ACTION AGAINST HUNGER

ACTED

Terre des hommes

SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND

ASSOCIATION WU PAKUWE

ONG TASSAGHT

RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR THE INTEGRATION OF CONFLICT SENSITIVITY

into the targeting of households facing extreme poverty

PROJECT **PROGRESS**

JULY 2020

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Throughout the past few months, the security status of the shared borders between Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso has declined significantly. Various analyses of the region led by Search have revealed several distinct conflicts. This review will focus specifically on those most sensitive conflicts which pose a risk to the activities of the PROGRESS Project targeted towards households facing extreme poverty, such as cash transfer activities. These conflicts have existed for a long time, though they have recently become violent in nature as armed altercations directed at civilians have arisen along the shared borders. The attacks have been indiscriminate in their brutality, targeting men, women, and the elderly as well as children and infants. Critically, it should be noted that such recent attacks have forced targeted populations to abandon their homes en masse, moving towards urban areas which are considered safer (typically, the communities' closest city or regional capital). This migration has worsened competition for already limited agricultural resources.

This issue primarily involves conflicts linked to access to and use of natural resources, especially land and water. These conflicts are the result of a lack of organization and clarity regarding the use and distribution of natural resources, exacerbated by the worsening effects of climate change. Such conflicts involve many actors, including:

- Local populations, refugees, and returnees (for example, the excessive chopping of trees on host population land by refugees, displaced persons, or returnees; installation of displaced populations into educational institutions or similar structures; use of host population land for livestock, etc.)
- Farmers and pastoralists, especially during the rainy season, with a notable lack of respect for rural procedural codes. These dynamics become even more complex when displaced groups or refugees leave their home communities for more stable areas already dealing with high concentrations of livestock. These conflicts exacerbate the vulnerability of impoverished households that already lack a stable income, often either from reduced agricultural capac-

ity or forced displacement, and increase the risk of food insecurity. It should be noted that recent attacks on villages in central Mali have been characterized by the destruction and/or theft of the livestock and grain stores of the local population by armed groups, worsening the vulnerability of households in the Mopti regions most affected by food insecurity.

Additionally, there are conflicts linked to assistance from humanitarian organizations and state technical services for refugees and other displaced persons in areas where the host communities face the same or similar issues of insecurity.

During various conflict analyses in Niger and Burkina Faso, examples of conflict linked to the distribution of provisions and other types of humanitarian assistance engendered tensions between the leaders in charge of distribution and their communities, as well as between members of the communities themselves, due to the perception that assistance was unfairly or inequitably distributed. Another issue linked to humanitarian assistance is that members of non-state armed groups sometimes target the provisions or cash flows distributed by humanitarian organizations and state technical services, exposing beneficiaries to a number of additional security risks. These communities sometimes acknowledge that assistance from state and international actors indirectly supplies non-state armed groups, contributing to mounting distrust in areas where information is limited and often biased, and rumours are particularly prevalent.

Conflicts linked to international commerce constitute a serious threat between the shared Niger-Mali-Burkina border.

These conflicts pit communities against each other, especially displaced livestock farmers (Foulani, Daoussak, Tamasheq) inhabiting the cross-border area situated between Tillabery and Tahoua in Niger and Gao in Mali, or between the Mali-Burkina borders in the Mali region of Mopti. The conflicts often manifest as violent confrontations between individuals or groups, as well as the theft of livestock herds by armed individuals or groups. The absence of security and defense outposts in this particular area combined with weak border authorities contributes further to the fragility of trade routes between the three countries. Traders and pastoral communities are confronted with having to navigate security risks by modifying their routes to avoid the most unstable areas of the region. These strategies sometimes have a negative impact on the economic and social environment of the three countries, changing the already fragile security relations between them.

Finally, conflicts related to violent extremism manifest as attacks by non-state armed groups on defense and security forces as well as on local civilian populations.

The inability of these three states to prevent conflict in the cross-border zones of Liptako-Gourma has given rise to large-scale violence committed by armed groups of ambiguous affiliation, exacerbating inter-community confrontations. At the same time, attacks by non-state armed groups on defense and security forces, state representatives, and civilians alikes have multiplied in the area. Adding to that is the increase in extrajudicial executions and forced and involuntary disappearances during military and security operations led by defense and security forces, sometimes supported by community militias and self-proclaimed self-defense groups. In this context of persistent armed violence against civilians, despite ongoing military operations, conspiracy theories, rumours and false information are on the rise in traditional and social media, contributing to the deterioration of trust between the authorities, defense and security forces et the affected communities.

Additionally, troubling discourses about hate, essentialism, and stigma (especially against Fulani communities) seem to resonate across the Sahel and in diasporic communities, directly contributing to conflict dynamics between already deeply divided communities. The inability of local and state authorities and their partners, especially the MINUSMA in Mali, to prevent violence against civilians and bring perpetrators to justice exacerbates doubts about the authority and the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of local communities. As a result, affected populations often turn to non-state armed groups to protect themselves. Abuse, extortions and "defensive" mass-killings attributed to such armed groups only worsen the downward spiral of violence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on an analysis of documents about targeting for Money Transfer (MT) activities for the three relevant countries, taking into account the existing conflict dynamics stated above, the following recommendations have been created to ensure that all future activities remain conflict sensitive:

1. In order to ensure that MT activities are accepted in participating areas, all steps in the process of targeting and recruitment (from formal exchanges with local authorities to the finalization of lists of participating households) must be in accordance with a solid strategy of communication between project coordinators and the various communities and groups which inhabit the relevant area(s). In the case of targeting communities in Mali and Niger, the proposed approach to engaging audiences through the use of radio and SMS in local languages about MT activities, targeting methods and criteria is strongly recommended. It is essential to involve local actors in the processes of communication and raising awareness, especially technical services from the state, traditional communicators, community leaders, and representatives of key social groups (youth, women, individuals living with disabilities, etc.).

2. In order to avoid exacerbating pre-existing conflict dynamics and divisions between communities, and to ensure the inclusion and support of all stakeholder groups, it is strongly recommended to lead collaborative consultations with communities ahead of time to define the criteria of targeting/recruitment. This process will also help ensure that minority groups are included in the early stages of the project.

3. The final lists of participating households should be confirmed with members of the local community, rather than merely with the targeting committees made up of community leaders and the local authorities. Once the lists have been finalized, it is recommended to organize small consultation groups for each region to confirm them, bringing together individuals from different stakeholder groups according to age, gender, community, and level of vulnerability. This should be followed by the creation of a larger, general assembly dedicated to planning for the inclusion and participation of all members of the community.

4. In light of existing tensions between communities, it is important to ensure the inclusion of different groups through the establishment of targeting and feedback committees. It is recommended that the creation of these committees not be directed simply by community leaders or local authorities, but rather through participatory mechanisms such as small consultation groups or the aforementioned general assemblies, which engage individuals that may be underrepresented.

5. The publication of household lists (or sharing of lists with specific actors), while important to our commitment to transparency and accountability, risks exposing households to extortion or retaliation from non-state armed groups (NSAG) and exacerbating pre-existing tensions between key communities. To this effect, it is strongly recommended to evaluate the pertinence of publishing household lists according to each individual community and/or region. In some cases it may be most appropriate to limit publication of lists to a private, internal resource or share the list verbally with a general assembly for discussion and review. In Mali, specifically, there have been multiple documented cases of retaliation against listed households. We recommend therefore that lists of households be kept confidential in areas where armed groups are especially present.

6. The neutrality and confidentiality of feedback mechanisms should always be respected. When recruiting individuals to manage feedback and complaint groups, selection should be unbiased and seek to include members from as many different stakeholder communities as possible. Methods of submitting and processing feedback should be equally confidential and never risk exposing beneficiaries to retaliation.

7. Within the scope of monitoring MT activities, it is important to monitor perceptions of households that do not receive assistance. Selection criteria may be misunderstood or falsely interpreted by certain households, and as a result can create or exacerbate tensions in participating communities. It is important to set up regular monitoring of perceptions from

non-beneficiary households in areas of implementation.

8. Given the high number of humanitarian actors already present in the area(s) of concentration (including the distribution of food, cash, or other goods and services) it is critical to have a strong working knowledge of these actors and their activities, in order to coordinate aid and ensure that the Consortium's activities are not redundant or disruptive (for example, paying displacement fees or per diems per household). This is especially important when mobilizing leaders and local authorities. We must be careful not to target households which have already been targeted by other actors (for example, refugee and displaced communities are often targeted by similar programs, especially those run by the UN).

9. In light of the numerous attacks by non-state armed groups on the project's targeted populations, as well as the need to protect targeted households from the risks of blackmail and retaliation, it is strongly recommended to limit or avoid physical transfers of money and the establishment of distribution sites. Instead, transfer by voucher, telephone, or through partners in the microfinancing sector are highly preferable. If the physical movement of beneficiaries is inevitable, it is crucial to ensure their safety ahead of time by communicating their arrival to local authorities. This will help ensure that the most vulnerable among them (single women, children, etc.) will be accompanied by trusted individuals. Armed forces should not be used to secure distribution sites, as the collateral risk of an armed state presence could further endanger civilian beneficiaries.

10. Registres Sociales Uniques (RSU) should be used carefully. This methodology, which is the basis for identifying participant households in Burkina Faso and Mali (using pre-existing lists of beneficiaries), should first use research to better understand the level of adherence to, and understanding of, these registers/lists within different communities. If these registers are not generally accepted by the various targeted communities, their use risks exacerbating pre-existing tensions and frustrations among groups that feel excluded or discriminated against. If the registers are old, it is important to make sure that they are updated appropriately, and thus relevant in the eyes of the targeted community.

11. Targeting activities must be carried out with particular attention to positive interdependent relationships between various groups in conflict (for example, farmers/herders, fisherman/herders), and seek to maximize opportunities for peace in targeted zones. All distribution of aid (and other MT activities) should be equitable and never prioritize one group to the detriment of another, unless accompanied by a solid mitigation strategy to avoid worsening divisions between conflicting groups.

12. Finally, it is always **important to consider the 5 most plausible negative effects of targeting and distribution of aid during the final stages of planning, in accordance with the *No Do Harm approach***:

- Effects of distribution: each instance of targeting one group implies the exclusion of another, often the majority of the

population (those who will not be targeted as beneficiaries). For this reason it is crucial to consider whether the project's activities will worsen divisions between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries;

- Effects of legitimization: for example, collaborating with certain leaders and/or authorities that are recognized by some communities and not others;
- Effects on the market: does the targeting of impoverished households have negative results on local markets (for example, rise in prices, shortages of food and other goods following the rise in demand and increased purchasing power, etc.)?;
- Effects of substitution: does the Consortium's targeting of households replace services that should be provided by pre-existing local or national state structures? If so, what is the strategy of coordination and collaboration with these structures in order to ensure sustainability?
- Theft, fraud and corruption: are there risks of theft due to money transfer practices? Are there risks of theft, fraud, and/or corruption linked to collaboration protocol with partner businesses (Mali)? How can these risks be minimized to ensure that mechanisms for feedback and complaints are functional in the case of abuse?

We suggest using the following table in order to organize and define the actions necessary to implement targeting activities for each country based on recommendations developed below. Actions and activities should be participatory and include descriptions of the various actors involved in targeting at the local and national levels, in order to develop specific actions sensitive to the conflict context.

ACTION PLAN - DO NO HARM - TARGETING OF HOUSELHOLDS FACING EXTREME POVERTY

Country :

Recommendation	Actions	Leadership	Timeline
[Copy down a recommendation for each row – this recommendation can include one or multiple activities to implement in order to address the corresponding issue. Create a new row for each recommendation.]	[Describe the proposed activities for implementing the recommendation, as well as any foreseen risks/negative effects.]	[Include the name and role of the person in charge of implementation for the activity]	Add the proposed date of implementation (be as specific as possible: day, month, year)
Ex. All steps of targeting (from administrative formalities through the finalisation of lists of households facing extreme poverty) must have a solid strategy of communication for the different groups and communities who live in the area(s).	*Broadcast of daily radio messages announcing the start of money transfer activities in the areas of interest, as well as eligibility and targeting criteria.* *Creation of telephone databases for sending SMS to alert relevant communities about eligibility and targeting criteria for participation in money transfer activities.*		