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U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
BUREAU FOR DEMOCRACY, CONFLICT, AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE (DCHA)

Sahelian West Africa – Malnutrition

Situation Report #1, Fiscal Year (FY) 2006

February 23, 2006

Note: The last fact sheet for Sahelian West Africa – Humanitarian Emergency was dated September 30, 2005.

BACKGROUND

The more than 41 million people living in the western Sahelian countries of Niger, Mauritania, Mali, and Burkina Faso are among the poorest and least food secure in the world. In 2004, an early end to seasonal rains combined with desert locust damage to crops and pasture lands adversely impacted cereal production and livestock viability throughout West Africa. According to USAID’s Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWS NET) and the 2006 U.N. Consolidated Appeal for West Africa (UN CAP), crop production shortfalls, livestock attrition, and record high grain prices exacerbated chronic poverty and household vulnerability in Niger, Mauritania, Mali, and Burkina Faso leaving an estimated 3.7 million people in need of food assistance, as of September 2005. In late September 2004, USAID’s Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) deployed a Disaster Assistance Response Team (USAID/DART) to Sahelian West Africa to provide technical assistance to national governments and help coordinate the USG response to the 2004 locust emergency. In response to the 2005 humanitarian emergency, USAID again deployed a USAID/DART to the region from early August to late September 2005.

Food security in the Sahel has improved considerably since early October 2005. Above average rainfall across much of the region resulted in a bumper regional harvest and excellent development of pasture for livestock, though localized zones may continue to experience food insecurity. However, malnutrition, in large part caused by lack of access to water, sanitation, and basic health care for poor households and unsafe infant and child feeding practices remains very high across much of the region. Moreover, the continuing impact of the 2005 food insecurity continues to threaten the lives and livelihoods of people throughout the region. Poor crop yields and loss of livestock reduced household assets and income-generation capacity. In addition, exceptionally high food prices through September 2005 forced many households to incur a high level of debt.

REPRESENTATIVE RATES FOR ACUTE MALNUTRITION IN SAHELIAN WEST AFRICA*		
Country	Prevalence (%) of Acute Malnutrition**	Source
Niger	15.3***	CDC/UNICEF/GON - October 2005 ¹
Mali	10.6	Demographic Health Survey 2001
Mauritania	12.8	Demographic Health Survey 2001
Burkina Faso	18.6	Demographic Health Survey 2003

* Represented years are the only years for which nationwide survey data is available. Except in Niger, the month in which the survey data was collected is unknown. In general, 2001 was considered a poor agricultural production year while 2003 was considered a good agricultural production year.

** Estimated prevalence (%) of children under five years of age suffering from acute malnutrition (moderate and severe wasting).

*** Malnutrition rates in Niger range from 8.9 percent in Niamey Region to 17.9 percent in Tahoua Region.

Total FY 2006 USAID/OFDA Assistance to Sahelian West Africa\$1,715,142

Total FY 2006 U.S. Government (USG) Assistance to Sahelian West Africa\$38,346,942

Total FY 2005 USAID/OFDA Assistance to Sahelian West Africa\$3,665,931

Total FY 2005 USG Assistance to Sahelian West Africa.....\$97,001,882

CURRENT SITUATION

Analysis of the 2005 humanitarian crisis.

Independent evaluations of the 2005 crisis in Niger, including an assessment supported by USAID’s West Africa Regional Program, point to structural food insecurity and chronically high levels of malnutrition as the primary causes of crisis. The international emergency response to the most vulnerable areas in southern Niger, including nearly \$100 million in food aid, failed to bring malnutrition rates below emergency levels.

Representatives from West African governments, international institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and donor agencies met in October and December 2005 to discuss lessons learned from the 2005 humanitarian crisis in the Sahel. The meetings served as a forum for exploring ways to improve effective coordination and response actions across the humanitarian community with the objective of minimizing future food insecurity and malnutrition in the context of sustainable poverty reduction. Conference participants agreed that early warning systems provided

¹ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), U.N. Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and Government of Niger (GON)

timely information on problematic food availability but failed to capture the movement of food products throughout West Africa and the impact of rising food prices on local livelihoods. In response, the humanitarian community initially concentrated on increased food assistance rather than implementing a more balanced range of interventions designed to address health, nutrition, water, and livestock needs. In light of these shortfalls, delegates reached a common consensus on the need for rapid identification and implementation of concrete, multi-sectoral solutions to the structural causes of crisis.

Regional outlook. Above average rainfall across the Sahel during the 2005 agricultural season resulted in excellent regional harvests. According to joint crop assessment missions conducted by the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), U.N. World Food Program (WFP), and FEWS NET in October and November 2005, cereal production across the region was estimated to be 15.2 million metric tons (MT), or 31 percent above the five year average—the best harvest ever recorded in the Sahel. Provisional 2006 country-level cereal balance sheets indicate post-import cereal surpluses in all countries except Mauritania. However, government restrictions on cross-border trade in response to the emerging threat of avian flu could potentially reduce grain supplies and raise food prices throughout West Africa.

Despite the promising October 2005 harvest, certain localized zones may continue to experience food insecurity and rates of malnutrition. The 2005 food emergency uprooted large segments of the population and exhausted local coping mechanisms by forcing many families to sell household assets or otherwise incur high levels of debt. Indebted households have used significant amounts of production to pay off debt, rather than meet subsistence food needs. Thus, even with record production, the hunger season may come early for these households.

Additionally, high malnutrition rates continue to pose a significant threat to the health, welfare, and long-term development prospects of many West Africans. Malnutrition rates throughout the Sahel have exceeded critical thresholds established by the U.N. World Health Organization (WHO) for more than 10 years. According to the 2006 U.N. CAP for West Africa, an estimated 55 percent of child deaths in the region are caused by malnutrition.

Niger. Food security in Niger continues to improve due to favorable agricultural and pastoral conditions combined with the large-scale provision of humanitarian aid. The GON, WFP, and implementing partners conducted a second round of food distributions that served 1.7 million Nigeriens and ended on October 12. Since then, the GON, WFP, and implementing partners have replaced large-scale food distributions with short-

term assistance programs to strengthen income-generation capacity for vulnerable populations. A FEWS NET food security warning issued on December 19 reported that Niger's 2005 agricultural season ended in mid-October with total cereal production estimated at more than 3.6 million MT, a surplus of 21,000 MT above the country's projected food needs.

A large part of Niger's most vulnerable populations continue to live above emergency malnutrition thresholds. Though traditionally attributed to cultural factors and social behaviors such as inadequate infant and young child feeding practices, malaria also contributes to malnutrition and child mortality. A USAID-funded joint survey conducted by CDC, UNICEF, and the GON in September and October 2005 confirmed that 15.3 percent of Niger's 6 to 59-month-old children suffer from severe or moderate malnutrition. Based on these statistics, experts concluded that child malnutrition was a driving structural problem underlying the 2005 humanitarian emergency. Malnutrition levels increased as a result of declines in household purchasing power and food availability due to rising food prices and poor crop yields during the 2004 harvest.

Although the good October 2005 harvest improved food security in many areas, Niger remains vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition crises in 2006 due to high household indebtedness, chronic nutritional deficiencies, and structural poverty. The vast majority of Nigeriens rely on subsistence agricultural production for both household food security and income-generation capacity to meet other needs such as health care, education, shelter, clothing, and debt reimbursement. Many families likely used a significant portion of the harvest to repay household debt incurred during the 2005 hunger season. Since more families will be dependant on local markets to purchase food, grain prices are also a major concern. According to the GON Market Information System, the national average price of millet—the staple cereal—remains 4 percent higher than at this time last year and 16 percent above the five-year average. The GON, U.N., and partner NGOs are finalizing an integrated joint action plan for 2006 that combines nutrition, food security, and livestock programs. A February 2006 WFP situation report estimated that 3.2 million Nigeriens, nearly a third of the rural population, would remain severely or moderately food insecure in 2006.

Mali. The 2005 humanitarian crisis placed significant stress on the coping strategies of Mali's rural population by eroding household assets among pastoral and agro-pastoral groups. High animal losses drastically reduced the purchasing power of pastoralists and increased the migration of men and youth in search of work, leaving women and children to fend for themselves in many remote communities. In response to the elevated food insecurity, the Government of the Republic of Mali (GRM) and development partners distributed 67,141 MT of cereals through free food distribution, subsidized cereal sales, and food for work programs.

Rainfall was well distributed throughout most of Mali throughout the 2005 rainy season resulting in improved pastoral conditions and averting additional animal losses. Despite restricted access to high-priced fertilizers, Malian food security experts considered the country's 2005 cereal production to be the second highest in history with a projected net cereal surplus of 80,000 MT. A joint FAO/GRM mission estimated aggregate cereal production at 3.1 million MT, an increase of 14 percent over the five year average. However, many Malian households liquidated at least some of their crops to pay back loans incurred during the 2005 hunger season. The country's improved harvest does not guarantee reduced vulnerability for rural Malians in 2006.

Mauritania. Mauritania remains a food-deficit nation whose domestic cereal production represents only one-third of the country's annual cereal requirements. The majority of rural Mauritians depend heavily on food purchases, as compared to subsistence food production, even in good years. Despite this reliance on food imports, Mauritania's food security situation improved considerably following excellent rains throughout the 2005 growing season. Pastoralists benefited from dense pasture production, abundant surface water, and no signs of animal epidemics. A joint CILSS/Government of Mauritania (GOM) crop assessment mission estimated Mauritania's annual agricultural production for 2005 at more than 200,000 MT, a 42 percent increase above the five year average.

Mauritania's overall nutritional status is at an acute crisis level with malnutrition rates estimated above 15 percent, the emergency threshold set by the WHO. A Médecins Sans Frontières rapid assessment in August 2005 showed evidence of vulnerable nutritional status spanning the southern regions of the country. A second survey conducted by WFP in August estimated an acute malnutrition rate of 15.7 percent among 784 children in the same localized areas. These findings reinforce a 2001 Demographic Health Survey conducted by the GOM that revealed acute malnutrition rates of 16.2 and 16.0 percent in the Senegal River and central regions of the country. Viewed holistically, these surveys indicate a serious risk for severe malnutrition among children under five and provide evidence that Mauritania is experiencing a long-term nutrition and child health crisis.

Burkina Faso. The 2005 humanitarian crisis in Burkina Faso significantly reduced household assets through livestock mortality and high indebtedness, particularly in the northern part of the country. The FAO reports improved food security conditions for Burkina Faso following favorable weather conditions during the 2005 agricultural season that resulted in a bumper harvest of 4 million MT, an increase of 40 percent over the five-year production average. However, as in the rest of the Sahel, record crop yields will not resolve the country's long-term nutritional problems.

Government of Burkina Faso (GOBF) demographic and health surveys measuring national nutrition status in 2003 and 2004 found malnutrition rates to be three times higher than the emergency threshold in two regions of the country and twice the emergency threshold on a national level. A rapid nutrition assessment conducted by CDC and USAID in September 2005 estimated even higher national malnutrition rates due to record high food prices. After analyzing results from these three surveys, the CDC team found that malnutrition was not concentrated in regions experiencing the highest food insecurity and that malnutrition rates did not decrease as economic wellbeing increased across the lowest four wealth quintiles. Both findings indicate that malnutrition is not directly correlated with economic vulnerability or food purchasing power, but rather more closely linked to unsafe infant and child feeding practices. The team concluded that balanced interventions, including long-term maternal education and child survival health programs, must be implemented to more effectively address the structural causes of high malnutrition, both in Burkina Faso and throughout the Sahel.

U.S. GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE

The USAID-supported West Africa Regional Program (WARP) handles West African development challenges that are most effectively addressed at a regional level. WARP works closely with USAID missions in the region, including USAID's bilateral missions in Mali and Senegal, and U.S. embassies in countries where USAID does not have a mission. WARP supports activities in 19 West African countries, including Niger, Mali, Mauritania, and Burkina Faso.

In response to the 2004/2005 locust infestation, USAID provided nearly \$14 million to support locust control efforts throughout Sahelian West Africa in FY 2005. USAID provided support to the Government of Mali for combating the locust infestation, providing pesticides, and funding related control activities. In Mauritania and Senegal, USAID supported locust prevention and response activities, including an aerial spraying campaign.

Niger. To date in FY 2006, the USG has provided nearly \$11.1 million to Niger to support emergency nutrition, animal health and fodder interventions, and food security and income generation programs. USAID has contributed 200 MT of emergency food assistance through WFP and 3,950 MT of development food assistance through the Food Security Initiative in Niger (FSIN) consortium that comprises Africare, Catholic Relief Services, CARE, and Helen Keller International. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is also providing 17,000 MT of Food for Progress development assistance to support agricultural development and the GON's national food reserve stocks.

In FY 2005, the USG provided more than \$20.5 million in assistance to Niger in support of food security and agriculture projects, emergency and development food

assistance, and airlifts of fortified food for emergency nutrition programs. USAID funded programs that focused on community-based development, child survival and health, youth, and human rights. USAID also provided 12,230 MT of development food assistance and 7,860 MT of emergency food assistance, and USDA contributed 3,000 MT of Food for Progress development assistance.

Mali. To date in FY 2006, the USG has contributed nearly \$6.6 million in assistance to Mali to improve food security and agriculture, restore livelihoods in the most affected areas, and build local NGO and government capacity. USAID has provided the equivalent of 1,785 MT of development food assistance, and USDA is contributing 10,400 MT of Food for Progress development assistance in FY 2006.

In FY 2005, USAID provided nearly \$40 million in assistance to Mali. USAID's development program in Mali worked to expand economic opportunities, particularly for the rural poor; provided high impact health services to improve the health and welfare of women and children; mitigated the spread of HIV/AIDS; improved the quality of basic education; consolidated democracy through support of decentralization; supported human rights; and accelerated overall development by making information more widely accessible through radio programs. USAID also provided 1,710 MT of development food commodities and 1,000 MT of emergency food commodities.

Mauritania. To date in FY 2006, USAID has provided 3,810 MT of development food assistance and 8,800 MT of emergency food assistance. In FY 2005, the USG provided more than \$21.5 million to various programs in Mauritania. USAID activities in Mauritania focused primarily on food security, human rights, and community-based development programs. USAID provided 19,330 MT of development food assistance and 16,940 MT of emergency food assistance to Mauritania. USDA also contributed 22,000 MT of Food for Progress assistance in FY 2005.

Burkina Faso. To date in FY 2006, USAID has provided 22,590 MT of development food assistance to Burkina Faso. USAID's funding level for Burkina Faso for FY 2005 was approximately \$18 million, most of which was focused on improving food security. USAID funded programs that support local human rights, community-based development, political party development, and technical assistance for elections and provided 24,240 MT of development food commodities.

U.S. GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE TO NIGER

<i>Implementing Partner</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Amount</i>
FY 2006 (To Date)			
USAID/OFDA ASSISTANCE²			
Center for Human Services	Nutrition	Diffa, Dosso, Maradi, Niamey, Tahoua, Tillaberi, and Zinder	\$640,194
CRS	Food Security/Agriculture and Income Generation	Dosso, Maradi, Tillaberi, and Zinder	\$517,886
Veterinaires Sans Frontieres/Belgium	Food Security/Agriculture	Agadez, Tadress, and Zinder	\$557,062
TOTAL USAID/OFDA			\$1,715,142
USAID/FFP ASSISTANCE			
Food Security Initiative in Niger (FSIN) Consortium	3,950 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Development Food Assistance	Countrywide	\$2,500,000
WFP	200 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Emergency Food Assistance	Countrywide	\$147,500
TOTAL USAID/FFP			\$2,647,500
USDA ASSISTANCE			
Government of Niger	17,000 MT of Food for Progress Development Assistance	Countrywide	\$6,700,000
TOTAL USDA			\$6,700,000
TOTAL USAID ASSISTANCE TO NIGER IN FY 2006			\$4,362,642
TOTAL USG ASSISTANCE TO NIGER IN FY 2006			\$11,062,642

FY 2005			
USAID/OFDA ASSISTANCE			
CDC	Health and Nutrition Survey	Countrywide	\$97,000
CRS	Food Security/Agriculture	Tillaberi and Zinder	\$494,513
FAO	Food Security/Agriculture	Countrywide	\$50,000
HKI	Nutrition	Diffa	\$1,091,470
UNICEF	Airlift of 251 MT of fortified food for emergency nutrition programs	Countrywide	\$543,826
World Vision	Nutrition	Maradi and Zinder	\$1,161,345
TOTAL USAID/OFDA			\$3,438,154
USAID/FFP ASSISTANCE			
FSIN Consortium	12,230 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Development Food Assistance	Agadez, Dosso, Tahoua, and Zinder	\$7,100,000
WFP	7,620 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Emergency Food Assistance	Countrywide	\$5,500,000
TOTAL USAID/FFP			\$12,600,000
USAID/AFR ASSISTANCE			
	Youth Programs		\$500,000
	Democracy and Human Rights Fund		\$92,000
	Special Self-Help Fund		\$74,000

	Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Initiative		\$1,050,000
	WARP Support		\$732,000
TOTAL USAID/AFR			\$2,448,000
USDA ASSISTANCE			
CRS	3,000 MT of Food for Progress Development Assistance	Countrywide	\$1,376,151
TOTAL USDA			\$1,376,151
TOTAL USAID ASSISTANCE TO NIGER IN FY 2005			\$18,486,154
TOTAL USG ASSISTANCE TO NIGER IN FY 2005			\$19,862,305

² USAID/OFDA funding represents anticipated or actual obligated amounts as of February 23, 2006.

U.S. GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE TO MALI

<i>Implementing Partner</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Amount</i>
FY 2006 (To Date)			
USAID/FFP ASSISTANCE³			
Africare	1,785 MT equivalent in P.L. 480 Title II Development Food Assistance	Timbuktu Region	\$1,000,000
TOTAL USAID/FFP			\$1,000,000
USDA ASSISTANCE			
Aga Khan Foundation	10,400 MT of Food for Progress Development Assistance	Countrywide	\$5,584,300
TOTAL USDA			\$5,584,300
TOTAL USAID ASSISTANCE TO MALI IN FY 2006			\$1,000,000
TOTAL USG ASSISTANCE TO MALI IN FY 2006			\$6,584,300

FY 2005			
USAID/FFP ASSISTANCE			
Africare	1,710 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Development Food Assistance	Timbuktu Region	\$930,000
WFP	1,000 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Emergency Food Assistance	Countrywide	\$667,200
TOTAL USAID/FFP			\$1,597,200
USAID/AFR ASSISTANCE			
	Economic Growth ⁴		\$1,723,000
	Education		\$5,755,000
	Democracy and Governance		\$1,447,000
	Health		\$15,705,000
	Agriculture/Environment ⁴		\$11,044,000
	Democracy and Human Rights Fund		\$70,000
	Special Self-Help Fund		\$77,000
	Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Initiative		\$725,000
	WARP Support		\$1,389,000
TOTAL USAID/AFR			\$37,935,000
TOTAL USAID ASSISTANCE TO MALI IN FY 2005			\$39,532,200
TOTAL USG ASSISTANCE TO MALI IN FY 2005			\$39,532,200

³ For Reporting purposes, USAID/Mali's P.L. 480 Title II program is combined with the P.L. 480 Title II program in Chad. The implementing partner is responsible for reporting on both Mali and Chad. The referenced figures are therefore not reflected in Mali's Congressional Budget Justification (CBJ).

⁴ This total includes funding for the locust response.

U.S. GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE TO MAURITANIA

<i>Implementing Partner</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Amount</i>
FY 2006 (To Date)			
USAID/FFP ASSISTANCE			
World Vision and the Doulos Community	3,810 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Development Food Assistance	Nouakchott	\$1,400,000
WFP	8,800 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Emergency Food Assistance	Brakna, Gorgol, Tagant, Assaba, and Hodh El Gharbi	\$4,400,000
TOTAL USAID/FFP			\$5,800,000
TOTAL USAID ASSISTANCE TO MAURITANIA IN FY 2006			\$5,800,000
TOTAL USG ASSISTANCE TO MAURITANIA IN FY 2006			\$5,800,000

FY 2005			
USAID/OFDA ASSISTANCE⁵			
DFS	Locust Response		\$177,777
World Vision	Nutrition	Countrywide	\$50,000
TOTAL USAID/OFDA			\$227,777
USAID/FFP ASSISTANCE			
World Vision and the Doulos Community	14,830 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Development Food Assistance	Nouakchott	\$4,826,100
WFP	16,940 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Emergency Food Assistance	Brakna, Gorgol, Tagant, Assaba, and Hodh El Gharbi	\$8,811,000
TOTAL USAID/FFP			\$13,637,100
USAID/AFR ASSISTANCE			
	Democracy and Human Rights Fund		\$80,000
	Special Self-Help Fund		\$87,000
	Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Initiative		\$250,000
	WARP Support		\$459,000
TOTAL USAID/AFR			\$876,000
USDA ASSISTANCE			
Government of Mauritania	22,000 MT of Food for Progress Development Assistance	Countrywide	\$5,032,000
TOTAL USDA			\$5,032,000
TOTAL USAID ASSISTANCE TO MAURITANIA IN FY 2005			\$14,740,877
TOTAL USG ASSISTANCE TO MAURITANIA IN FY 2005			\$19,772,877

⁵ USAID/OFDA funding represents actual obligated amounts as of September 30, 2005.

U.S. GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE TO BURKINA FASO

<i>Implementing Partner</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Amount</i>
FY 2006 (To Date)			
USAID/FFP ASSISTANCE			
Africare and CRS	22,590 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Development Food Assistance	Zondoma Province (Africare); all 45 provinces (CRS)	\$14,900,000
TOTAL USAID/FFP			\$14,900,000
TOTAL USAID ASSISTANCE TO BURKINA FASO IN FY 2006			\$14,900,000
TOTAL USG ASSISTANCE TO BURKINA FASO IN FY 2006			\$14,900,000

FY 2005			
USAID/FFP ASSISTANCE			
Africare and CRS	24,220 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Development Food Assistance	Zondoma Province (Africare); all 45 provinces (CRS)	\$15,570,000
TOTAL USAID/FFP			\$15,570,000
USAID/AFR ASSISTANCE			
	Democracy and Human Rights Fund		\$69,500
	Special Self-Help Fund		\$104,000
	WARP Support		\$1,628,000
	Economic Support Fund		\$463,000
TOTAL USAID/AFR			\$2,264,500
TOTAL USAID ASSISTANCE TO BURKINA FASO IN FY 2005			\$17,834,500
TOTAL USG ASSISTANCE TO BURKINA FASO IN FY 2005			\$17,834,500

TOTAL USG ASSISTANCE TO SAHELIAN WEST AFRICA IN FY 2006	\$38,346,942
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TOTAL USG ASSISTANCE TO SAHELIAN WEST AFRICA IN FY 2005	\$97,001,882
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Gregory Gottlieb
 Acting Director
 Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance