys and girls play a much lesser role, if any, in community decision-making. They may, however, play roles in maintaining community resources, as well as channeling information.

Gendered roles and responsibilities leave women and girls responsible for reproductive duties such as childcare, housework, and caring for other family members. Although men are often viewed as the primary breadwinners in Mali, Niger, and Nigeria, women and youth often take on significant productive work, contributing to household income-generation and livelihoods activities (e.g. farming, commerce, small livestock). Women increasingly contribute to household incomes, in some cases due to their role as heads of household in the absence of men (e.g. because of labor migration or conflict); in Nigeria, for example, female-headed households represent around 15% of households. In addition, certain Tuareg communities (principally in Mali’s north and in Niger), are matriarchal and women can have a higher amount of control over productive resources. Control over family resources also varies in polygamous contexts, where second or later wives may have slightly more control over their animal assets and revenue from income-generating activities.

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121 MC Focus Group Women Filingué, Women and Girls Maradi – women and girls confirmed that may have more control over revenues gained from their own income-generating activities or animals they own.


123 British Council (2012); Nwadinobi, Eleanor with Sarah Maguire. (January 2013).

124 National Gender Policy, p. 14; FGD Filingué Women

125 FGD Filingué Women – girls help women in regular cleaning and maintenance of sanitation around well sites; boys and men help weed and do harder labor tasks to maintain well sites. Girls are the least involved in community decision-making, and have less access to information than boys.

activities.\textsuperscript{127}

Boys often assist men in productive roles, while girls support women in their reproductive roles and productive contributions.\textsuperscript{128} The detailed responsibilities of boys and girls also vary depending on the level of family income, whether they are enrolled in school (e.g. girls in school sometimes have less involvement in reproductive activities, but more than boys), and what livelihood zone they live in.\textsuperscript{129}

\textbf{It is important to note that gender roles and responsibilities may change as a result of environmental or other pressures.} For example, male migration may lead women, girls, and other household members to take on new roles (e.g. managing food stocks). These changes can create opportunities to challenge discriminatory social norms, but can also exacerbate vulnerabilities (e.g. increased responsibility for household needs without necessary control over resources or decision-making power).

\textsuperscript{127} MC staff interview, October 2013; Key Informant Interview with Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, October 2013.
\textsuperscript{128} National Gender Policy, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{129} MC Focus Group Girls Maradi.
## Appendix 4: Definitions of Resilience from Peer and Donor Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization or Institution</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>“…the ability of countries, communities and households to manage change, by maintaining or transforming the living standards in the face of shocks or stresses…without compromising their long-term prospects.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Commission</td>
<td>“the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to withstand, adapt, and quickly recover from stresses and shocks such as drought, violence, conflict or natural disaster.”¹³⁰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>“the ability of people, communities or systems that are confronted by disasters or crises to withstand damage and to recover rapidly.”¹³¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change</td>
<td>“the ability of a system and its component parts to anticipate, absorb, accommodate or recover from the effects of a hazardous event in a timely and efficient manner, including through ensuring the preservation, restoration or improvement of its essential basic structures and functions.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFRC</td>
<td>“the ability of individuals, communities, organizations, or countries exposed to disasters and crises and underlying vulnerabilities to anticipate, reduce the impact of, cope with, and recover from the effects of adversity without compromising their long-term prospects.”¹³²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercy Corps</td>
<td>“the capacity of communities in complex socio-ecological systems to learn, cope, adapt, and transform in the face of shocks and stresses”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxfam</td>
<td>“…the ability of women, men, and children to realise their rights and improve their well-being despite shocks, stresses, and uncertainty”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>“…a transformative process of strengthening the capacity…to anticipate, prevent, recover, adapt and/or transform from shocks, stresses and change.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNISDR</td>
<td>“the capacity of a system, community or society potentially exposed to hazards to adapt, by resisting or changing in order to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning and structure. This is determined by the degree to which the social system is capable of organising itself to increase this capacity for learning from past disasters for better future protection and to improve risk reduction measures.”¹³³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>“the ability of people, households, communities, countries, and systems to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth.”¹³⁴</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹³² IFRC. (June 2012).
¹³⁴ USAID. (2012).
Appendix 5: Defining Factors of Resilience

Although not exhaustive, there are several defining factors of resilience that are common across organizational frameworks and the resilience literature:

- While in the past, resilience has been presented or understood as an outcome that can be measured, an increasing number of academics and practitioners now recognize that a more useful way to conceptualize resilience is to understand it as a process, capacity, or ability. Understanding what capacities need to be developed by individuals, households, and communities that are vulnerable to shocks, is critical to understanding resilience.

- Resilience is not just the immediate ability to respond to negative ‘events’ but rather a process of positive adaptation before, during and after a disturbance. Different abilities of anticipating, reducing the impact of, coping with, and recovering from the effects of disturbances are necessary for building resilience. Across organizational frameworks and definitions, three interconnected capacities have been cited, each necessary for building resilience but not sufficient on their own:
  - Absorptive Capacity – the ability to absorb the negative impact of shocks and stresses. The capacity to cope with change in the short-term.
  - Adaptive Capacity – the ability to make proactive and informed choices about alternative strategies based on an understanding of changing conditions. The capacity to manage change in the medium-term.
  - Transformative Capacity – the ability to rely on governance mechanisms, policies/regulations, infrastructure, community networks, and formal mechanisms that constitute the enabling environment for innovation and systemic change. The capacity to manage and benefit from change in the long-term.

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136 Frankenberger, Tim et al. (October 2013).
• Resilience also means coping with disturbances **without compromising long-term prospects.** At its core, the resilience approach is an attempt to protect development gains in the longer term and to reduce the dramatic decline in development that disasters and crises cause.\(^{137}\) This distinguishes resilience from bare survival. Resilience is an ability to 'bounce back' or even to 'bounce forward' rather than simply return to vulnerability. Strengthening resilience can be associated with windows of opportunities for change and transformation, often opening after a disturbance.

• A systematic, comprehensive approach to resilience requires understanding the **interconnectedness of different levels — individuals, households, communities, and higher-level systems such as nations and ecosystems.** A comprehensive analysis requires understanding that individuals and households are “nested” within communities, and that communities are “nested” within the external environment. Interventions to strengthen resilience should be taken on different levels and should reinforce each other. **The analysis conducted for this report focuses on individuals and households, and their connection to community-level processes.** Further analysis on how gender influences vulnerability and resilience within higher-level systems should be examined.

\(^{137}\) IFRC. (June 2012).
### Appendix 6: Patterns Emerging from Gender Analyses in Mali, Niger, and Nigeria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Capital and Related Asset</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>Control</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Human Capital</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge and Information</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Financial Capital</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Revenues/Income</td>
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<tr>
<td>Credit (formal)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit (informal)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Natural Capital</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Capital</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Livestock (large)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Livestock (small)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Social Capital</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bonding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bridging</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linking</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Political Capital</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Traditional Governance Mechanisms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formal Governance Mechanisms</td>
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</table>

= Full access/full control of asset

= Some access/some control of asset

= No access/no control of asset
Appendix 7: Overview of the Gender Asset Gap in the Sahel

This appendix provides a summary of information included in Mercy Corps’ Mali, Niger, and Nigeria gender analyses, and has been supplemented by a literature review, key informant interviews, and the author’s field research. It is important to note that due to the wide scope of the analysis, covering diverse groups, regions, and subjects, this overview is not able to capture the level of detail necessary for targeted interventions. Instead, this overview attempts to highlight patterns and commonalities between contexts to draw broader conclusions about gender across the Sahel. In some cases, illustrative examples from one or two country contexts have been used in this analysis; such examples may not be applicable to every area or context within the Sahel. Therefore, while this appendix intends to provide a broad overview of the gender asset gap and was used as the foundation for the chart in Appendix 6, more research (especially in Mercy Corps’ target communities) is essential for developing a detailed analysis of the gender gap.

Financial, Physical, and Natural Capital

Throughout the Sahel, men have more access to and control over productive resources such as land, credit, animal assets and other agricultural inputs. Even with laws allowing women and girls to own and access resources in practice, customary law limits women’s ownership of productive resources (e.g. land, ability to enter into contracts to buy/sell goods). 138

Natural Capital

When compared to men, women and youth have less decision-making power over community natural resources, although they make important contributions. Men and women’s involvement in natural resource management remains closely related to their gendered roles and responsibilities, as well as their control over resources. For example, analysis in Niger noted stronger women’s participation in water management committees than in land tenure commissions, likely due to both women’s lack of land ownership and their primary role in water collection. 139 When natural resource management structures marginalize women and youth’s participation, this can lead to responses and priorities that do not address their particular needs and vulnerabilities, and that undervalue their contributions to community-led solutions. 140

**Land:** Discriminatory social norms hinder women from owning land and women and girls often access land through their husbands, male relatives, or, in some cases, through inheritance (e.g. under Sharia law). 141 In Nigeria, for example, men are five times more likely to own land than women, with women owning only 4% of land in the Northeast and around 10% in the Southeast.

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138 For example, according to the SIGI, Niger’s Rural Code states women are free to buy, own, and sell land, but this is limited in reality because of discriminatory inheritance practices and the dominant role of men as head of households. Niger’s Commercial Code allows women to engage in economic activity outside the home without spousal permission, but is limited in practice. Indeed, although no laws prohibit women from opening bank accounts, it remains difficult for them to access credit despite their “increasingly important role in society as entrepreneurs.”

139 Niger Gender Context Analysis, October 2013


141 Peterma et. al. (June 2010). “Understanding Gender Differences in Agricultural Productivity in Uganda and Nigeria”, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).
While family farms often utilize the labor of women, girls, and boys, male heads of household usually control agricultural resources and revenues. Although women most often access land through male relatives, and may farm a portion of their husband’s commercial or household plot, women’s collective gardening plots also exist, in some cases promoted by development interventions. Women have limited control over these plots, i.e. they can decide what to plant, but do not officially own the land (and cannot sell or use the land as collateral in loans). In most cases, crops grown by women are used for household consumption, though they may also be sold for revenue. The family plots that men control are more likely to be used for cash crops.

- Men are responsible for providing grains and cereals for the family, and, as the head of the household, are expected to make decisions about and manage the grain storage. Although it is expected that men will provide households with rice and millet (grains), if their provisions are not sufficient, women are obliged to use their own money to obtain additional grain. In the Maradi and Zinder regions of Niger (and as explained during focus group discussion in the town of Galo in Mali) men, boys, women, and girls all contribute to household production of cereals, however, only men control access to the harvested crop. Men decide how much and when to draw on this food stock and women must use their own limited resources (e.g. small commerce and small livestock) to meet the remaining needs of their household. In some cases, men will migrate elsewhere for work, leaving women and children at home, unable to access the remaining stock (or having to go through other family members, such as brothers-in-law).

Traditional gender roles and responsibilities mean women and girls responsible for reproductive roles such as childcare, housework, and caring for other family members. This often includes collecting water and firewood, which may sometimes significantly impact female workloads, especially where water sources are located far from communities. Women and girls, as part of their responsibility for these tasks, have unique knowledge about supplies of water and firewood. Their practices of collecting these resources demonstrate how they are already adapting to changes in the climate that may impact their access to water and wood.

Financial Capital

Revenues/Income: Women and adolescent girls are engaged in economic activities, however they are often concentrated in the informal sector. For example, in Northern Nigeria, a majority of girls who report participation in economic activities are involved in informal, female dominated-industries, including handicrafts, home-based or family businesses, and restaurant or food sales.

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142 British Council (2012)
143 usually a smaller surface area (0.5 hectares)
144 MC Focus Group Filingue Women – cited collective gardening for women created and supported by another NGO; Maradi – cited SAWKI program support for women’s collective gardening.
145 Key informant interviews with Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and Africare Livestock Advisor, October 2013
146 Focus Group, Galo Women
147 MC Maradi staff interviews; MC Niger SAWKI program documents; ICF baseline study, Galo focus group discussion with men, Galo focus group discussion with women
Generally, women and girls have less control over their revenues, especially where men are traditionally considered heads of household and responsible for financial decision-making. This may vary where women are widowed, divorced, or heads of household. Studies have shown that girls often do not fully control revenues from their commercial activities, but their increased economic contributions to the household can lead to increased status within their families and communities. In focus group discussions across the Sahel, women and girls who report running their own enterprise also report having a higher rate of control over their income.

- Revenues from agricultural production/gardening - Men control revenue from family farms and women sometimes control income from the sale of produce from collective or their own small plots. Men and those with access to agricultural inputs (larger tracts of land, credit etc.) are more likely to control revenues from cash crops or engage in irrigated farming, which can lead to higher revenues. “Female farmers are associated with traditional subsistence and low-yield food crops, due to their lack of influence and their inability to access agricultural innovations.”

Credit: Individuals across the Sahel face barriers to accessing financial capital and services. For example, an estimated 65% of Nigerians do not have a bank account, and instead rely on informal savings and loan mechanisms or microfinance institutions (MFI). Women, girls, and sometimes boys are less able to access formal credit, in part because they lack the collateral; studies in Nigeria have found that men are twice as likely to secure finance compared to women, who turn instead to family, friends, or informal savings groups. Without land as collateral, limitations on household decision-making and lower levels of literacy and education, women are less able to access financial services. In Niger, men are more likely to access formal credit and banks due to control over productive assets (such as land, used as collateral in loans, and food stocks, used in agricultural insurance schemes). In addition higher levels of education and literacy, as well as gender norms governing commercial activities bias men. Although there are no legal restrictions on women’s access to bank loans, barriers mean that women are more likely to be part of informal savings and loan mechanisms, such as “tontines,” or microcredit interventions targeting women. Adolescent girls also report participating in informal rotating saving and credit groups.

150 Mercy Corps, “Adolescent Girls in Northern Nigeria”, 2013; Glennerster, Rachel and Kudzai Takavarsha, May 2010. – Studies demonstrate that adolescent girls’ increased contribution to household assets increases their role in decision making within the household
151 Mercy Corps, “Adolescent Girls in Northern Nigeria”, 2013, FGDs in Sanankoroba, Kati
152 Women may do small-scale irrigated gardening activities, but typically at a smaller scale than men because they don’t usually have access to a moto-pump to pump water, and must irrigate by hand instead.
153 Peterman et. al. (2010).
154 Idowu et. al. (2008), p. 6.
156 British Council (2012).
157 National Gender Policy; SIGI; Key Informant Interview ASUSU, October 2013.
girls saving a maximum of N200 per month. The majority of girls report participating in savings groups to save money to start their own business or small economic activity (69%), to pay school fees (12%), household needs (10%), marriage (5%), and medical expenses (2%).158

**Physical Capital**

**Small and Large Livestock:** In pastoral communities, women and girls are traditionally responsible for dairy production and marketing, and use the revenues for household and sometimes personal consumption. Men traditionally own cattle and make decisions regarding smaller animals. Women and other family members sometimes own small animals apart from the husband’s herd (goats, sheep, poultry). In Niger, for example, women are most likely to control poultry resources (and sometimes goats and sheep), which represent a more mobile form of capital that they would be able to take in the case of divorce or family migration due to shocks. In some contexts, women may also manage and sometimes control ovine and caprine herds as well as poultry.159 Men may make decisions regarding animal assets of other household members, but the reverse is seldom true. Women are forbidden from selling men’s animals without their permission, but report making small decisions about animal care in the absence of men (for example, if their husbands migrate).160 Conflict has seriously affected pastoral livelihoods, threatening animal assets, a major source of income and savings. For example, inter-communal conflict in Nigeria’s Middle Belt stems in larger part from competition over resources and has led to barriers in access to vaccination services, theft, and killing of animals. Conflict has also led to the sale of animals to meet household needs in response to damaged livelihoods, displacement, or risk avoidance.161 The loss of animal assets affects and involves the entire household. For example, men will use animal assets to meet household needs, boys will work as herders, and women and girls will sell small animals and in some cases discontinue dairy production.162

- Whether a woman is the head of household also influences her access to and control over livestock. In Niger, for example, 37% of female-headed households claim to own animals, of which 51.2% specified owning ovine herds.163 Girls and boys in the family may also assist in the management of livestock, and/or own smaller animals (goat, sheep, poultry). Women are almost always responsible for milk production for all types of animals, and often have some control over household consumption and revenues related to dairy products.

**Human Capital**

Human capital consists of the skills, knowledge, information, ability to labor, and good health that are important to the pursuit of livelihood strategies. Across the Sahel, men are typically responsible for making major decisions about health and education of children.

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159 MC Focus Group Maradi Women – women said only animal they control is poultry.
160 Peterman et. al. (2010), p. 5
162 KII National Commission for Nomadic Education; FGD Female Washeq Pastoralists; FGD Female Bisichi Pastoralists.
163 National Gender Policy p. 20.
**Education:** On average, women and girls experience lower levels of education and literacy across the Sahel. Nigeria, for example, has the largest amount of children out-of-school in the world (10.5 million), with an average of only 60% of girls and 65% of boys attending school. Girls also face higher dropout rates and lower literacy levels, which vary by region. Roughly 66% of female youth (15-24 years) are literate, compared to 78% of male youth. Women’s literacy rates as a percentage of men is only 70%. Disparities exist between regions and communities as well. For example, 70.8% of young women aged 20-29 in the Northwest of Nigeria are unable to read or write due in part to early marriage and childbirth, poor sanitation, and the shortage of female teachers. In Niger, an estimated 29% of the population (over 15 years old) is illiterate; only 23% of female youth (15-24) are literate, versus 52% of male youth. The gap between adult male and female literacy rates is just as stark with female literacy as percentage of the male literacy rate at only 35%. Low levels of primary and secondary-level education are a reality for both boys and girls in Niger, however gender roles and norms disadvantage girls’ access to education, leading to much lower primary, secondary and tertiary education rates.

• Technical Education and Skills-Building Opportunities: Women often have less access to agricultural and livestock technical services and appropriate technologies, due in part to cultural barriers, small-scale production, limited mobility, and lack of female staff.

**Health:** Women and children face major health challenges that hinder their development and livelihoods, in part linked to early marriage and childbirth.

• Maternal Health: Around 47% of Nigerian women are mothers before they reach 20 years old. Early marriage can lead to complications for maternal and child health, hinder continuing education and lower negotiating power within the household. Nigeria has a maternal mortality rate of 545 deaths per 100,000 live births, nearly double the global average, and is ranked 14th in the world for under-five mortality. Niger has the highest rate of marriage for girls under 15 years old in the world, which contributes to infant health problems, constrains education opportunities, and increases the potential for gender-based violence (i.e. less negotiating power, often married to a man 10 years senior). Additionally, one in 23 women die of pregnancy or child labor.

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166 UNICEF Niger Statistics – Primary net attendance ratio: 31% girls vs. 44% boys; Secondary net attendance ratio: 8% girls vs. 13% boys.
167 FAO and ADB. 2013.
168 For more information, see — Temin, Miriam and Ruth Levin. 2009.
169 British Council, Executive Summary.
related issues, and Niger is ranked seventh in the world for infant mortality.¹⁷²

- HIV/AIDS: Nigeria has the second largest population living with AIDS after South Africa (4 million), with over 2.1 million children orphaned due to AIDS. Low access to health information, poverty and discriminatory social norms expose young girls to high levels of sex in exchange for goods in the South, and early marriage (less negotiation power) in the North. As a result, young women are particularly at risk of HIV/AIDS.¹⁷³

**Information:** Research suggests that men and to an extent boys have more access to information in their communities than women and girls, who also have less control over modalities (cell phones, radios, community meetings). In recent focus group discussions, men said they received information about their communities through village chiefs and community meetings, as did boys to an extent, with the latter adding word of mouth in the marketplace and community spaces. Women cited family members and neighbors, and in some cases, through their own children. Girls said they receive information about their communities through friends or their brothers, though rarely from parents. All groups referred to use of technology, cell phones and radios, to some extent. However ownership of cell phones and radios varied by income groups, as well as by gender, related in part to lower literacy rates and financial resources of women, girls, and boys. Men control household radios, the village chiefs often set up separate times for male and female community members to listen.¹⁷⁴

**Political Capital**

**Traditional governance mechanisms:** Traditional dispute resolution mechanisms that emphasize the role of male traditional and religious leaders (e.g. a council of elders, or use of pastors or Imams as mediators) may in some cases risk not addressing the underlying causes of conflict or grievances of women, girls, and male youth.¹⁷⁵ Although male youth are major actors in violent conflict in Nigeria (among other countries in the Sahel) they may not always be fully represented in conflict resolution mechanisms or formal peace initiatives, and sometimes struggle for power with older male leaders in their communities.

Girls’ more limited mobility, low levels of education and literacy, and high rates of early marriage also mean they have less negotiating power and voice to influence and engage in community decision-making and conflict resolution. Unmarried girls may also face barriers, especially where female participation revolves around their roles as “wives and mothers.”

**Formal governance mechanisms:** All three countries have low levels of female political participation and ability to influence political processes. Despite national targets (35%), women represent only 6-7% of the legislature in Nigeria. A study in the Northern States of Yobe, Bauchi, Zamfara and Jigawa revealed that women represented around 2% of State-level political office holders in

¹⁷² UNICEF Niger Statistics; CIA World Factbook – Maternal mortality rate is 590 deaths per 100,000 lives births and infant mortality rate is approximately 88 deaths per 1,000 live births (2010).
¹⁷³ Medical Sciences for Health (2010).
¹⁷⁴ All MC Focus Groups Filingué and Maradi, October 2013.
¹⁷⁵ NSRP (January 2013)
2007. Women are also largely absent in Local Government (LG), where they represent only 4% of LG councilors.\textsuperscript{176} In Niger, women represent 12% of the legislature (6-7% in parliamentary bodies), and in Mali, they account for 9.7%. The level of influence and meaningful participation is less documented, however, and there are some fears of manipulation from male politicians (e.g. supporting election of female family members of allies they may more easily be able to influence).\textsuperscript{177}

Despite gender disparities in political representation, there are examples of women and youth’s involvement and influence in political processes. More women than men are registered to vote in Nigeria. Despite some challenges in coordination rooted in ethnic and religious diversity, there is a vibrant landscape of non-governmental organizations (NGO) engaged in promoting gender equality in Nigeria. There is also an active women’s movement in Mali, and women’s rights NGOs are providing support services to women in need while also campaigning against female genital mutilation and early marriage. Nonetheless, exclusion of women and youth from multiple levels of government still limits their ability to affect change in national decision-making bodies in comparison to men.\textsuperscript{178}

\textbf{Social Capital}

Several studies have found that men and women may have different kinds and qualities of social capital based on differences in their social networks, values of collaboration, levels of conflict and capacity for conflict management. With respect to social networks, a number of researchers have found that women often depend more on informal relations and so form stronger kinship and friendship relations than men, who tend to rely more on formal relationships.\textsuperscript{179} However, structural variables (such as number of children, marital status, age, employment status, income and occupation) can be more important for explaining differences in their social networks than gender. For example, research from the Sahel found that girls often lack the time or space to gather, seek support, or stay informed, especially outside of school.

According to Agrawal (2000), “…women have a greater need to build up social capital through localized networks, since women’s avenues for accumulating economic resources and their physical mobility is typically more restricted than men’s. They also have a greater need to sustain these networks, given their fewer exit option and lesser intra-household bargaining power.” In villages across the Sahel, women will often spend most of their day together. A large part of the day is spent on preparing food, which is very labour intensive. But, as was discovered in focus groups discussions in Mali, the women often assist each other in pounding millet, freeing time for other chores.\textsuperscript{180} Similarly, they help mind each other’s children and small domestic animals, again freeing time. Often, the free time created by working together is utilised by the women to make

\textsuperscript{176} British Council (2012).
\textsuperscript{177} Key Informant Interview (KII), Program Officer for Female Leadership, Gender Justics and Good Governance, Oxfam, Abuja, November 2013.
\textsuperscript{178} British Council (2012)
\textsuperscript{179} Agrawal (2000)
\textsuperscript{180} FGD with women, Gado
shea butter and sauces, work in their gardens and fields, tend to their animals, and go to the market, where they sell their garden produce, animals, and/or food.

In some villages throughout the Sahel, women also participate in collective gardening which provides opportunities for sharing resources (wells, water pump, tools etc.) as well as safety in working close to each other and in groups. These benefits are seen when women’s individual plots are grouped together, as well as in community gardens with shared plots. Through the Sawiki program, Mercy Corps has helped women in Niger negotiate access to land near wells, which allows them to reduce the time needed for household chores. For example, women go to the well to fetch water for their household needs, and then tend their garden before returning home. This cuts down on the need to make two different trips (to the well and to the garden) and creates time for women to engage in other activities.

**Spotlight on Women’s Social Capital in Mali:** Women report high levels of bonding social capital in Mali due to their participation in local *tontines* and working together during the day (in garden co-ops, or to grind millet). In the village of Galo, women described a rotating system for household duties and food preparation – groups of 10-12 women help each other grind millet on a daily basis, rotating which household’s grain will be ground day-by-day. This helps relieve time burdens, as women are sharing in daily chores, and it also ensures that every woman (and family) gets grain for the day (each woman that helps with grinding takes a little home for meals). Women also report watching out for each other and sharing resources as necessary (for example, sharing food upon noticing neighbors haven’t cooked that day because they lack grain).

Women’s ability to strengthen and maintain social ties can be limited by the considerable restrictions on their freedom of movement. In the eastern regions of Niger, for example, women are rarely allowed to leave their homes without a male escort. In Mali, on a day-to-day basis, 61.6% of women reported that they could not go and visit female friends and relatives without their husband’s permission. Women’s mobility was especially impacted during the recent conflict in the north of Mali. Prior to the crisis, women’s associations and cooperatives existed related to artisanal production and market gardening, and women worked together in informal savings mechanisms or *tontines*. Under the MUJAO, however, women and girls were severely restricted – they were unable to loiter outside their own house, limited access to markets to buy essentials, were unable to gather or meet in cooperatives/associations, and were restricted from practicing market gardening and rice cultivation because it could be a potential gathering point for women’s groups and mixed company. This severely limited the bonds that women in the North relied on for their livelihoods and wellbeing.

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181 SIGI, Niger  
182 SIGI, Mali  
183 Réseau des femmes leadeurs du nord; Mercy Corps Gao staff interview.
In addition to mobility restrictions, heavy workloads and a lack of meeting space were also cited in focus groups as hindering women's ability to strengthen ties and meet on a regular basis. In Sanankoroba (Mali) women mentioned the creation of a women's-only house which has enabled them to meet more often, and discuss more sensitive issues in private. Women mentioned using the women-only space to work together, hold garden co-op and tontine meetings, and to share information.\textsuperscript{184}

\textsuperscript{184} FGD with women, Sanankoroba
Appendix 8: Frameworks Used in Theory of Change Development


1. If Mercy Corps’ commitment – as detailed in the agency’s Gender Policy and Procedures – is fulfilled; women, men, girls, and boys are more equitably engaged as stakeholders; and gender is fully integrated into all aspects of the program cycle, then gender needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities will be better understood and addressed in programming.

2. If gender-specific needs, vulnerabilities and capacities are understood and addressed through program activities that raise awareness, challenge gender dynamics, influence gatekeepers, and build the capacity of marginalized stakeholders, then programs will be able to influence the primary ‘levers of change’ identified as critical to enhanced gender equity at a community and societal level. These levers include:
   - Increased marginalized stakeholders’ access to, and control over, resources, income and information;
   - Increased marginalized stakeholders’ decision-making power and household and community influence;
   - Reduced barriers to mobility and burdens on time.

3. If these change outcomes are successfully achieved, then private, public, and civil society sectors will be more inclusive and more members of the community – including marginalized women and girls – will be meaningfully and actively engaged in the processes, decisions, and systems that affect their lives – the necessary prerequisites for a secure, productive, and just community.
Appendix 9: Project Profiles – Mercy Corps in the Sahel

Mali
“Espoir pour les Eveleurs du Sahel”/Gates Foundation (2012-2013)
The $1.5 million Gates Foundation funded “Hope For Sahel’s Pastoralist” (EESA) project takes a unique approach to building the resilience of pastoralist and agro-pastoralist households along the international transhumance corridors in Mali and Niger. The emergency phase of the project addressed critical lean season needs of pastoral populations through distribution of vouchers for supplementary livestock feed. During the recovery phase, the project is working to build the capacity of Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs), improved quality of animal feed, and working through private sector livestock service providers to establish service centers along key transhumance corridors. Complementing this, Mercy Corps is working the strengthen access to information at the community level as a part of the national early warning system in Niger, and transferring information and capacity to Mali. Further, the project is taking initial steps at laying the foundations for peaceful resolution of conflicts over land and resources, facilitating meetings and productive dialogue between customary leaders that will enable improved rangeland management in the long-term.

Niger
PASTORAL (OFDA), Sawki (USAID/FFP), PROSAZ (Private)
In Niger, a suite of programs focused on reducing the vulnerability of pastoralists supports diversifying assets and market access, managing natural resources increasingly stressed by climate change and population growth, and strengthen dispute resolution skills for community members and leaders. The award-winning “Projet d’Appui à la Sécurisation des Terres et Ouvrages de Réhabilitation des Aires Locales” (PASTORAL) program responded to the continuous emergency situation in Niger catalyzed by the 2008 food price crisis that left 7.8 million people, over half the population, in need of assistance. With $2.7M from USAID/OFDA, PASTORAL improved food security of agro-pastoralists and pastoralist households in rural areas of the hard-hit Filingué region. Beyond providing urgent supplementary feed to thousands of cattle, the program strengthened the risk prevention capacity of over 10,000 vulnerable households (over 65,000 people) through infrastructure rehabilitation such as water points and harvest storage and rehabilitating 530 ha of rangeland through bio-reclamation techniques. Establishing channels for communities to share information regarding herd management and monitoring nutritional status is a long-term investment in dryland resilience and disaster risk reduction. Evidencing this, in October 2012, USAID/OFDA presented the Mercy Corps PASTORAL project in Niger with an award for “Recognition of Excellence in Innovation and Learning in Disaster Risk Reduction.”

Other programming in Niger builds on these efforts, with an emphasis on food and nutrition security as the foundation for building resilient communities, including “Sawki”, a five-year $30M USAID/FFP program started in 2012 in Maradi and Zinder, two of the most food insecure regions of Niger. The partnership with Helen Keller International (HKI), Africare, the Government of Niger, local NGOs, the National Institute of Agronomy Research (INRAN) is delivering an integrated comprehensive package of activities, with a special emphasis on empowering women and adolescent girls’ as household decision-makers to combat malnutrition and build resilience.

Finally, the Early Recovery, Resilience, and Livelihoods (PROSAZ) program integrated economic recovery with food security for vulnerable households in the department of Ouallam through micro-credit and women’s Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA). Initiated in 2012, the funding consortium for PROSAZ includes four private foundations, two US-based and two UK-based, contributing to a combined budget of $1.25M.

Nigeria
In Nigeria, Mercy Corps is working to prevent and resolve conflict between pastoralists and farmers in the ethnically diverse “Middle Belt region, where the southern fringe of the pastoral Sahel meets more agrarian communities. As the frequency of drought becomes ever-more regular, pastoralists in search of pasture come into conflict with already established agrarian/agro-
pastoral communities. The situation in the Middle Belt is exacerbated by a complex ethnic brew of groups frequently coming into associated ethno-religious conflicts and weak resource governance. This has the effect of undermining prospects for stability and resilience in the region. Working in partnership with Pastoral Resolve (PARE), the £3 million CONCUR project targets 20 geographic areas in southern Sahel Middle Belt region where Muslim pastoralists and Christian farmers frequently come into conflict, providing 20 leaders in each location with skills and tools to map conflicts, facilitating dispute resolution, and sharing learning and successes across communities. Taking proactive measures to address the drivers of conflict and implement agreements reached between parties, the CONCUR project supports follow-on economic and natural resource initiatives in each of the 20 areas, including projects such as dairy processing. The intervention is rounded-out by a policy and advocacy component providing both the project and community leadership with a systems lens to inform program decisions, and possibly leading to government policy reform that lessen the impact of conflict and increase resilience of both pastoralists and farmers throughout the Middle Belt.

Mercy Corps’ recently secured the participation of Coke Foundation, DFID, Nike Foundation, and d.light to launch the £6.8 million ENGINE project, a ground-breaking approach to resilience in Northern Nigeria with empowered adolescent girls at the center. Not only does the program support schooling and skills development for girls, but provides them with real franchising opportunities within the Coca-Cola company’s supply chain in Nigeria. ENGINE’s theory of change states that when marginalized Nigerian girls complete a full education cycle and are supported by gatekeepers they will be more skilled employees and have increased earning power and increased decision-making authority, thereby building the resilience of the overall household. The linkage between this approach to adolescent girls’ empowerment and increased resilience is directly supported by a recent end-of-project evaluation of Mercy Corps’ MILK project in Niger and research carried-out by MIT’s Poverty Action Lab, entitled “Young Women: What do we know?” With a major M&E component and project-level impact evaluation already underway, the ENGINE project is providing a rigorous testing ground for Mercy Corps’ burgeoning evidence base demonstrating that increased gender equity in households and communities leads to increased resilience to shocks and stresses.

Rounding-out the Mercy Corps project portfolio in northern Nigeria’s southern reaches of the Sahel, Mercy Corps has recently been awarded the USAID-funded Girma (“Grow” in Hausa) project. The project takes a multi-sector approach to help 42,000 very poor households to grow their agricultural production, incomes and children through improved nutrition. As households advance through the program, resistance to shocks is correspondingly increased through a suite of activities that build agricultural know-how and resources including diversified production and use of technologies. Reflecting Mercy Corps’ systems approach to resilience programming, this work is done in close coordination with local government authorities in the respective regions, providing them with the skills and resources to undertake this work independently and correspondingly address policy and implementation constraints to support these gains.
Appendix 10: Description of Project Interventions

SAWKI
Mercy Corps, Helen Keller International (HKI) and Africare have designed a comprehensive package of activities, supported through partnerships with the Government of Niger (GoN), local NGOs, the National Institute of Agronomy Research (INRAN) and the private sector. With Mercy Corps as the lead consortium partner, Sawki’s overall goal is to reduce food insecurity and malnutrition among vulnerable populations in Niger, with an emphasis on empowering women and adolescent girls. The project’s two strategic objectives (SO) are to: 1) reduce chronic malnutrition among pregnant and lactating women and children under five with an emphasis on children under two, and 2) increase the local availability of and households’ diversifying agricultural productivity, rural households’ income, and increasing resilience to shocks.

Sawki will address the causes of malnutrition and food insecurity in Niger. All activities will be implemented in the same geographical areas to ensure target communities receive a comprehensive package of interventions to maximize impact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SO1: Reduce chronic malnutrition among pregnant and lactating women and children under five with an emphasis on children under two</th>
<th>IR1.1: Pregnant women, mothers and caretakers adopt appropriate nutrition practices during their children’s first 1,000 days</th>
<th>25,501 or 100% of pregnant and lactating women and children ≤2; 24% of the total village pop over the LOA</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IR1.2: Adolescents adopt appropriate nutrition practices and healthy timing of first pregnancy</td>
<td>7,500 girls and boys/men; 7% of the total target village pop. over the LOA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IR1.3: Health centers and other community staff promote and respond effectively and appropriately to community demand for counseling and care</td>
<td>128 health staff and 20,024 or 100% of pregnant and lactating women and children ≤5; 19% of total target village pop. over the LOA</td>
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Sawki will use a community-based model to promote healthy behaviors that improve the nutritional status of pregnant and lactating women and children under five, using the Essential Nutrition Actions (ENA) framework. The program will emphasize family planning (healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies) to promote adolescent and maternal health; and appropriate sanitation and hygiene practices to reduce infectious diseases. As girls tend to become wives and mothers early, SO1 targets adolescent girls and those who influence their life choices to promote healthy behaviors.

**IR1.1 - Pregnant women, mothers and caretakers adopt appropriate nutrition practices during their children's first 1,000 days** - Sawki will train health staff to conduct household counseling visits, address complementary feeding through the promotion of household gardens (see IR2.1) and emphasize the healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies and family planning options.

**Disseminating ENA Practices** – New GoN program and district health staff will receive a five day master ENA trainers’ course and will be responsible for training 128 selected staff of integrated health centers as well as 900 leader mothers and men’s group (or “Ecoles des Maris”185 and Fada186) members. Trainees will then conduct interpersonal counseling on nutrition, birth spacing and hygiene. The program will build on existing community groups and use “cascade groups” (CG) comprised of 10-15 volunteer leader mothers trained in ENA, who will then be responsible for making home visits to 10-15 local mothers who are within the 1,000 day window. Sawki staff will also distribute preventive food rations to all pregnant and lactating women and their children under two during the first two years of their participation. Distribution will occur every two months with the malnutrition screening meetings (see IR1.2). Cooking lessons, led by the leader mothers, will occur at distribution sites to ensure efficient use of ration commodities and to encourage the integration of locally-available produce.

**Expanding acceptance and adoption of healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies (HTSP)** – ENA modules will be expanded to emphasize improving knowledge of the health benefits of deferring first pregnancy to age 18 and spacing births 24-36 months. Sawki will use UNFPA’s Ecole des Maris approach to promote ENA and HTSP practices, in which “enlightened” husbands (who support their wives’ reproductive health) analyze community problems and devise plans to resolve them.187 Sawki will also act on other barriers to family planning, including misperceptions of the

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185 An approach developed by UNFPA and being used by a number of NGOs in Niger, translated as “Enlightened Men’s Groups.”
186 Fada are groups of young people, usually men, who constitute an informal village youth association.
187 Research by the Laboratoire d’Études et de Recherches sur les Dynamiques Sociales et le Développement Rural.
dictates of Islamic law. It will mobilize local religious and traditional leaders to advocate for healthy birth spacing, and will work with the MOH to increase access to counseling and contraceptive commodities (see IR 1.3).

**Increasing Access To Potable Water** – The program will rehabilitate 20 wells under the supervision of the Ministry of Environment and Hydrology and improve 30 others through integration of animal troughs or installing solar pumps. Sawki will also identify alternate cost-efficient individual solutions to improve water quality, such as using bio-sand and silver filters, and distributing water purification tablets.

**Implementing community-led total sanitation (CLTS) Strategies** – The program will use the CLTS approach's participatory methods to analyze local communities' sanitation conditions, map the path from open defecation to water and food sources, and document the contamination's impact on public health. Communities will build low-cost latrines to eliminate open defecation.

**Promoting New Technologies To Reduce Women and Girls' Workloads** - Sawki will identify opportunities for reducing women's work burden. The program will focus its research on identifying local low-cost technologies to increase household productivity, such as fuel-efficient cook stoves; wastewater reuse systems; and agro-product processing technologies (see IR2.1).

**IR1.2 - Adolescents adopt appropriate nutrition practices and healthy timing of first pregnancy** - Girls in Niger – particularly in Maradi and Zinder – marry and bear children early. Sawki will work to change community norms by highlighting not only the health implications and economic ramifications of early marriage and childbirth but also health and survival costs to mothers and children. The program will distinguish between young adolescent girls (10 to 14 years), who may need assistance to delay their marriage and first birth, and those 15-18 years old who, if already married, will need support to take care of themselves, their children and delay their next birth.

**Sensitization Campaign** – The program will mobilize “bright spots” among local leaders to act as champions and educators for their community on topics related to adolescent girls, including appropriate nutrition and health care, marriage and first birth, optimal birth spacing, and girls' education. Through ENA-related community meetings, health caravans and community radio talk shows, messages will seek to change adults' perceptions of adolescent girls.

“Safe Spaces” Discussions for Girls – Sawki will work with families and leaders to create “safe spaces” to help girls discover, learn and discuss topics adapted to each age group. The program will work with existing girls' groups and leverage the influence of the local iya, a traditional mentor. Where groups do not exist, the program will facilitate their creation, targeting 50 girls per village. Each girl will identify a mentor (a leader mother, older girl, graduate, or the iya) who will support her. Adolescents taking part in at least 80% of the meetings will receive a 50 kg lentil ration every six months to encourage participation and increase their community standing.

**Family Planning and On-Demand Contraception for Couples** – Sawki will conduct research on the barriers to and facilitators of family planning in Niger to inform communication strategies. The program will target adolescent girls within the safe space discussions. Boy and girl peer educators identified among youth groups (Fado) and communal youth committees will be trained to tell their peers about the importance of family planning and contraceptive use.

**IR1.3 - Health centers and other community staff promote and respond efficiently and appropriately to community demand for counseling and care** – Sawki will strengthen the GoN's capacity to supply quality health services at the community and department-level, while engaging regional and national levels to ensure buy-in.

**Health Facility Staff Deliver High Quality Service and Messages for ENA, Family Planning and Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (IMCI)** – Staff from health centers and health posts will be trained on prevention and treatment practices. Sawki will also collaborate with the MOH and UNFPA to strengthen supply management to ensure family planning supplies meet demand. Sawki will conduct trainings on clinical case management to reinforce health agents' technical abilities to treat major diseases through the IMCI approach.

**Increasing Outreach Services in Nutrition and Family Planning** – The program will support the MoH in organizing monthly outreach visits to bring services to villages further than five kilometers from health facilities or to pastoralist populations on the move. These visits will include: growth monitoring; nutritional counseling; an Expanded Program of Immunization (EPI) station to provide vaccines; and birth spacing and contraception counseling.

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188 UNFPA (2006.)

189 Iya is the leaders of girls groups that are formed within villages. As soon as she marries, the iya is replaced by a younger girl.
Establishing an active screening and referral system for malnutrition at the community level - Sawki will train and support selected leader mothers and members of the Ecole des Maris to organize monthly community meetings with all mothers and children under 2 to screen for acute malnutrition and facilitate appropriate follow-up treatment and care.

Supporting the National and Regional Governmental Health Services’ Organization and Communication Efforts – To support effective, efficient and accountable governance at all levels, Sawki will provide all focal points in the target zones with three five-day courses in ENA and behavior change communication; supervision techniques; and planning and coordination. Sawki will also support the GoN/World Bank nationwide program designed to curb population growth.¹⁹⁰

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SO2: Increase the local availability of and households’ access to nutritious food by diversifying agricultural productivity, rural households’ income, and increasing resilience to shocks</th>
<th>IR2.1: Target women increase the household year round availability of diversified nutritious food for consumption</th>
<th>IR2.2: Target households and communities increase land and livestock productivity</th>
<th>IR2.3 Target households increase income through their integration into value chains offering significant nutritional value and strong potential for income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10,271 pregnant women, mothers of children ≤2 (100%) and other mothers, 10% of the total target village pop.</td>
<td>4,764 men, women, boys and girls.</td>
<td>5,313 FFA workers (± family), 37,190 people or 35% of target village pop per year.</td>
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External pressures on land have reduced the productivity of agriculture and animal husbandry, impacting household nutrition and resiliency to external shocks. Diversifying production while simultaneously increasing revenue and incorporating nutrition education will directly impact household nutrition. Sawki activities will improve agricultural productivity, and SO2 includes various activities to address the factors contributing to lack of access to food and resiliency.

**IR2.1 - Targeted women and girls increase the household availability of diversified nutritious food for consumption** – This IR will complement IR1.1’s nutrition education campaign by targeting all SO1 women and adolescent girl beneficiaries and emphasizing food preparation practices that are more energy and labor efficient.

Enhanced Household Food Production (HHFP) – Sawki will provide SO1 women and girls with the means to produce a combination of fruits, vegetables, pulses and animal-based nutrient rich foods in order to increase and diversify household production. The program will promote crops rich in micro-nutrients and enhanced production techniques, including improved land use; crop selection and diversification; poultry and livestock management; and food processing and marketing. Sawki will sensitize men on the value of producing nutrient-rich food and the importance of giving women and girls access to land and the ability to manage their revenues.

Trainings will be delivered by volunteer female SO1 participants, who will be trained and supported as garden coordinators (GCs). Each village will be served by five GCs, and adolescent girls who have chosen to defer childbearing will be selected as GCs to foster adolescent participation and awareness. 50% of the female participants will be selected by the community to receive vouchers that will enable them to purchase the necessary inputs.

**Micronutrient-Rich Product Processing & Conservation** – Sawki will study traditional food preparation methods to estimate nutritional content and the amount of energy required for preparation in order to improve food preparation techniques. The program will disseminate simple nutrient enhancement techniques, such as processing and conservation techniques through cooking demonstrations by the leader mothers.

**IR2.2 - Target households and communities increase land and livestock productivity** – Sawki will partner with agribusinesses, research institutes (INRAN) and the GoN extension services to deliver a comprehensive approach to increasing agricultural productivity. Sawki will disseminate improved production technologies and services targeting 7,188 men and women heads of households and improve access to inputs to increase farmland and livestock productivity.

**Efficiently Managing Soil & Water Resources** – Male and female production decision-makers will be encouraged to adopt two complementary approaches: Conservation Agriculture (CA) and Former Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR). Technical trainings at each stage of the production cycle will feature improved stress-tolerant crop varieties suited for the Sahel. To demonstrate appropriate techniques, Sawki will work with partners to establish learning plots on volunteer farmers’ land and integrate animal husbandry with crop production practices.

¹⁹⁰ 2007-2013 Multisector Demographic Sector Financing Agreement, World Bank/IDA.
Technical trainings will begin with a five-day training to the GoN extension services, who will then be responsible for training five farmer volunteers per village as agriculture value chain coordinators (AVCC). Each AVCC will replicate training for another 15 producers. While these trainings will target both men and women, they will emphasize the specific needs of women.

**Enhancing Animal Fertility and Milk Production** – Sawki will provide training to agro-pastoralist livestock owners to reinforce appropriate care practices, including the efficient use of crop by-products during harvest and storage for livestock dry-season feeding. Livestock extension service agents will be trained over a five day period, each extension worker will train five livestock VCCs (LVCC) per village, and each LVCC will train 15 herders and animal owners.

To improve the current veterinary service market (including GoN and private veterinarians), Sawki will revive and strengthen a network of 150 para-vets who will be trained over a ten day period on technical skills and business skills. Trained para-vets will be provided with a subsidy voucher covering 40% of their initial veterinary drug kits. They will then market their services for a fee to ensure they are able to reconstitute their stocks and make profit.

**Contributing to Improved Input Supply Chains** – Sawki will establish artisanal seed production systems for drought-and disease-resistant crops, and facilitate the promotion and dissemination of these seeds through its support to agro-vet networks. To not disrupt the market, only 30 seed multipliers in the two target regions will be supported.

The program will organize product demonstrations and trade fairs to generate sales opportunities for the newly established seed multipliers. As an incentive for supported farmers to try the improved seeds, a one-time subsidy of an equivalent of $35 will be provided to interested target producers, with the expectation that the increase in production will encourage producers to purchase full priced seeds the following year. A similar system will strengthen livestock production, providing both improved goat breeds and improved animal feed and related nutritional supplements. Animal producers will be selected upon similar criteria as the seed multipliers, will receive technical and business training, and will be provided with subsidies to cover 50% of the purchase price of three improved female breeding goats.

**IR2.3 – Target households increase income through their integration into value chains offering significant nutritional value and strong potential for income** – Sawki will conduct value chain assessments of one legume (based on nitrogen fixing potential, production capacity, and nutritional values) and one animal (based on growth potential and nutritional value).

**Identifying and Addressing Constraints in Value Chains** – To foster collaboration, Sawki will organize quarterly meetings for targeted producers, support seed multipliers, agribusinesses, processors, transporters, extension services, and GoN policy decision-makers to identify constraints, opportunities for collaboration, and locally-relevant solutions. To promote commercial exchange, Sawki will organize trade fairs on topics identified by producers. Sawki will also work with existing financial institutions to promote their services, assist potential clients to develop successful applications to access financing, and tailor their services to women’s specific needs.

**Increasing Producers’ Commercial Capacity** – Men and women participating in I.R.1 and I.R.2 will be provided an opportunity to enhance their entrepreneurial skills through trainings on basic business topics. Successful business owners involved in the trade fairs will be contracted to train and provide real-life examples, including local female entrepreneurs who can be role models to other women. Trainings will take place over a 2-year period in four three-day phases. Technical assistance will be available in Year 3 to producers interested in creating producers associations.

**Cross-Cutting IR: Local government & community structures support household resilience to drought**

While SO1 targets agro-pastoral households’ utilization of food and SO2 increases availability and access to food, a Cross-Cutting Intermediate Result (CCIR) targets communities and their government counterparts to prepare for future droughts, ensuring resiliency. This CCIR will provide two key interventions to support households to become more resilient: 1) the establishment, or reinforcement, of community-based early warning systems and the development of drought response plans; and 2) strengthening the capacity of government and community structures to mitigate the negative impacts of droughts.

**CCO1 Reinforcing Community-Based Early Warning Systems (EWS)** – To assist communities in planning and preparing for health- and climate-related shocks, and strengthen the existing GoN data collection system, Sawki will: 1) identify gaps in the collection and sharing of data, in collaboration with FEWS NET, AGRHYMET, ACMAD\(^\text{\textsuperscript{191}}\) (for climate-related data) and the MoH

\(^{191}\) Agrhymet is a Niger-based regional center involved in climate data analysis, information exchange, and early
(for health related data); 2) train EWS committees (comprised of members from five target villages) in data collection for climate-related disasters and its effects on health, agriculture, and conflicts; 3) promote data-sharing with appropriate stakeholders; 4) encourage communities to use data for planning and response; and 5) work with local vulnerability surveillance structures (OSV) to use and aggregate data to guide their development of response plans. Community-based information generated for EWS will be also incorporated into village natural resource and water plans (see CCO2 for details), and the village-level land commissions (CoFoBs) planning.192

CCO 2 Building the Capacity of Local Government & Community Structures to Mitigate the Impacts of Drought – Communities and governments can act to mitigate the impacts of climate change at the local level. Over a four-day workshop, sawki will work with the GoN environment extension services and CoFoBs to assist communities and local government structures in developing and implementing natural resources and water plans (NRWP), and raising awareness of the long-term benefits of simple practices for soil productivity and water access.

FFA resources will offer $2,000 grant prizes for up to 10 “green villages” to implement water or soil improvement projects. For sustainability purposes, “surveillance committees” will be elected by each village and trained to manage and protect the newly-rehabilitated community pastoral land from excessive grazing and tree cutting.

The nutrition-focused community structures, i.e., leader mothers and Ecole des Maris members, will be trained in the Positive Deviant/Hearth (PDH) approach to treat children ages 7-36 months identified with moderate or acute malnutrition. The leader mothers will conduct home visits to reinforce new practices and monitor children’s recovery. Leader mothers will be trained to keep simple graphical records of the numbers of children participating in HEARTH sessions.

MILK
With financial support from USAID/OFDA, Mercy Corps launched an economic recovery program in February 2009 to increase the purchasing power of vulnerable households through short-term Cash-for-Work (CFW) activities while simultaneously revitalizing an important dairy value chain in urban Niamey. Notable impacts during the program’s 27-month duration include:

• 2,018 households, consisting of 16,024 individuals, directly benefited from Mercy Corps’ CFW activities, receiving a total of $535,600 in wages.
• 2,556 entrepreneurs received small grants to start or strengthen dairy related businesses, which increased incomes and fostered resilience against future shocks.
• Three dairy groups, comprised of 930 members, received organizational and financial support to contribute to the dairy value chain in urban Niamey and to improve milk production of their herds.
• More than 2,700 people received at least one training on business management, savings, and marketing concepts.
• Approximately $435,000 of sales were generated1 by Mercy Corps’ dairy-supported businesses over a one year period.

Funded by USAID/OFDA, MILK was a $2,375,980 economic recovery program designed to increase the purchasing power of vulnerable households through short-term CFW activities while revitalizing an important dairy value chain in urban Niamey. The program worked to increase availability of affordable, locally-produced, nutritious dairy products that prior to the program, did not meet consumer demand in urban areas. The program also strengthened linkages between producers, vendors, and consumers, and increased resiliency of program beneficiaries to future shocks to ensure sustainability.

The MILK program was made up of three main components: 1) CFW activities to help vulnerable households address immediate needs; 2) organizational support to peri-urban dairy cooperatives/groups to increase availability of fresh milk; and 3) support to women entrepreneurs to foster resilience against future shocks. Beneficiaries of the MILK program included CFW participants, herders and cattle owners, private entrepreneurs, and market users (sellers and buyers). A total of 5,799 individuals directly benefited from the program and approximately 100,000 individuals from the urban community of Niamey indirectly benefitted from the program through cleaner markets and more readily-available and affordable dairy products.

Successes of the program include:

192 CoFoB stands for “Commissions Foncières de Base”, or land commissions at the village level. They organize annual planning events involving community members. This is an occasion to ensure that EWS are fully integrated in all planning events.

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Successes of the program include:
The most prominent successes of the MILK program in Gamkalé and surrounding areas. Mer
dependable source of fresh milk, Mercy Corps' support to women entrepreneurs became one of
Though thi
b)
environmental spaces.
members of 2,018 households and allowed tens of thousands of people to benefit from improved
Drainage canals benefited from this activity. Overall, the CFW component helped 16,024
$535,600 in wages. In addition, eight important market sites and more than 65 km of ro
Visitors ea
identified by Mercy Corps and city authorities, with an emphasis on areas with a large number of
areas to be cleaned were
Under the CFW component, Mercy C

a)

Summary:
Sector 1 — Summary:
Despite some challenges during the first year of the program, Mercy Corps achieved substantial
results by the program’s conclusion. The objective of increasing milk production and availability
was attained, though the initial target of 2,000 liters/day was not met. As stated in quarterly
reports, Mercy Corps faced numerous organizational issues with regards to Kirkissoye Ranch
leadership and management. Over nine months, the MILK program staff made every effort
possible to roll out initial plans of revitalizing the ranch and creating a durable and strong source
of fresh milk in urban Niamey. A lack of commitment coupled with internal misunderstandings of
members and ultimately a land claim issue led to the dismantling of the cooperative. Despite this
setback, Mercy Corps’ MILK staff identified alternative sources of fresh milk. In collaboration with
OFDA, Mercy Corps opted to work with three local dairy groups, who had no major
infrastructural capacity, but who were very much committed to the challenge of business
expansion. Mercy Corps facilitated a series of capacity-building activities to enable them to
strengthen their operations and become sustainable farming entities. Mercy Corps provided
trainings in business management, animal health care, marketing, inputs (animal feed, feeding
materials,) and storage facilities. The three Mercy Corps-supported dairy groups each doubled
their milk production over the course of one year, increasing cumulative yield from around 600
liters/day to nearly 2,000 liters/day. Knowledge gained from the MILK program helped the three groups
get through the harsh fodder deficit that struck Niger in 2010. Based on their newly-established working structure,
the groups succeeded in purchasing sufficient animal feed in a timely manner, despite
high prices. The groups also considered nutritional factors when purchasing food, which they
learned through Mercy Corps’ trainings. Additionally, most groups were able to
provide paid-veterinary services for their cattle.

Support to women entrepreneurs is considered one of the program’s largest successes.
The program was designed to provide start-up grants (in two installments, the second
contingent on solid performance with the first grant), coupled with training in business
management (basics provided at the start, moving to more advanced courses while
implementing the grant), and regular mentoring and business coaching. Furthermore,
Mercy Corps encouraged participants to work with existing credit systems in Niamey.
As stated above, the initial target was surpassed and Mercy Corps reached 2,556
beneficiaries (more than 200% of initial target). Regular evaluations conducted by the
monitoring and evaluation officer revealed that start-up grants generated both
economic and social impacts among the beneficiaries and the self-formed solidarity
groups.

Sector 2 — Summary:
a) – Cash for Work
Under the CFW component, Mercy Corps completed a series of hygiene and cleaning activities
with residents of the Gamkalé neighborhood as the laborers. The areas to be cleaned were
identified by Mercy Corps and city authorities, with an emphasis on areas with a large number of
visitors each day. In total, 2,018 CFW beneficiaries, each representing a vulnerable household,
earned $4 per day, during 60-62 days of work, for an overall CFW total of approximately
$535,600 in wages. In addition, eight important market sites and more than 65 km of roads and
drainage canals benefited from this activity. Overall, the CFW component helped 16,024
members of 2,018 households and allowed tens of thousands of people to benefit from improved
environmental spaces.
b) – Support to Women Entrepreneurs
Though this component of the program experienced some delays early on due to a lack of a
dependable source of fresh milk, Mercy Corps’ support to women entrepreneurs became one of
the most prominent successes of the MILK program in Gamkalé and surrounding areas. Mercy
Corps paired start-up grants with intensive business management trainings to ensure better business practices and sustainability. The start-up grants proved to be very successful. An evaluation at the program’s midterm revealed a success ratio of more than 85 percent of entrepreneurs having received the grant’s second installment. Interviews with beneficiaries at the end of the program found that more than 91% of supported micro enterprises are still functional and show encouraging signs of growth. Overall, the start-up grants to foster and strengthen dairy-related micro enterprises reached 2,556 individuals (of which more than 97% were females), for a total of USD $304,884 provided as start-up capital. Through regular monitoring data, Mercy Corps found that two-thirds of beneficiaries earned approximately $435,000 in sales over 12 months of business transactions.

ENGINE
ENGINE’s Theory of Change states that when more marginalized Nigerian girls complete a full education cycle and are supported by gatekeepers, they will be more skilled employees and have increased earning power and increased decision-making within the household. This Theory of Change will be supported by ENGINE’s outputs and outcomes and will contribute to an overall impact of improved life chances for marginalized girls while simultaneously providing further evidence that improved female education contributes to economic growth, reduced poverty, and a range of other social and environmental benefits.

ENGINE activities support three primary objectives:
1. Ensure marginalized in-school girls improve their learning outcomes in a supportive environment by participating in weekly Safe Space activities over a nine-month period to receive academic tutoring as well as employment readiness skills including financial education and leadership skills.
2. Increase girls’ economic assets and their influence on household decision making through access to education, increased learning, and direct linkages to economic activities. ENGINE will enroll out-of-school marginalized girls into six-month education cycles to increase their business and entrepreneurial skills. After completing the education cycle they can choose to enter the Coca-Cola value chain as micro-retailers or explore other business or employment avenues. Through direct receipt of Coca-Cola assets (in the form of specialised training, direct receipt of Coca-Cola selling infrastructure, and on-going mentoring and support) girls will benefit from increased incomes.
3. Work with gatekeepers to enable girls access to and involvement in learning and economic opportunities. These interventions are critical to ensure girls can engage, enroll, and stay in education and actively participate in income-generating activities to increase her standing in the household. Gatekeepers can include husbands, mothers, fathers, mothers-in-law, male relatives as well as faith and traditional leaders (FTL).

The ENGINE programme supports DfID’s Strategic Vision for Girls and Women recognising the benefits of investing in girls and women are transformational for their own lives and for their households, communities, and economies. Coca-Cola understands that for girls to achieve economic success they require the skills and knowledge gained through completing a cycle of education that includes financial and business education followed by a clear path to gain, keep hold of, and make productive use of economic assets which will have a multiplier effects for economic growth, poverty reduction and girls improved position in their households.

Output 1 will ensure marginalized in-school girls in Kano, Kaduna, and the FCT improve their learning outcomes in a supportive environment by participating in weekly Safe Space activities for academic tutoring and employment readiness techniques. In-school girls will not be eligible to enter the 5by20 initiative until after graduation from secondary school or upon completion of their Islamiyya courses.

Output 2 focuses on increasing girls’ economic assets and the influence girls have on household decision making in all four states through access to education, increased learning, and direct linkages to economic activities. ENGINE will enroll out-of-school marginalized girls into six-month education cycles to increase their business and entrepreneurial skills. These girls have either dropped out of school or never attended school. After completing the education cycle they can choose to enter the Coca-Cola value chain as micro-retailers or explore other business or employment avenues also facilitated by ENGINE. Through direct receipt of Coke assets girls will benefit from increased incomes. Girls not interested in entering the Coca-Cola value chain will be linked to the d.light solar lantern value chain, other identified supply chains, and other donor programming supporting both traditional and non-traditional female employment sectors. All girls, whether they wish to continue into an economic activity or not, will be able to participate in savings groups.
Output 3 recognises that gatekeepers enable girls’ access to and involvement in learning and economic opportunities. These interventions are critical to ensure girls can engage, enroll, and stay in education and actively participate in income-generating activities to increase her standing in the household and greater community. These activities are critical to the success of engaging marginalized girls, and would not be possible without DFID support; DFID funds will therefore greatly increase the impact of Coca-Cola’s investment. Interventions will expose family members to what girls have learned as part of the Safe Space activities, increase attendance rates of both girls and boys through support of the school-based management committees (SBMC), and direct involvement of faith and traditional leaders in girls’ education.

ENGINE delivers benefits at several levels. On the Girl level, adolescent girls will obtain skills training leading to increased wages and direct assets. This will increase their life choices and influence over household decisions. On the Household level, ENGINE will result in more productive households and communities with improved social and economic status of girls and women, as well as reduced income poverty within the targeted communities through increased savings for herself and her household and incentives around increased learning outcomes. Girls’ education will be prioritised as families recognize the long-term financial benefit for the household through advocacy activities. On the School level, ENGINE will assess learning outcomes and supplement girls’ academic curriculum while facilitating engagement as schools can adopt the Safe Space curriculum within the formal school structure. On the Coca-Cola Business level, by learning and acquiring demand-driven skills, girls will be more skilled employees and micro-retailers and a better educated consumer base for products and services. On the Community level, the educated ENGINE participants will eventually keep their own children in school longer – breaking intergenerational cycles of low educational achievement and poverty. Literacy skills acquired in school and retained after exiting school are linked to lower fertility rates and increased child health outcomes benefiting the community as a whole. By engaging new value suppliers such as d.light, the program will introduce existing low-cost solar lamp products at the community-level. On a Government level, ENGINE will work to operationalise policies such as the Central Bank of Nigeria’s Financial Literacy Framework included in the Financial Inclusion Strategy (both released in 2012) and National Youth Development Policy. On the Regional level, ENGINE will result in a more competitive and productive economy with more women holding positions in the formal economy. On an Environmental level, the introduction of solar lamps will increase study time and income opportunities for girls and households but also reduce use of fuel wood and charcoal for reduced climate impact.

For a girl’s school to work transition to be successful, she requires a solid educational base aside from just the specific skills required for the job. ENGINE will raise the educational achievement levels of the targeted cohort through both formal and non-formal education to reach the most marginalized girls in both rural and urban contexts. In Mercy Corps’ assessment, the majority of businesses surveyed (64%) had a preference for junior and senior secondary school graduates when hiring employees. Marginalised girls in school will stay in school and receive supplementary market-driven skills to better prepare them for employment upon graduation.

Girls typically have less access to broad social networks to aid in job search and consequently less information with which to make a good decision on sector and occupation. Girls often go into traditional, low-earning sectors based on social norms or restrictions. Both girls in school and out of school will participate in weekly Safe Space meetings providing both the social and emotional networks for marginalized girls’ as well academic support to increase learning outcomes. Girls will also have a clear path to employment based on their personal interests including with Coca-Cola, d.light, and other non-traditional value chains. Safe Spaces and learning opportunities will be close to where the girls live recognising that evidence shows that reducing the distance that girls have to travel for school (formal and non-formal) dramatically increases enrolment.

Girls typically have little access to or ability to increase economic assets. ENGINE ensures girls gain direct access to and control over productive economic assets in the form of equipment from either Coca-Cola, d.light, and other supply chains and increased savings. Mercy Corps found that over 48% of adolescent girls already save informally through savings groups or money keepers and an additional 8% save in formal financial institutions. Savings allow adolescents to build assets into adulthood, cushion against shocks to their livelihood or household needs, and provide security in emergencies. Savings also serve as collateral for credit while increasing girls’ future orientation, long-term thinking, and planning and self-efficacy.

Recognising the specific needs of married, adolescent girls. ENGINE recognises that married girls are often considered women once they marry but they are still girls based on age, skills and experience. ENGINE will work largely with girls who are married early (prior to age 18) or who are divorced and/or supporting children, as 69% of girls in Northwest Nigeria are married,
divorced or widowed between the ages of 15-19. Because these girls often enroll in Islamiyya schools rather than MoE schools, ENGINE will target these schools in Kano, Kaduna, and the FCT. Safe Space content will be tailored to be relevant and to meet the unique concerns of married girls, such as child rearing, negotiating with a spouse, safety, child care, etc. ENGINE Safe Spaces may be the only social networks these girls have as she may be cut off from social networks after marriage and under the household authority of a husband or potential co-wives.
Appendix 11: Next Steps - Developing an Evidence Base in the Sahel

Future areas of study and questions to test the proposed Theory of Change should include:

An examination of the relationship between inclusion and absorptive, adaptive, and transformative capacity

- Key questions at the community-level: What impact does inclusion have on the community structures’ ability to adapt to a shock or stress? Do inclusive community structures demonstrate higher levels of sustainability, solidarity, productiveness, and less conflict than community bodies that are exclusive/limited to one gender group? How do processes and outcomes from inclusive community structures differ from processes and outcomes of exclusive community structures?
- Key questions at the household-level: Does a report in increased decision-making by marginalized gender groups at the household-level correlate with increased adaptive capacity and less distressful coping mechanisms at the household level (as measured by the Coping Strategies Index)?

An examination of the relationship between access and control of capital, pathways of empowerment, and inclusion.

Empowerment through increased access to and control over financial, physical and natural capital

- Key questions at the community-level: What program factors increase beneficiaries’ influence and inclusion in community structures and processes? Do programs that increase beneficiaries’ (particularly women and girls) access to and control over financial, physical, or natural assets, correlate with a reported increase in community influence?
- Key questions at the household-level: Do programs that increase beneficiaries’ (particularly women and girls) access to and control over financial, physical, or natural assets correlate with reports of increased decision-making at the household-level? Does a report of increased women and girls’ increased access to and control over financial, physical, or natural assets correlate with less distressful coping mechanisms at the household level (as measured by the Coping Strategies Index)?

Empowerment through increased access to and control over human capital

- Key questions at the community-level: Do programs that increase access to and control over knowledge, information, and skills, correlate with reported increase in community influence?
- Key questions at the household-level: Do programs that increase access to and control over knowledge, information, and skills correlate with reports of increased decision-making at the household-level? Do programs that increase women and girls’ access to knowledge, information, and skills correlate with less distressful coping mechanisms at the household level (as measured by the Coping Strategies Index)?

Empowerment through increased access to and control over political and social capital

- Key questions at the community-level: Do programs that increase decision-making/bargaining power and help beneficiaries build relationships and networks (bonding, bridging, and linking), correlate with reported increase in community influence?
- Key questions at the household-level: Do programs that increase women and girls’ access to social networks correlate with reports of increased decision-making at the household-level? Do programs that increase women and girls’ access to social networks correlate with less distressful coping mechanisms at the household level (as measured by the Coping Strategies Index)?
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