



# CRISIS MODIFIERS

## A SOLUTION FOR A MORE FLEXIBLE DEVELOPMENT- HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM?

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Evaluative learning for resilience  
Lessons from the BRACED experience in the Sahel



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## Acronyms

<b>3es</b>	Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness
<b>ACP</b>	Africa, Caribbean, Pacific
<b>AFL</b>	Acting for Life
<b>BEIS</b>	Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy
<b>BRACED</b>	Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters
<b>CAPC</b>	Community-Level Adaptation Planning Committee
<b>CFW</b>	Cash for Work
<b>COPRASUR</b>	Comité Provincial de Secours, d'Urgence et de Réhabilitation (Provincial Department of Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation)
<b>CRS</b>	Catholic Relief Services
<b>DCF</b>	Decentralising Climate Finance
<b>DEFRA</b>	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
<b>DFID</b>	Department for International Development
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>ECHO</b>	EU Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FEWS-NET</b>	Famine Early Warning Systems Network
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>FM</b>	Fund Manager
<b>IASC</b>	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
<b>ICAI</b>	Independent Commission for Aid
<b>ICVA</b>	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
<b>IFRC</b>	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
<b>IP</b>	Implementing Partner (this refers to a BRACED consortia project)
<b>INRAN</b>	Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique du Niger (Nigerian National Institute for Agronomic Research)
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interview
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation

<b>NEF</b>	Near East Foundation
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>OCHA</b>	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>ODI</b>	Overseas Development Institute
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>OPM</b>	Oxford Policy Management
<b>PHASE</b>	Providing Humanitarian Assistance for Sahel Emergencies
<b>PRESENCES</b>	Projet de Résilience face aux Chocs Environnementaux et Sociaux au Niger (Building Resilience against Environmental and Social Shocks in Niger)
<b>PRIME</b>	Pastoralist Areas Resilience Improvement through Market Expansion
<b>PSNP</b>	Productive Safety Net Programme
<b>PSP</b>	Participatory Scenario Planning
<b>RECOPA</b>	Réseau de Communication sur le Pastoralisme (Communication Network on Pastoralism)
<b>RISE</b>	Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced
<b>SAREL</b>	Sahel Resilience Learning Initiative
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNFCCC</b>	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>UNISDR</b>	UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
<b>US</b>	United States
<b>USAID</b>	US Agency for International Development
<b>VfM</b>	Value for Money



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Image: Eric Montfort

An estimated 87% of people living in extreme poverty are in fragile or environmentally vulnerable countries (Global Humanitarian Assistance, 2017). Tackling poverty and responding to crises are increasingly linked, and the aid system is struggling to respond to new challenges posed by the interconnected risks of climate change, displacement, conflict and political fragility. Though enormous progress has been made in helping nearly 1.1 billion people escape poverty since 1990, such progress in fragile contexts has been stubbornly slow, periodically interrupted by shocks and leaving the extreme poor more vulnerable than before. To meet ambitious commitments articulated by Agenda 2030, (UN General Assembly, 2015) both development and humanitarian actors must get serious about preventing and minimising the impact of crises on the poorest.

By design, the humanitarian–development aid architecture is strictly segregated, divided by mandates and rules that were originally designed to meet different kinds of needs. Today, however, this rigidity is hampering the aid system's ability to manage risks and rapidly respond to shocks and stresses. Pre-planned development programmes do not have the flexibility to quickly reallocate funding to address spikes in need, and humanitarian organisations are largely confined to funding instruments that prevent longer-term engagement in vulnerability reduction. When a localised crisis interrupts people's lives, the place between routine development work and full-scale humanitarian response is found wanting.

To address these issues, donors, governments and non-governmental organisations are trialling a new set of innovative risk financing options to help deal with small-scale crises that impede development progress. In November 2015, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) linked a humanitarian fund Providing Humanitarian Assistance for Sahel Emergencies (PHASE) to the multi-year Building Resilience to Climate Extremes and Disasters (BRACED) programme. Focused on the Sahel, the 'crisis modifier' was designed to enable early action and rapid response to new humanitarian needs that manifested in the project areas. In doing so, the crisis modifier intended to protect development gains BRACED projects had made.

Unlike other test cases, this crisis modifier was accessed by development agencies working long-term in the Sahel through BRACED. Eight BRACED projects applied to the PHASE crisis modifier in the first year. This report examines three of these interventions in depth, investigating each step in the process: observing a changing situation, designing an appropriate response, applying to the fund, the fund's decision-making process, implementation of an intervention and how the 'regular' BRACED programme carried on after the humanitarian support was provided. The study asks what the added value of a crisis modifier is to resilience-building programmes, and synthesises the diverse case studies to draw recommendations about implementing a crisis modifier effectively.

Evidence from BRACED reveals that crisis modifiers are an important contribution to an emerging suite of risk financing options. If implemented effectively, a crisis modifier allows development agencies to respond quickly to anticipated or observed crises, while continuing to invest in projects that address the root causes of people's vulnerability to shocks and stresses. The case studies of crisis modifiers managing conflict-related displacement in Burkina Faso, flooding in Mali and food insecurity in Niger demonstrate that, when employed effectively, crisis modifiers offer a practical means to avert or reduce the impact of a crisis on beneficiaries and protect resilience trajectories.

Deploying a crisis modifier is a new way of working. This study identifies common challenges, both technical and political, in responding to a crisis in the context of a development project.

We call for six changes to maximise the ability of a crisis modifier to deliver effective support.

1. **Make contingency planning a prerequisite.** The first step to ensuring a project itself is resilient to shocks and stresses involves having a contingency plan in place. A contingency plan can include specific triggers for early action to embolden field staff to react to anticipated crises. Without a plan, shocks and stress can escalate into a crisis and cause significant additional workload for agencies, and uncertainty around what actions are most appropriate at different points in a crisis. Importantly, contingency planning is not limited to the design phase of a project; plans should be revisited regularly to foster a culture in which everyone is responsible for connecting contingency plans to action.

2. **Act at a pace that reflects the urgency of the situation.** For donors, crisis modifiers should be accompanied by more flexible processes that enable much shorter timeframes for decision-making and disbursement of funding. Crisis modifier interventions by their very nature mean that waiting too long could render the support ineffective, missing crucial windows of time before affected people resort to migration, selling productive assets or other potentially negative coping strategies. Forging a culture of trust and transparency between the donor and the implementing organisation is essential to facilitate faster quick decision-making.
3. **Prepare for transitions into and out of recovery periods.** As the crises subsided, unique needs arose that pre-planned BRACED activities or short-term humanitarian assistance did not cover. In some cases, BRACED partners incorporated actions designed to improve recovery into their PHASE interventions. Transitioning out of crisis is vital for the success of development projects affected by shocks and stresses, but recovery-oriented activities do not necessarily need to be funded by a crisis modifier if project budgets are flexible enough to be reallocated to tackle recovery needs. Principles of adaptive programming offer potential here.
4. **Adhere to humanitarian norms when targeting.** Without guidelines, BRACED partners encountered ethical questions about who should receive support from a crisis modifier. Should funding go exclusively to project beneficiaries, or those who were worse affected? Generally, good practice was to respond to crises that occurred within the project's catchment area, and target support to people who were worst affected, drawing on advice from local governments and humanitarian teams. Collaboration across humanitarian and development partners helped strengthen decision-making, drawing on past experience of response and recovery.
5. **Start responding to the right signals.** Though only one slow-onset crisis was included as a case study in this report, PHASE interventions were initiated after people began enacting distress coping strategies, such as distress migration or sales of productive assets when prices were low. In this context, the crisis modifier had a specific mandate to protect development gains, having been designed for early action *before* people's livelihood systems were eroded. Responding to negative coping mechanisms raises important question about whether, and how, agencies can act earlier and start responding to the 'right' signals.
6. **Harness existing social infrastructure.** Evidence shows crisis modifier funding furthered BRACED consortia's relationships and social standing with communities and government officials, which helped further collaborations that were important for BRACED interventions. In turn, community groups created in the context of BRACED helped deliver the crisis modifier interventions more effectively. Deploying the crisis modifier brought a range of intangible benefits to the BRACED partners – increased trust and social capital, for instance – and this enhanced their operating environment.

Crisis modifiers are not a simple bolt-on to projects. The reality is that working to address crises in development projects requires a fundamental shift in the way development actors design, think and act.

From the experiences of the BRACED programme, it is clear that addressing risk must be elevated to the core of resilience-building, for everyone from donors to field staff. Again and again, we found ourselves wondering how a programme that intends to build resilience for communities at the grassroots level could fail to consider the resilience of the programme itself. In contexts vulnerable to climate change, natural hazards and conflict, crises are not a peripheral possibility. Unless the aid system is prepared to move away from a fierce division of responsibilities and funding modalities, crises will continue to undermine livelihoods, disrupt programming and monopolise the focus of local authorities.

High-level efforts to rethink the humanitarian–development nexus have so far lacked practical application for operational agencies. Crisis modifiers offer a means for development and humanitarian actors (where desirable and appropriate) to work coherently together to address disaster risks in specific locations. When development actors cooperate with humanitarians working in the same geographies, there is an opportunity for greater cohesion in working to address both the symptoms of vulnerability through humanitarian aid and the root causes through development programming.

To be effective, crisis modifiers should be deployed alongside adaptive programming approaches, to ensure there is sufficient flexibility to deal with transitions into recovery and back to 'normal' development programming. Features of adaptive programming, such as decentralised decision-making, collective responsibility for action and stripping back bureaucracy would have enabled much faster responses to the crises, for donors, and for implementers (Vowles, 2013). Moreover, supporting agencies to articulate any reversals in progress, and adjusting expectations as a result, is an important step towards more honest reflection and learning.

Crisis modifiers are not a singular solution to managing risk, but are one of a number of innovative financing mechanisms being trialled to better manage shocks and stresses. Others include forecast-based finance, shock-responsive programming, adaptive social protection and insurance. Little is known about what combination of risk financing mechanisms is best suited to protecting development gains and encouraging early action in order to reduce the humanitarian burden, across different risk profiles. Interrogating these options will be an important endeavour as we strive to achieve Agenda 2030.

We live in an era where political discourse is increasingly concerned with interconnected risk; where UN Secretary-General António Guterres is mobilising a reform process to bring together sustainable development, peace, security and human rights; and where the legacy of the 2008 global financial crisis maintains a focus on efficiency, effectiveness and economy in overseas development assistance. Crisis modifiers are not a singular solution to risk, but they offer hope for addressing the needs of those in crisis quickly and effectively – 'in the right place, in the right way, at the right time' (Scott, 2015).

A man in a white robe and blue headwrap stands in a dry, open landscape, holding a wooden staff. The background is a vast, flat, arid plain under a clear blue sky. The man is positioned on the right side of the frame, looking towards the left. The overall tone is somber and reflective, emphasizing the challenges of crisis.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Image: Pablo  
Tosco/Oxfam

An increase in the intensity, frequency and breadth of crises has placed an unprecedented burden on the bifurcated aid system, calling into question its ability to provide support to people in crisis. For development actors, the emergence of the resilience agenda and commitment to a new set of global policy frameworks – centred around Agenda 2030 – mark a shift in methods of addressing poverty and risk. For humanitarian actors, high-level efforts to reform the humanitarian system culminated in a 'Grand Bargain' to change tired ways of working. Alongside these parallel efforts, a new set of innovative risk financing options is being trialled as a way to deliver the support these trends have promised. In this broader context, the UK government is piloting a flexible financing mechanism known as a 'crisis modifier', linking humanitarian contingency funds to a long-term resilience-building programme.

Evidence from the Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters (BRACED) programme in the Sahel reveals that crisis modifiers represent an important contribution to an emerging suite of risk financing options. When utilised effectively, they hold the potential to avert or reduce the impact of a crisis, offering a practical means to better support at-risk populations.

## Setting the scene

*A better way of working is not about shifting funding from development to humanitarian programmes or from humanitarian to development actors. Rather, it is about working collaboratively across institutional boundaries on the basis of comparative advantage.*

(Grand Bargain, 2016: 14)

An estimated 87% of people living in extreme poverty are in fragile or environmentally vulnerable countries (Global Humanitarian Assistance, 2017). Tackling poverty and crises are increasingly linked, and the aid system is struggling to respond to new challenges posed by the interconnected risks of climate change, displacement, conflict and political fragility. Though enormous progress has been made in helping nearly 1.1 billion people escape poverty since 1990, progress in fragile contexts has been stubbornly slow, periodically interrupted by shocks that leave the extreme-poor more vulnerable than before. To meet ambitious commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals (UN General Assembly, 2015), the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (UNFCCC, 2015) and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR, 2015), a new aid paradigm is needed to address the root causes of vulnerabilities while meeting urgent humanitarian needs. The question remains: Can the current aid system be modified to deliver against such high ambitions?

**The place between routine development work and full-scale humanitarian response remains un-bridged. At the heart of this matter lies improving the support provided to vulnerable communities, which are left at the mercy of two (inflexible) systems.**

Over the course of the past decade, the number of people receiving humanitarian assistance has more than doubled (OCHA, 2015). The demands of longer, more expensive and more frequent crises have put the humanitarian system under considerable strain. Recognising the need for reform, the former UN Secretary-General convened the first-ever World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. Under its auspices, the world's leading donors and aid agencies agreed to channel more support through local organisations, focus on early action and crisis prevention, increase the use of flexible funding and strengthen engagement between humanitarian and development actors (ICVA, 2017). Doing so, it was hoped, would make a real difference to the lives of people in need (Grand Bargain, 2016: 2).

In parallel, the development sector has seen the emergence of the resilience agenda, which has reoriented discourse towards the positive capabilities of people in vulnerable contexts and to re-emphasise the importance of integrating climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction into sustainable development.

Importantly, the resilience agenda seeks to provide solutions to respond to the frequency of crises that erode development investments and further entrench poverty. Following the devastating drought in the Horn of Africa in 2011–2012 (Maxwell et al., 2014), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and donors pivoted their approaches to concentrate on building resilience so that households, communities, states and systems could better absorb shocks without suffering long-term setbacks in their economic and social development (Lindborg, 2017).

One aspect of the resilience agenda has been to focus on early action to prevent and mitigate crises (Cabot Venton et al., 2012), and in doing so expanded the geographic coverage of development work to places previously considered the sole domain of humanitarian actors, such as Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. This focus on building resilience for the world's poorest has been promoted and legitimised by global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (see Peters et al., 2016a).

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action to respond to crises is a matter  
of concern not just for humanitarians;  
it is a conversation to which development  
and climate actors must also be party.

Despite a decade of humanitarian reform and parallel investment in resilience-building, there is still a need to reconfigure conventional aid models to improve coherence between humanitarian and development actors because vulnerability reduction in high-risk environments has not happened at the pace required to mitigate crises. Agenda 2030 and related global frameworks articulate a set of collective outcomes that, while championed in rhetoric, are slowed by the constraints of a fragmented policy, programming and financing architecture. Take the example of early action. Development programmes do not have the flexibility to rapidly reallocate funding to address spikes in need, and humanitarian organisations are largely confined to funding instruments that prevent longer-term engagement in vulnerability reduction. The place between routine development work and full-scale humanitarian response remains un-bridged. At the heart of this matter lies improving the support provided to vulnerable communities, which are left at the mercy of two (inflexible) systems.

Solutions are starting to emerge. Adaptive programming has reintroduced notions of working flexibly, allowing programmes the agility to respond to needs as they arise (Valters et al., 2016). Financing initiatives such as the Grand Bargain (2016) and Future Humanitarian Financing (2015) are contributing to a discourse that seeks to adapt the humanitarian financing architecture to be 'fit for purpose' (Scott, 2015). Moreover, though emerging from disparate fields, a suite of innovative risk financing options has developed and been trialled over the past few years (see Box 6). But the question of how best to finance early action to respond to crises is a matter of concern not just for humanitarians; it is a conversation to which development and climate actors must also be party.

A crisis modifier allows development agencies to respond quickly to anticipated crises, while continuing to invest in programmes that address the root causes of people's vulnerability to shocks and stresses. Case studies of crisis modifiers managing conflict-related displacement in Burkina Faso, flooding in Mali and food insecurity in Niger (all featured in this report) demonstrate that, when employed effectively, crisis modifiers offer a practical means to enable early action and response to emerging crises. Though nascent, initial findings indicate that such mechanisms hold potential to change the way the aid sector thinks about and acts towards crises.

We live in an era where political discourse is increasingly concerned with interconnected risk; where UN Secretary-General António Guterres is mobilising a reform process to bring together sustainable development, peace, security and human rights; and where the legacy of the 2008 global financial crisis is maintaining a focus on efficiency, effectiveness and economy in development assistance. Crisis modifiers offer hope for addressing the needs of those in crisis quickly and effectively – 'in the right place, in the right way, at the right time' (Scott, 2015).

## A spotlight on crisis modifiers

Crisis modifiers could represent a vital step towards humanitarian and development aid working more effectively together. The UK Department for International Development (DFID) is trialling ways to improve coherence between these spheres – by setting aside a portion of a humanitarian contingency fund to be accessed by a multi-year resilience-building programme, to enable early action in the event of a suspected or apparent crisis (see Section 3).

As BRACED partners have discovered, deploying a crisis modifier in a resilience programme opens up new opportunities for better supporting vulnerable communities as they transition in and out of crises, without compromising wellbeing and longer-term development objectives. It also reveals a set of barriers – real and perceived – to supporting those transitions within the confines of prevailing programming approaches. Here, we explore three case studies: the sudden outbreak of violence in the Côte d'Ivoire and resultant refugee crisis along pastoral corridors in Burkina Faso (Section 5); slow-onset food insecurity crisis as a result of unpredictable rainfall in the Tillabéry region of Niger (Section 6); and flash floods in Mopti and Douentza in Mali (Section 7).

Through three case studies, we reveal how long-term development actors can harness existing relationships and networks to identify and implement life- and livelihood-saving activities, working with local to national government to collectively respond to those in need. But the BRACED experience also points to a number of challenges. Even when funds are available for early action to avoid escalation of a crisis, it remains the norm to respond to signals that indicate that negative impacts are already happening, rather than reacting to early warnings. Inexperience in delivering humanitarian response – particularly food aid – can come at the cost of significant delays. Similarly, debating what constitute appropriate actions to protect development outcomes in spite of a shock

or stress – in the context of a fund that has no predetermined criteria, in order to be flexible to a diversity of contexts – has led to a rethinking of the premise of crisis modifiers to include the ambition to protect so-called 'resilience trajectories'.

Using crisis modifiers, and designing programmes to proactively manage extensive risk, could fundamentally change the way development actors and resilience-building programmes have been operating to date. Crisis modifiers have the potential to better support communities experiencing shocks and stresses, advance the design of resilience programmes, reduce pressure on the humanitarian system by preventing small-scale events from escalating and helping protect development gains.

High-level efforts to rethink the humanitarian–development nexus have so far lacked practical application for operational agencies. Crisis modifiers offer a means for development and humanitarian actors (where desirable and appropriate) to work coherently together to address extensive disaster risks in specific contexts. Doing so could better serve populations at risk of crises, advance the UN Secretary-General's prevention agenda, deliver against the Grand Bargain and be a contribution to a new way of working as we strive to reach the goals set out under Agenda 2030.

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## About this report

To build resilience, both emergency and longer-term livelihoods and development support may be appropriate at the same time. This evaluation sought to learn whether Implementing Partners (IPs) in BRACED could build resilience more consistently and effectively by accessing flexible humanitarian finance through Providing Humanitarian Assistance for Sahel Emergencies (PHASE). The evaluation was driven by the overarching question: *To what extent did flexible humanitarian finance applied within a resilience-building programme protect development gains made and ensure development progress remained on track?*

There is sparse evidence on the process involved in and the results of using a crisis modifier in a development programme. We know little about how development organisations anticipate and mitigate against the impacts of shocks and stresses while pursuing resilience outcomes. The lessons from this evaluation on how development organisations deal with crises, address humanitarian need and simultaneously build long-term resilience could inform the design of future resilience programmes and offer scope to reform the way development actors manage risk.



## 2. THE EVOLUTION OF CRISIS MODIFIERS

Image: Jan Eijkenaar

Over the past 20 years, development organisations working in drought-prone contexts have trialled crisis modifiers to better manage risks and shift funding to respond to immediate needs. Although different models offer different benefits, crisis modifiers are seen as advantageous when compared with stand-alone humanitarian aid because they draw on pre-existing distribution channels and are easier to scale down when appropriate. Evidence on their effectiveness is sparse, but experiences deploying them show they must be well designed and fall within strong coordination mechanisms if they are to deliver on their promises. The growing use of crisis modifiers in development projects, particularly in response to El Niño and La Niña weather events, suggests they have a role to play in future resilience programming.

Under the radar for nearly two decades, crisis modifiers have been trialled in development projects to better manage localised, extensive risks and protect development investments. The US Agency for International Development (USAID) continues to lead in their use and application, deploying them primarily in drought-prone contexts to protect pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods. Although their capacity to deliver timely response has been mixed, crisis modifiers are emerging as a feature of major humanitarian responses, most recently in the 2015–2016 El Niño drought in Ethiopia. As resilience thinking gains traction in the development community, crisis modifiers are growing in relevance for a broader audience of practitioners, donors and policy-makers.

With increasing interest have come calls for more evidence of what has worked, and under what contexts crisis modifiers offer a possible solution to the challenge of acting early in response to early warnings.

## Under the radar for nearly two decades, crisis modifiers have been trialled in development projects to better manage localised, extensive risks and protect development investments.

A range of funding instruments fall under the term 'crisis modifier', although most have been used in East Africa to respond to drought conditions. Early attempts to deploy crisis modifiers focused on quickly reallocating development funding to humanitarian activities. This was trialled in response to the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 2000, when USAID deployed a crisis modifier to redirect development funds to pay for emergency assistance activities (USAID, 2015: 8).

In 2005, a variation on this idea was built into the Pastoralist Livelihood Initiative in Ethiopia, whereby 10% of the project's budget could be reassigned to fund humanitarian or early action in crisis without prior approval from USAID. The diversion of development funds in a crisis was duly recognised as enabling a speedy response. However, the drawback of the reduced overall level of funding available for originally planned development work (USAID, 2015: 2) led USAID to readjust its funding mechanism to one which would not deplete pre-allocated development budgets. This culminated in the development of an additional ring-fenced top-up fund of up to \$1 million per year, introduced in the second phase of the Pastoralist Livelihood Initiative in 2009 (ibid.: 11).

The creation of a top-up fund was the precursor to the most recent crisis modifier model, in which an additional contingency fund is specifically set aside to respond to emergency situations. Many recent examples of crisis modifiers have taken this approach, including the USAID Pastoralist Areas Resilience Improvement through Market Expansion (PRIME) project in Ethiopia in 2012,<sup>1</sup> the German Red Cross in Uganda in 2012<sup>2</sup> and the Oxfam-led La Niña Consortium in Kenya in 2013 and 2014.<sup>3</sup>

Using the label 'emergency envelope', the La Niña Consortium supported early action in small-scale emergencies following the 2010–2011 drought and Horn of Africa humanitarian crisis in northern Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands.

<sup>1</sup> PRIME included a crisis modifier of up to \$1 million per year (USAID, 2015: 13).

<sup>2</sup> The German and Ugandan Red Cross were given a preparedness contingency fund of €100,000 by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (IFRC, 2014: 17).

<sup>3</sup> The La Niña Consortium had access to a crisis modifier of €300,000 and was funded by the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations agency (IFRC, 2014: 18).

Taking emergency response as the starting point, investments were sought that strengthened people's resilience over the long term as part of a transition from response to longer-term development and resilience planning (Carabine et al., 2015). The envelope was considered important, 'giving financial flexibility to the partners to address emergencies rapidly' (ibid.: 24).

A USAID review of crisis modifiers found agencies were able to respond to crises faster because the crisis modifier was pre-agreed and did not require further approval from regional intergovernmental bodies (Stockton et al., 2012: 11). Furthermore, it has been noted that crisis modifiers can be more cost-effective than stand-alone humanitarian aid, as they rely on pre-established distribution networks and are easier to 'scale down' when appropriate (World Bank, 2013: 8). Despite the known benefits, though, crisis modifiers are not without challenge (see Table 1).

**Crisis modifiers can be more cost-effective than stand-alone humanitarian aid, as they rely on pre-established distribution networks and are easier to 'scale down' when appropriate.**

In practice, crisis modifiers are not a simple remedy that seamlessly bridges humanitarian and development programmes. The limited existing evidence on crisis modifier implementation points to the serious drawback of bureaucratic delays between application for the crisis modifier and disbursement of additional funding, often as a result of (development) work cultures that are out of step with humanitarian norms. This has been attributed to a lack of understanding among NGOs applying for the crisis modifiers (USAID, 2015: 29), as well as the bureaucracy encountered when engaging several different donor agencies and multiple branches of local government (Smith, 2014: 94). Questions have also been raised as to whether agencies will be pressured to respond to crises that do not relate to the aims of their development project (USAID, 2015: 29) – where humanitarian actors may be better placed or have more expertise in emergency response. Despite this, in the case of the Pastoralist Livelihood Initiative Phase 2, USAID concluded that the crisis modifier was the aspect 'most appreciated by beneficiaries, government officials, and implementer staff' and that benefits on the whole out-weighed the drawbacks (Stockton et al., 2012: 11).

In spite of some growing pains, crisis modifiers are increasingly being trialled in development programmes. The 2015–2016 El Niño drought response in Ethiopia was characterised by the widespread use of flexible funding mechanisms within long-term resilience projects, including crisis modifiers (Catley et al., 2016). The Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance and USAID activated crisis modifiers in two projects: PRIME, a pastoralist resilience project, and Graduation with Resilience to Achieve Sustainable Development, an initiative to enhance livelihood options for chronically food-insecure households. DFID also deployed a crisis modifier in Save the Children's Peace for Development in Ethiopia's Somali region to provide emergency education support. Other donors added

**Table 1: The potential benefits and challenges of crisis modifiers**

POTENTIAL BENEFITS	POTENTIAL CHALLENGES
Some crisis modifier funds are pre-agreed and don't require lengthy approval procedures to be released (Stockton et al., 2012: 11).	Time lags and delays between applications and delivery of aid still exist (Sida et al., 2012) as staff time and skills may be needed for proposal development (USAID, 2015: 2).
Crisis modifiers that involve emergency payments and grants may be quicker to scale back down once the crisis is over, making them more cost effective – if designed in this way (World Bank, 2013: 8).	Staff may not be aware of the best way to apply for crisis modifiers – certainly while they are relatively new processes – and may take time to understand the premise of why development gains should be protected (USAID, 2015: 29).
Many USAID funds are pre-assigned but not guaranteed – NGOs are required to seek approval before accessing funds. This approval process is intended to ensure quality and relevance (USAID, 2015: 2).	Crisis modifiers may provide only a partial financial solution. Usually there is a budget limit, which may not be sufficient to mitigate the effects of the emergency (USAID, 2015: 2).
Generally, crisis modifiers have a faster approval time compared with stand-alone funding applications (USAID, 2015: 2).	Crisis modifiers are not currently a standard arrangement in cooperative agreements (USAID, 2015: 2) so not everyone is familiar with them.
Some models of crisis modifiers do not reduce the budget for development work within the project (USAID, 2015: 2). Funds are ring-fenced so there is no pressure to use them elsewhere.	There may be some dependence on an official declaration of emergency, unless a standing declaration is in place (USAID, 2015: 2). This could limit their release and thus timeliness and/or effectiveness.
The use of existing distribution networks makes the delivery of aid faster and more cost-effective (World Bank, 2013: 8).	Delays can arise if a number of different donors, implementing partners or government ministries are involved (Smith, 2014: 94).
Networks, contacts and trust built over a long timeframe – between communities, local government and development actors – can be harnessed to signal when negative changes are occurring (Section 5).	Development gains could be undermined if the crisis modifier is perceived as a free hand-out (USAID, 2015: 29).
Enabling pre-existing partners (such as local NGOs) access to crisis modifier funding can improve decision-making, bringing decisions closer to the point at which the impacts are felt (Section 5).	There may be pressure to support emergency activities that aren't linked to a project's development aims (USAID, 2015: 29).
Crisis modifiers – depending on the criteria for use – can encourage broader thinking about what it means to protect development gains, outcomes and even (future) resilience trajectories (Section 9).	Confusion can occur over which early warning signs should be used to trigger an emergency response (USAID, 2015: 29).
Activities funded by crisis modifiers can be planned in ways that align with pre- and post-development programmes, enabling continuity in programming approaches (Section 6).	Questions have been raised as to whether staff trained to implement development projects have the appropriate technical expertise to respond to crises as well (USAID, 2015: 30).
	Development partners inexperienced in procuring food aid (or other humanitarian items) can incur delays to the detriment of the timeliness of the response, relearning lessons (Section 8).
	Entrenched ways of working can prevent early action where agencies use indicators that signal when negative coping strategies/impacts are already happening – arguably too late (Section 8).
	If funds for crisis modifiers are available without there also being a requirement for contingency planning that occurs well in advance, this can result in a significant additional workload for agencies, and the need to implement planning processes in relatively short timeframes (Section 8).

substantial resources to the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), Ethiopia's flagship social protection programme, to allow for emergency transfers to households most affected by drought.<sup>4</sup>

Although in some cases these efforts improved response times to the severe El Niño event, lessons learnt on recent experience caution that, unless crisis modifiers are 'well-designed, implemented efficiently, and fall within strong coordination mechanisms', their use will not necessarily translate to improvements in impact on the ground (Catley et al., 2016: 15). The use of crisis modifiers was not consistent across resilience projects, and crisis modifiers did not uniformly deliver on the promise to provide timely assistance and protect livelihoods (ibid.; Levine et al., forthcoming).

USAID is also attempting to deploy flexible funding mechanisms in the Sahel. Following repeated large-scale humanitarian emergencies in the region, the agency has funded a portfolio of resilience investments known as Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced (RISE), supported by a knowledge manager function, the Sahel Resilience Learning Initiative (SAREL), which provides monitoring, evaluation and learning support. As part of its role, SAREL is facilitating multi-stakeholder processes to support humanitarian–development collaboration in contingency planning, to pre-prepare action plans in the event that crisis modifier funds need to be accessed.

Across the region, RISE and SAREL are considered among the most innovative in relation to trialling new ways of connecting humanitarian and development ambitions, although achieving changes in practice is challenging: 'though some RISE projects have the tools or mechanisms, such as trigger indicators and crisis modifiers to facilitate rapid response, it does not appear that RISE portfolio projects have proactively managed [localized] shocks in the last three years' (USAID, 2017: 7). Linking early warning to response is consistently difficult, even in projects designed to experiment with different technical solutions to mobilising early action. Learning from their experience, the 2017 RISE strategy suggests moving data compilation and analysis of trigger thresholds to SAREL, and giving RISE partners responsibility for tracking local indicators.

While the implementation of crisis modifiers has by no means been flawless (Sida et al., 2012: 22), and suggestions for their improvement continue to emerge (Stockton et al., 2012: 26), their adoption in social protection programmes and their growing use in development projects suggests they hold great potential for future programming.

In this broader context of the evolution of crisis modifiers, and the trialling of innovative risk financing options (see Box 6), DFID decided to link a humanitarian contingency fund – that is, PHASE – with a long-term resilience programme – that is, BRACED (see Section 3). In many ways, this is a rare example of a move towards funding models that embed a more forward-thinking approach to the management of risk. External reviews had also been pointing towards the need for a change.

<sup>4</sup> For more information on the PSNP and other shock-responsive social protection, see OPM (2017).

An ICAI investigation into DFID's 2012 humanitarian response in the Horn of Africa recommended DFID improve responsiveness to crises by using 'more flexible funding mechanisms ... including contingencies, pooled funds and "crisis modifiers" to allow for rapid response and protect development achievements' (ICAI, 2012: 23). Attaching a humanitarian contingency fund to a development programme (see Section 3) was in some ways a natural extension of trialling new, more flexible, ways of working.

A woman wearing a turban and a purple top is holding three ears of corn. The background is a blurred field of crops. The entire image has a blue tint.

# 3. LINKING HUMANITARIAN FINANCE TO RESILIENCE PROGRAMMING

Image: Pablo  
Tosco/Oxfam

In November 2015, DFID linked a humanitarian contingency fund, Providing Humanitarian Assistance for Sahel Emergencies (PHASE), to the multi-year Building Resilience to Climate Extremes and Disasters (BRACED) programme. Focused on the Sahel, the fund intended to enable early action and rapid response to new humanitarian needs, and to protect development gains made by BRACED projects. Each project was eligible to apply for grants of up to £250,000 and could expect a decision back from an Assessment Panel within 15 working days. The PHASE guidelines were designed to be open-ended, allowing maximum flexibility for the applicants.

BRACED is the UK government's flagship investment under the International Climate Fund (BEIS et al., 2017). It is one of the largest single investments in resilience-building, globally. The four-year programme (2014–2018) aims to tackle poverty and the root causes of vulnerability to climate change and disasters for up to 5 million people (DFID, 2016). Through 15 consortia working in the Sahel, East Africa and Asia, BRACED is working to scale up proven technologies and practices to build resilience, develop local-to-national capacity to respond to climate-related disasters and generate evidence of what works on adaptation and disaster risk reduction. BRACED works across 13 countries and includes over 120 organisations, including NGOs, local government, research institutes and the private sector. The programme is supported by a Knowledge Manager led by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and a Fund Manager (FM) led by KPMG.

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**Box 1: Where does PHASE sit in the range of crisis modifiers?**

In BRACED, the funds from PHASE are referred to interchangeably as a contingency fund, contingency mechanism and crisis modifier. We refer to the fund as a crisis modifier. In USAID's official definition, crisis modifiers are 'funding mechanisms designed to support a timely response to crisis by implementing partners who are already operational on the ground' (USAID, 2015). Crisis modifiers are explicitly deployed to 'protect development gains' – a justification for using funding that features in the internal PHASE Guidance Note. The term 'crisis modifier' is well suited to the purpose and ambitions of the fund as used in the BRACED programme.

The PHASE crisis modifier draws on elements of different designs. It includes the following parameters:

- Development actors (BRACED consortia) are eligible to apply.
  - It is intended to fund emergency assistance or early action to protect development gains.
  - It intends to fund new humanitarian needs, not chronic needs.
  - Crisis must occur or affect the project area.
  - It is not dependent on early warning triggers.
  - It sits at the programme level, not in project budgets.
  - Assessment Panel approval is required to release funding.
  - Funds can be paid in advance or arrears, depending on the implementers' preferred payment modality.
  - Decisions are to be made in 15 working days from submission of proposal.
  - The BRACED FM manages the fund, including the application process, the Assessment Panel, dispersal and accountability.
  - Decisions are made by an Assessment Panel comprising the FM and DFID, with the Knowledge Manager as an observer. The final decision rests with DFID; the FM provides information about the wider BRACED project and can provide recommendations.
- 

In 2015, DFID created the Providing Humanitarian Assistance for Sahel Emergencies programme in response to the UK government's Humanitarian Emergency Response Review (Ashdown et al., 2011) and a growing body of evidence on the value of early action (Cabot Venton, 2013). PHASE is a multi-year

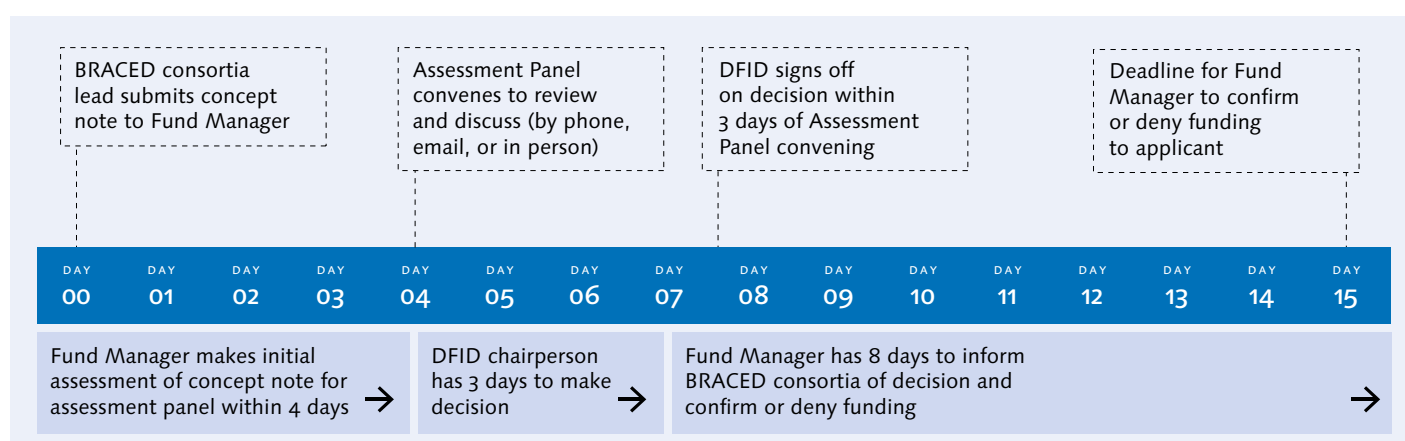
humanitarian programme that works across the Sahel to address the drivers of food insecurity, increase capacity to cope with natural hazard-related disasters and alleviate the needs of people affected by conflicts (DFID, 2014). One component of the programme is a £28 million contingency fund for rapid response to humanitarian needs. Within this contingency fund, £1.5 million had been ring-fenced as a crisis modifier for BRACED consortia working in the Sahel.

Since November 2015, BRACED Implementing Partners (IPs) in the Sahel have been eligible to apply for grants of up to £250,000 from the £1.5 million PHASE crisis modifier to take early action against shocks or stresses. DFID contracted the BRACED FM to oversee the application, decision-making, disbursement and accountability of the PHASE funds for successful BRACED applicants. In advance, the FM wrote a guidance note explaining the scope, eligibility and application process for accessing the funds. The fund is intended to enable pre-approved organisations to apply for funding for early action when needed, with minimal bureaucracy, facilitating a rapid approval and disbursement process on the part of DFID and the FM.

The PHASE crisis modifier is designed to facilitate early action, provide rapid response to new crises, protect BRACED development gains and maintain the progress of the projects. The design of PHASE in BRACED thus draws on elements of different designs of crisis modifiers (see Box 1).

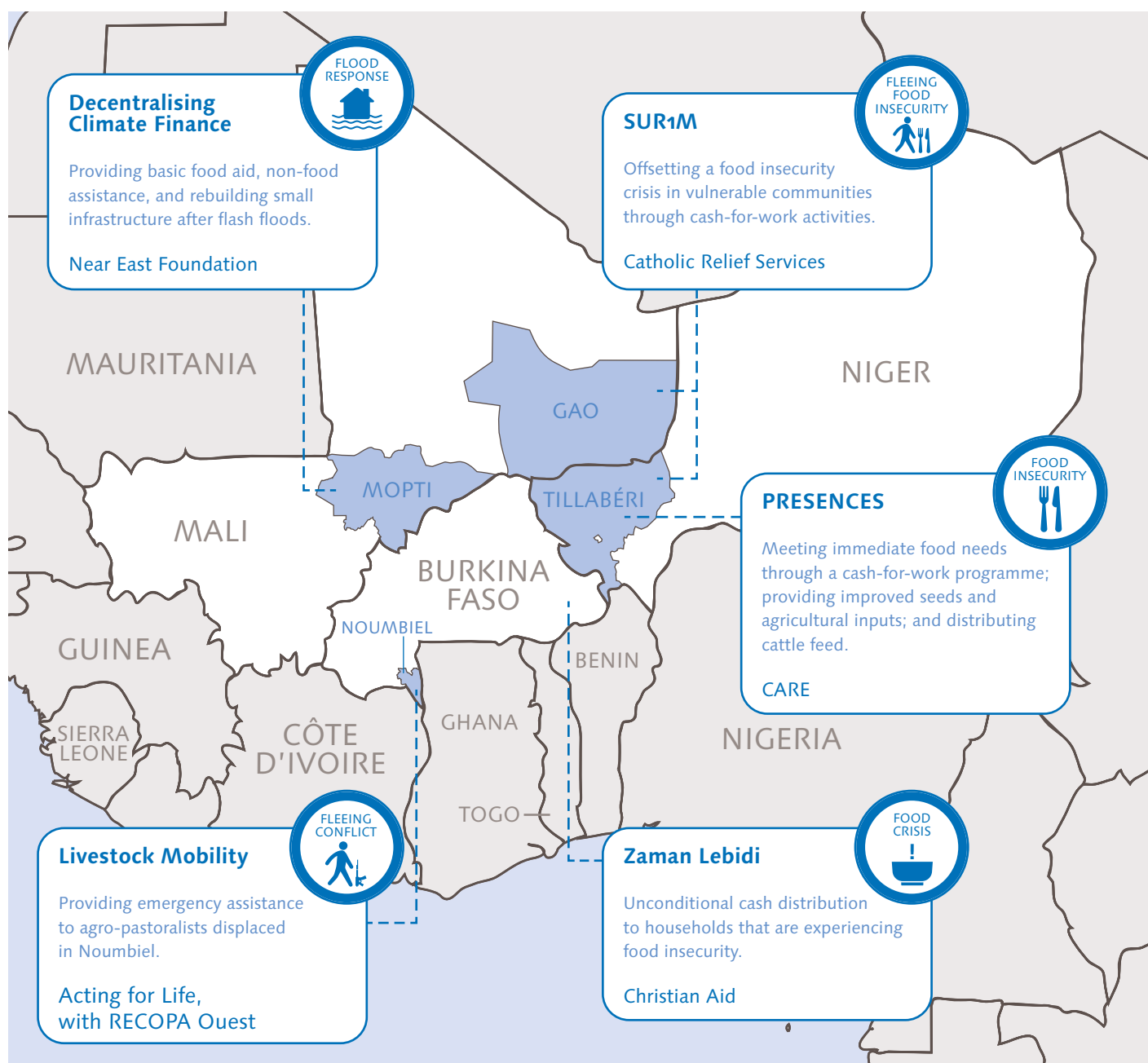
The PHASE guidelines are fairly open-ended and provide no instruction on what kinds of activities can be funded, allowing maximum flexibility for BRACED applicants. They stipulate that all interventions must aim to meet needs caused by a new humanitarian crisis and protect the success of BRACED activities. Interventions last between three and six months, could be co-funded and do not rely on any specific trigger or early warning to qualify for funding.

**Figure 1: Crisis modifier countdown – 15 days for decision-making**



The PHASE guidelines set out a timeline for the decision-making and disbursement of funding. The application process is designed to be completed within 15 days total (Figure 1).

Figure 2: Review of applications and selection of case studies



Beginning in late December 2015, applications to the PHASE mechanism began rolling into DFID. They dealt with a range of shocks and stresses, from displacement to extreme flooding and food insecurity caused by late and erratic rainfall. At the time of selection of case studies, there had been five applications to the fund (see above); by May 2017, there had been eight applications to the fund.

A woman wearing a blue long-sleeved dress and a red headwrap is kneeling in a field, working with the soil. The field is filled with low-lying green plants. In the background, there are some trees and a clear blue sky. The overall scene is rural and agricultural.

# 4. METHODOLOGY: EVALUATIVE LEARNING

Image: Pablo  
Tosco/Oxfam

A bespoke 'evaluative learning' methodology was created for this evaluation, plus a tailored theory-based approach and set of programme- and project-level causal chains. The methodology described in the detailed evaluation design (Peters et al., 2016b) guided data collection and analysis, helping ensure robust collection of evidence across Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.

An 'evaluative learning' methodology was designed to help understand the added value of a crisis modifier in safeguarding longer-term development gains, from both a project-specific and a programme-wide perspective (Peters et al., 2016b). In this context, 'project-specific' refers to individual BRACED consortia projects and 'programme-wide' to BRACED as a whole, encompassing all 15 consortia. The evaluation is concerned with the impact of PHASE within BRACED, with a primary focus on *learning* from the process of its implementation. The evaluative learning methodology generated lessons on if, and how, crisis modifiers can add value in resilience programmes.

Using a theory-based evaluation approach, we aimed to open up the 'black box' of PHASE interventions to answer not 'What worked?' but 'Why and how?' We tested the following hypothesis:

*By utilising the PHASE crisis modifier, BRACED IPs are able to offer protection to BRACED programme Outputs 1 and 2 in the event of early warning or experience of a shock or stress that threatens target areas, and thereby help prevent the derailing*

*of resilience-strengthening progress being made and maximise the maturity of resilience outcomes attainable over the full term of the BRACED programme.*

The BRACED programme outputs are: 1) poor people receive support to reduce their vulnerability to climate related shocks and stresses; and 2) increased capacity of local government, civil society and private sector to respond to climate-related shocks and stresses (BRACED, 2013).

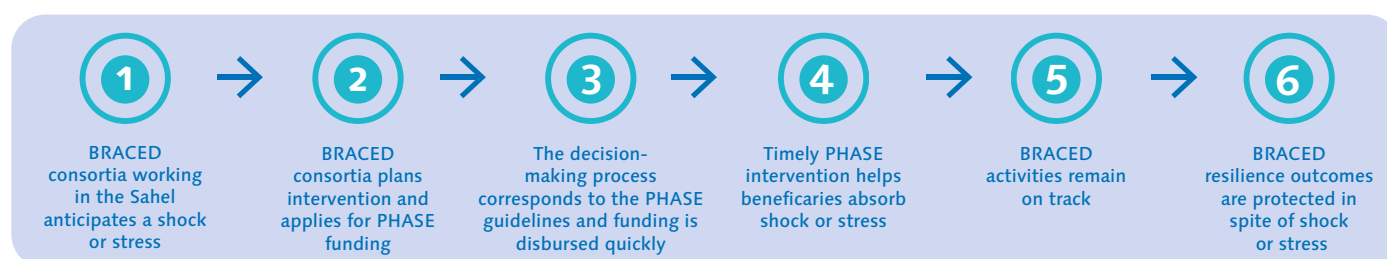
Simply put, the hypothesis posits that the crisis modifier funds can be used to protect real or projected gains made by the BRACED programme. These gains may be in the form of reduced vulnerability or increased capacity to deal with climate- and disaster-related shocks and stresses.

Simply put, the hypothesis posits that  
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protect real or projected gains made by  
the BRACED programme.

The seven steps outlined below are a simplified version of the methodology adopted for this evaluation (see Peters et al., 2016b).

**Step 1. A programme-wide theory of change was developed.** The theory illustrates the relationship between PHASE interventions in the BRACED programme, based on the hypothesis and informed by a programme document analysis. The theory outlines a series of causal steps we used to test our assumptions at each stage of a PHASE intervention.

**Figure 3: Causal chain**



**Step 2. The case studies were selected.** In this case, the case study unit is a PHASE crisis modifier intervention, and the case study methodology allowed the evaluation to understand how the implementation, context and other factors produced the observed results (Yin, 2003). All applications to the PHASE fund were reviewed and assessed in line with predefined criteria.<sup>5</sup> Purposive sampling, a form of non-probability sampling, was used to shortlist three case studies.

<sup>5</sup> The criteria included (in no particular order) geographical spread to ensure a cross-section of the Sahel countries; diversity in hazard and crisis type; diversity in proposed intervention activities; willingness to engage in an evaluative learning process; timing of the fund applications; security situation; and possible de/escalation of the crisis situation.

**Step 3. A simple causal chain was developed for each case study.** This traced the process through which PHASE interventions aim to protect BRACED development gains using crisis modifier funding. Based on PHASE application documents, and key informant interviews (KIIs), the causal chains were iterated through the data collection and verification process. The project-specific causal chains can be found at the start of each case study chapter (Sections 5, 6 and 7).

**Step 4. The stories of each case study were articulated.** The most important source of data for this analysis was KIIs directly with project staff and local government officials working in the affected areas. A snowball sampling technique was used, with interview questions based on a review of secondary literature and project documentation. For each case study, the team aimed to draw from as many perspectives as possible, including individuals involved in applying for, implementing, observing and working alongside the PHASE intervention. In addition, focus group discussions (FGDs) were held with project staff based in the UK, and in Burkina Faso and Niger.

These exchanges deepened the case study description and analysis and helped address gaps in the case study and ensure multiple key informants and stakeholders validated each step in the causal chain. Validation processes aimed to strengthen the robustness of the evidence. For example, a series of measures were taken to account for, and manage, potential sources of bias (see Peters et al., 2016b).

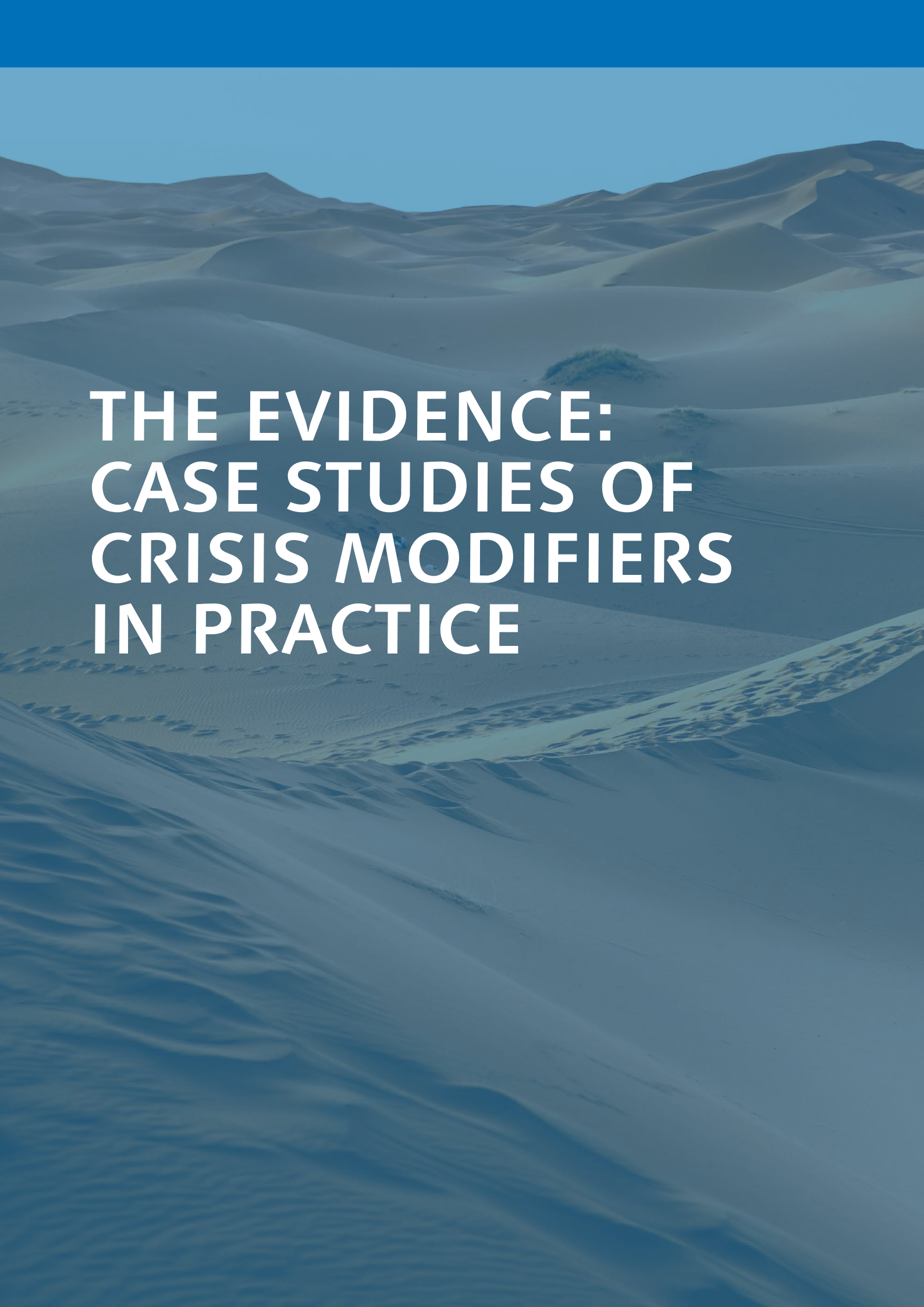
**Step 5. Assessing whether links in the project-level causal chains held.**

The team determined whether or not each link in the causal chains held. Judgement was made on an assessment of the strength of evidence from primary data, triangulated with supporting documentation from project reports and independent source material (where available). Where there was conflicting evidence, the case study highlights this.

**Step 6. Synthesis of three cases and comparison with the programme-wide causal chain.** A synthesis of the three case studies allowed for their comparison against one another, and in relation to the programme-wide causal chain (see Section 8). This process allowed the team to identify the assumptions that did not hold under each step of the causal chain. The results were consolidated under the overarching generic theory, and this allowed for the identification of common points of deviation.

**Step 7. Internal and external review.** Each case study (and this report in its entirety) undertook extensive internal and external review, including by the implementing teams in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. In addition, a more detailed version of this report was submitted to – and approved by – DFID's formal evaluation process, Evaluation Quality Assurance and Learning Services.

The three case studies are detailed next (Sections 5, 6 and 7). Section 8 features a synthesis of the three cases and comparison with the programme-wide causal chain. Section 9 reflects on these findings to derive lessons from BRACED's experiment with a crisis modifier.



# THE EVIDENCE: CASE STUDIES OF CRISIS MODIFIERS IN PRACTICE

## Introducing case studies

### SECTION 5: THE CASE OF CONFLICT-RELATED DISPLACEMENT IN BURKINA FASO

The BRACED project Livestock Mobility is a consortium led by Acting for Life (AFL). Livestock Mobility is active across Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal. The project aims to negotiate and secure 1,700 km of strategic trans-border corridors for use by pastoral and agro-pastoral women, men and children, improving 900,000 Sahelian pastoralists' ability to manage climate variability.

The Communication Network on Pastoralism (RECOPA, Réseau de Communication sur le Pastoralisme) Ouest is a Livestock Mobility consortium partner, and is at the centre of this case study. The case reveals how crises in neighbouring countries can have a direct impact on project sites. The case study shows how the crisis modifier was used to respond to the sudden outbreak of violence in neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire and the resultant refugee crisis along pastoral corridors in Burkina Faso.

### SECTION 6: THE CASE OF FOOD INSECURITY IN NIGER

The BRACED project Building Resilience against Environmental and Social Shocks in Niger (PRESENCES, Projet de Résilience face aux Chocs Environnementaux et Sociaux au Niger) is a consortium led by CARE International. PRESENCES works in Niger to support over 400,000 vulnerable people to adapt to climate extremes using an innovative model combining climate information services, support for climate-resilient livelihood options and governance and management of national resources.

The case study traces the slow-onset food security crisis that has resulted from unpredictable rainfall and pest infestation in Tillabéry region of Niger, CARE's application to the crisis modifier to address growing food insecurity and the challenges this presents to delivering early response and resilience-building activities simultaneously.

### SECTION 7: THE CASE OF FLOODING IN MALI

The BRACED project Decentralising Climate Finance is a consortium led by the Near East Foundation (NEF). Decentralising Climate Finance supports communities in Mali and Senegal to access climate grants to identify and invest in adaptation strategies. The project supports the readiness of Mali and Senegal's devolved governments to invest global and national climate funds in public goods to meet local priorities.

The case study documents NEF's experience of dealing with flash floods in Mopti and Douentza *cercles* in Mali, and reveals the challenges involved in determining what type of interventions should be funded from a crisis modifier or should be included in routine resilience-building programming.

## Structure of the case studies

Taking an evaluative learning approach (see Section 4), each case study begins with a tailored causal chain. The case study then traces each step in the chain, describing what happened, why and how. At the end of each link, we determine whether said causal link held or not. Each link in the causal chain follows the sequential order of the intervention.



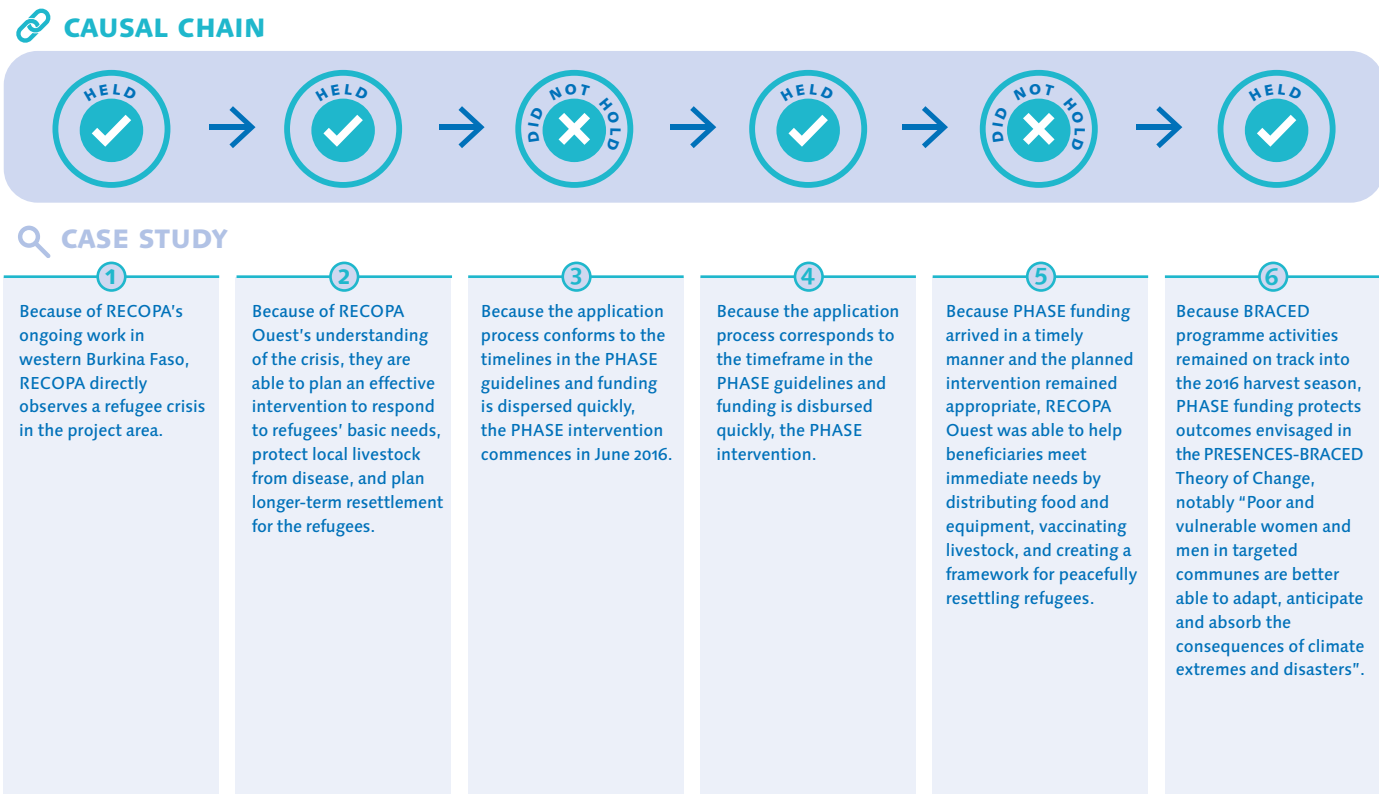
# 5. THE CASE OF CONFLICT-RELATED DISPLACEMENT IN BURKINA FASO

Image: Pablo  
Tosco/Oxfam

RECOPA Ouest was working on negotiating pastoral corridors in Burkina Faso when the BRACED project was affected by a conflict-related displacement from neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire. With no prior experience in humanitarian response, RECOPA Ouest wrote a strong application to respond to the crisis, focusing on providing for immediate needs and supporting longer-term resettlement and integration of displaced people into the community. There were significant delays from DFID and the FM in responding to the application, and further delays from RECOPA Ouest in procuring the food aid needed in-country. When it was delivered, the intervention was managed with local authorities and filled a specific niche in the relief effort as humanitarian organisations moved out of Nounbiel. Some displaced people were resettled, but most did not have a permanent solution within the six-month PHASE timeframe. The humanitarian financing helped RECOPA Ouest gain a foothold in Nounbiel province, and the project was able to secure pastoral corridors when the PHASE intervention concluded.

Unique among PHASE interventions, this case study focuses on a conflict and subsequent refugee crisis rather than an environmental shock or stress.

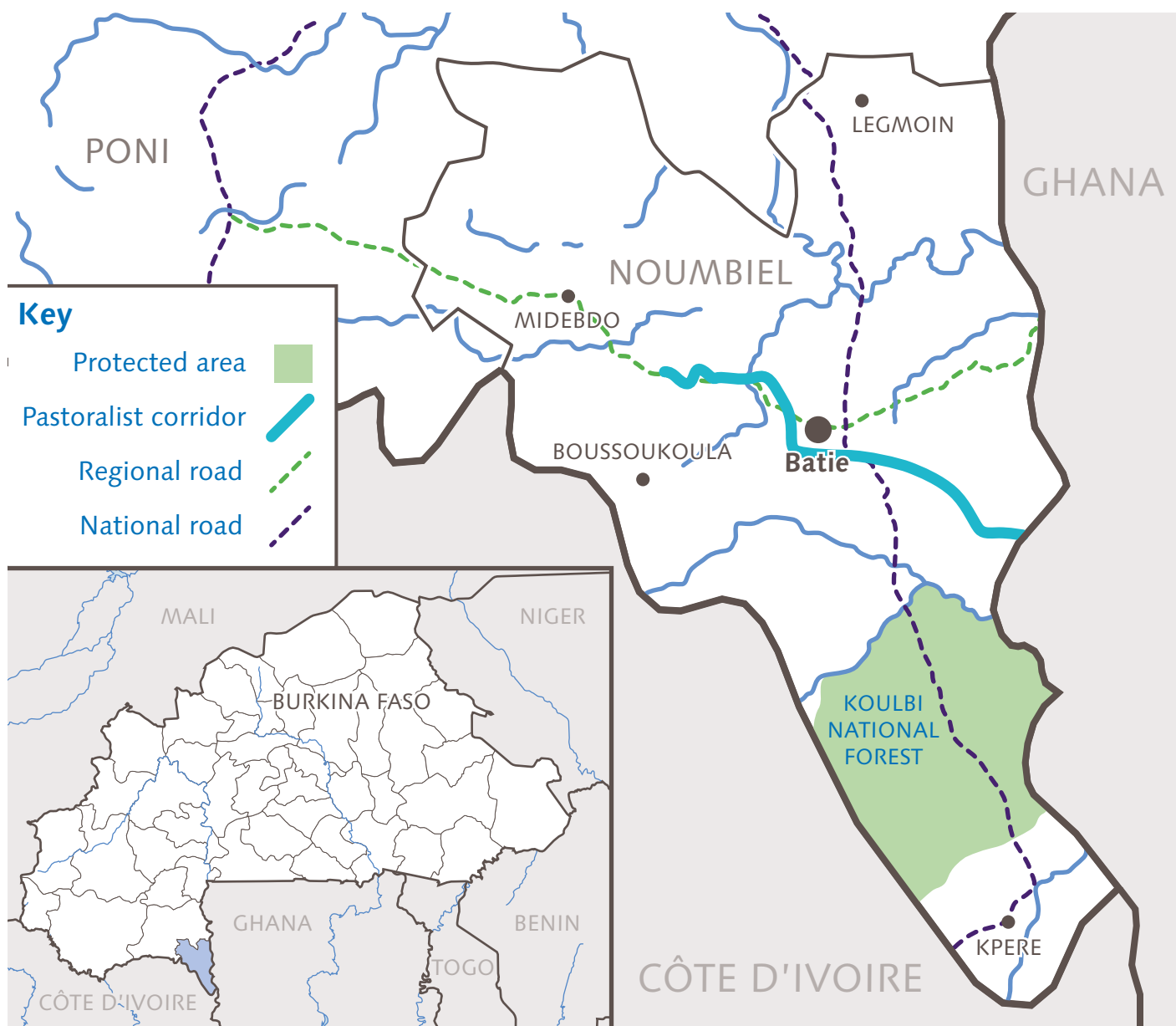
Figure 4: Causal chain for the case of conflict-related displacement in Burkina Faso



On 24 March 2016, a violent conflict erupted between pastoralists and farmers in Bouna, Côte d'Ivoire, leaving 33 people dead and dozens wounded. Pastoralist families fled the town, heading to safety over nearby borders into Burkina Faso and Ghana. Over 2,000 people, primarily women and children, arrived in Kpouéré, Batié and Boussoukoulou, three towns in Nounbiel province of Burkina Faso. Having fled with only their livestock (and in many cases even without them, lost in the chaos of leaving Bouna or killed in the conflict), the newly arrived refugees were completely dependent on the generosity of local populations and food aid provided through the local government.

The towns where refugees arrived fall within the BRACED intervention area, where RECOPA Ouest is leading a BRACED project that aims to secure pastoral mobility between Sahelian and coastal countries. RECOPA Ouest is a grassroots advocacy NGO that works as a network representing pastoralists in western Burkina Faso, and has been working to promote pastoralist issues in local and national Burkinabe politics since 1998. To improve pastoralist resilience to climate change, RECOPA Ouest's project with AFL negotiates corridors for pastoralists and their livestock, provides basic services along these corridors, and advocates for trans-border livestock mobility at local, national and regional levels. Because of its proximity to coastal countries, the southwest is a vital transit area for transhumance, or the type of seasonal migration with livestock that Sahelian pastoralists have practised for centuries. Still today, pastoralists cross Nounbiel to move between Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Mali. In spite of its importance to pastoralists, Nounbiel has long been neglected by development projects, and few NGOs besides RECOPA Ouest currently operate in the province.

Map 1: BRACED projects that accessed the crisis modifier in the Sahel



According to the Ivoirian Minister of Animal Resources, Kobenan Adjoumani, the conflict in Bouna was the result of intensified tensions between herders searching for pasture for their livestock and farmers expanding the agricultural land they cultivated (*Le Figaro*, 2016). These underlying causes are directly relevant to the BRACED project in Nombiel, which intends to manage these pressures on natural resources and protect nomadic paths. The influx of refugees into Burkina Faso risked exacerbating these stresses, particularly in the small town of Kpouéré, which found itself with a greater number of refugees than the total population of the town.<sup>6</sup> The additional burden on natural resources, particularly water and pasture, was a major concern for local populations. With similar patterns of agricultural encroachment on transhumance paths, and more competition over scarce land and resources as a result of the refugee crisis, Nombiel faced a humanitarian emergency that risked putting in jeopardy the peaceful co-existence between two livelihood systems.

<sup>6</sup> According to the RECOPA Ouest project coordinator.

Table 2: Timeline for the case of conflict-related displacement in Burkina Faso

APPLICATION		PREPARATION FOR IMPLEMENTATION				IMPLEMENTATION	
Step in application process	Time taken to draft and submit PHASE application	Time taken to convene Assessment Panel and make decision	Time taken to disburse PHASE funding, after decision was taken	Time taken to draft and submit tender for food aid	Length of time food aid contract is advertised in national papers (legal requirement)	Time taken to obtain a bank guarantee on food aid	Time taken to deliver food aid
Length of time	3 weeks	6 weeks for informal confirmation, 2 additional weeks for sign-off	11 weeks	4 weeks to write tender for provision of food aid, 2 additional weeks for AFL to validate	2 weeks	5 weeks	3 weeks
							Regularly for 3 months
Date finalised	15 April 2016	29 May informally, 6 June 2016 formally	20 September 2016	28 July 2016	11 August 2016	15 September 2016	10 October 2016
							11 October 2016
Explanation	Took 2 weeks to put together budget	Received a few updates from KPMG but no understanding of why this took so long	Delays in receiving funding, clarifying budget questions, issuing contract addendums. Activities continue in interim	AFL had to validate because of sum involved, and tendering food aid was a new process and was extremely cumbersome (80 page tender document)	Legal requirement to publish tender competitively in a newspaper	Bank guarantee was a requirement given the value of the tender	There was no more maize on the market, so this took an extra 2 weeks to furnish
							This began during the lean season, so the delay meant RECOPA Ouest was also able to include vulnerable households from BRACED beneficiaries

**(Theory) Link 1: Because of RECOPA Ouest's ongoing work in western Burkina Faso, RECOPA Ouest directly observes a refugee crisis in the project area.**

*In practice: RECOPA Ouest staff were swiftly alerted to the arrival of refugees, thanks to information from their pastoral networks and their proximity to the epicentre of the crisis. Although BRACED project implementation had been limited in Nounbiel, RECOPA Ouest's role representing pastoralists provided it with a strong mandate to respond. The first link in the causal chain held true.<sup>7</sup>*

Prior to the refugee crisis, RECOPA Ouest's progress had been slow in Nounbiel province. Unlike other areas of western Burkina Faso, in Nounbiel the land tenure system is dominated by small private landholdings. Negotiating pastoral corridors is far more cumbersome when deliberations occur at the individual household level, with separate negotiations for every landholding. Any one household can block efforts by refusing to cede a portion of their land for a corridor to allow pastoralists to move through the area. In the absence of village chiefs who can make communal decisions about land use, RECOPA Ouest has been relying on advocacy efforts to foster successful outcomes in Nounbiel.

At the time of the crisis in March 2016, the project facilitator in Nounbiel had not yet managed to negotiate or secure any corridors. Active since early 2016, when Nounbiel was brought into the fold of the BRACED programme, the project focused on laying the groundwork for a common understanding of the importance of pastoral mobility. The facilitator had identified an existing pastoral corridor and organised communal assemblies to present the objectives of BRACED and garner their reactions. In early 2016, the facilitator organised workshops on livestock mobility, to raise the profile of the issue with key stakeholders and to enhance advocacy efforts.

The day after the conflict began, RECOPA Ouest's project coordinator and facilitator were hosting a workshop on livestock mobility in Batié, a major destination for the refugees. Local members of RECOPA Ouest's network of pastoralists alerted staff, who immediately left to visit the newly arrived refugees to determine the best response. Immediate needs for food and shelter had not yet been met, and there were simmering tensions among locals concerned that the refugees' livestock would destroy property or crops. All of the people who arrived in Nounbiel were Fulani pastoralists, belonging to the same ethnic group as the pastoralists living in southwest Burkina Faso. In some cases, the refugees were extended family of the BRACED project beneficiaries.

<sup>7</sup> The evidence to support this link is strong, though it differs slightly from the overarching theory of change. The generic PHASE causal chain states that, 'Because of the BRACED IP's work in the intervention area, access to accurate data, and familiarity with beneficiaries, the BRACED consortia is able to *anticipate* a crisis event.' In the case of AFL, the crisis could not have been anticipated; there was no conflict early warning system to rely on and the conflict itself occurred in a neighbouring country. To accommodate for this, the first link in the AFL PHASE theory of change is adapted, and concerns RECOPA Ouest's direct observations of the crisis and access to refugees.

According to RECOPA Ouest staff, the organisation, which functions as a network representing pastoralists, could not be seen to ignore an issue that so directly affected its members. Not responding could cause it to lose legitimacy among its key constituents, and the arrival of refugees threatened to disrupt the peace in its target villages. Because of RECOPA Ouest's direct access to the refugees and the refugees' ethnic and familial links with BRACED beneficiaries, Link 1 in the causal chain held true.

**(Theory) Link 2: Because of RECOPA Ouest's understanding of the crisis, it is able to plan an effective intervention to respond to refugees' basic needs, to protect local livestock from disease and to plan longer-term resettlement for refugees.**

*In practice: Working alongside government agencies and responding to needs outlined in official needs assessments, RECOPA Ouest designed an intervention that responded to the immediate material needs of refugees, protected local livestock from disease brought with the refugees' herds and considered longer-term resettlement for those affected. The second link in the causal chain held true.*

After witnessing the refugee sites, the RECOPA Ouest project coordinator called AFL (Lead IP in the BRACED consortium) and asked for support to resource a response. AFL informed on the opportunity to apply for crisis modifier funds through PHASE. Within one week of the crisis, a first draft of the application for PHASE was shared with AFL, without a budget attached. Determining budget allocations for PHASE proved more complicated; the coordinator was unsure how to estimate the costs of refugee resettlement negotiations. Under pressure, with limited time, the costs were budgeted based on transportation for local officials and generic workshop costs. Within three weeks of the original crisis, the final PHASE application was submitted.

In Burkina Faso, the Provincial Department of Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation (Comité Provincial de Secours, d'Urgence et de Réhabilitation) is responsible for coordinating emergency response and humanitarian interventions at the provincial level. RECOPA Ouest's proposed PHASE intervention drew on information from COPRASUR's assessment of the situation. To complete the PHASE application accurately, the coordinator liaised with the high commissioner of Batié, who was the most senior government official coordinating the response, and the director of Action Sociale, a branch of local government that is a member of COPRASUR, to manage and deliver aid to refugees. COPRASUR produced reports detailing the number of refugees as 2,027, all of whom were included as beneficiaries within the planned PHASE intervention.

The planned intervention was designed to incorporate short- and longer-term concerns, building on RECOPA Ouest's strengths as an organisation representing pastoralists. The proposed activities included:

- Providing emergency food aid and basic equipment to refugees;
- Health checks and vaccinating livestock;

- Identifying potential sites for permanently settling refugees, and raising awareness of refugees and local people to ensure peaceful cohabitation;
- Organising a framework for dialogue and cross-border exchange with a view to returning the agro-pastoralists to their homes, or, where appropriate, returning property left behind in Côte d'Ivoire.

The distribution of emergency food aid responded to the needs outlined in COPRASUR's reports, and was also undertaken by a number of other relief organisations that descended on Nounbiel to support the refugees. The Red Cross and Plan International agreed to provide food aid, Oxfam undertook building latrines and drilling wells and the Red Cross committed to providing education and child protection services. COPRASUR was responsible for managing the process and distribution so that food aid was sequenced appropriately and coherent between various donors.

Although short-term response activities (provision of food aid and basic equipment) were common to all interventions, RECOPA Ouest was the only organisation to plan a response that included activities related to livestock health and the eventual resettlement of refugees. RECOPA Ouest's decision to vaccinate livestock as part of PHASE was a response to the influx of an estimated 14,000 animals that arrived with refugees, and was intended also to protect local pastoralist herds from diseases arriving with the refugees' herds.

Actions to resettle refugees were not included in COPRASUR's initial reports, nor were they addressed by other humanitarian partners' plans for the relief effort. Reflecting on the proposed PHASE intervention, the director of Action Sociale stated that the proposal suited RECOPA Ouest's strengths, particularly regarding vaccination of livestock and negotiating resettlement of refugees. These issues had strong links to RECOPA Ouest's organisational remit to support pastoralists and had been neglected by other relief NGOs that operate in shorter humanitarian programme cycles.

Given RECOPA Ouest's close proximity to communities and access to government assessments and data, the organisation was able to plan an effective intervention that complemented other humanitarian and governmental efforts. The second link in the causal chain held.

**(Theory) Link 3: Because the application process conforms to the timelines in the PHASE guidelines and funding is dispersed quickly, the PHASE intervention commences in June 2016.**

*In practice: RECOPA Ouest's PHASE application was submitted on 14 April 2016, with a planned implementation period of June 2016 to November 2016. The first round of PHASE funding was not disbursed until 22 June, three weeks after the planned start date. As a result of delayed decision-making and late disbursement of funding, Link 3 in the causal chain did not hold.*

AFL and RECOPA Ouest submitted the PHASE concept note on 14 April 2016. According to the timeframe in the PHASE application guidelines, RECOPA Ouest should have received an answer by 5 May at the latest, 15 working days after the application was submitted.

After the application was submitted, it encountered a series of long delays. When the application was submitted, the FM's Results Manager was on a monitoring visit in Sudan and not available to begin the assessment. The FM acknowledged the application on 9 May – in principle after a decision should already have been made. The FM asked for more information on the budget (concerning unit costs, number of units and notes for each budget line), capacity and staffing to ensure they were well resourced. The FM also suggested AFL develop a work plan. A detailed budget was provided the following day, but the work plan and additional information on staffing were submitted only 17 May, after additional prompting from the FM. For AFL, providing this information rapidly was challenging because the team was already inundated with heavy reporting requirements for the entire BRACED project. The FM's request for more information dovetailed with the deadline for a BRACED quarterly report (15 May) and elaboration of the first annual report (31 May).

The Results Manager completed its initial assessment of the fund four days later, and sent a mail requesting an Assessment Panel meeting. This meeting was convened three days later on 26 May – six weeks after the concept note had been submitted. The results of the meeting were positive, although DFID stipulated that the proposal needed to clearly lay out an exit strategy and detail risks and strategies to adhere to the 'do no harm' principles. The formal funding agreement was transmitted to RECOPA Ouest on 6 June, one week after the Assessment Panel meeting but one month late according to the process in the application guidelines.

Although the FM sent an email to AFL authorising the start of activities on 1 June, actually contracting and financing the intervention proved another obstacle. The FM emailed AFL confirming the contract was awaiting signature and would be sent the following week. AFL then received a second email asking clarification questions about PHASE, although the FM stated (in the same email) that a response was not expected to all the questions.

After receiving the initial confirmation, AFL was not aware the contract would be held back until it responded to the questions in the FM's follow-up email. On 20 June, the FM informed AFL that it would need to answer the questions because the answers might affect the PHASE budget. AFL responded to the questions on 29 June, and the details were agreed on with the FM. The contract was then dated 1 July and AFL sent a signed copy to the FM the week of 11 July.

Once the contract was finalised on 11 July, the FM immediately requested funds from DFID. A query from DFID was sent to the FM, which responded the following day. DFID transferred funds to the wrong KPMG account on 29 July. The funds were returned automatically to DFID. One month later DFID reissued the disbursement; the FM received the funds from DFID on 22 August. Through a series of delays, misunderstandings and mistakes, the sense of urgency regarding a humanitarian intervention got lost in the logistical details of contracting and funding the intervention.

The reasons for the long delays were unclear to RECOPA Ouest, which was expecting decisions to be made faster and funds to arrive sooner. Because all communication went through AFL, RECOPA Ouest had no direct contact with the FM or DFID. Meanwhile, RECOPA Ouest staff were busy working on negotiating pastoral corridors in other parts of western Burkina Faso, unable to progress with the project in Nounbiel.

Link 3 did not hold; although the funding eventually arrived, RECOPA Ouest had to request an extension to accommodate the delay. The extension request was granted and the planned intervention was extended for two months through January 2017. The length of the intervention (six months) remained the same.

**(Theory) Link 4: Because PHASE funding arrived in a timely manner and the planned intervention remained appropriate, RECOPA Ouest was able to help beneficiaries meet immediate food needs and integrate refugees in the community through the distribution of food and basic equipment and transporting refugees to reception sites; health monitoring and vaccinations for the livestock of refugees; and supporting negotiation to resettle refugees and creating a framework for peaceful dialogue.**

*In practice: Because Link 3 did not hold, RECOPA Ouest's PHASE intervention began with considerable delay. The PHASE intervention was then further delayed by the staff's lack of familiarity with humanitarian tendering and procurement processes, the length of the legal procurement process itself and confusion over financial auditing. Still, after being granted an extension, RECOPA Ouest was able to implement the activities described in its application and Link 4 ultimately held.*

RECOPA Ouest's PHASE intervention did not meet 'immediate' needs until four months after the date stipulated on the application. This was partially a result of RECOPA Ouest's lack of familiarity with tendering and procurement for food aid and the strict legal framework for procurement of humanitarian aid in Burkina Faso. Despite this setback, the chosen intervention remained appropriate, and it would be disingenuous to claim that the intervention did not work as a result of delays. Rather fortuitously, the late start to the intervention allowed RECOPA Ouest to support the refugee response just as other humanitarian NGOs were moving out of Nounbiel, thus providing critical support to both refugees and BRACED beneficiaries over the lean period. The project was also granted an extension by the FM (see Link 3), which enabled RECOPA Ouest to implement most PHASE activities outlined in the funding application, although the resettlement of refugees was not completed within the timeframe of the project.

When funding arrived in late June, RECOPA Ouest embarked on a lengthy tendering and procurement process for food aid. As a development organisation, RECOPA Ouest had no prior experience of supplying humanitarian assistance, and was navigating the process for the first time. Humanitarian aid should comply with sound financial and management practices but humanitarian organisations

often have exigencies for emergency situations to ensure a timely response. In the case of RECOPA Ouest, there was no such provision or institutional experience to draw upon.

The primary difficulty lay in drafting the tender for food aid. Writing this took four weeks – an unnecessarily long time, but one that can be understood when considering the length of the tender itself and the organisation's weakened human resource capacity (see Link 5). AFL supported RECOPA Ouest as best it could, sending models of the documents to be used for the procurement process and an explanation of what needed to be done. The full tender for food aid, which had to comply with Burkina Faso's legal standards, is over 80 pages long. The project coordinator drafted this while managing the other BRACED interventions in the region, juggling challenges including a project facilitator in Nounbiel who had recently quit and falling ill himself for a week during the drafting process. No other member of staff was able to step in and take over the drafting process.

On 18 July, RECOPA Ouest shared the tender with AFL. The value of the contract was high enough that it required approval from AFL before it could be published. AFL was in the middle of a routine BRACED audit but was able to provide feedback on 22 July, within the same week. RECOPA needed one more week to finalise with AFL's comments and revisions, and the tender for food aid was advertised on 28 July, the same day AFL approved it. The period between 18 and 28 July represented the back and forth between AFL and RECOPA Ouest in terms of provision of support on the process and ensuring it met the correct standards.

After the contract was advertised and a supplier was secured two weeks later, RECOPA Ouest encountered one final bureaucratic obstacle: the supplier needed to obtain a financial guarantee from the bank in order to make it possible to advance 20% of the value of the contract to the supplier. The financial guarantee is a legal stipulation in the food aid tendering process. This step was in the hands of the bank, beyond the control of RECOPA Ouest or AFL. Securing a guarantee took a full month, and RECOPA Ouest was able to forward money to the contractor only on 15 September.

In the interim, RECOPA Ouest carried on with consultations to define a strategy to resettle refugees, organising a workshop in Batié on 25 August with the high commissioner, local mayors, relevant government departments and COPROSUR. The workshop focused on updating on the situation of refugees across all sites, lobbying mayors to find designated spaces to resettle the refugees who had expressed a desire to stay and fostering social cohesion between local populations and refugees. The workshop report lists the challenges encountered during the refugee crisis, remarking that 'the integration and resettlement of refugees in the province is the greatest difficulty' for key stakeholders managing the crisis (COPRASUR, 2016). The workshop participants agreed on a plan for beginning negotiations, creating special committees comprising the secretary general, prefects, mayors and staff of relevant government departments. These committees would lead negotiations and work alongside Fulani elders to ensure a peaceful process. RECOPA Ouest plans on using these same committees to further pastoral corridor negotiations when the refugee crisis is settled, building on the institutional network created during PHASE to advance BRACED objectives (see Link 6).

Before distributing aid, RECOPA Ouest provided Action Sociale with the resources to survey refugees to assess their needs. The survey results showed that over 1,250 refugees remained in September 2016 – over 60% of the 2,027 people who had initially arrived. The survey also included local households, to gauge food security in local communities, and found some vulnerable households were struggling during the lean season. To account for these needs, 300 local households were included as recipients when food aid was distributed in early October. Including local people in the distribution of food aid was a point of pride for RECOPA Ouest staff, who found that the intervention helped build goodwill among the local population who had sacrificed their own resources to help accommodate refugees. KIIs with government officials agreed that food aid distribution promoted a positive perception of RECOPA Ouest's work among both locals and refugees.

The second component of RECOPA Ouest's intervention focused on livestock needs and health. After distributing food aid, RECOPA Ouest sent veterinarians into communities to vaccinate herds and check on livestock health. These veterinarians were available to refugees and locals alike, provided they paid a small fee to cover the costs of any medicines their livestock needed. Because other humanitarian NGOs providing support to refugees did not address livestock needs (although over 14,000 livestock arrived with the refugees), RECOPA Ouest was able to fill a specific niche in the crisis response and raise its profile as an organisation working on pastoralist issues.

When PHASE funding was delayed, a series of humanitarian partners provided for refugees' immediate needs (see Link 2). By the time RECOPA Ouest had delivered food aid to COPRASUR in October 2016, most humanitarian aid organisations were winding down their activities. Practically speaking, this allowed RECOPA Ouest to support government capacity to deal with the crisis in its final stages. RECOPA Ouest's support also enabled government officials to focus on resettlement of refugees, ensuring that food aid would not be a permanent fixture in Batié or Kpuéré.

Given the considerable delays in funding (Link 3), the evidence supporting Link 4 is mixed. RECOPA Ouest did implement activities detailed but not within the timeframes it had initially anticipated.

**(Theory) Link 5: Because the PHASE funding was effective in helping beneficiaries cope with the arrival of refugees, beneficiaries were able to continue in the BRACED activities to secure pastoral corridors and ensure livestock mobility, and to maintain healthy herds in spite of influx of repatriated livestock.**

*In practice: Link 5 did not hold, as key BRACED activities (including negotiating pastoral corridors) did not progress in Nounbiel during PHASE implementation. Local governments and populations were preoccupied with the refugee crisis, and continuing normal BRACED activities was considered inappropriate. The stall in BRACED implementation was compounded by RECOPA Ouest's weakened human resource capacity. Link 5 shows that normal BRACED activities did not continue prior to, and during, PHASE implementation.*

In RECOPA Ouest's other intervention areas through 2016, BRACED activities continued as usual. RECOPA Ouest organised informed debates on pastoralism and negotiated 102 km of priority corridors, meeting the annual target set in the BRACED project. In Nounbiel, however, the refugee crisis was the primary concern, and government officials and local populations were busy dealing with the immediate impacts of the crisis.

Human resource constraints were also a major factor in halting BRACED activities. RECOPA Ouest began the first half of the PHASE intervention with severely weakened programmatic capacity. The BRACED facilitator based in Nounbiel left his position in July 2016, only a few weeks after funding for PHASE arrived on 22 June. According to RECOPA Ouest's quarterly reporting, his decision was 'followed by the effective cessation of the activities on the ground'.<sup>8</sup> The report requested the recruitment of a PHASE supervisor until they could recruit a new BRACED facilitator, who would be responsible for leading implementation of all BRACED engagement activities.

The new PHASE facilitator began working for RECOPA Ouest in early November 2016. At the time of the interview in November 2016, his understanding of what constituted a 'normal' BRACED programming activity was conflated with activities undertaken through PHASE, confirming that the project in Nounbiel has shifted to full focus on dealing with the refugee crisis. There is a possibility that the facilitator's role will transition into a BRACED position at the end of PHASE implementation, although a decision on this front has not yet been taken.

Although the FM's Initial Assessment Form addresses concerns over capacity constraints by explaining that AFL planned on recruiting surveyors to support the relief team over three months, the PHASE project was stalled when funding was not disbursed quickly (Link 3) and the facilitator left RECOPA Ouest to pursue another job opportunity. As a result, there was no team in place to be supported – rather, the coordinator went back and forth between his base in Bobo-Dioulasso

<sup>8</sup> RECOPA Ouest trimester internal report to AFP.

and the refugee sites. According to RECOPA Ouest staff, the severity of the refugee crisis made the coordinator's presence at key meetings more important and lent credibility to RECOPA Ouest's proposed intervention. There was consensus between the RECOPA Ouest staff interviewed that a facilitator was too junior to lead the refugee resettlement negotiations in the context of PHASE.

Without a team on the ground, the government's technical services completed the refugee surveying for PHASE (see Link 4). Because of this, the choice to support government departments was logical and offered local government an opportunity to update their data and inform resettlement negotiations. RECOPA Ouest has a history of working through the government's technical services, and this strategy helped mitigate the impacts of limited staffing.

Link 5 shows that normal BRACED activities did not continue in the project site prior to, and during, PHASE implementation. The fifth link in the causal chain did not hold.

**(Theory) Link 6: Because BRACED project activities were able to continue, PHASE funding protects outcomes envisioned in AFL's BRACED theory of change, notably 'facilitating trans-border livestock mobility in order to improve resilience for pastoral and agro-pastoral women, men and children'.**

*In practice: Though the weakness of Link 5 suggests Link 6 may also have been weakened, PHASE opened opportunities for BRACED in a context where normal project implementation had proven difficult.*

Because a key justification of a crisis modifier is to protect the development gains a project has made, an intervention like RECOPA Ouest's, which was struggling to move project activities forward, would arguably have less to protect than a project nearing its completion date. This case study, however, shows that 'development gains' are not necessarily cumulative over the course of a project. Factors like a having peaceful operating context are necessary for RECOPA Ouest's work, and inter- or intra-community conflicts are a direct threat to project implementation, and even more so to project outcomes. Even during the Assessment Panel, the Knowledge Manager observed that there was less emphasis on 'protection' of the ongoing BRACED project than in previous panel discussions. The humanitarian case for intervening was clear, and was not necessarily contingent on protecting specific outcomes.

In the case of RECOPA Ouest, accessing a crisis modifier was key to building relationships with government officials the organisation did not otherwise work with, cultivating a relationship with the local community and, most importantly, mitigating a conflict that could further erode the potential for peaceful negotiation of pastoralist corridors. As the president of RECOPA Ouest explained,

*The management of the crisis in the short term – distribution of food and vaccination of livestock – is only one component of what we're doing [through PHASE funding]. The negotiations are the most important element to make sure that pastoralists also have an area to live. If we didn't help negotiate where people were going to live, we can't prevent conflicts down the road.*

Resettling refugees was the most ambitious element of the PHASE project. Through UN systems, formal refugee resettlement processing times take an average 18–24 months. In Noumbiel, local officials and community representatives lead the process but it is still a lengthy endeavour. Using PHASE funding, RECOPA Ouest's team was able to set up five committees responsible for managing negotiations (in Batié, Kpuéré, Boussoukoulou, Midebdo and Legmoin). These committees managed to secure small parcels of land for resettlement, including 2 ha in Batié, and permanently resettled 16 households in Legmoin. Considering the scale of the crisis, these achievements are small, however, and many refugees still remain without a permanent place to stay.

The PHASE intervention helped facilitate the negotiation of pastoral corridors (see Map 1). One year later, over 30 km of corridors in Noumbiel have been secured, adding to the 102 km successfully negotiated and secured across western Burkina Faso.

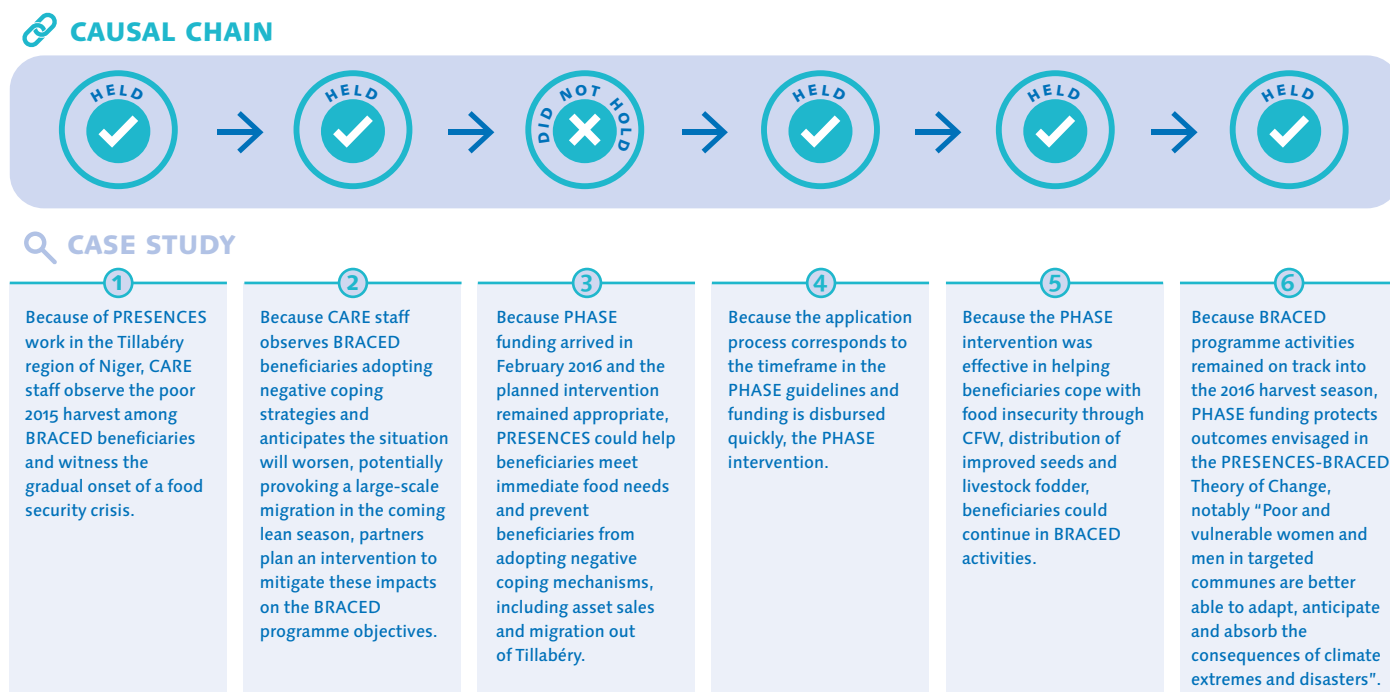


## 6. THE CASE OF FOOD INSECURITY IN NIGER

Image: EC/ECHO/  
Anouk Delafortrie

CARE was beginning implementation of a BRACED project in Tillabéry region of Niger to support climate-resilient livelihoods when a slow-onset stress culminated in a failed harvest. Tillabéry is already one of the most food-insecure regions of Niger. Delayed rains disrupted the planting season, and when they did arrive six weeks later they were erratic and caused local flooding, damaging agricultural efforts. Compounding the stress for local farmers and pastoralists, a pest attack destroyed crops and created water shortages and high cereal prices. Observing beneficiaries struggling to cope and anticipating migration out of the project area, CARE applied for PHASE financing. The intervention intended to distribute seeds for the following harvest, implement a cash-for-work (CFW) project through the lean season and provide fodder for pastoralist households. DFID and the FM did not adhere to the 15-day turnaround for the intervention, which began a few weeks after the intended start date. The intervention was designed to be complementary, advancing resilience priorities identified in the BRACED project. Staff and local authorities credited the intervention as preventing mass migration out of the project area and helping keep resilience-building activities on track.

Figure 5: Causal chain for the case of food insecurity in Niger



Unfolding over the course of weeks and even months, droughts are creeping emergencies that evolve quietly and often concurrently with other stresses. Their long timeframes are an opportunity for early action, but repeated humanitarian emergencies are ample evidence of the difficulties in identifying the right moment to act and mobilising political support to do so. The CARE project in Tillabéry region of Niger illustrates one example of how the crisis modifier worked in a slow-onset shock, highlighting both the challenges in acting quickly to address threats to people's livelihoods and the entry points for furthering local resilience priorities.

Tillabéry is among the most food-insecure regions of all of Niger, with most farmers practising rain-fed agriculture that leaves them vulnerable when rains fail. In 2015, the June rains that usher in the planting season were delayed by six weeks. When the rains finally did arrive, they were erratic and destructive, causing local flooding and further damaging agricultural efforts. Compounding the stress for local farmers and pastoralists, a pest attack descended on fields of grains and vegetables. Locusts attacked millet, and caterpillars, aphids and other insects destroyed cowpea and sesame. The poor rain combined with the pest attack resulted in failed plantings for farmers and insufficient forage growth for livestock.

As the crisis worsened, subsistence farming households sought to replant their crops an average of 2.5 times, depleting their seed stock for the following year in an unsuccessful effort to produce food for consumption over the lean season. Pastoralists were also under stress, with water shortages and high cereal prices forcing some to sell their livestock. As more pastoralists choose to sell their cattle, the value of livestock fell in local markets and further deepened household vulnerabilities.

Food insecurity intensified just as PRESENCES, a BRACED consortium led by CARE UK (although CARE staff referenced in this study refer to CARE Niger), started its first phase of project implementation. Beginning in March 2015, only

three months prior to the late rains, the project intended to address the very climate risks that were threatening the livelihoods of beneficiaries. The project approach combines 1) an improvement of climate information services; 2) support for climate-resilient livelihood options; and 3) promotion of sustainable and climate-resilient governance in the management of natural resources. As negative impacts of the delayed rains began manifesting in the project area, BRACED objectives were increasingly in jeopardy.

**(Theory) Link 1: Because of CARE's work in Tillabéry region of Niger, CARE staff observe the poor 2015 harvest among PRESENCES beneficiaries and witness the gradual onset of a food security crisis.**

*In practice: CARE Niger staff implementing PRESENCES in Tillabéry region observed first-hand how delayed rains and a pest infestation led to a food security crisis<sup>9</sup> among PRESENCES beneficiaries. The first link in the causal chain held.*

CARE's programme of work in Tillabéry took shape in March 2015, coinciding with the onset of unusually challenging climate conditions. At the time, CARE had recently finished vulnerability studies to better comprehend people's experience of climate risks, but had not yet begun implementing PRESENCES activities. Under normal circumstances, the May–June rains would herald the start of the crucial productive season that would provide a solid foundation for beginning resilience-building for both farmers and pastoralists living in Tillabéry. By May 2015, however, the National Meteorological Directorate for Niger and AGRHYMET<sup>10</sup> forecast that the rainy season would be delayed, arriving two to four weeks late.<sup>11</sup> Even more startling, in July the government's Tillabéry Multi-Risk Contingency Plan predicted that 1,030,143 people would be in need of food aid after the harvest, and 156,441 livestock would need 37,546 tons of fodder<sup>12</sup> as emergency aid.

The initial forecast raised alarm bells with CARE staff, who presented the seasonal forecasting information in June and July 2015 at Participatory Scenario Planning (PSP) workshops.<sup>13</sup> At these workshops, farmers and pastoralists, municipal

<sup>9</sup> According to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS-NET), conditions in parts of Tillabéry region of Niger were 'stressed' or 'minimal', rather than defined as 'crisis'.

<sup>10</sup> AGRHYMET is the Sahel regional body for drought monitoring and food security.

<sup>11</sup> According to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS-NET), conditions in parts of Tillabéry region of Niger were 'stressed' or 'minimal', rather than defined as 'crisis'.

<sup>12</sup> 2 kg per animal and per day.

<sup>13</sup> PSP is a means to decentralise early warning information and seasonal forecasts by sharing and discussing climate information among farmers and pastoralists, municipality officials, national forecast service representatives, community radio and decentralised government service representatives. The PSP workshops ensure macro-level forecasting is complemented by local information, and as such they help reinforce operational decision-making in support of community resilience.

officials and national meteorological representatives met to discuss what actions should be prioritised in light of the forecasts. The information gathered formed the basis for developing Community Adaptation Plans. No comprehensive early action strategy was agreed on, but the use of improved seeds was identified as an important adaptation strategy to cope with rainfall deficits.<sup>14</sup> Although improved seed distribution was not originally planned (PRESENCES intended to help people store and use seeds, not buy and distribute them), CARE decided to trial the provision of improved seeds to 15 people in each of the 65 targeted villages to mitigate existing vulnerabilities to drought.

Delayed by six weeks, the rainfall was worse than AGRHYMET's predictions. When they finally arrived, they came very abruptly and caused localised flooding in some areas of the project, further hampering agricultural efforts. Furthermore, the lack of humidity as a result of poor rainfall in other areas fostered the perfect environment for a pest infestation, and the harvests that had survived were damaged by locusts, caterpillars, aphids and other insects. Households that received improved seeds did not fare any better: the pests decimated their crops too. CARE staff observed that households sought to cope by sowing on average 2.5 times in an attempt to achieve a harvest. Not only did this prove unsuccessful, or marginal, in terms of producing food for immediate consumption, but also it used up the household seed stock needed for the following year.

For pastoralists, the poor rainfall proved to be a major stress on their herds. There was insufficient forage growth for livestock in the pastoral areas of Gorouol and Inatès.<sup>15</sup> The shortage of water and high cereal prices owing to poor yields forced some pastoralists to sell their livestock, and this destocking drove down the value of livestock, further exacerbating vulnerabilities. This combination of impacts heightened food insecurity for pastoral households. PRESENCES field staff observed that, by the end of November 2015, many pastoralists were going to markets to find cattle feed.

Though the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS-NET) did not classify Tillabéry as a region in crisis, the experience for vulnerable households was crisis-like. CARE staff reported that the most vulnerable households reduced their food consumption to one meal a day; moderately vulnerable households reduced their intake to two meals a day. Some households resorted to selling assets, although the scale of these potentially harmful coping strategies is not

<sup>14</sup> The use of improved seeds is a key element of the strategy to enhance food production in Niger, along with increased irrigation. The PRESENCES partner, the Nigerien National Institute for Agronomic Research (Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique du Niger, INRAN), a government institute, researches and collects data on soil, environmental and agricultural conditions across Niger and recommends appropriate seeds and crops for different communes in Tillabéry according to local growing conditions.

<sup>15</sup> For example, in the July and August 2015 Multi-Risk Contingency Plan for Tillabéry (drafted by a partnership of civil society organisations, technical government advisers, regional authorities and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and in other sources, such as on FEWS-NET and in reports by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock.

known because they were not systematically recorded. CARE staff's observations of deepening vulnerability indicate that high-level indicators and physical data provided through FEWS-NET and other sources may lack the resolution to reflect the diversity of experiences on the ground.

In response to the stress of the meagre harvest and poor conditions for livestock, people began migrating out of Tillabéry. Young men and heads of household left to Niamey or neighbouring countries to find alternative sources of income, and some women left for cities to do housekeeping or informal work. For PRESENCES beneficiaries, it was critical to find an income after the successive stresses undermined their ability to make a living through agriculture or pastoralism alone.

In October and November 2015, the National Department for Disaster Prevention conducted its annual field verifications to collect post-harvest data in Tillabéry region, and in December 2015 it presented its estimates of the numbers of villages in food deficit at a workshop. A total of 1,161 villages were found to be in deficit (58% of villages in the region), rendering over 1 million people in need of food assistance. Other actors also highlighted the deteriorating situation. For example, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Harmonised Framework Analysis of Food Insecurity bulletin in December 2015 indicated that 1.5 million people in Niger would need emergency support during the 2016 planting season if some form of assistance was not provided early. What CARE staff had been observing in PRESENCES communities was now officially recognised.

Following early warning information provided in May 2015, CARE staff watched the early stages of an unfolding crisis. By October and November 2015, the negative impacts on people were clear to CARE staff, and the official information provided from official post-harvest assessments confirmed their anecdotal observations. The first link in the causal chain held.

**(Theory) Link 2: Because CARE staff observe PRESENCES beneficiaries adopting negative coping strategies and anticipate that beneficiaries will begin migrating, partners plan an intervention to ensure the most vulnerable households in Tillabéry secure a basic income, protect livestock assets and continue participating in BRACED.**

*In practice: Through their existing work with local people, CARE staff observed first-hand the development of some negative coping mechanisms and could recognise the implications of this for the upcoming lean period ahead of the next harvest in 2016. The second link in the causal chain held.*

After the official post-harvest assessment in Tillabéry, CARE staff decided that an emergency intervention was necessary to prevent an exodus of desperate people searching for an income to get through the 2016 lean season. CARE staff were aware of the availability of the PHASE crisis modifier through the BRACED monthly newsletter. By applying for PHASE funding, CARE intended to help vulnerable households cope with the hardship experienced after the poor harvest and secure beneficiaries' participation in PRESENCES activities going forward.

CARE staff stressed that a widespread exodus of people out of the project site would render resilience-building efforts obsolete. Although vulnerability assessments with beneficiaries had been conducted in the preliminary phases of the project, actively preventing distress migration out of the project area had not been built into the PRESENCES design. Still, with communities' attention focused on meeting immediate needs rather than attending PRESENCES trainings and activities, CARE staff knew concerted action would be necessary before the following lean season.

For CARE Niger, it was the second experience of enacting a contingency mechanism in a development project. Through a European Union (EU)-funded mechanism deployed in 2007, CARE used contingency finance to respond to a pastoral crisis developing in the neighbouring Diffa region. To design PHASE, CARE drew on in-house humanitarian staff who were well versed in designing short-term emergency interventions. Humanitarian teams lent their support to ensure aid was appropriately targeted, the support would be well timed and the PRESENCES team was able to monitor their efforts effectively.

The timing of the PHASE intervention was important. In a normal year, poorer households in Tillabéry begin selling cereals and cash crops immediately post-harvest in November and December for cash, and rely on their own harvest to subsist until April when they must again purchase cereals for household consumption. According to a FEWS-NET livelihood profile of agro-pastoralists in Tillabéry, 'In years of crop failure, all but the richer households are already buying cereals by March – and the poorer households even by January. They become very dependent on early earnings from migrant work' (FEWS-NET, 2005). The poor rarely have the necessary savings to buy enough food to make it through to the next harvest after bad year. Without an income, the households that are in the most need of resilience-building support are forced to leave to urban areas or neighbouring countries in search of opportunity (ibid.).

Based on CARE's understanding of the need to curtail cycles of vulnerability, a concept note for PHASE was prepared aimed at providing support to vulnerable agro-pastoralists and pastoralists. For both types of households, existing food supplies were already under stress as a result of the failed harvest. CARE staff calculated that the food security situation for the most vulnerable households would deteriorate further, getting to a more critical point in February 2016 when supplies would begin running out. An intervention would need to span the lean season from February to June, or risk vulnerable people living in Tillabéry being forced to leave their homes in search of an income.

The PHASE application was designed both to respond to needs arising during the lean season as a result of the poor 2015 harvest and to support beneficiaries to transition back out of the crisis and be prepared for the next agricultural cycle. In doing so, the intervention sought to align with some of the desired Community Adaptation Plans, which had been designed based on vulnerability assessments and PSP. In this way, PHASE was not designed as a separate and distinct emergency intervention, but as a complementary investment towards locally identified PRESENCES objectives. The Knowledge

Manager for BRACED-PRESENCES, explained that, 'Every activity undertaken within PHASE was inspired by the communities themselves.' The proposed activities include:

- A CFW programme to restore 230 ha of degraded land (10 ha per site);
- Distribution of fodder for dairy cows and livestock that were too weak to follow transhumance routes;
- Distribution of improved seeds, to help farmers who had depleted their seed stocks after failed replanting attempts in 2015.

A CFW programme was designed to help the most vulnerable beneficiaries maintain some income through the lean season stretching from February to June 2016, to compensate for losses from abysmal harvests. A market analysis using government available data for the region of Tillabéry showed it was best to apply the CFW modality (as food was available and accessible in local markets, supplied by other surplus regions and/or neighbouring countries) as opposed to distributing food aid. The CFW modality had another advantage – it allowed PRESENCES beneficiaries to collectively work on a public good to enhance the resilience of those living in the area. Community Adaptation Plans had identified restoring degraded communal lands as a way of building resilience. Once made arable through water and soil conservation, these lands would provide additional resources for growing crops for vulnerable households.

In terms of budget, distribution of improved seeds and livestock feed for households were the largest component of the intervention (46% of the total budget of £247,115). Providing enough fodder for all livestock would have been a mammoth task; according to government figures, the total deficit was estimated at 38,000 tonnes of fodder. Instead, provision of livestock feed in pastoralist areas of Gorouol and Inatès was strictly for vulnerable households with dairy cows or animals too weak to follow pastoralist corridors. CARE was to provide 120 tonnes of wheat bran for these animals, anticipating that most pastoralists would migrate with their livestock to areas with better pasture and would not need direct support. The distribution would be coupled with trainings by the government's livestock service on the appropriate use of wheat bran.

After multiple failed replanting attempts, farmers were particularly affected by the poor harvest in 2015. Distribution of improved seeds was a means of helping beneficiaries recover from losses resulting from the poor 2015 harvest and of ensuring farmers continued to participate in agriculture-related project activities. The distribution of improved seeds ahead of the 2016 planting season was on a much larger scale than in the initial pilot in 2015 (see Link 1). Through PHASE, CARE intended to distribute 30 tonnes of millet, 15 tonnes of cowpea and 8 tonnes of sesame, well suited to the Sahel context and recommended by the Nigerien National Institute of Agronomic Research (INRAN, Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique du Niger), with short 40–60 day cycles that would reach maturity faster than the 90-day vegetative cycle of traditional varieties. Households receiving these seeds would also be able to take part in the agroforestry training sessions by PRESENCES partner TreeAid to improve

resilience to future drought and pest infestation. By helping beneficiaries achieve a successful harvest in 2016, CARE sought to set the groundwork for communities to establish the warrantage schemes,<sup>16</sup> which people had identified as a priority action in their Community Adaptation Plans.

Efforts to deliver the PHASE intervention built on existing structures and processes established by PRESENCES. Local management committees, comprising community leaders and community members who had been engaged through the PRESENCES project, would oversee emergency activities at the local level along with PRESENCES implementing partners. The committees helped identify households deemed 'very' or 'extremely' vulnerable, using CARE's Secure Living Conditions approach.<sup>17</sup> Within these same target groups, the committees fine-tuned the list of beneficiaries to identify those most in need. Because the poor 2015 season had affected all 12 areas of Tillabéry region, there were significant overlaps between PHASE and PRESENCES beneficiaries. A total of 94% of PHASE beneficiaries were already participating in BRACED. The final list of beneficiaries was validated at community meetings facilitated by local management committees.

While the proposal was being written and processed, the government of Niger provided subsidy price cereal and enhanced seeds to some people in Tillabéry. Other NGOs in the region began delivering aid, including direct cash transfers to people in need. One PRESENCES staff member noted that this aid risked undermining the self-help ethos promoted by PRESENCES, although there was no other mention of other agency support over the course of interviews for this case study.

Given their understanding of the crisis, CARE was able to plan a timely investment to meet beneficiaries' immediate income needs and reduce negative coping strategies, such as cutting down on meals or selling assets. In doing so, CARE intended to reduce migration out of Tillabéry and ensure PRESENCES was able to continue in order to build resilience capacities for longer-term vulnerability reduction. The second link in the causal chain held.

<sup>16</sup> At the time of harvest, crops command only a low price because there is a strong supply. However, the price rises as availability reduces through the dry season. Higher prices can be out of reach for the poor and more vulnerable. A warrantage scheme is a storage mechanism for a portion of the harvested products to help mitigate the effects of cereal price inflation on the markets. Rather than producers having to sell their products at harvest time at low prices and then buy food and seed later at high prices, microfinance loans are offered at the time of harvest based on the stored supply. Those with stored crops can then use them themselves when market available options are too expensive. In this way, warrantage is a system that helps absorb shocks and can be considered an adaptation strategy to market price and food availability fluctuations.

<sup>17</sup> Very and extremely vulnerable criteria include: households headed by men or women who bear the burden of children without support and especially lack the resources to meet basic needs (food, health, education, housing); de-capitalised households owing to the poor harvest (sale of productive assets and other resources), debts not reimbursed, etc.; and socially marginalised households (those currently unable to participate in ongoing development programmes/projects, e.g. savings and credit groups, cereal banks, livestock production, etc.) because they are unable to fulfil certain eligibility criteria.

**(Theory) Link 3: Because the application process corresponds to the timeframe in the PHASE guidelines and funding is disbursed quickly, the PHASE intervention commences in February 2016.**

*In practice: CARE developed a proposal and submitted it on 23 December 2015, before the lean period in which PRESENCES beneficiaries would consider migrating for work. Owing to delays in convening the Assessment Panel, the need for more information and difficulties in contracting, the process was much longer than anticipated. Although DFID ultimately agreed to fund the proposal by 22 February, the process did not adhere to the PHASE guidelines. Link 3 in the causal chain did not hold.*

The CARE team began developing the PHASE concept note in November in 2015. The in-house CARE humanitarian team helped with the narrative design and budget, to ensure it reflected its experience of delivering support to food-insecure households. CARE was the first applicant of the PHASE crisis modifier, and the process of elaborating a proposal that was acceptable to the FM was longer and more cumbersome than the CARE team had anticipated. As one CARE staff member described it, 'Writing the application took a lot of discussion, back and forth through email and Skype, to ask for information and clarifications on certain aspects of the crisis.'

The first draft of the application was submitted to the FM on 23 December 2015 in the hope that a decision would be taken before the UK offices closed for the Christmas break on 24 December 2015. On 4 January 2016, the FM organised a call with DFID to consider the application. The phone call resulted in DFID requesting more information from CARE because 'The drivers of the climate extremes and food security were not clearly established [in the proposal].'<sup>18</sup>

Niger faces food insecurity almost every other year. According to the World Food Programme (2017), 20% of the population cannot meet food needs, a figure that rises to 30% during periods of poor rainfall. The proposal raised numerous questions about the predictability of the crisis, especially the pest attack and whether it was abnormal for the region. In other words, should or could this crisis have been planned for and mitigated within PRESENCES itself? Was there a legitimate justification for emergency contingency funding? The fact that the funds requested (£249,000) were just under the maximum allowable under the crisis modifier mechanism (£250,000) raised some scepticism, as did the question of whether PHASE was a response to shock and stress (the purpose of the crisis modifier) versus a means to bolster existing resilience work in the face of common stressors.

The FM provided this feedback to CARE by 7 January 2016, and worked with the team to improve the submission and develop a detailed budget and work plan, including benchmarking costs and fiduciary risks. The revised draft was submitted on 3 February 2016 – three days after the proposed intervention was designed to begin. The proposed intervention had not changed, but the information about how the crisis had evolved was more detailed.

<sup>18</sup> Correspondence with FM.

To review the final application, the Assessment Panel convened on 16 February 2016, two weeks after the revised proposal was resubmitted. In the Assessment Panel, DFID agreed that the severity of the crisis merited additional funding, although it still perceived that management of the crisis could well have been embedded within PRESENCES. The decision was made 60 days after the original concept note had been submitted, and two weeks after the proposed start date. The decision was communicated to CARE's team on 22 February 2016, and the intervention started immediately.

Even though the decision had been made, there were further delays with contracting and funding the actual intervention. For the FM, all contracts needed to be approved by KPMG's Risk Management Team based in Nairobi. The team reviewing the contract took longer than anticipated, and the contract was not issued to CARE until 9 May 2016. The FM explained that, 'Due to the humanitarian nature of the funding, this delay should have been expedited' and has since taken measures to avoid similar delays. CARE was given the go-ahead to implement the intervention before the contract was issued, and the CARE Niger office self-funded the activities to ensure they went forward as planned.

The funds were intended to arrive by February 2016, before increasing pressure on households resulted in people migrating away or selling productive assets. Delays in convening the Assessment Panel, sourcing more information and contracting the intervention meant the intervention did not begin on 1 February as initially anticipated. Link 3 did not hold.

**(Theory) Link 4: Because PHASE funding arrived in February 2016 and the planned intervention remained appropriate, PRESENCES could help beneficiaries meet immediate food needs and prevent beneficiaries from adopting negative coping mechanisms, including asset sales and migration out of Tillabéry.**

*In practice: Although the PHASE intervention started after a three-week delay (see Link 3), the content was still widely considered appropriate. The PHASE project had been planned to begin well before migration began, so even with a moderate delay the support was still able to reach households that may have otherwise migrated. The distribution of improved seeds and livestock fodder and the CFW programme were extended for two months, however, after the PHASE coordinator tragically died and PRESENCES partners experienced some difficulties with procurement and delivery of materials. Extending the delivery time enabled PHASE to support beneficiaries to transition out of food insecurity and ensure a more successful 2016 harvest. The fourth link in the causal chain held.*

To avoid further delays and ensure they reached people as needs spiked during the lean season, CARE Niger self-funded the PHASE intervention, in the understanding that funding would be reimbursed in arrears. The CARE team working on PRESENCES began organising implementation and procurement with the support of CARE's in-house humanitarian team. The humanitarian team lent its expertise

in designing beneficiary selection criteria and providing supervision in the field, interviewing beneficiaries, the project team and members of the government's technical services.

To ensure the intervention ran smoothly, CARE established procedures to combine the emergency PHASE activities within the existing PRESENCES structures and processes. The bulk of the PHASE intervention was to be implemented by existing CARE or PRESENCES consortium partners' staff, a deliberate strategy intended to maximise coherence between the short-term emergency PHASE project and the three-year BRACED project. A few additional staff were recruited to bolster human capacity for the consortium's main project team, but these were kept to a minimum.

Striking the right balance so as not to over-commit existing staff while also not recruiting too many new short-term emergency staff was difficult to achieve. Even with prior planning, existing staff who were working on PRESENCES took on a heavy additional workload. This was exacerbated when the PHASE coordinator, who was recruited to oversee the intervention through July, became ill and suddenly died in early June. A replacement was not found for this role, and so the existing PRESENCES project team absorbed these responsibilities. Inevitably, this deepened work pressures further and was a contributing factor to the team's request for a two-month extension through August 2016, which the FM approved.

Government technical departments supported the intervention at the commune level, helping supervise and ensuring activities were well embedded in the local government's support structure. Municipal and government authorities attended missions to raise awareness of the PHASE intervention, enhancing legitimacy of the intervention and buy-in from authorities looking for ways to address the crisis.

Once the systems were in place, the three components of the project began in earnest in March 2016: 1) CFW on community projects, 2) receiving improved seeds in preparation for the 2016 planting season and 3) a distribution of fodder for livestock.

### **Cash-for-work**

Although the PHASE application signalled that beginning the work in February was crucial to prevent migration, the CARE team had designed the intervention to begin before distress migration might occur. In a normal year, patterns of work out-migration would occur during the lean season in May or June. In 2016, out-migration was expected to accelerate as a result of the severity of the food insecurity, occurring as early as March. To prevent this early out-migration, CARE prioritised reaching out with local authorities to beneficiaries to explain the support they would provide and who was eligible. Although the Assessment Panel's approval of the intervention was slightly delayed, communicating that the PHASE intervention was going to be implemented allowed beneficiaries to plan accordingly. Those who might have migrated away in search of other opportunities were able to stay, knowing they would be able to feed their household until the next harvest.

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**Box 2: How does cash-for-work help in managing food insecurity?**

This study was not able to conduct a survey of beneficiaries, nor were we able to examine the impacts of the crisis on a community that had experienced similar climatic stresses but did not have access to CARE's CFW project. Nevertheless, we can draw some lessons from other PHASE interventions.

Christian Aid manages a BRACED project in Burkina Faso that accessed the PHASE crisis modifier in response to deepening food insecurity. The intervention used CFW modality to deliver support to beneficiaries. As part of its efforts, Christian Aid commissioned a short study in August 2016 on beneficiaries' perceptions of the CFW project. For their participation, beneficiaries received a cash transfer of 25,000 FCFA (about £31). According to a survey, 52% of beneficiaries found the sum to be adequate, 19% believed it to be excessive and 29% described it as insufficient to cover their nutritional needs for the month. Even with some believing the funds to be insufficient, the majority of households (96%) found the cash had a positive impact on their household. Surveyed households described how the cash improved their access to food, allowed them to address health needs, enhanced their social standing in the community, increased social cohesion and in some cases was used to pay off debts that households had taken out so they could make it through the hunger gap. Across the sample, households reported spending three-quarters of the cash on buying cereals.

Accompanying future CFW programmes with similar follow-up studies can help refine the amount provided and the method of providing support, to ensure people are equipped to deal with food insecurity.

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Between May and August 2016, nearly 6,000 people participated in the CFW restoration of degraded land. Clusters of people from PRESENCES communities selected 10 ha sites where the work should occur. Those involved worked for 10 days building half-moons and seeding herbs to rehabilitate the land. Digging half-moons is a technique that allows water to pool in places with parched soil, where it would otherwise run off. With better ability to retain water, the land has an opportunity to nourish plants. All the clusters chose to build half-moons, although in the municipality of Méhanna they also included treatment of the *koris* to break the force of run-off rainwater that threatened the village.

Although it was originally planned that the intervention would be completed in July 2016, some CFW activities had to be extended until after the rainfall had begun, to allow newly planted tree seedlings to take root. The PHASE intervention was extended by two months, to 21 August 2016. On completion, 185 ha of degraded land had successfully been recovered and participants received a little over the government-set standardised compensation for such work (1,500 FCFA as opposed to 1,300 FCFA for three half-moons constructed).

Understanding the CFW impacts at household level would require, at a minimum, a survey of beneficiaries, such as that Christian Aid commissioned after implementing its PHASE intervention in Burkina Faso (see Box 2). Data of this kind can enrich our understanding of the synergies between emergency interventions and resilience-building work, and help us determine whether support is adequate. Furthermore, to answer the counter-factual – what would have happened without PHASE funding? – we would need a survey reaching vulnerable households that did not have access to the support. Both types of studies are beyond the scope of this report, so we rely on local government perceptions and CARE's testimonials to derive a picture of what happened on the ground.

The PRESENCES project coordinator in Niger explained that 30% of a community would normally be expected to migrate under such conditions, but the 2016 outflow was reduced to about 10% thanks to the CFW project. In a similar food security crisis in 2012, a needs assessment reported that, without support, over 90% of households resorted to early out-migration, and in some villages in Tillabéry more than half of the population left (ACAPS, 2012). The CFW project in 2016 meant people were able to buy cereals, preventing them from having to sell assets or look for an income in Niamey. CARE staff explained that the averted migration of men and young people alleviated the burden on women, who are typically left behind to sustain the household.

Local authorities explained that PHASE's effect on 'averted migration' was positive, as the uncertainty that accompanies migration can render people more vulnerable. Furthermore, the intervention reduced pressure on resource-strapped local governments. The Mayor of Hamdallaye town in Tillabéry explained, 'As local authorities, we were protected from the various demands [from vulnerable households] that we would undoubtedly not have been able to respond to with the same promptitude and efficiency as PHASE did.'

Still, implementation of the CFW project encountered some challenges, and the long-term ecosystem service benefits will also depend on the sites being maintained. Beneficiary communities were meant to agree which sites should be restored, but in practice it was not easy for multiple villages to agree on joint sites. Some sites were located more than 7 km from people's homes. This created challenges related to people getting to the restoration work site, and even more importantly renders the sites much harder to maintain and protect after plants have been planted and sown.

## Distributing improved seeds and livestock fodder

To reduce pressure on households that had lost their seed stocks after the failed 2015 harvest, CARE arranged for the distribution of improved seed varieties of millet, cowpea and sesame to 11,112 households, scaling up the small pilot conducted in 2015.<sup>19</sup> Local partners INRAN and Moribeen, supported by internal CARE Niger procurement policies, were tasked with determining which improved seed varieties best suited the various project sites and where they could be bought. These seeds were intended to improve the 2016 harvest and create an opportunity for PRESENCES to set up seed banks or warrantage schemes with beneficiaries in the second year of the project.

In practice, timing the distribution proved tricky. Procurement and logistical challenges caused some delays, and distribution needed to occur right before the seeds could be planted, to prevent people consuming rather than planting them. The local government's technical services advised CARE staff to wait, to support communities to sow after the first useful rains, to avoid a scenario in which a dry period during the early part of the season destroyed the crops. Because the CARE team waited until after the rains, localised flooding made it more difficult to reach some areas. Ultimately, with perseverance, and knowing the seeds were crucial to the success of BRACED longer-term resilience-building ambitions, they were successfully distributed in 85 villages in time for planting in June and July 2016. Accompanying training on cropping techniques was provided to recipients.

Although they did not fare well in the initial 2015 pilot, the improved seeds presented evident benefits to local authorities. A technician from Tchelol Béfi in Gueladjo, explained, 'The local seed was sowed first, but the enhanced seed was harvested earlier.' A councillor in Torodi, said, 'The certified cowpea sown on 22 June has grown after only 40 days. So, we must do everything we can to avoid losing this variety.' Beneficiaries were said to have obtained more food earlier and in larger quantities compared with non-beneficiaries. After a long period since a successful harvest, these early and strong yields provided a significant help to families without adequate food or income.

Lastly, livestock fodder was distributed to pastoralist areas to compensate for the forage deficit, but on a much smaller scale than was used for improved seed distribution. In the municipality of Inatès, 100 kg wheat bran was distributed to 1,599 beneficiaries (a small increase from the original plan). Nomadic and transhumant pastoralists selected the weakest animals of the herd to receive supplementary feed during the lean period. Stronger animals that could be moved towards Burkina Faso or Togo in search of pasture did not receive fodder.

The animals receiving feed benefited for a few weeks, which alleviated some of the pressure on pastoralists, but this did not provide all the fodder necessary to sustain a herd. 'The four bags I have received will cover about one month of my weakest animals' needs. We hope that the rainy season will come in the meantime,' explained a Peulh pastoralist in the municipality of Inatès. Similarly, a Touareg pastoralist with small ruminants in Amannass, said, 'I think that the wheat bran will

<sup>19</sup> Cowpea and sesame seeds were distributed to women, as women do not own land for the planting of millet.

help me save the lambs and the weakest adults until the new weeds grow in the area.' According to the mayors of Inatès municipality, the support was positive but had only a small impact, preventing the sale or death of a few animals.

The support beneficiaries received through PHASE can reasonably be attributed as helping vulnerable households cope with food insecurity and stay in Tillabéry region long enough to participate in the 2016 planting season. Although the intervention took longer than originally planned, it did help curtail the adoption of negative coping mechanisms. The fourth link in the causal chain held.

**(Theory) Link 5: Because the PHASE intervention was effective in helping beneficiaries cope with food insecurity, through CFW and distribution of improved seeds and livestock fodder, beneficiaries could continue in BRACED activities.**

*In practice: Because PHASE was designed to incorporate BRACED resilience objectives and local climate change adaptation priorities, funding actually furthered PRESENCES objectives. Through help to transition out of food insecurity, vulnerable households were able to stay in Tillabéry, participating in the 2016 planting season and rebuilding their losses after the poor 2015 harvest. Although slower than if the crisis had not occurred, progress was still made and link five in the causal chain held.*

Because PHASE was designed as a complement to PRESENCES work, the emergency intervention furthered key BRACED objectives. The BRACED–PRESENCES theory of change asserts that building resilience involves 'increasing capacity and willingness to strengthen the natural resource base and restore degraded resources by individuals and institutions'. The PHASE CFW restored degraded lands, a natural resource management activity that communities had prioritised in their Community Adaptation Plans (see Link 1). Before the crisis, communities themselves would be expected to self-organise to accomplish the task, leveraging support from other stakeholders as necessary.

Similarly, ahead of the crisis, PRESENCES sought to establish warrantage schemes so that surplus grain could be stored and sold when cereal prices were more favourable, enabling poor households to save through the lean season. These schemes had been identified as priority actions in BRACED Community Adaptation Plans but the poor 2015 harvest had undermined the start of this initiative by depleting seed stocks. Distributing improved seeds in a timely fashion before the 2016 planting season, on a scale that far surpassed what was intended through BRACED, allowed beneficiaries to benefit from a good yield. This was the necessary precondition to establish a warrantage scheme, to make beneficiaries more resilient in the event of a poor harvest similar to the one in 2015.

Lastly, beneficiaries were able to continue participating in PRESENCES project activities for the simple reason that they were able to stay in the project area. As the Assistant Country Director for CARE Niger, explained, 'PHASE is a safety net. It prevents BRACED households from withdrawing from long-term activities.' Help to transition out of food insecurity allowed people from vulnerable households to participate in BRACED activities, such as agro-forestry training and strengthening local climate adaptation planning. The fifth link in the causal chain held.

**(Theory) Link 6: Because BRACED activities remained on track into the 2016 harvest season, PHASE funding protect outcomes envisaged in the PRESENCES–BRACED theory of change, notably 'Poor and vulnerable women and men in targeted communes are better able to adapt, anticipate and absorb the consequences of climate extremes and disasters.'**

*In practice: Although the PRESENCES project was too early in its implementation to have specific resilience gains to protect, PHASE helped secure beneficiaries' resilience trajectories. It did so by preventing or lessening a deterioration in vulnerability and helping households overcome the setbacks of the 2015 rains and pest infestation – which had increased vulnerabilities at the start of the BRACED project. In addition, PHASE sought to deliver aspects of the BRACED–PRESENCES theory of change. The final link of the causal chain held.*

Without PHASE, there would likely have been a continued deterioration in terms of household vulnerability, with anecdotal evidence pointing to loss or sale of assets, cutting-down on meals, borrowing money and migration for casual work. The experiences of the 2015 failed harvest lowered the baseline "starting point" for already highly vulnerable households in PRESENCES. PHASE gave people opportunities and options to remain in Tillabéry, allowing BRACED resilience-building activities to resume in 2016. According to a FEWS-NET analysis of livelihoods in Tillabéry, a poor household may need up to three years to recover from a period of low production. Without PHASE support to enable a more successful 2016 harvest, poor households would have taken much longer to bounce back from the failed harvest. Taking a multi-year perspective, the poor households of PHASE would have potentially experienced impacts that extended beyond the BRACED project timeframe.

The PHASE intervention was designed to address immediate food needs, but also to help build resilience to future food crises. Because it was implemented at a time when PRESENCES had not yet made many concrete results that needed protecting, in some direct ways PHASE did not so much seek to protect PRESENCES gains made as pursue aspects of the resilience pathway defined by the BRACED–PRESENCES theory of change itself. It did this most clearly by seeking to strengthen the natural resource base and restoring degraded land. PHASE also sought to put in place buffers to help women and men manage harsh periods, by building the capacities of local management committees and helping establish seed banks.

The food security crisis in Niger was an opportunity to reflect on whether the BRACED programme should be supporting migration flows, and, if so, how to do so in a way that does not leave people even more vulnerable. Migration is not an inherently negative coping strategy if people have viable work opportunities and there are strategies to support the community members who have stayed behind. In this case study, discussions about migration were limited to questions of prevention. Ultimately, a crisis modifier should not be deployed simply to 'keep people in place' but also to ensure they are able to manage stresses without deepening cycles of poverty and vulnerability.

PHASE made a significant contribution towards implementing local resilience ideas – by funding them. This undoubtedly has benefits, but is funding community ideas facilitating the necessary change and paving the way towards greater resilience? As one interviewee asked, 'If BRACED and PHASE work is thought of as starting the engine of a car, who is then going to drive the car?'

Over the long term, PHASE's contribution to protecting resilience gains will be determined by the extent to which local people are able to identify and act on the changes required to maintain their resilience capacities. Ensuring outcomes are sustained in the medium term is critical to ensure the land management practices contribute to people's resilience, and that engaging in CFW during emergencies does not undermine willingness to participate in PRESENCES programming.

Although PHASE helped people who were struggling, it also raised questions. Was the CFW to restore degraded land through PHASE funding different from the well-established pattern in the region of doing the same thing during all lean periods? How likely is it that people will take ownership to restore land and then maintain it, if they are likely to be paid to rehabilitate the very same land if it is left alone? There are examples in the region of local people recognising the case for restoring land and consequently investing time and resources. Likewise, distributing improved seeds is commonplace as a strategy to improve productivity. But gradually the seeds cross-breed with other varieties, diminishing their benefits. To make the system sustainable, how are communities going to manage the use of improved seeds and maintain seed quality?

The BRACED–PRESENCES theory of change articulates that the PRESENCES project will see impact in terms of a reduction in the magnitude of losses and a reduction in the frequency with climate shocks and stressors disrupt livelihoods and asset bases. This will be assessed through avoidance of negative coping strategies.<sup>20</sup> The experience of PHASE in reducing negative coping mechanisms, such as migration of people in search of work and sale of assets and livestock, shows that achieving the change in the theory of change requires robust early action planning. Even in cases of success, avoiding negative coping mechanisms is not really a step on a resilience pathway, but only a prerequisite before those initial steps forward can be taken.

<sup>20</sup> Household coping strategies, as defined by PRESENCES baseline: asset losses; sell workforce; sell breeding animals; sell non-productive goods; sell productive goods; sell land; entrust children to others; gamble; resort to timber and hay sale; ant-hill digging; forbidden or abnormal things (BRACED PRESENCES Baseline Report, October 2015).



# 7. THE CASE OF FLOODING IN MALI

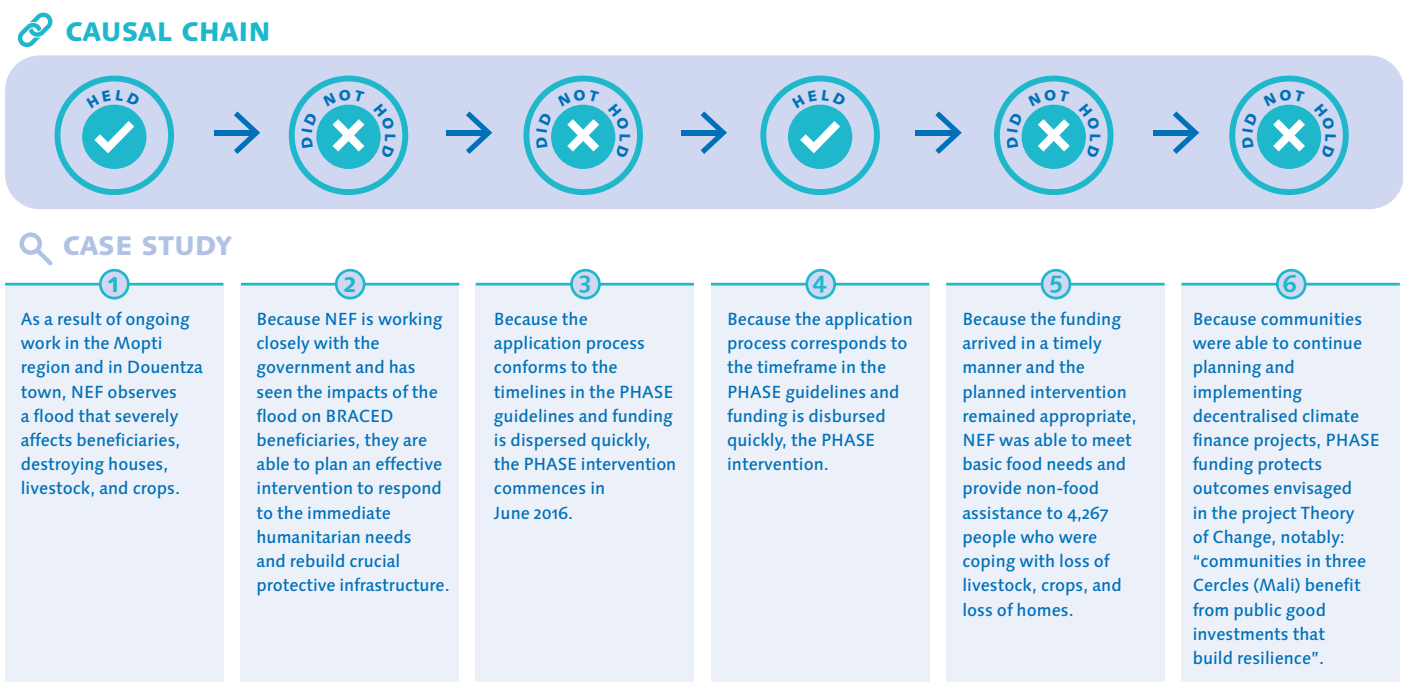
Image: Emilio  
Labrador/Flickr

NEF was working in Mali on a BRACED project to decentralise climate finance, enabling people to plan for and fund their own resilience projects, when flash flooding badly affected the project areas. NEF wrote an application for PHASE funding to provide immediate assistance as well as to rebuild flood protective infrastructure that had been damaged. The Assessment Panel chose to partially fund the application, rejecting the infrastructure component because it was not deemed fit for a crisis modifier – one funded through a humanitarian contingency fund. The NEF team delivered the food aid to help beneficiaries cope with the loss of their grain storage. Because the BRACED climate grants had already been allocated, NEF did not have the resources to rebuild the infrastructure, leaving beneficiaries vulnerable to flooding events in the future.

The NEF case study reveals underlying tensions in attempting to segregate finance for humanitarian and development spheres. NEF's original PHASE application had two major components: providing immediate assistance to households affected by flooding in Mopti region of Mali and rebuilding protective infrastructure to prevent flooding in the future. For DFID, NEF's application raised questions about the kind of interventions a crisis modifier type fund should be supporting, and whether it could justify spending humanitarian funds on investments in protective infrastructure. DFID rejected the infrastructure component of the intervention and NEF curtailed the scope of the response to provide only food aid and essential equipment to those affected in the communes where the BRACED project works.

The causal chain was modified to reflect the funded intervention, with the unfunded components demarcated in red text (see Link 2).

Figure 6: Causal chain for the case of flooding in Mali

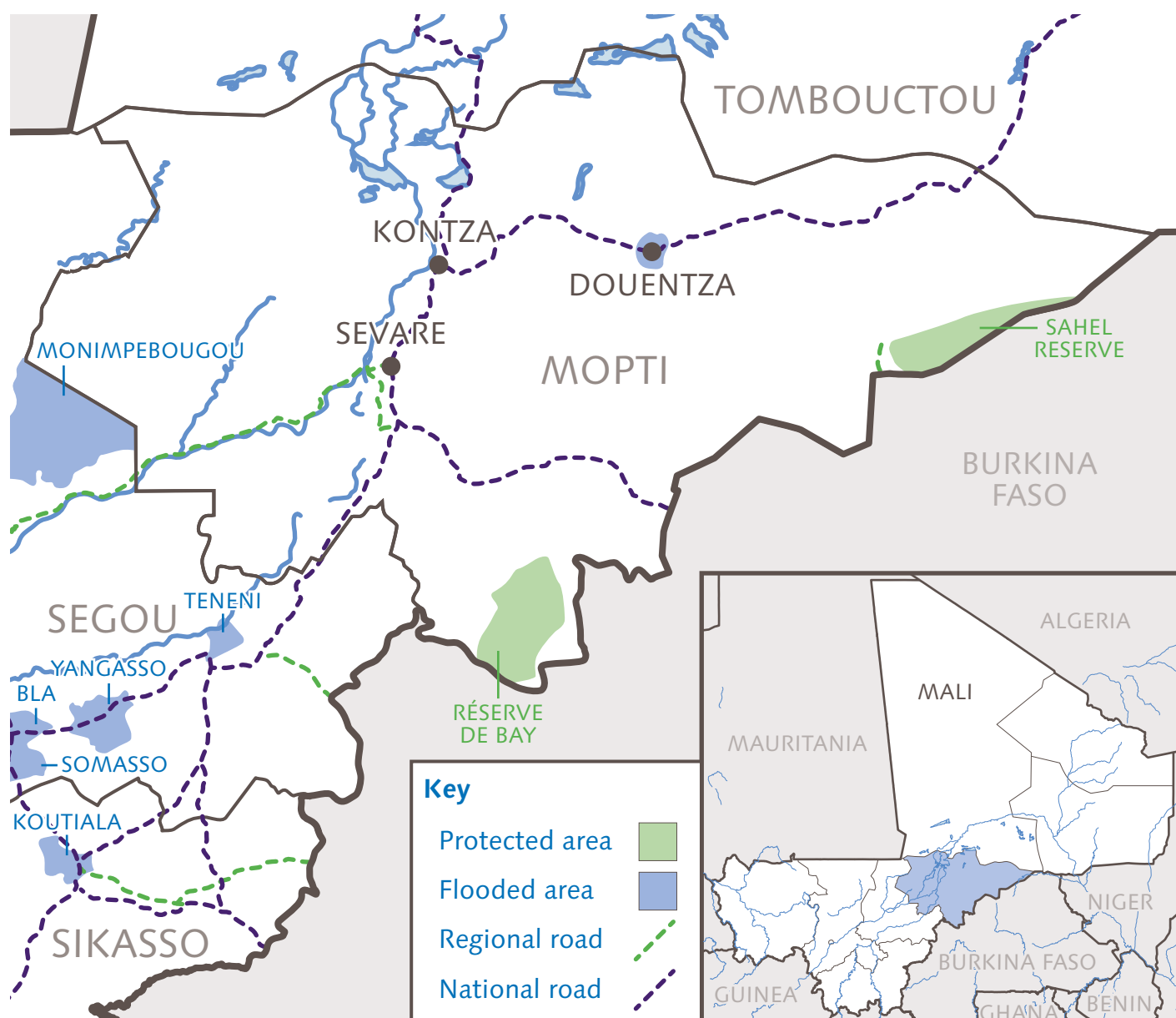


On 18 and 19 July 2016, the arid town of Douentza experienced torrential rain. Water ran down from the surrounding rocky outcrops into the low-lying town, destroying and filling houses in the newer neighbourhoods in the southern and western part of town. Without functioning canals to drain and direct the rain water, the houses formed a barrage between the run-off and the swollen river where water was draining (KII, Service de Développement Sociale, NEF). The flood water disbursed in all directions, and over 618 houses were destroyed. Other infrastructure, such as latrines and wells, were also washed away or damaged (KII, Service Technique du Développement). The waters destroyed 160 ha of Douentza's farmers' agricultural production, intensifying medium-term food needs (KII, Regional Director of Agriculture, Mopti).

Three weeks later, on 3 August 2016, Kontza, a village situated in the Inner Niger Delta alongside the river, experienced a significant downpour. The effects of the heavy rainfall in the village were amplified by run-off from the distant Bandiagara Escarpment and the overflowing Niger River. The poorly maintained dyke constructed along the river fissured and partially collapsed under the force of the flood waters, and over two-thirds of the village was submerged. The flooding destroyed 119 houses and damaged 67 more.<sup>21</sup> Wells, latrines, grain storage and livestock were swept away or destroyed in the powerful flood waters. Over 32 ha of cultivated land were lost in the flooding.

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Map 2: Flooding in Mali



With no formal early warning system in place, there was little time for people to escape the flood waters. Fortunately, no one lost their life in either Douentza or Konna (the commune that contains Kontza), but those affected suffered extensive material damage. Crops were lost when fields were flooded, personal food storage and granaries were swept away and livestock drowned or went missing. Thousands of people were left without food or shelter. No group was spared: the wake of destruction affected farmers, pastoralists, petty traders and fishers. In Douentza, people living in more recently developed neighbourhoods without canals bore the brunt of the impacts. In Konna it was those living closer to the river who faced the worst losses.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Key informant interviews with NEF project staff and local officials.

The flooded areas were part of the BRACED Decentralising Climate Finance (DCF) initiative led by NEF. This project aims to make climate finance accessible to communities so they can design and implement their own climate change adaptation projects. Through the initiative, Mopti and Douentza's *cercle* governments obtained discretionary authority over climate funds of £500,000 to finance community prioritised, public good investments that build resilience to climate stresses.<sup>23</sup> In each commune, a community-level adaptation planning committee (CAPC) is responsible for identifying resilience priorities and submitting proposals to the *cercle* government managing the fund. If successful, the CAPC implements the resilience projects through a public procurement process, with support as needed from NEF project staff.<sup>24</sup>

Link 1 details the community-led resilience projects in Konna and Douentza. The project in Douentza was significantly affected by flooding but the crisis did not have direct impacts on the resilience investment in Konna commune.

**(Theory) Link 1: As a result of ongoing work in Mopti region and in Douentza town, NEF observes a flood that severely affects beneficiaries, destroying houses, livestock and crops.**

*In practice: The level of rainfall experienced in Douentza and Kontza was well above the norm and, according to NEF staff, could not have been anticipated. Thanks to its ongoing work in the two communes in Mopti, NEF learned of flood impacts through direct contact by development partners and official disseminations by regional authorities. The NEF team is based in Sevaré, a crossroads town 12 km inland from Mopti, where the staff have access to the project sites in Mopti and Douentza cercles.<sup>25</sup> Sevaré itself was not affected by flooding but its proximity to the sites, the relationship with local authorities and contact with NEF project agents ensured NEF was aware of the flood impacts on the population and on BRACED investments. The first link in the causal chain held.*

**Impact of the flooding on local populations**

The floods in Douentza and Kontza were the product of extreme precipitation (respectively 105.6 mm in Kontza in one day and 93 mm in Douentza over a four-hour period). According to the World Meteorological Organization, the extreme weather continued, with Mopti's precipitation level in September reaching three times the monthly average and five times the amount the previous year.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Kontza is in Mopti *cercle*. Douentza is an urban *cercle*.

<sup>24</sup> NEF BRACED Proposal.

<sup>25</sup> NEF used to have an office based in Douentza. In September 2012, Islamic militants seized the town and NEF moved its base of operations to Sevaré. Although Douentza was re-secured, NEF maintained its primary Mopti office in Sevaré.

<sup>26</sup> Information provided by NEF staff in the US, based on data provide by the World Meteorological Organization.

The most serious impacts of the flash floods were on housing and food security. In the immediate aftermath, a Regional Flood Watch Committee undertook a census of the victims: in Douentza, 618 homes had been washed away, with 91 damaged or unstable. In addition, 85 latrines and 16 wells were destroyed. In Kontza the situation was similar, albeit on a smaller scale: 119 houses were destroyed, 67 homes badly damaged and 230 latrines ruined. The floods destroyed 160 ha of agricultural production in Douentza (millet and rice) and 32 ha in Kontza. NEF staff stated that, in some form or another, nearly all families in Douentza or Kontza were affected. Most people lost either their homes, animals, food, seed storage or personal possessions or a combination of these.<sup>27</sup>

The effects of losing agricultural production manifested in two waves of need. Because people lost their food storage and many families had nothing to fall back on, nutritional assistance was necessary in the period following the floods (September to November 2016). Farmland had been damaged, leaving little to harvest in October and November. Millet in particular had low tolerance for the flood waters, and these crops suffered extensively. With people unable to replenish food stocks, the following lean season (April to July 2017) resulted in another spike in the need for food aid. NEF staff described food needs during the lean season as equally high as needs in the immediate aftermath of the floods. As one Mopti government official explained, 'Even before this catastrophe, people were suffering [in terms of meeting food needs]. The flooding made things go from bad to worse.'

As the first responders, the Regional Flood Watch Committee organised temporary shelter for refugee families in local schools. It distributed a small amount of food and non-food aid as a symbolic gesture, and then called on development partners (including NEF) to respond to the humanitarian crisis. The Red Cross provided 167 kits with sanitary equipment, blankets, mosquito nets and other basic necessities, and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) organised cash transfers for 300 households. This aid was intended to last for two months, through October 2016 (KII NEF).

### **Impact of the flooding on protective infrastructure**

The floods of July and August 2016 were exceptional in their intensity, but flooding itself is a routine occurrence in Mopti and Douentza *cercles* of Mali. Konna is located in the Inner Niger Delta along the Niger River, and its residents rely on annual floods to support farming, fishing and pastoral livelihoods. Although it is 120 km inland from the Niger River, Douentza too experiences relatively frequent flooding during the rainy season, owing to run-off from the neighbouring escarpments.

To defend against 'normal' flooding, both Konna and Douentza had some protective infrastructure in place before the flooding. In Konna, there was a 1.2 km long earthen dyke along the river, with a span of 2 m high and 3 m wide. The dyke protects the village from run-off from the rains and channels them in a gully about 100 m wide. Over the course of decades of flooding, the earthen dyke had been

<sup>27</sup> NEF PHASE Proposal.

severely degraded, and the ravine had increasingly filled with sand, rendering the dyke ineffective. During the flash flooding in August, the dyke and a bridge that allowed local people to reach nearby markets were over 80% destroyed.

In Douentza, older neighbourhoods in the urban commune have canals to drain and divert rain water. The mayor had delegated responsibility for managing the canals to each neighbourhood (*quartier*). Neighbourhood committees were not provided with the funds or equipment to maintain the canals, and many were filled with silt and garbage. When the flash floods hit, the canals quickly reached full capacity. Still, these poorly maintained canals provided some protection, unlike in Douentza's newer neighbourhoods, where no canals at all had been built. The flood water disbursed among the houses, knocking them down and leaving the neighbourhood the worst affected in the town.

### **Impact of flooding on BRACED project**

Prior to the floods in Kontza and Douentza, the BRACED project had made progress on addressing local climate risks, although mitigating flood risks did not feature in the first round of resilience projects. The CAPCs in Douentza and Konna had selected priority resilience-building interventions, and both projects had been approved and were in the early stages of implementation.

When the floods hit Douentza, the local CAPC was mid-way through implementing a project to restore wetlands for improved fish and agro-forestry production. The ponds were designed to provide livestock with a direct water source, thereby preventing damage to agriculture from cattle that traverse fields in search of water. The CAPC had negotiated a contract, and work to dig ponds was set to begin. When the downpour began, the project halted around the contracting and planning stage. Local government services focused resources and time on responding to the flood impacts.

Although Kontza falls under the CAPC intervention area and is eligible to participate in climate fund disbursements, the approved investment was planned for another village within Konna commune.<sup>28</sup> In a village 10 km away from Kontza, the CAPC had planned a project to improve infrastructure for irrigated agricultural production. The flooding had no direct impacts on the project in Konna.

Because of its work in Mopti region and Douentza, NEF observed the impacts unfolding in real time. The first link in the causal chain held.

<sup>28</sup> NEF PHASE Concept Note.

**(Theory) Link 2: Because NEF is working closely with the government and has seen the impacts of the flood on BRACED beneficiaries, it is able to plan an effective intervention to respond to immediate humanitarian needs and rebuild crucial protective infrastructure.**

*In practice: Confusion around what the PHASE fund was, and who was responsible for applying for funding, resulted in a major delay in NEF's humanitarian response to the flood impacts. Although NEF had enough information to design a response and had been asked by local authorities to intervene, Mali-based staff did not understand how to apply to the fund, so the second link in the causal chain did not hold. When NEF staff prepared an application in September and November, the application detailed a response and a recovery-oriented intervention.*

At this stage in the causal chain, there is an implicit assumption that the BRACED consortium is aware PHASE funding is available and knows how to apply for it. In both the AFL and the CARE case studies, the consortia were quickly informed of the PHASE funding and were able to plan an intervention accordingly. For NEF staff, getting clarity on how to access PHASE funding and how it could be used proved a more convoluted process.

In the aftermath of the flooding, NEF staff in Mali had asked for extra support from various partners to respond to the crisis. The BRACED Knowledge Manager, based in Senegal, informed NEF that it would need to share information on the floods for a project called Reality of Resilience, a separate initiative within BRACED, which poses questions about how a climate extreme has affected people. After completing a questionnaire about the flood impacts and sharing official government documents on flooding in Mopti, the Mali-based NEF team thought this information would be used to secure funds to respond. The Knowledge Manager in Senegal did not recall sharing information about the PHASE fund or process of elaborating and submitting a proposal at this time. In the PHASE guidelines, there is no official role for the Knowledge Manager for facilitating the PHASE application.

It was not until 20 September, nine weeks after the flood event in Douentza (and seven weeks after the floods in Kontza), that NEF staff in Mali understood what PHASE was and how to access it. NEF staff from New York and Mali were attending a consortium workshop in Dakar, Senegal, with the FM, who helped direct NEF staff to the PHASE application. NEF discussed internally whether it would be appropriate to apply for the fund and what kind of intervention would be most appropriate. NEF staff from Mali and New York prepared an application with the guidance and submitted it on 3 November 2016.

The FM reviewed the proposal the same day and asked for clarifications to help strengthen its justification. The FM's support in strengthening this justification was positively regarded by the NEF team. The FM stated that partners based in the US who led the proposal worked 'around the clock' to get the application up to the FM's standards before the Application Panel convened. NEF

submitted a revised application on 8 November and then resubmitted it with further clarifications on 10 November. The FM shared its assessment with DFID within three working days, on 15 November.

Although NEF designed a proposal months after the initial flooding in Douentza, humanitarian needs were still high. The food aid provided by local authorities and development partners during the immediate response was sufficient only for two months, and major infrastructure and homes lay unrepaired. Displaced families had been sheltered in local schools temporarily, but, with the school year fast approaching, people were about to be relocated again. The NEF proposal had two major components: food aid and non-food assistance; and rebuilding civil protection infrastructure to reduce vulnerability to similar flooding in the future. The total value of the requested intervention stood at £191,147.

For the first component, food and essential equipment, NEF staff determined how much aid and what kind to provide based on information gathered by the Regional Flood Watch Committee, which had sent a delegation to visit Douentza on 21 July and Kontza on 6 August, in the immediate aftermath of the floods. The Committee had provided detailed damage assessments and estimated the humanitarian need (see Link 1).

Using these initial estimates, and drawing on ongoing engagement with government officials, NEF staff determined what was still needed. NEF's programme agents based in Douentza and Mopti *cercles* corroborated the government's needs assessments and verified conditions in both *cercles*. NEF determined that it should provide 20 tonnes of rice and millet, and equipment including tents, tarps, mosquito nets, blankets, mats, kitchen kits, jerry cans for water, sanitation kits and disinfectant products.

The second component of the proposal detailed an intention to rebuild and reinforce protective infrastructure that had been destroyed in the floods, in order to protect people against flooding in the future. The proposal mentions, but does not emphasise, that the infrastructure would replace pre-flood structures that had existed prior to the event but were badly damaged and had collapsed under the strength of the flood waters. According to the PHASE application, the intervention would engage technical experts to conduct a feasibility study to identify the most appropriate design, materials and location for protective structures to minimise flood risks. As it does with climate grants in the BRACED programme, NEF proposed working with local communities so these could help with procurement and contracting of private sector engineers to construct flood protection systems, based on the results of the feasibility study.

The infrastructural component of the project was explained as necessary for 'protecting the BRACED project at large because it will help prevent further impacts in the communes where the BRACED project is active'. In this conception of protection, rebuilding infrastructure was not intended to protect a specific resilience investment funded by local climate funds (such as the wetlands work in Douentza or the irrigation project in Konna). Instead, the purpose was to alleviate the pressure of unmet humanitarian needs and respond to newly exacerbated vulnerabilities.

Responding to this would enable local governments, whose continued involvement is the backbone of the DCF project, to continue focusing on adaptation and resilience-building. As NEF staff explained, 'Because commune governments are both key beneficiaries and active participants in implementing BRACED, we believed that avoiding further impacts from extreme weather would protect the investment that the DCF project had made in local institution-building by allowing governments to remain focused on adaptation and resilience-building, rather than emergency response.'

Because of NEF's relationship with affected communities and working history with Douentza and Mopti government services, it was able to plan an appropriate response to remaining humanitarian needs in the months after the flash floods. However, because NEF staff in Mali were not aware of how to apply to the PHASE crisis modifier, they did not do so in time to respond in the immediate aftermath, when needs were highest. The second link in the causal chain did not hold.

**(Theory) Link 3: Because the application process conforms to the PHASE guidelines and funding is dispersed quickly, the PHASE intervention commences in June 2016.**

*In practice: NEF's application was partially rejected, sparking a debate within the Assessment Panel on what kinds of interventions a crisis modifier should be funding. The food and non-food aid was deemed to meet PHASE criteria but rebuilding protective infrastructure was considered a 'stretch from the original objective [of PHASE]' (DFID communications). The third link in the causal chain did not hold, owing to delays as a result of sourcing more information to strengthen the original proposal. The final decision on the infrastructural component was extended for a week while the FM sourced more information from NEF.*

The timeline for the application process, from submitting the revised proposal to convening the Assessment Panel, conformed to the schedule in the PHASE guidelines.<sup>29</sup> The schedule does not show time spent in 'pre-submission', however, when first drafts of the application were submitted and then revised based on requests for more information. On the whole, the process was more streamlined than previous efforts, but detailing an acceptable concept note was a lengthy endeavour.

<sup>29</sup> The FM reviewed NEF's PHASE application on the same day it was submitted – 3 November. The FM requested clarification and more details. Final submission by NEF was on 10 November, and the FM reviewed and submitted it to the assessment panel on 15 November, within three working days. The Assessment Panel was held the following day.

When the Assessment Panel convened, on 16 November, DFID staff raised three questions about the application, two concerning the design of the project and one concerning the PHASE proposal itself:

DFID question regarding BRACED project design	1. Why had NEF's BRACED project not taken into consideration flood risks?  2. Why didn't communities prioritise flood protection works in their resilience assessments?
DFID question regarding PHASE proposal	3. Is building protective infrastructure an appropriate use of humanitarian funding?

Although the Assessment Panel heavily queried the content of the proposal, it raised no questions about the time interval between the flood events and submission of the application. The FM confirmed that humanitarian needs remained urgent, and DFID agreed to fund the food aid and non-food aid immediately, to support families through the lean season after they had lost the food and cereal stocks that help them manage normal patterns of food insecurity during the agricultural cycle.

The infrastructural component of the proposal was more contentious, with DFID advisers implying that the crisis modifier funding had been requested to backstop weaknesses in the original design of the project. The discussion was anchored by the questions as to why the project had not taken flood risks into account and why communities had not chosen to use climate change adaptation grants to better prepare for flooding.

In the context of NEF's project, DFID's first two concerns are at odds with each other. The NEF team does not determine resilience investments because these investments are entirely community-driven. BRACED beneficiaries are subject to a range of vulnerabilities and poverty-related stresses, of which flooding is only one. In the participatory 'resilience studies' that NEF facilitated in BRACED project areas, people assessed their resilience to climate change in the context of their livelihoods.

Although flooding poses a threat to some livelihood activities, and this was mentioned in resilience assessments in Douentza and Mopti, farming, pastoralism and fishing also faced a range of threats. Investment decisions were made by local CPACs, which selected proposals that aimed to increase the productivity of pastoral and agricultural production systems in an effort to enhance food security. The DCF grant mechanisms invested in a range of public goods, including developing and managing pastoral spaces (38.3%); developing market gardens to diversify food sources and income (31.91%); hydro-agricultural developments for rice production to reduce reliance on rain-fed agriculture (14.89%); developing water resources for human consumption (8.51%); anti-erosion measures (4.26%); and income-generating activities to diversify livelihoods (2.13%).<sup>30</sup> None of the 47 community resilience grants addressed flood risks. NEF staff explained that

<sup>30</sup> Mid-Term Review of the DCF project.

they had conducted awareness-raising activities and communicated climate information to beneficiaries but that they did not propose climate change adaptation projects on behalf of communities, nor did they anticipate the severity of the 2016 flooding.

Furthermore, the scope of the works suggested in the BRACED proposal was also beyond the capacity of an individual climate grant. In Mali, local climate funds support projects up to the value of 40,000,000 FCFA (or about £53,000), and the protective flood infrastructure feasibility study and subsequent construction was estimated to cost £127,397. Normally, building protective infrastructure is the remit of the state. Since civil war broke out in 2012, however, NEF staff explained that the state's priorities have been in managing insecurity and residual conflict and rebuilding after the coup and occupation. The mayor of Douentza corroborated this, explaining, 'Since 2012, we get very little revenue from taxes. Implementing projects is slow because of the "rebellion", banditry, Islamic extremism ... We always ask donors and NGOs to help us, but we have not had much support.'

The final question, 'Is building protective infrastructure an appropriate use of humanitarian funding?' was left unanswered during the meeting. DFID expressed scepticism and a need for more information. In the meeting minutes, DFID stated that, 'PHASE funding could be flexed to incorporate this work even though it relates more to preventative resilience work than emergency response, but insist it should be clearly labelled as such and explained.'

In an email on 21 November, two working days after DFID circulated the actions to be taken following the Assessment Panel meeting, the FM provided a detailed explanation of:

- The costs of the feasibility study;
- Existing flood protection infrastructure in Douentza and Kontza;
- The nature of the damage to existing infrastructure;
- Why the flood protection was not part of the original design of the BRACED project.

One rationale for funding the flood protection work was for 'demonstration effect, to encourage more communities to consider prioritising wider reaching infrastructure based adaptation actions, and not only natural resource-based actions to protect individual livelihoods'.<sup>31</sup> NEF also stated that the investments would stabilise safe agricultural production in the villages, so beneficiaries would be able to plan a safer crop season in 2017. The FM warned on behalf of NEF that, 'If NEF cannot provide this support, it will negatively impact the credibility of the BRACED project.'

In an email exchange between the FM and DFID on 24 November, DFID chose not to fund the infrastructural component, citing the high costs of the feasibility study versus the estimated costs of the works (£27,397 for study vs. £100,000 for

<sup>31</sup> DFID meeting minutes.

implementation, or 30% of the costs). It also pointed to the aims of the crisis modifier, which should 'meet needs caused by a new humanitarian crisis, i.e. the fund is not intended to address chronic needs'. The infrastructure was deemed to be related to a 'chronic' need rather than a new humanitarian crisis.

NEF staff in New York expressed frustration over the decision, because the 'chronic' need was a new need that had emerged after the flash flooding. Flood damage meant communities were even more exposed to small rainfall events that the old infrastructure could have managed. Humanitarian finance would generally not be used for investing in protective infrastructure, but for a contingency fund or crisis modifier the funding criteria are not as strongly anchored in humanitarian norms.<sup>32</sup> Under PHASE, funds were meant to protect 'development gains'. NEF staff believed the flood infrastructure was essential to protect development gains, as without it BRACED communities and their agricultural production would be even more vulnerable to flooding than before. Flooding in the 2017 rainy season risks destroying the community-managed resilience projects, further distracting government institutions from engaging on climate finance and planning and recreating humanitarian needs that could become chronic.

Because of the delays in sourcing more information for the proposal, the application process took longer than expected. Whether these delays are inefficient depends on perspective: the FM and DFID considered sourcing more information and strengthening the proposal an additional but necessary process in the application. Given the humanitarian nature of the PHASE projects, however, this study considers timeliness the major criterion for efficiency. As a result, Link 3 did not hold. Importantly, though Link 2 did not hold either, the delays in Link 3 were unrelated to those in Link 2.

**(Theory) Link 4: Because the funding arrived in a timely manner and the planned intervention remained appropriate, NEF was able to meet basic food needs and provide non-food assistance to 4,267 people who were coping with loss of livestock, crops and homes.**

*In practice: Though the original intention was to begin implementing PHASE on 15 November 2016, the NEF team did not begin distributing aid until 28 January 2017. The delay in providing aid occurred on both the decision-making side and the implementation side. On the decision-making side, the delay was partially because DFID needed additional information (before declining to fund the infrastructural component of the proposal). On the implementation side, the delay was a result of the four weeks needed to procure and deliver food aid, to adhere to national legal policy. NEF drew on its previous humanitarian experience, using a food voucher system to distribute aid in Douentza and Kontza. Given the multiple spikes in need and the insufficiency of the government-led response, the proposed intervention remained appropriate and Link 4 in the causal chain held.*

<sup>32</sup> Funding recovery is a component of humanitarian action, though this is primarily in relation to rebuilding major infrastructure such as schools, water points, etc.

Funding from the FM was disbursed on 16 December 2016, one month after the original proposed start date (15 November) and eight days after NEF signed the contract, on 6 December. The original application had been optimistic about the turnaround time for decision-making, allowing for eight working days between submission and the start of the intervention. In practice, it took 30 working days, primarily because of requests for more information from the FM and DFID advisers.

The Mali-based NEF team advertised the tender for food aid and essential supplies on 23 December 2016. The severity of the food security situation meant the food aid remained appropriate, arriving before the spike in hunger during the lean season, which was particularly pronounced in 2017 because harvests had failed as a result of flood damage. The food aid and emergency supplies for Douentza and Konna arrived in February 2017, six months after the flash floods affected the area and five weeks after the tender for food aid was advertised.

NEF distributed food vouchers and food aid, alongside other humanitarian actors including the Red Cross, CRS and World Vision. NEF was able to draw on its BRACED networks, working with Douentza municipality and Mopti regional government. These government officials coordinated the response between different humanitarian actors to ensure the food aid was sequenced and distributed effectively. Although NEF did not respond at the time of highest need (immediately after the floods), food insecurity had remained a major issue in Douentza and Kontza. For households whose grain storage had been wiped out and harvests destroyed by flooding, there were few options.

NEF has had previous experience in humanitarian response in Douentza, Mopti and elsewhere in northern Mali. Since 2013, NEF has led three humanitarian responses to food insecurity and to conflict-related crises. All three of these projects had budgets of over \$1.5 million and lasted for at least a year. NEF staff believed that the distribution of food and non-food aid had worked well, and this success owed partially to their previous experience in humanitarian response. However, staff argued that, 'It would have been preferable to also build the protective infrastructure, to safeguard people's lives and their assets in the face of future flooding during the next rainy season.'

Although the original intention was to begin implementing PHASE on 15 November 2016, this was delayed as a result of the time needed in Link 3 to submit a revised proposal, make a decision, request revised documents and sign a contract addendum. The severity of the humanitarian situation and the multiple spikes in need meant the intervention remained appropriate and the fourth causal link in the chain held.

**(Theory) Link 5. Because PHASE funding was effective in helping beneficiaries cope with food insecurity, beneficiaries were able to continue to design, plan and implement 'public good' investments responding to climate change issues.**

*In practice: Although essential support was provided to those affected by flooding, there was no clear causal link between receipt of food aid and beneficiaries' ability to continue with BRACED work. Although the aid served a humanitarian need, Kontza was not the site of a public good investment for BRACED. In Douentza, a delay in project implementation occurred while government officials dealt with the crisis and flood waters drained away. The project was able to resume by March 2017, though resuming work was not contingent directly on food aid distribution. As PHASE distribution finished, the major BRACED activities were also nearing completion because the funds in the grant mechanism had already been exhausted. Although BRACED activities did resume, Link 5 in the causal chain did not hold.*

Although Kontza falls within the Konna CAPC 'catchment' area for climate projects, there was no ongoing climate change adaptation project in the village. The food aid helped people in Kontza cope with food insecurity but did not enable them to continue participation in climate investments as they were not already directly implementing a project. People continued receiving climate information via the radio through BRACED, but they did not implement a climate adaptation investment.

After the flooding, people organised collectively to build a small stone wall to replace the damaged dyke. The wall is not cemented, and the Service de Développement Sociale in Mopti is pessimistic about its capacity to protect against any flooding. In Konna, the existing irrigation climate project continued after the rainy season finished, as originally planned.

In Douentza, the wetlands restoration project was on hold in the aftermath of the crisis. Planning for the project had finished and a supplier had been contracted before the flooding began, but waterlogging prevented physical construction of the ponds. Government officials and beneficiaries were focused on managing the immediate impacts of the floods, so proceeding with the project was deemed inappropriate until December 2016. When the works were first restarted in December 2016, a bulldozer got stuck in the bed of the pond because of soil moisture and the rising water table. The work had to be suspended a second time and did not resume again until April 2017.

According to NEF staff, some beneficiaries suggested redirecting the grant for flood protection works. The engineer had been already contracted to do the work, however, so adjusting the plan was not feasible. The original project was restarted in April 2017, and 'restarting construction did not depend on distributing humanitarian aid' (NEF staff). Although humanitarian aid undoubtedly helped the population of Douentza, it was not the instrumental factor in getting BRACED work going again, which was completed when water drained from the area in March 2017.

After the climate change adaptation projects in Konna and Douentza were completed, the first phase of the grant disbursement mechanism came to a close. To maintain equity between CPACs in the BRACED project, NEF did not provide extra funding for the affected communes to implement additional grants (nor was there money available to do so).

Although the aid served a clear unmet need, Kontza was not the site of a public good investment for BRACED. In Douentza, the project was able to resume and beneficiaries completed the final steps in public good investments, but not as a direct result of the provision of humanitarian support. The fifth link in the causal chain did not hold.

**(Theory) Link 6. Because communities were able to continue planning and implementing decentralised climate finance projects, PHASE funding protects outcomes envisaged in the project theory of change, notably, 'Communities in three cercles (Mali) benefit from public good investments that build resilience.'**

*In practice: Beneficiaries were able to continue with the final steps of implementation of decentralised climate finance projects after the flooding, but they also expressed interest in receiving additional grants for flood protection works. There were no resources remaining within the DCF project budget for CPACs to allocate to new projects. As a result, people's vulnerability to flooding in the next rainy season remained high. Although the BRACED projects had addressed relevant risks to livelihoods through wetlands restoration and irrigation, the flash floods had exposed and exacerbated a severe threat to people's ability to manage climate impacts. This vulnerability is likely to detract from people's resilience and the benefits they derive from public good investments in the long term, so Link 6 did not hold.*

Without flood protective infrastructure and support to rebuild their homes, BRACED beneficiaries remained vulnerable to flood risks. Many still had not recovered from the impacts of the flooding when support provided through PHASE was winding down. Those who had lost their homes were staying with friends or relatives six months later, and many young people migrated out to cities. These new problems did not fall under the mandate of the BRACED project, whose implementation in Douentza and Mopti slowed slightly after the floods but otherwise continued as planned.

Community-led projects in Mopti and Douentza reflected local people's priorities on livelihood-focused resilience interventions, rather than investments in protective infrastructure against flooding (see Link 3). Small climate grants are targeted investments; they cannot be expected to protect people against the multitude of hazards they deal with, including extreme events like the flash flooding of July/August 2016. This feature is one of the trade-offs inherent in the DCF project format. If the grant mechanism continues after BRACED ends, people may be able to choose new investments in small flood protection projects in the future.

In NEF's meetings with the mayor's office, the commune and the CPACs, people expressed an interest in building flood infrastructure in Douentza and Kontza. Because NEF had conducted meetings to scope out the possibility of rebuilding protective infrastructure, people hoped NEF would lead on this major infrastructure project. Local government officials were counting on an external donor to invest in the infrastructure, because they did not have the revenue base from taxes or budget allocations to fund flood protection works themselves.

After the floods, people were more aware of flood risks and ready to take action through the DCF project. Unfortunately, no more funds remained in the communes' climate funds after the first round of climate grants had been approved, disbursed and completed. Furthermore, the cost of rebuilding protective infrastructure, such as canals and dykes, surpassed the maximum grant amount.<sup>33</sup> Building the infrastructure proposed in PHASE was not possible through community-based projects alone. NEF has since approached other donors (USAID) to seek funding for flood protection infrastructure across the Inner Niger River Delta, but had not yet been successful at the time of writing.

The aim of the BRACED project was technically achieved: the creation of a grant disbursement mechanism that allows people to invest in their community resilience. However, people remained highly vulnerable to flooding, which could affect the 'public good' projects in the next rainy season. Flooding is projected to get more frequent and severe, particularly as climate change intensifies, and future flooding in these areas is likely. This significantly undermines the population's resilience and the sustainability of the public good investments in the longer term. As NEF staff explained, '[Through PHASE] we could just support people in terms of immediate needs, but we did not reduce their vulnerability to floods.'

<sup>33</sup> Comparing the estimate of costs in the PHASE application with the amount of money allocated in the climate grants.



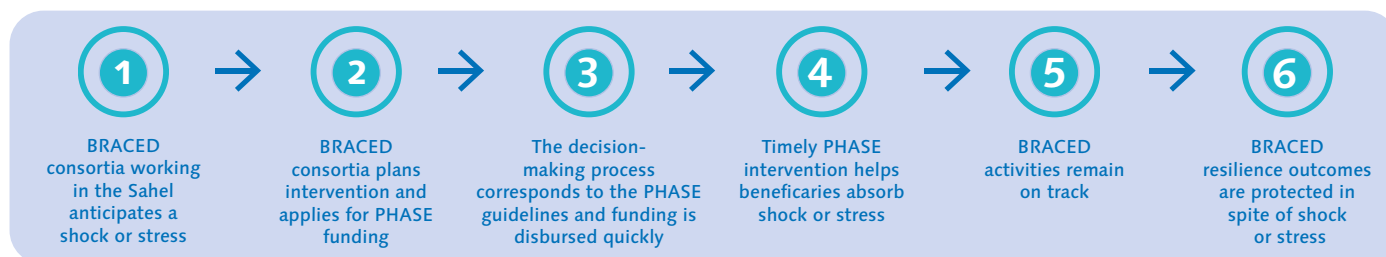
# 8. CRISIS MODIFIERS IN PRACTICE: WHEN DID THEORY HOLD?

Image: IFRC

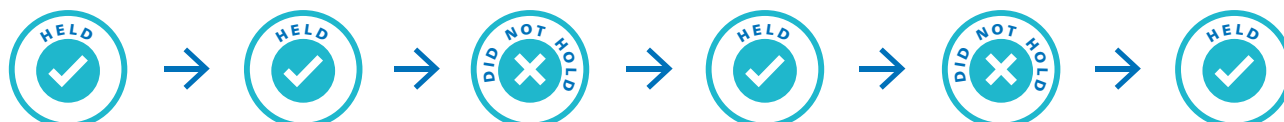
In each step of the causal chain, there were deviations from the generic theory about how the crisis modifier would work. For instance, projects reacted to shocks rather than anticipating them. None of the interventions unfolded exactly according to the timeframe in the guidelines, owing to delays in convening the Assessment Panel, intensive rounds of information-gathering, late disbursement of funding and late procurement and delivery of the intervention themselves. Lastly, projects early in implementation had few 'resilience gains' to protect; instead, the humanitarian funding helped protect resilience trajectories, enabling people to continue engaging in resilience-building activities.

Each case study illustrates a different set of challenges associated with deploying a crisis modifier in a resilience programme. In this section, we draw together the lessons from each step in a linear 'causal chain' (i.e. if A happens then B will happen) to test our generic theory about how PHASE funding would work. Under each step in the causal chain, we lay out which assumptions did, and which did not, hold in practice. The section draws together lessons from the three case studies. The findings here are not representative of all PHASE applications, but indicate important deviations from the theory that occurred in our case studies. These inform the broader picture about how the crisis modifier worked and form the basis of our recommendations and lessons for the crisis modifier.

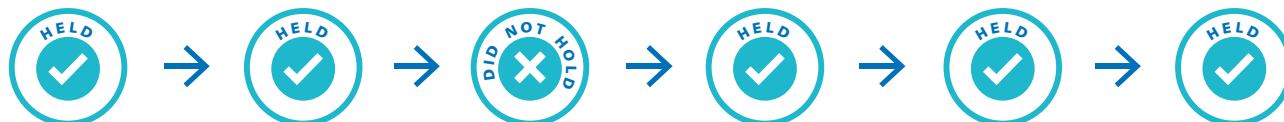
## CAUSAL CHAIN



## CASE STUDY BURKINA FASO



## CASE STUDY NIGER



## CASE STUDY MALI



## 8.1 BRACED project working in Sahel anticipates shock or stress

In theory, this step assumes IPs are able to anticipate crises because of their knowledge of the context, familiarity with beneficiaries' livelihoods and ability to recognise change and interpret what this may mean with respect to the risk of crisis.

**BRACED consortia witnessed localised shocks that threatened to derail the BRACED project and negatively affect beneficiaries. Because of their close relationships with communities and local governments, field staff were quickly alerted to the scope of the crisis. In our case studies, the IPs had direct access to the government agencies managing the response and had a strong understanding of the impacts on project beneficiaries. None of the BRACED IPs in this sample had anticipated the shocks or activated predetermined contingency plans in response to the events.**

**PRACTICE: BRACED PROJECTS REACTED TO THE EFFECT OF SHOCKS ON BENEFICIARIES RATHER THAN ANTICIPATING THEM.**

IPs reacted to the impacts of shocks, rather than proactively responding to risks and early warnings. For sudden-onset shocks, reacting quickly to a shock is an appropriate use of crisis modifiers; the PHASE fund is designated for both early

action and response. The sudden outbreak of violence in Côte d'Ivoire and the resultant refugee crisis in Burkina Faso were not anticipated, nor were the flash floods in Mopti and Douentza in Mali.<sup>34</sup>

For slow-onset shocks whose evolution can be traced using technical and physical data (e.g. rainfall, vegetation cover, climate forecasts, food prices), we found BRACED partners were not anticipating the events but observing their negative impacts. Although field staff demonstrated a strong understanding of context, there were no specific triggers to respond to or contingency plans to activate. CARE's project in Tillabéry region of Niger is frequently exposed to erratic weather. Few would reasonably guarantee that, throughout the duration of the multi-year BRACED project, the rainy season will begin smoothly in the middle of June each year, as a seasonal calendar might portray. Similarly, pest infestations are not abnormal. However, a strategy to respond to these challenges was initiated only when vulnerable people began demonstrating that the stress of the failed harvest was forcing them to adopt distress coping mechanisms.

Although there was only one slow-onset shock among the three case studies, additional applications for PHASE funding revealed that IPs were reacting to adverse impacts on beneficiaries. The FM confirmed that later proposals to the crisis modifier, not included in this study, followed the same patterns.

## 8.2 BRACED consortium plans intervention and applies for PHASE funding

In theory, this step assumes BRACED consortia are aware of the crisis modifier fund and can design an appropriate response to the crisis.

**When notified of PHASE funding, BRACED consortia had access to information that enabled them to plan an appropriate response to the respective crises they encountered. Their interventions were aligned with local government priorities and, in the case of AFL and NEF, complemented ongoing humanitarian responses by non-BRACED organisations. In all case studies, the demands of PHASE proposal writing meant the turnaround time was longer than the IP expected. The FM required more information and clarifications than were included in the original PHASE submissions, which lengthened the process considerably. The additional information provided more evidence of the scope of the crisis and impacts on beneficiaries but the content of the proposed interventions did not change.**

<sup>34</sup> Although precipitation can be forecasted and flooding is a regular occurrence in Mali, extreme flood impacts vary widely depending on a range of specific spatial characteristics, such as the topography of the land, the rate and amount of precipitation and the existence of hard and soft mitigation measures.

**PRACTICE: NOT ALL BRACED PROJECT STAFF UNDERSTOOD HOW TO APPLY FOR PHASE FUNDING.**

In the case of NEF, information about accessing the PHASE fund was not effectively disseminated, particularly at the field level. This resulted in severe delays in designing a humanitarian response to a crisis in the project area. The fragmented flow of information resulted in a three-month delay between the crisis event and submission of a proposal to activate the crisis modifier.

This communication breakdown was not characteristic of all the PHASE interventions, which suggests sufficient organisation and information-sharing can overcome this blockage relatively easily. Still, to activate a fast and appropriate response, ensuring the crisis modifier mechanism is understood at both the field and headquarters level is essential.

**PRACTICE: IN NIGER, CARE'S HUMANITARIAN TEAMS WERE BROUGHT IN TO AID WITH PLANNING THE PHASE INTERVENTION TO CAPITALISE ON THEIR EXPERTISE IN EMERGENCY RESPONSE.**

Experience with humanitarian response and access to humanitarian staff proved helpful for BRACED partners applying for PHASE funding. CARE's BRACED staff invited its humanitarian team to help develop the proposal in a way that would meet humanitarian aims and ensure coherence with the existing BRACED project. The team helped integrate actions from BRACED Community Adaptation Plans into the PHASE response. The humanitarian team supported BRACED staff to select appropriate activities for the CFW programme, and helped the team target aid in a manner consistent with humanitarian principles.

RECOPA Ouest and NEF chose to design their respective PHASE interventions in-house, without the support of humanitarian teams. For the most part, this did not manifest in a significant disadvantage, because of their prior experience and the direction given by local authorities. NEF's team has worked in a humanitarian capacity in Douentza and Mopti since 2013, responding to food insecurity and conflict-related crises. NEF staff drew on this experience when they included a food voucher system to distribute aid as part of their PHASE intervention.

RECOPA Ouest is the only organisation among the case studies with no prior experience of humanitarian action or access to humanitarian staff. As a small local NGO, RECOPA Ouest designed a PHASE intervention that played to its strengths as a network representing pastoralists, addressing livestock needs other humanitarian NGOs had not funded, in addition to providing conventional food aid. The local government managed targeting to ensure coherence with other humanitarian actors. For RECOPA Ouest, the main challenge was limited staff capacity, which hampered its ability to write the tender for food aid. This was especially the case as the local coordinator had recently left, and the organisation was not familiar with the process of procuring food aid. Although project design was appropriate, delivery was slower than it would have been had there been access to surge capacity.

**PRACTICE: IN ALL THREE CASES, THE FIRST ITERATION OF THE PROPOSAL WAS NOT DEEMED SUFFICIENTLY DETAILED FOR THE FM. THE FM WORKED WITH THE BRACED CONSORTIA TO SOURCE MORE INFORMATION AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE PROPOSALS.**

The PHASE guidance is not prescriptive on the level of detail needed in the PHASE proposals, stating only that, 'Partners are responsible for determining and demonstrating humanitarian needs.' For IPs, the open-ended criteria meant short proposals with essential information would be sufficient, but the FM expected more comprehensive data than what were initially provided. Without additional information, the FM struggled to understand whether the proposed activities were appropriate in the given situation or context.

According to the FM, there was a steep learning curve for each applicant to the PHASE fund. PHASE proposals went through multiple rounds of revisions, or requests for additional documentation, before the Assessment Panel deemed them ready for assessment. This was an additional process not articulated in the guidance, which implies a 15-day turnaround from receipt of an application. Crisis modifier proposals were new to many consortia, and the FM described their initial submissions as 'not very clear'. In particular, the FM felt they needed more detail on crisis impacts and to clarify details on the work plan, capacity, staffing, costs and other aspects. In the case of CARE, the initial application led the FM to query whether the unfolding situation was truly a crisis warranting PHASE funding, rather than part of what the BRACED project should be anticipating within normal activities.

Given the urgency of the proposals, it is worth questioning whether the long iteration process improved the Assessment Panel's ability to make decisions. PHASE proposals in our sample were up to 10 pages long and took weeks to refine and assess. Partners recommended shortening the form, explaining, 'We want to get straight to the point of what is needed and how we'll address the change in context. The template is too static but the world is constantly evolving.'

As a point of comparison, a humanitarian fund managed by the START Network<sup>35</sup> has a faster, less demanding, application process for partners to respond to small shocks. The START Network is also funded by DFID. Although it has a different operating model to the PHASE crisis modifier, its track record shows decisions and funds can be made and disbursed quickly when there is sufficient planning and political will for action. After NGOs raise an alarm that a crisis is pending, the network triangulates information about the crisis with a context analysis from ACAPS,<sup>36</sup> funding requirements from Global Humanitarian Assistance and a rapid survey of other humanitarian organisations in the network. If a decision is taken to respond, agencies submit a three- to four-page proposal describing the intervention. The funding is awarded within 72 hours of the crisis alert. Whether this results in better outcomes is beyond the scope of this report, but the network consistently meets the three-day timeframe in its mandate and prioritises efficient decision-making.

<sup>35</sup> <https://startnetwork.org>

<sup>36</sup> [www.acaps.org/who-we-are](http://www.acaps.org/who-we-are)

### 8.3 The decision-making process is efficient and corresponds to the PHASE guidelines, and funding is disbursed quickly

In theory, the decision to fund a PHASE application operated on a 15-day timeframe (see Figure 1, Section 3). This step also assumes that requesting and disbursing funds after a decision has been made does not entail another delay.

**The application process for CARE and RECOPA Ouest's interventions did not conform to the PHASE guidelines. For NEF, the timeline conformed after NEF resubmitted its original proposal, but the time spent clarifying and adding detail meant the initial proposed start date was not met. The Assessment Panel was not clear on what kinds of interventions the crisis modifier should be funding, and was sceptical about whether the interventions were funding 'resilience' work that should be covered through BRACED. After decisions had been made, disbursement of funding proved another obstacle, further delaying implementation.**

**PRACTICE: THE APPLICATION PROCESS WAS INEFFICIENT AND, IN MOST CASES, DID NOT ADHERE TO THE APPLICATION GUIDELINES, RESULTING IN DELAYED DECISION-MAKING AND DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS.**

Timeliness is a key indicator of efficiency. On this element, the PHASE application process fell short of expectations. The criterion set in the guidelines is that, 'The Assessment Panel ... will review and discuss (by phone, email or in person) the concept note and the Fund Manager's initial assessment within four working days of the application.' The funding decision should be made within three days of the meeting, and the FM should inform the lead agency in the consortium of the decision within eight days of DFID's decision. In total, the process should take 15 days. The original PHASE guidelines had been designed by the FM, drawing on the expertise of staff with a humanitarian background, and were in line with OCHA standards, but in practice staff working on PHASE deemed these 'very unrealistic' and advocated for a longer, and achievable, timetable.

In discussions with IPs, the FM and DFID, it was clear that these organisations work within a 'development' culture in which management systems are out of step with humanitarian norms. IPs expressed frustration at the discrepancy between their expectation of fast, flexible funding and the reality of the relatively slow, bureaucratic process (although IPs too were responsible for some minor delays by not responding immediately to information requests). There was a clear learning curve on the part of the FM, which eventually narrowed the turnaround time but still struggled to respond to the applications and hold the Assessment Panel in accordance to the timeline articulated in the guidelines. According to the FM, the iteration process was needed to close important information gaps and ensure assessors could fully appreciate the relevance of the intervention. Despite repeated experiences of not meeting the 15-day turnaround (except in the case of NEF), the PHASE guidelines were not adjusted to ensure they described timeframes that could be adhered to.

Late convening of the Assessment Panel also owed to scheduling conflicts between members of the Assessment Panel. Meetings were not held unless the DFID senior responsible owners and FM charged with that specific project were present, which was difficult to achieve, given workloads and travel schedules. In one Assessment Panel meeting, DFID staff suggested making follow-up decisions over email rather than holding a second meeting, arguing that decisions over allocating much larger sums of money were routinely made through email.

**Table 3: Turnaround time for crisis modifier applications**

LEAD AGENCY OF BRACED CONSORTIUM	SUBMISSION DATE	ASSESSMENT PANEL DATE	CONTRACTUAL START DATE	TURN-AROUND TIME	PAYMENT MODALITIES
CARE	12 Dec 2015	16 Feb 2016	22 Feb 2016	60 days	Arrears
CRS	21 Mar 2016	21 April 2016	1 May 2016	40 days	Arrears
AFL (of which RECOPA Oquest is a part)	14 April 2016	26 May 2016	1 June 2016	47 days	Advance
Christian Aid	6 June 2016	24 June 2016	11 July 2016	35 days	Advance
NEF	3 Nov 2016	16 Nov 2016	1 Dec 2016	27 days	Advance

Source: FM's Year 1 Review.

**PRACTICE: FOR NEF AND CARE'S PROPOSAL, THE ASSESSMENT PANEL DISAGREED OVER WHAT KINDS OF ACTIVITIES SHOULD BE FUNDED, PARTICULARLY REGARDING WHAT ADDRESSED A NEW NEED VS. A CHRONIC NEED OR WHAT QUALIFIED AS PROTECTING DEVELOPMENT GAINS.**

In the conceptual stages of the PHASE crisis modifier design, DFID intentionally left the criteria about what should be funded open, without specific prescriptions, definitions or triggers. The open criteria was envisaged to leave room for flexibility, to allow for innovations and to enable better learning from how development partners might work differently to traditional humanitarian actors. The implicit understanding was that protecting development gains would entail different actions for different scenarios and communities, and that it would be self-defeating to assign artificial triggers or guidance at the project level. Early actions in particular may not always correspond to traditional humanitarian activities and may appear more developmental in nature.

This mind-set appears to have shifted by the time PHASE was operational. The broad criteria left room for interpretation on the part of both the applicant and the Assessment Panel, and the Assessment Panel was fairly rigid in its understanding of humanitarian action and, depending on the composition of the Panel, at times sceptical of justifications for funding that were framed as protecting resilience trajectories. Provision of food aid was considered relatively uncontroversial (interestingly, given that this is where some agencies lacked experience and faced challenges in procurement), but other interventions were subject to more interrogation. For example, CARE's proposal included distribution of improved seeds after farmers' reserves were depleted following multiple failed

attempts to replant. DFID questioned whether supplying improved seed was appropriate as part of a humanitarian intervention, and did not interpret it as an attempt to protect livelihoods for the following agricultural cycle, arguing that the proposal did not make a strong case as to what 'development gains' would be protected. This cautionary approach was more apparent when humanitarian experts were part of the Assessment Panel.

Moreover, in light of media scrutiny of UKAid, which was occurring in parallel with PHASE decisions, DFID staff felt an increased weight of responsibility when taking quick decisions. This manifested as reduced willingness to trust local reporting of situations without documented evidence of a crisis and its impacts – meaning evidence of negative impacts already being experienced, rather than early action. Continued requests for additional evidence caused increased delays in the decision-making process. When the Assessment Panel had a stronger presence of humanitarian expertise, there was more debate as to whether proposals were patching over weaknesses in the design of BRACED projects and consortia were seeking additional funding for resilience-building activities rather than responding to urgent crises.

Furthermore, cleanly categorising 'new' and 'chronic' needs proved complicated. While new needs arose after shocks, chronic needs also intensified and new vulnerabilities were exposed. In RECOPA Ouest's refugee response, some vulnerable households that were not refugees were included in food aid distribution. This ensured equity and improved local perceptions of fairness of the intervention, even though these households were experiencing chronic need that existed prior to the crisis. In the case of NEF, DFID declined to fund flood protective infrastructure because this was a response to a chronic need rather than a new need. This was a point of contention for NEF staff, who explained that existing infrastructure had been washed away and beneficiaries were now more vulnerable to flood impacts than before.

When addressing chronic needs through PHASE, the scale and the modality of the intervention mattered. One PHASE intervention managed by CRS (which was not included as a case study but was referenced by the FM) included a CFM project in which beneficiaries constructed diguettes to help manage future flood impacts. This has many similarities with NEF's proposal to rebuild flood protection infrastructure, which addresses the same vulnerability but was rejected (see Section 7). Although the aim (flood protection) was synonymous, the modality and scale of the projects were different: a community-based CFW programme vs. a professionally contracted infrastructure project. The means, and not the end, were an important factor in securing approval.

**PRACTICE: AFTER THE ASSESSMENT PANEL MADE A JUDGEMENT, THE DISBURSEMENT OF PHASE FUNDS WAS ROUTINELY LATE, REVEALING ANOTHER LAYER OF BUREAUCRACY.**

Because PHASE funding was not held in a separate account that the FM could access, the FM had to request funds from DFID every time a PHASE intervention was approved. This resulted in serious delays. The AFL-led intervention, meant to begin on 1 June 2016, was funded only on 22 August 2016. Similarly, the CARE

intervention that was paid in arrears was not funded until 13 September 2016, three weeks after the PHASE intervention was completed on 22 August 2016.

There were two reasons for delays. First, the FM needed clarification on proposed budget from the BRACED partners, after the decision to fund the intervention had been made. The BRACED partners were slow to respond, in part because they did not realise funding would be withheld. When they did not have the answers, contracting was delayed and the FM did not put in the request for funds.

The second reason was DFID's financial forecasting system. According to DFID staff, DFID is required to account for spending month to month. When money is transferred to a separate NGO account, it is considered spent. For contingency finance, however, DFID needed to know exactly how and when funds would be spent so this could be reflected in financial forecasting. DFID staff explained that there was a culture of 'micro-managing the way cash is spent' in order to ensure accountability and value for money. The extent to which DFID's financial system is responsible for delays is not the subject of this study, but it did feature prominently in discussions with the FM and DFID staff. Simple human error played a part too. In the case of AFL, DFID sent the funds to the wrong KPMG account. The funds were automatically redirected back to DFID, and it took weeks for the funds to be disbursed again to the correct account.

## 8.4 Timely PHASE intervention helps beneficiaries absorb shock or stress

In theory, the fast-tracked decision-making process allows BRACED partners to respond quickly and help beneficiaries deal with the impacts of the crisis. With extra support provided through PHASE, beneficiaries do not need to resort to selling assets or moving away from the project site. The PHASE intervention helps mitigate food insecurity and meet essential needs in the aftermath of the shock or stress.

**Because of considerable delays in the application and approval process, PHASE interventions did not start when IPs planned for them to. Some interventions were further slowed by lengthy procurement in-country, and activities did not reach beneficiaries until weeks after funding was disbursed. In spite of delays, humanitarian needs remained high well after the crises struck. IPs provided essential support to those affected through food aid, seed distribution and CFW projects, mitigating food insecurity and reducing the need for distress migration. Where possible, PHASE interventions utilised community groups and local institutions set up in the context of BRACED to help with targeting and delivery.**

**PRACTICE: AFTER FUNDING WAS DISBURSED, LENGTHY PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACTING PROCESSES IN-COUNTRY SLOWED THE DISBURSEMENT OF FOOD AID AND EMERGENCY SUPPLIES.**

After funding was disbursed, interventions were further delayed by lengthy procurement and contracting processes for the projects that supplied food

aid rather than opting for cash modalities. These delays were for three main factors: 1) legal requirements around tendering food aid (AFL); 2) difficulties sourcing sufficient food aid in local markets (NEF, AFL); and 3) limited staff capacity to dedicate to procuring food aid (in the case of AFL). Advice from national humanitarian teams with more familiarity with humanitarian logistics could help BRACED IPs using crisis modifiers for the first time overcome constraints more easily. In one instance, CARE brought in humanitarian teams that helped ensure targeting and delivery of aid were appropriate.

**PRACTICE: ALTHOUGH UNINTENTIONAL, THE LATE START TO PHASE FUNDING MEANT IT WAS ABLE TO PROVIDE SUPPORT AS OTHER HUMANITARIAN ACTORS MOVED ON OR WOUND DOWN THEIR ACTIVITIES, ACTING AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT ACTORS.**

As a result of the delays in the application process (detailed above), PHASE funding did not arrive rapidly enough to treat the initial symptoms of a crisis for NEF in Mali or RECOPA Ouest in Burkina Faso. For the sudden-onset shocks, such as the flooding in Mali and conflict-related displacement to Burkina Faso, other humanitarian actors moved in to help support the state in its efforts to mitigate the crisis. These actors operated on standard humanitarian timeframes, however, and generally moved on within six months of the crisis. This inadvertently allowed PHASE funding to help bridge the gap when humanitarian actors moved on, supporting recovery and, in the case of AFL and NEF, helping vulnerable people cope with the lean season. Government officials in Mali and in Burkina Faso expressed gratitude for this extended support, in both cases stating that the problems had not been resolved within six months and that additional financial and operational support from BRACED projects had been necessary.

Importantly, this was not the case for CARE, which was not working in parallel with other humanitarian actors.

## 8.5 BRACED activities remain on track

In theory, because PHASE helps beneficiaries buffer the impacts of a crisis, beneficiaries are able to continue participating in the BRACED programme and the consortia are able to continue delivering BRACED project activities.

**PHASE interventions alleviated pressure on beneficiaries as they grappled with food insecurity, asset loss after a flood and tensions on resources after an influx of refugees. For RECOPA Ouest and NEF, PHASE support arrived as other humanitarian actors were moving on, thus serving as a bridge between humanitarian and development actors. For all case studies, some BRACED activities were delayed for a short period of time while humanitarian support was provided and while local governments focused their efforts on responding to the crisis. For RECOPA Ouest and CARE, BRACED objectives and activities were advanced during PHASE implementation because the PHASE interventions were designed to complement these. Local officials regarded PHASE support positively, and this improved engagement for BRACED implementation for the long term.**

**PRACTICE: IN ALL THREE CASE STUDIES, SOME BRACED ACTIVITIES WERE PUT ON HOLD FOR A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME DURING PHASE IMPLEMENTATION, ALTHOUGH THIS DID NOT AFFECT BRACED PROJECTS' ABILITY TO CONTINUE AS PLANNED WHEN PHASE WAS COMPLETED. FOR TWO INTERVENTIONS, BRACED IMPLEMENTATION STILL PROGRESSED BECAUSE THE PHASE INTERVENTIONS WERE DESIGNED TO BE COMPLEMENTARY WITH BRACED ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES.**

PHASE acted as a temporary substitute for BRACED activities, most of which were put on hold until people were able to focus again on rebuilding their livelihoods. In the immediate aftermath of a shock, local authorities and BRACED beneficiaries were solely concerned with coping with the impacts. In the affected areas, 'normal' BRACED programming could not progress. A few activities that were not limited to the geographic area affected continued, such as disseminating climate information on the radio, but beneficiaries could not be expected to be meaningfully engaging with these endeavours. Pausing BRACED activities to deal with humanitarian response was deemed appropriate by BRACED consortia staff and local authorities, and helped build goodwill with authorities and BRACED beneficiaries alike.

Although BRACED implementation was put on hold for PHASE recipients, in some cases PHASE facilitated the achievement of BRACED objectives. For CARE and RECOPA Ouest, significant aspects of the PHASE interventions were designed as a complement to the BRACED project. For CARE, PHASE facilitated the restoration of degraded land and the establishment of a warrantage scheme, two activities that BRACED work had identified as important for resilience. Similarly, RECOPA Ouest set up community groups for negotiating refugee resettlement through PHASE, which doubled as focal points for negotiating pastoral corridors – the project's primary BRACED objective. As PHASE completed, RECOPA was able to secure over 30 km of pastoral corridors in a region where BRACED had struggled to gain a foothold (see Section 5). PHASE opened opportunities for BRACED in a context where normal project implementation had been difficult.

## **8.6 BRACED resilience outcomes are protected in spite of shock or stress<sup>37</sup>**

In theory, providing humanitarian support allows beneficiaries to continue participating in BRACED projects. As a result of PHASE support, resilience gains made to date in the projects were protected, and resilience trajectories were maintained.

<sup>37</sup> Progress towards 'resilience outcomes' is a factor of quality of project implementation (among many other factors, too diverse to be adequately addressed here). This study did not assess BRACED project implementation, which is ongoing at the time of this study, so we do cannot comprehensively answer the question as to whether BRACED resilience outcomes have been achieved. Still, the evidence from case studies leads us to some conclusions about how humanitarian finance used in the context of a development programme can maintain resilience trajectories.

**PHASE funding did not protect specific resilience gains as two of the three crises occurred at an early stage in BRACED delivery, before substantial gains could be quantified. PHASE interventions did, however, maintain resilience trajectories and reduce pressure on beneficiaries who might otherwise have disengaged from the project. This included reducing the likelihood of out-migration from project areas, and in some cases enabling the peaceful operating context necessary for continuing with resilience-building initiatives. Providing humanitarian support thus enabled beneficiaries to continue participating in the BRACED project. In the case of NEF, however, BRACED beneficiaries emerged from the shock and PHASE intervention more vulnerable to flooding than before, as there were significant recovery needs that were beyond what the scope of approved PHASE funding.**

**PRACTICE: PHASE FUNDING PROTECTED RESILIENCE TRAJECTORIES.**

Shocks and stresses interrupted BRACED projects that were early in their implementation. For these projects, there were few specific resilience gains for PHASE to protect, but much to lose if people's situation continued worsening. PHASE funding enabled people to maintain a resilience trajectory, in which their livelihoods remained viable and the operating context was peaceful enough to return to the BRACED projects' resilience-building activities.

Up until March 2016, RECOPA Ouest had made little progress in negotiating pastoral routes in Nounbiel region of Burkina Faso (partially because of the land tenure system – see Section 5). After refugees entered the project area, adding pressure to already strained resources, local authorities warned of the possibility of a conflict erupting. Such an event would greatly diminish possibilities of peaceful negotiation of pastoral corridors and undermine mobility and livelihood options for pastoralists in the region.

Similarly, CARE had been active for a few months before delayed and erratic rains and a pest infestation interrupted the agricultural cycle in Tillabéry, Niger. Because multiple rounds of failed harvests had depleted seed stocks, the PHASE intervention prioritised distributing improved seed (alongside the CFW project) so BRACED beneficiaries could ensure a viable harvest the following year and would not need to migrate in search of an income. If the following harvests failed entirely and people chose to leave, the project would have little possibility of improving resilience to shocks.

**PRACTICE: PHASE FUNDING DID SUPPORT BENEFICIARIES AND HELP AVOID OUT-MIGRATION, ADDRESS FOOD INSECURITY AND AVOID NEW CONFLICTS. IN THE CASE OF NEF, HOWEVER, BENEFICIARIES REMAINED HIGHLY VULNERABLE TO A SIMILAR EVENT IN THE FUTURE.**

Two of the three PHASE interventions included in this study involved distributions of food aid, and there was one CFW project. Providing food or cash support was needed to address acute food insecurity and see beneficiaries through a crisis. Accompanied by other medium-term activities, such as provision of seeds for the following planting cycle or the permanent settlement of refugees, the support was designed to contribute to recovery and ensure the shock or stress did not further erode beneficiaries' wellbeing.

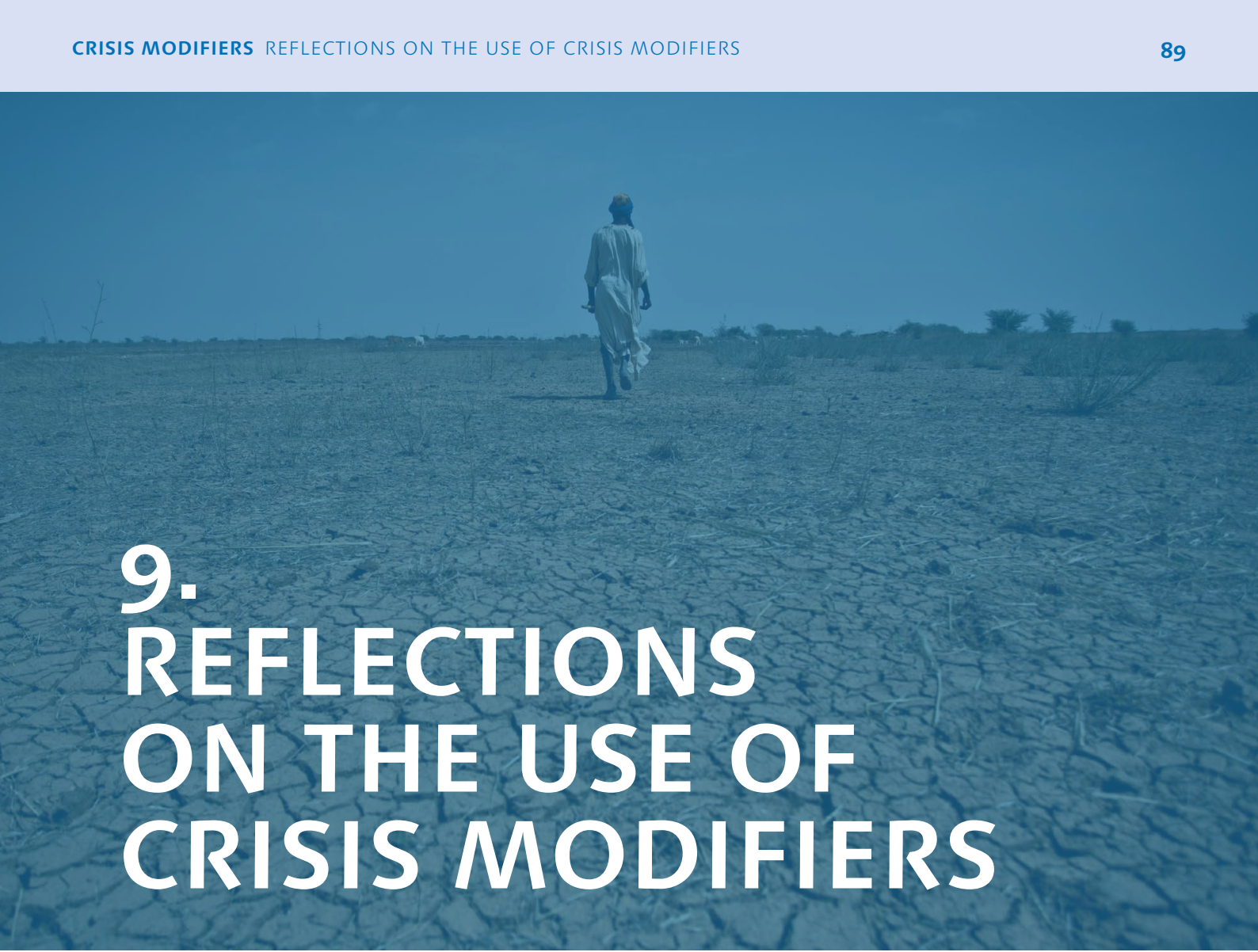
Alone, however, emergency assistance does not reduce vulnerability to future shocks. Flash floods in Mopti and Douentza, Mali, washed away protective infrastructure and caused severe damage to homes, food storage and agricultural production. People needed support to rebuild in a way that protected them against future extreme floods. Beneficiaries were more exposed to 'normal' flooding than before, but had diminished financial capacity to respond to a threat. After speaking with local authorities and assessing needs, NEF designed a PHASE intervention that combined provision of food aid with rebuilding infrastructure, to enable people to cope with future floods without losing their homes and damaging their livelihoods. The Assessment Panel rejected the infrastructural component of the intervention, explaining that it was not what PHASE was intended to fund (see Section 7 for detail). As a result, beneficiaries living in the affected towns remained highly vulnerable to flash floods. If PHASE funding is used only to address immediate needs, and there is no scope in the BRACED programme to reallocate funds to deal with new vulnerabilities, then BRACED resilience gains are temporary (see Box 3).

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**Box 3: Programming choices – more of the same?**

Shocks and stresses can change projects' operating contexts, revealing new vulnerabilities. Although crises could reasonably be expected to challenge BRACED project assumptions, we did not observe BRACED IPs significantly redesigning their approaches to consider what would happen if a crisis happened again. Still, some projects made changes at the margins; CARE put an emphasis on setting up stores at the community level to respond to further pest attacks. NEF also worked to revise its approach. The selection of climate adaptation projects is normally completely decentralised. Following the floods, NEF made a choice to prioritise projects that took flood risks into account, to ensure investments for the climate fund selection process would address the vulnerability to extreme flooding that remained after NEF's proposed PHASE intervention was partially rejected.

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# 9. REFLECTIONS ON THE USE OF CRISIS MODIFIERS

Image: Pablo  
Tosco/Oxfam

Failure to plan to act early to prevent crises is pervasive in the current aid system. We call for six changes to enhance the ability of crisis modifiers to deliver effective support to at-risk communities: 1) Make contingency planning a prerequisite, 2) Act at a pace that reflects the urgency of the situation, 3) Prepare for transitions into and out of recovery periods, 4) Adhere to humanitarian norms when targeting, 5) Start responding to the right signals and 6) Harness existing social infrastructure and recognise intangible benefits. Drawn from the BRACED experience, these reflections are relevant for similar resilience-building programmes wanting to trial a crisis modifier.

## 9.1 Getting the basics right

From a resilience perspective, repeatedly responding to humanitarian crises that could have been foreseen is a flawed model. In fragile contexts, investments in longer-term vulnerability reduction, early warning and early action are critical to ensure people can avoid, mitigate or recover from the possible impacts of shocks and stresses. As the annual Global Humanitarian Assistance report articulates:

*'Arguably, humanitarian response will by definition be too late, needed only when these other mechanisms are absent or insufficient to match the type or scale of events. So, early action requires a dual approach:*

*scaling up of long-term financing for risk and vulnerability; and contingency mechanisms for deploying rapid humanitarian assistance where and when it is necessary'.*

(Global Humanitarian Assistance, 2015: 94)

Yet calling for more early warning data or rejigging indicators to spur early action is a tired formula. Greater clarity is needed in terms of how different actions to manage risk intersect across the development, climate and humanitarian realms, and how to translate these into timely and appropriate support for people affected by crises. From a systems perspective, this includes understanding how financing for development activities and humanitarian response intersect with risk financing such as insurance, social safety nets and social protection (Global Humanitarian Assistance, 2015: 94; also see Box 6). From a programmatic perspective, donors should be committing to more flexible ways of working – such as adaptive programming – and ensuring the proper decentralisation of responsibilities for managing risk and taking action.

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On this basis, if crisis modifiers are treated as a simple bolt-on to programmes, they will never deliver the results that are promised by the plethora of predictive tools and reports intended to inform practice.<sup>38</sup> The reality is that working to address crises in development programmes requires a fundamental shift in the way development actors design, think and act – as individual entities and in relation to other actors who play a role in managing risk.

From the experiences of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, it is clear that addressing extensive risk must be elevated to the core of resilience-building, for everyone from donors to field staff. In contexts vulnerable to climate change, natural hazards and conflict, crises are not a peripheral possibility. The question is not if a shock or stress will occur, but when. Unless the aid system is prepared to move away from a fierce division of responsibilities and funding modalities, crises will continue to undermine livelihoods, disrupt programming and monopolise the focus of local authorities.

<sup>38</sup> Examples include the Situation and Response Analysis Framework, the Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards, the Livelihood Impact Analysis Sheet and the Livelihoods, Early Assessment and Protection tool.

## 9.2 Ownership and accountability: Does a crisis modifier reveal a flaw in the design of resilience programmes?

BRACED partners demonstrated a strong appetite for learning how to bridge the humanitarian–development nexus. Staff showed an appreciation of how a crisis modifier could enable them to act more nimbly in the event of a shock or stress, and were generous in terms of sharing their experiences to inform future efforts. But these same BRACED partners failed to anticipate the shocks and stresses they experienced over the four-year lifetime of their projects. DFID had not systematised risk management planning at the programme level, and had forbidden BRACED projects from including contingency budget lines.<sup>39</sup> Again and again, we found ourselves wondering how a programme that intends to build resilience for communities at the grassroots level could fail to consider the resilience of the programme itself.

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This evaluative learning work produces a range of recommendations, many of which relate to crisis modifier design, though we recognise that technical approaches to inherently political problems are not sufficient to fix the chronic failure to deliver early action (Levine et al., 2011; Bailey, 2012). The barriers are not necessarily insufficient early warning indicators, finance or knowledge. Levine et al. (2011) point to lack of ‘ownership’ of the response as a major driver of substandard outcomes in the experiences of the 2009 drought in the Horn of Africa. Although this finding resonates in a fragmented aid system, it is not sufficient to explain outcomes for a crisis modifier, in which a single organisation is tasked with rapid response to a localised crisis. The BRACED consortia do ‘own’ the results of their projects and are contractually obligated to report these to DFID. Moreover, the consortia pride themselves on delivering effective support to communities at risk, so why would they not be more proactive in managing risks that threaten the success of the projects?

In BRACED, one aspect of ‘ownership’ translates to accountability for the outputs and outcomes in the project-level theories of change. The BRACED consortia are not held accountable for planning early or preparing sufficiently for a range of shocks and stresses that may unfold simultaneously and in unexpected ways.

<sup>39</sup> DFID’s funding and design stipulations for the original BRACED programme were not a focus of this study, but individual projects’ inability to budget contingency lines was mentioned multiple times in interviews for our case studies.

Without an actionable contingency plan, field staff may not feel emboldened to react to unfolding crises outside of a project logframe. Those who understand the situation best are often disconnected from the English-language, data-heavy proposal and report writing managed by staff in headquarters, who are removed from fluctuations in people's livelihoods and wellbeing. And so it is not until there is a serious threat to the delivery of a project that action is taken, such as when CARE faced a potential mass exodus of people out of the project area in Tillabéry, Niger.

Furthermore, the donor and managers of the funds are not held accountable in terms of making decisions quickly and delivering finance rapidly. At each stage of the process, each actor in the chain slowed the actual disbursement of PHASE funding: decisions were put on hold while staff responsible for making assessments were on mission; funds were slowed by UK Treasury procedures that could have been foreseen; and requests for more information were a burden on field staff trying to manage heavy workloads.<sup>40</sup> At points, it appeared no one was aware of the 15-day timeline articulated in the PHASE guidelines. Although the FM made a concerted effort to improve response times with each new application, its systems remained out of step with humanitarian norms, thwarting the good intentions of busy local staff.

The need for a crisis modifier also revealed flaws in the design of the BRACED projects. This led to scepticism over whether PHASE funding should 'plug the gap'. Although DFID accurately diagnosed a limitation of BRACED – 'Why weren't these risks considered in project design?' – the time taken to debate the issue stalled decision-making within PHASE and hampered the ability of local partners to deliver support quickly to people that needed it. To confidently fund the proposal, the Assessment Panel consistently needed more information about the impacts of the crisis on beneficiaries and the costs associated with the response. Moreover, the type of information requested exposed a lack of experience in understanding what kinds of quantitative data are available at what points in the escalation of a crisis. The process of going back and forth to source more data was a major factor in delaying rapid response. Striking a balance between providing enough information to meet the Assessment Panel's criteria without slowing humanitarian action will require change.

<sup>40</sup> Arranging interviews for this study was a testament to this; field staff were generous with their constrained time but constantly attending meetings, working to deliver specific trainings and otherwise occupied with project commitments.

## 9.3 Six recommendations from BRACED

*'Our experience working in Mopti Region [of Mali] over two decades confirms that preparedness in development programming is not so much a question of whether a shock will occur, but when and where. Based on our experience with the PHASE mechanism, we'd like to see other donors couple aid with access to similar funding mechanisms in the future'.*

(NEF in Final PHASE Report)

Though imperfect, the PHASE crisis modifier did have value for the organisations that accessed it, by mitigating the impacts of crises when beneficiaries were struggling to cope and high humanitarian needs remained unmet. The crisis modifier helped projects stay on track and was delivered in ways that helped them align with and achieve resilience objectives. Going forward, we call for six changes to improve future crisis modifier models to deliver early action and rapid response more effectively.

### 1. Make contingency planning a prerequisite

Currently, shocks and stresses in BRACED are being treated as anomalies, rather than as predictable events that are likely to manifest over the course of a multi-year programme. DFID and the FM need to have in place the financial, contractual and operational structures to allow for rapid activation of the crisis modifier, and projects need to build in preparedness through contingency planning as a prerequisite to funding. Even though BRACED projects intended to work in some of the world's most fragile contexts, they were not required to articulate contingency plans in their design phase. Unless early action and rapid response are planned, and these plans are revisited periodically, effective early action will remain a pipedream.

For slow-onset emergencies, contingency plans can facilitate better preparedness and early action by identifying triggers for taking action, planning timeframes for implementation based on seasonal calendars, and taking decisions about what data to monitor – and who is responsible for monitoring these data (Levine et al., 2011). Coordinating with other actors working in the same geographical area can also help improve response and ensure activities are appropriate. Lastly, speaking with beneficiaries to understand their coping mechanisms should ensure plans align with people's own strategies. These types of consultations were done routinely as part of vulnerability assessments in the inception phase of BRACED, making this step to inform contingency planning easily transferrable from current programming.

Contingency plans designed as part of resilience projects should align with and bolster national and local government contingency and response plans, where these exist. Integrating plans for early action into existing government plans is a means to support improved coordination and coherence. That said, while full humanitarian response is usually contingent on national declaration of an

emergency, crisis modifiers should be activated well before this. Such discussions could be used to encourage formal governance structures to think more concretely about pre-emptive risk management.

Importantly, planning for shocks and stresses should not be limited to the design phase of a project. Plans should be revisited regularly (e.g. before the lean season). Like many development programmes, BRACED has seen high staff turnover over its course. When new staff are hired, they need to be briefed on contingency planning and made aware of the processes and their own responsibility in enacting plans. Taking extensive risk seriously requires a mind-set change – and fostering a culture in which everyone is responsible for connecting contingency plans to action.

## **2. Act at a pace that reflects the urgency of the situation.**

Despite the rhetoric of rapid response, PHASE interventions were still characterised by procedural delays, resulting in aid not reaching beneficiaries until weeks or months after the crisis was initially detected. DFID and the FM need to be held accountable to the timeframe articulated in the guidelines. If, in practice, the Assessment Panel is not able to deliver in accordance to the timelines described in the guidance, then these should be adjusted to reflect the pace at which the Assessment Panel can be convened and decisions taken.

Consortia partners designed their interventions expecting fast turnaround. Field staff in particular were frustrated and mystified at the time needed for decision-making, contracting and disbursement of funding. The delays experienced could have rendered planned activities obsolete as people's needs changed. In our sample, interventions remained appropriate because humanitarian needs lingered for months, but there were risks associated with responding late. RECOPA Ouest's intervention to respond to a refugee crisis was delayed by over four months. If other humanitarian actors had not responded with food aid and essential support to refugees, a conflict between locals (BRACED beneficiaries) and refugees could have erupted.

There was no mechanism to hold DFID and the FM to the guidelines, and delays were not often discussed in the Assessment Panel meetings. In the first ever Assessment Panel meeting to consider CARE's concept note, members mentioned that the meeting should have taken place at end of December (rather than mid-February). According to meeting minutes, the need to convene an Assessment Panel meeting 'went off the radar', partially because the original concept note had been a draft rather than a formal proposal.<sup>41</sup> Offices closing over the holidays from Christmas through New Year's Day likely contributed to delays and slipped priorities. Assessment Panel delays were not discussed for the other case studies explored in this report. For time-sensitive meetings like the crisis modifier, assigning functions (in which other staff members of the organisations can represent for an absent colleague) rather than waiting for specific individuals would facilitate timely decision making. Alternatively, decisions could be made over the phone or by email.

<sup>41</sup> Meeting minutes from Knowledge Manager observations of the Assessment Panel.

In meetings with the Knowledge Manager, the FM repeatedly claimed the original 15-day timeline was unrealistic. There are other crisis modifier models that demonstrate that this timeline is feasible: fast-acting humanitarian funds such as START have managed to devise models in which decisions are made within 72 hours. This study does not intend to prescribe a specific number of days between alert and response but it does highlight that the major causes of delays here were preventable and that keeping to guidelines (however long or short) is important to make it possible to design interventions in ways that align with the decision-making and fund disbursement timeframe.

To address delays resulting from information-gathering, project staff could be brought into the Assessment Panel to justify the intervention and explain the impacts on beneficiaries, rather than having to articulate longer and more detailed proposals (which ranged from nine to 15 pages in our sample). For delays owing to difficulties physically convening the Assessment Panel because of members' busy travel schedules, decisions could be made over phone call or by email. Alternatively, if one member is unable to attend, another staff member could serve in their place.

### 3. Prepare for transitions into and out of the recovery phase

Delays in approving funds and procuring supplies meant PHASE interventions often reached beneficiaries during the recovery phase of a crisis. In a few instances, they also incorporated actions designed to improve recovery, although they did not categorise these activities in this way. Although funding recovery was not in the crisis modifier's original mandate, these actions set BRACED consortia apart from other humanitarian organisations responding to the same crisis, which limited their involvement to short-term humanitarian assistance. As people transitioned out of crisis, unique needs arose that pre-planned BRACED activities or by food or cash transfers did not cover. For example:

- **CARE's** intervention was concerned primarily with immediate coping needs, through its CFW project and the distribution of fodder. There was a small 'recovery' component: provision of improved seed varieties for millet, cowpea and sesame for the following season. Although CARE staff described this action as 'early action for the following planting season', it enabled farmers to recover from multiple failed plantings that had depleted seed stores and prepare for the following harvest.
- **RECOPA Ouest** supported recovery by helping facilitate negotiations for refugee resettlement. Although other organisations, such as Oxfam, Plan International and the Red Cross, helped provide access to water, food and education for refugees, they had moved on before a lasting solution to the crisis was found. Facilitating dialogue between government officials, locals and refugees contributed to the permanent resettlement of 16 households. The committees created to manage dialogue were later taken forward for use in negotiating pastoral routes in regular BRACED programming.

- **NEF's** proposal included a clear recovery element, to rebuild flood protection infrastructure that had been damaged in the flood events. The Assessment Panel rejected this component of the intervention. Its justification was that, 'though definitely useful the "digues" are not addressing needs caused by a sudden, current crisis but mitigating shocks in the future. This is a stretch from the original objective.' While the protective infrastructure was indeed intended to mitigate shocks in the future, NEF staff perceived the need as new because the existing infrastructure had been destroyed. Without digues and canals, beneficiaries were far more vulnerable to regular flooding events than they had been before.

Smoothing transitions out of crises is vital to the success of BRACED projects affected by shocks and stresses. However, recovery-oriented activities do not necessarily need to be funded by a crisis modifier, if project budgets are flexible enough to be reallocated to tackle recovery needs (see Section 10 for more on adaptive programming). In the case of NEF in Mali, decentralised climate finance grants had already been allocated; there was no room in the remaining budget to fund the rejected component of the PHASE concept note. With beneficiaries more vulnerable to flooding than before, incomplete recovery will threaten BRACED resilience gains in Mali in the long term.

#### **4. Adhere to humanitarian norms when targeting**

Humanitarian aid is governed by four core principles – humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. Impartiality mandates that 'Humanitarian aid must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress' (OCHA, 2012). Although crisis modifiers address humanitarian needs too, these funds are not subject to the humanitarian imperative of impartiality. For some consortium staff, this introduced ethical questions around who should receive support from a crisis modifier. Were only project beneficiaries allowed to benefit from PHASE funding, or should funding go to those who were worst affected by the shock or stress?

The guidelines for PHASE funding do not explicitly specify who should receive support, stating that the funds must respond to a new crisis and should protect the success of BRACED activities. In the end, PHASE interventions relied on in-house humanitarian teams, local government technical services and community groups set up through BRACED to help select who needed support. This ensured perceptions of fairness were met (as in RECOPA Ouest's intervention, when some highly vulnerable BRACED families were included in aid distributions alongside refugee households) and helped the interventions meet highest needs.

Generally, good practice was to respond to crises that had occurred within the geographic scope of the project and to support those who had been worst affected, whether they were direct BRACED beneficiaries or not. Even if these people were not direct recipients of a BRACED intervention (such as in NEF's intervention, when residents of Kontza were affected by flash flooding), they were within the project's catchment area and were governed by the same

sub-national government entities as direct beneficiaries. Intervening improved the quality of relationships with local government officials, and it helped the consortium to be seen to be responding to people's immediate needs.

## 5. Start responding to the right signals

Although this report includes only one slow-onset crisis as a case study, PHASE interventions for such shocks were responding to distress coping strategies, such as migration (CARE, CRS, Christian Aid) or distress sales of livestock (Christian Aid). Applications relied on data from the Cadre Harmonisé, a tool to analyse food and nutrition insecurity in the Sahel and West Africa, to show people had already been officially classified as in a food security 'crisis' stage.

Making judgements about what the right signals are raises the question: Does the manifestation of negative coping strategies constitute early warning? The ambition of a crisis modifier is to prevent asset loss and damage to livelihoods. The issue of a response being left until negative strategies emerge may be a result partially of a lack of contingency planning. Paying attention to market signals, using livelihood assessment tools and tracking early warning data with specific triggers for action are a few methods of supporting anticipation of a crisis in development programmes.

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constitute early warning?

Enabling partners to take early action would require forging a culture of trust and transparency between donors, local organisations and consortia. Interventions that intend to protect development gains may resemble 'development' activities rather than emergency response. If the Assessment Panel questions why BRACED funding does not cover these early action interventions, it may be inadvertently encouraging consortia to wait until crises have already manifested before acting. Furthermore, early action has been called a 'no regrets' approach. Even if early warnings are wrong, as long as actions are supporting productive activities, public goods or service delivery, they can still improve people's wellbeing and contribute to building their resilience.

## 6. Harness existing social infrastructure and recognise intangible benefits

Evidence shows that crisis modifier funding furthered BRACED consortia's relationships and social standing with communities and government officials, which helped further collaborations that were important for BRACED interventions. In turn, BRACED partnerships helped deliver the crisis modifier interventions more effectively.

Responding to people's immediate needs built greater trust between communities and the consortia, particularly local organisations. It was also instrumental in getting buy-in for the BRACED project from government officials who were grateful for additional support. One clear example was RECOPA Ouest, which had not managed to progress in securing pastoral corridors in Nounbiel region prior to the refugee crisis. This was a new project area for the small NGO, and the land tenure system in the region made it possible for any one individual to block RECOPA Ouest's efforts. After the refugee crisis, RECOPA Ouest had better relationships with government officials and the local community, which helped the team successfully negotiate 30 km of pastoral routes.

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#### **Box 4: Institutionalising contingency planning at the project level**

All aid project operating in contexts where shocks and stresses occur should design contingency plans as part of their design/inception phase. We recognise this describes the majority of contexts in which development, climate and humanitarian aid is delivered. The level of time, capacity and resource investment in those plans will be determined by operational, donor and contextual specificities, and should reflect the likelihood of certain risks occurring in the lifetime of the project. For example, for projects of three years or more, in locations with a history of shocks and stresses or with projected impacts from climate change, contingency planning should be compulsory to quite some level of detail for the top three to five risks. These should be updated on an annual basis, as a minimum. Donors should articulate the budget ceiling for delivering against those plans – though a crisis modifier – and hold an open discussion on the impacts on project delivery and alternative options for scaling-up should the shock/stress require responses that exceed that budget ceiling.

In project design guidance, and in budget approvals, donors should make compulsory funds for project staff time to design contingency plans and review them annually, and for a crisis modifier mechanism (options for funding are in Figure 7, Section 10). A clear process should be articulated for revisiting the original project ambitions in the event of a shock/stress, using principles of adaptive programming to adjust logframes and assumptions on which interventions are based.

Contingency plans should be designed through a collaborative process involving agencies responsible for delivering the original project and agencies identified in plans as partners in delivering early action (these will likely differ depending on the range of shocks/stresses expected to occur). Existing humanitarian tools, approaches and experience in designing and implementing contingency planning and early action should be drawn upon.

Community experiences and preferences should form the basis of interventions described in contingency plans. The projected affected communities should be involved in plan design, where viable and appropriate. Agencies should actively ask communities how they would like to be supported, and seek to strengthen local early warning and intervene only when local coping mechanisms are overwhelmed. Relatedly, agencies should invest in understanding the history of community experiences in and out of crisis, to learn from past experiences, and ways to link to national and sub-national early response mechanisms, where these exist.

Given the nascent evidence base on the benefits and limits of crisis modifiers, and lack of robust evidence on how best to operationalise crisis modifiers through project design, investment in accompanying processes of monitoring and/or action research could accompany delivery. Specific attention should be paid to transitions in (lessons for early action) and out (lessons for recovery) of crises. We recommend using evaluative learning methodologies to learn about different experiences across contexts.

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## Potential of crisis modifiers

Although using crisis modifiers effectively will require a major mind-set shift on the part of donors and development actors, they offer the potential to change the aid system and make it more viable to reduce the existence and escalation of crises. Crisis modifiers can foster strategic coherence between development and humanitarian organisations and lessen pressure on the humanitarian system. To be effective, crisis modifiers should be deployed alongside adaptive programming approaches, to ensure there is sufficient flexibility to deal with transitions into recovery and back to 'normal' development programming. Crisis modifiers are one instrument in the landscape of different risk financing approaches, including adaptive social protection, forecast-based financing, insurance and humanitarian contingency funding, and are well suited for use in development programmes operating in fragile and environmentally vulnerable contexts.

By design, the humanitarian–development aid architecture is strictly segregated, divided by mandates and rules that were originally designed to meet different kinds of needs. Today, however, the same rigidity is hampering the aid system's ability to better manage risks and respond to crises. We acknowledge that we are working within the confines of the existing binary system, but both systems would benefit from a stronger emphasis on the experience of people in crises. The priority should be to meet needs as they arise – whether through early action to mitigate a shock or stress, in full crisis-response mode or by supporting recovery as people transition back to normality.

We believe rigid systems foster rigid mind-sets. As Albert Einstein is credited with saying, 'The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking.' Quibbling over modalities is not the intention of this report; even incrementalist efforts to change the aid system must entail a commitment to thinking and acting differently, for all actors working in crisis-prone contexts. Alongside shifts in mind-sets, a constellation of different approaches and risk financing options is needed. Crisis modifiers are one piece of this puzzle.

Even incrementalist efforts to change the aid system must entail a commitment to thinking and acting differently, for all actors working in crisis-prone contexts.



# 10. AN ANTIDOTE TO THE BURDEN ON THE HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM?

Image: EC/ECHO

## 10.1 Crisis modifiers: A new way of managing risk

Using crisis modifiers in projects explicitly designed to proactively manage risk (be this climate, hazard or conflict related) could fundamentally change the way development actors have been operating to date. As it stands, flexible finance to deal with extensive risk is largely absent from development or resilience programmes, as is pre-emptive planning to guide how to respond when risks evolve into crises. Using crisis modifiers has the potential to improve the design of resilience programmes, reduce pressure on the humanitarian system by preventing small-scale events from escalating and better support people experiencing shocks and stresses. Crisis modifiers are appropriate for development or resilience projects working in areas with a history of extensive, predictable risks – such as erratic rainfall, drought, small-scale conflict or flash flooding, as evidenced by the experiences of the BRACED programme.

Alongside crisis modifiers, development actors need to design projects that can respond flexibly to the situation at hand. There is a wealth of experience, tools and approaches that can help with implementing contingency plans and early action, although the process of designing and revisiting contingency plans is as important as the final plan. Bringing together different stakeholder groups to discuss response options in the event of a shock or stress could enable

greater inclusion of people's choices in future response, create more collective responsibility for plans and help advance understanding of what indicators signal that early action is warranted. In doing so, this could challenge the current trend of responding to the 'wrong signals' – that is, those that show negative coping mechanisms are already underway (see Section 9).

For donors, crisis modifiers should be accompanied by more flexible business processes that enable much shorter timeframes for decision-making and disbursement of funding. To facilitate more rapid processes, donors must carry out due diligence and must pre-vet organisations that deliver crisis modifier interventions, as they did in the BRACED programme. But the slow-turnaround for PHASE shows that pre-vetting alone is not sufficient if it is not coupled with improved trust and a commitment to transparent and rapid action. Furthermore, the donor's disbursement of funding should not be slowed by central government stipulations about financial forecasting; by nature, contingency funding cannot be anticipated and forecasted accurately. This may require allocating crisis modifier funds to a separate organisation so the money is considered 'spent', as DFID does when it allocates resources to pooled humanitarian funds. Considering these operation details is essential to ensure early action moves from rhetoric to early response.

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#### **Box 5: 'Workarounds' – options for design**

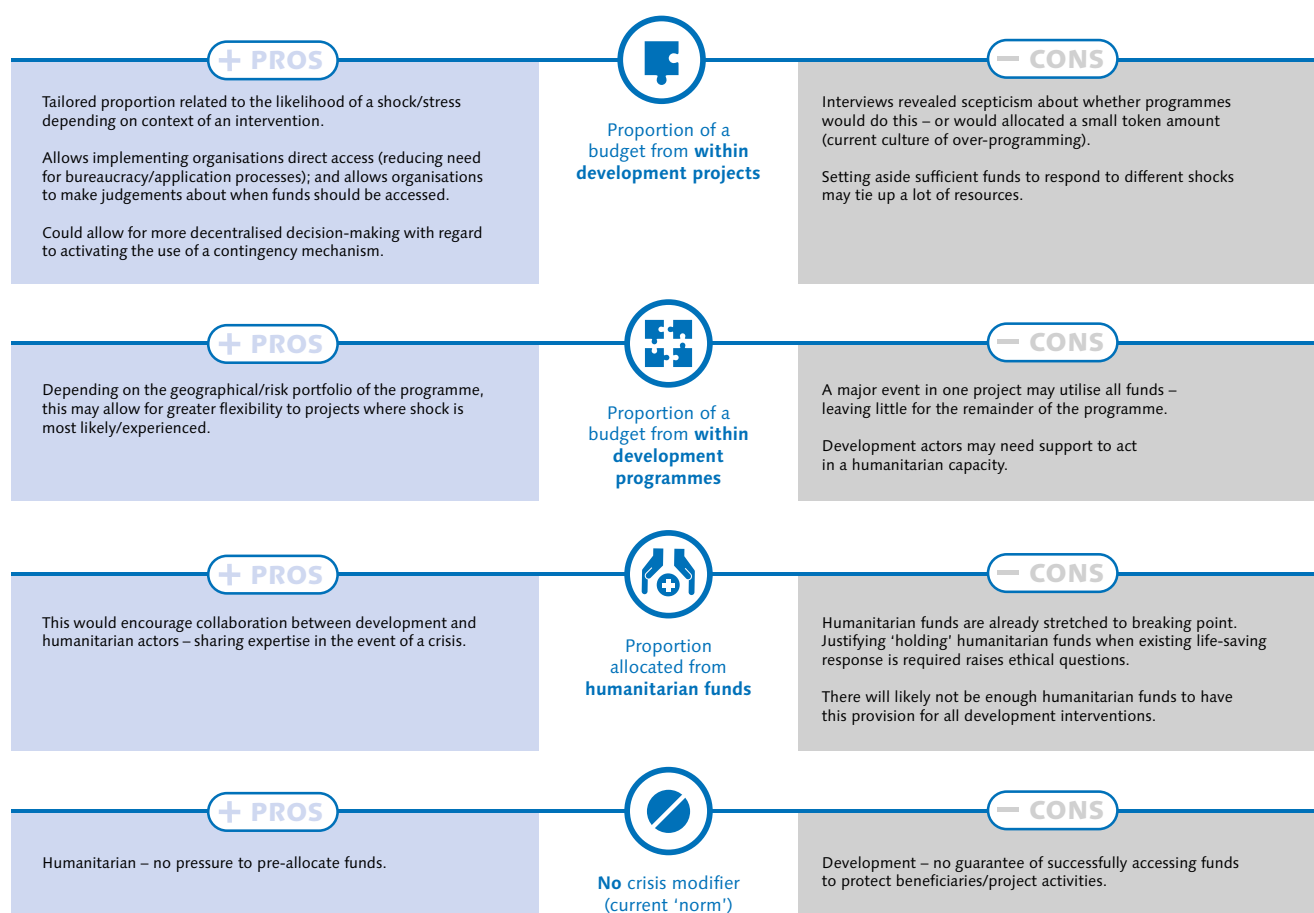
For some donors, crisis modifiers will fit well with their legal, financial and programmatic ways of working. For others, different combinations of innovative risk financing options (see Box 6) may be more suitable. Choosing between the various options will depend on the annual budgeting process, legal frameworks and political appetite for managing risk within the existing humanitarian (and development) remit (Scott, 2015).

The calls for multi-year humanitarian financing have uncovered many of the challenges relevant to establishing more innovative financing mechanisms, for example donor legislative frameworks that can prevent funding beyond 12 months (OECD, 2017). In response, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has articulated a set of 'workarounds', which include thinking more creatively about where funding from crisis modifiers originates. For example, 'another workaround is to increase the flexibility given to development co-operation funds, notably in crisis contexts, to cover long-term humanitarian action. For instance, the European Development Fund has an inbuilt emergency reserve that can be mobilised in case of a sudden emergency in an ACP (Africa, Caribbean, Pacific) country affected by a crisis (Cotonou Agreement, 2010)' (ibid.: 5).

In the context of a bifurcated aid system, a number of options exist for how to design crisis modifiers (see Figure 7). This takes an incremental approach to adjusting the current financing architecture; for some, this is a radical transformation to the way donors currently understand and act on risk.

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Figure 7: Mechanisms for funding crisis modifiers



## 10.2 Fostering strategic coherence with humanitarians

High-level efforts to rethink the humanitarian–development nexus have so far lacked practical application for operational agencies. Crisis modifiers offer a means for development and humanitarian actors (where desirable and appropriate) to work coherently together to address disaster risks in specific locations. Doing so could help advance the 'nexus' agenda under the UN Secretary-General's prevention agenda, support the Grand Bargain and contribute to a new way of working as we strive to reach the goals of Agenda 2030. In places of chronic and extensive risk, the separation of humanitarian and development responsibilities can be counterproductive. Humanitarian agencies have been mainstreaming contingency planning into operations for over a decade now, and development actors using crisis modifiers should not 'go at it alone' but draw on their valuable experience (Choularton, 2007). Advice and support from humanitarian actors should be embedded into any response, particularly during the contingency planning phase, when humanitarian actors can help with preparing contracts, tenders and options for humanitarian action in different scenarios. Seeking the support of experienced emergency teams can avoid slowing responses as development organisations grapple with new timeframes and ways of working.

Humanitarian agencies have been mainstreaming contingency planning into operations for over a decade now, and development actors using crisis modifiers should not 'go at it alone' but draw on their valuable experience.

Lastly, when development actors cooperate with humanitarians working in the same geographies, there is an opportunity for greater cohesion in addressing both the symptoms of vulnerability through humanitarian aid and the root causes through development programming. 'In protracted contexts or complex emergencies both humanitarian aid and development cooperation can be mobilised. In such contexts, donors should ensure that humanitarian aid programming is aligned with development co-operation interventions to achieve a commonly defined objective' (OECD, 2017: 6). Working towards common goals requires each actor to play their part. Crisis modifiers are consistent with this approach, allowing development partners to add value to humanitarian response in places where they already have networks and working partnerships with local officials.

### 10.3 Linking crisis modifiers with adaptive programming

For development actors, crisis modifiers should go hand-in-hand with adaptive programming approaches. As a tool that allows projects to be responsive to changing environments, crisis modifiers are consistent with the ethos of adaptive programming. Both seek to put the 'end game' at the heart of programming decisions, with rhetoric of flexibility, adaptability, transitions and change. Importantly, deploying crisis modifiers effectively depends on the extent to which adaptive programming principles have been integrated into the programme. Features of adaptive programming, such as decentralised decision-making, collective responsibility for action and stripping back bureaucracy would have enabled much faster responses to the crises, on both the donor and the implementation side (Vowles, 2013).

Over the course of a programme, new needs may arise that do not need to be funded through a crisis modifier, if the programme is significantly flexible to address transitions in and out of crisis. But a crisis modifier has a distinct purpose even in a completely adaptive programme: they add significant resources to help address a new problem and ensure resources for contingency situations are not siphoned into normal development work. Crisis modifiers and adaptive programming are not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary ways of working more flexibility and responding to real-world circumstances.

After a shock occurs, adaptive programming is necessary to revise project approaches and objectives and possibly recalculate outputs and outcomes in light of a changing context. This requires supportive donor processes and incentives for implementing agencies, to articulate what has not worked and what could be done better next time. Moreover, supporting agencies to articulate any reversals in progress,

and adjusting expectations as a result, is an important step in this regard. Thus project end goals and ambitions should be revisited and revised (where necessary) following the experience of a crisis (see Section 8).

## 10.4 Broader landscape of managing risk

Crisis modifiers are not a singular solution to risk – be these climate-, hazard- or conflict-related – but feature in a broader landscape of different risk financing options. There are notable differences in the origin, scope, ambition, terminology and operationalisation of the various innovative risk financing options. Yet little is known about the breath of modalities available, their relative benefit or what combination of options is required to address the likely risks within a given context.

We highlight a range of risk financing options in Box 6, including adaptive social protection, traditional insurance, forecast-based financing, humanitarian contingency funds and adaptive programming. Each option involves different actors, from national governments to the private sector, and there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach. The common thread that binds them is that they all must be grounded in detailed risk and vulnerability assessments to ensure risks are adequately understood.

As different approaches are trialled, there is a need to interrogate those modalities. For example, there is a growing concern about positing insurance as the 'solution' to questions of risk in situations of chronic vulnerability. Because there are market limitations to what is considered an insurable hazard, insurance would not be the most appropriate choice for low-severity, high-frequency risks. Forecast-based finance could be an option to predetermine triggers for action and circumvent the politics and processes of decision-making, but it, too, has some technical limitations. Instruments that predict when to release financing are subject to a trade-off: longer forecast times mean more time for action but diminish the accuracy of forecasts and result in higher chances of 'acting in vain' (Hassan and Neussner, 2016). Social protection has much to offer in crisis response, but scaling up disbursements during a shock requires a functional, pre-existing social protection system that is capable of quickly determining who needs support. Not all developing countries have these sophisticated systems, and building them can take years.

In selecting risk financing options, development and humanitarian actors must consider the hallmarks of an effective system. For each donor, context and approach, there are various options available, but all must be grounded in a much stronger understanding of risk and a commitment to act differently. In the midst of the debate around roles, procedures and modalities in crisis response, the aid community cannot lose sight of the ultimate objective – providing help to ensure communities are thriving and resilient. For people living through crises, the quality and timing of support will always matter more than the modality.

**Table 4: Innovative risk financing options**

The suite of financing options for managing risk is expanding rapidly. Some, such as insurance, have been longstanding components of risk transfer for some sectors. Others, such as forecast-based finance, are novel, with their value yet to be truly realised or verified. There are notable differences in the origin, scope, ambition, terminology and operationalisation of the various innovative risk financing options. Yet little is known about the breath of options available, their relative benefit or what combinations of risk financing options are most suitable in a given context. Moreover, what's considered 'innovative' varies according to donor, context and maturity of financial approaches to risk. Outlined below are a few of the more commonly cited risk financing options being explored within the aid system. This is by no means exhaustive and the options below are not necessarily comparable.

FORECAST-BASED FINANCE	ADAPTIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION
<p>Forecast-based finance is an innovation that automatically releases finance for preventative actions based on forecasts. By utilising the time between forecasts and a (possible) extreme weather event, a 'window of opportunity' can be used to help reduce risk for those likely to be affected. The current aid system 'does not make sufficient use of this window of heightened risk' (Coughlan de Perez, 2014: 3195), but the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement (and other agencies) are currently trialling forecast based finance pilots around the world.</p> <p>Forecast based finance systems 'automatically trigger action based on climate forecasts or observations. The system matches threshold forecast probabilities with appropriate actions, disburses required funding when threshold forecasts are issued, and develops Standard Operating Procedures that contain the mandate to act when these threshold forecasts are issued' (Coughlan de Perez, 2014: 3194).</p>	<p>Social protection is a policy tool that can enable vulnerable communities to cope with social and lifecycle risks. This includes social assistance (cash, in-kind, food subsidies, pensions), social insurance (maternity benefits, weather-indexed crop insurance) and labour market interventions (skills transfer programmes, CFW) (Ulrichs, 2016: 2). Growing recognition of changing vulnerability and increased risks as a result of climate change has led to the development of 'adaptive social protection'.</p> <p>Adaptive social protection involves designing programmes that take into account climate risks, considering current and future vulnerability and supporting flexible, cross-sector responses to different types of risk. 'Social protection instruments can thus be vehicles for protecting those with low adaptive capacity from climate risks, preventing damaging coping strategies and promoting livelihood resilience by increasing people's ability to withstand shocks (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004)' (Ulrichs, 2016: 3).</p>
CONTINGENCY AND RAPID RESPONSE FUNDS	ADAPTIVE PROGRAMMING
<p>Contingency planning and contingency funds have been considered part and parcel of good humanitarian practice. More than a decade ago, humanitarian agencies were making 'significant progress in mainstreaming contingency planning into their management and operations ... At the same time, however, achieving and sustaining truly dynamic contingency planning processes remains a major challenge for humanitarians beset with competing demands, limited staff time and constrained resources' (Choularton, 2007).</p> <p>One example of these is the START Fund. The START Network is funded by DFID and Irish Aid, to a value of up to £30 million over three years. Parameters include direct funding to NGOs, disbursed within 72 hours and spent within 45 days. Others, such as RAPID, an NGO-led fund in Pakistan funded by USAID, take nine to ten days and disburse to local through to international NGOs. Other variations exist: 'Many government donors also have their own rapid response mechanisms. These include fast-tracking through pre-positioned funding with Red Cross and Red Crescent societies or NGOs, and pre-negotiated drawdown agreements with accredited partners that can be quickly activated. These were used in response to Typhoon Haiyan and included £5 million from DFID disbursed through pre-selected NGOs' (Global Humanitarian Assistance, 2015: 95).</p>	<p>Building on a growing interest in the concept and practice of 'learning' across development programmes, and Western donor interest in 'doing development differently', adaptive programming has emerged as a means to work in more flexible ways in response to changing operating environments (Valters et al., 2016).</p> <p>Adaptive programme describes a different way of working, which internalises 'that development actors may not be able to fully grasp the circumstances on the ground until engaged; that these circumstances often change in rapid, complex and unpredictable ways; and finally that the complexity of development processes means actors rarely know at the outset how to achieve a given development outcome – even if there is agreement on the outcome of interest' (Valters et al., 2016: 5).</p> <p>Adaptive programming is an approach rather than a financing modality, but does imply new ways of allocating and delivering finance, in ways that support greater flexibility to achieve an agreed set of results. The relationship and relative value of different (potentially innovative) financing modalities to adaptive programming remain an area for investigation.</p>

## 10.5 Time to take action: Recommendations for specific stakeholders

Crisis modifiers hold potential to mature the way the international community supports people at risk. As one of a suite of innovative financing mechanisms being trialled by humanitarian and development donors, if they can be implemented effectively the potential to save both lives and livelihoods is immense. What is more, delivered effectively, crisis modifiers may act as a 'security blanket' to investment portfolios, offering flex in a system that has for some decades called for greater adaptability to reflect the complexity of developing country contexts.

What is outlined below reflects a need to trial crisis modifiers and linked systematising of contingency planning, across development, climate and resilience programming. Given that this is a new mechanism, there is a need to build a body of evidence on what works and what doesn't, across different contexts. This evidence needs to be situated in a broader context. Little is known about what combination of risk financing mechanisms is best suited to protecting development gains and encouraging early action in order to reduce the humanitarian burden, across different risk profiles.

Crisis modifiers should therefore be situated in broader debates around innovative financing mechanisms for managing risk and should support local to national systems for managing risk. There is also potential to link crisis modifiers to achieving donor and agency commitments against global frameworks and the UN Secretary-General's new ways of working towards 'collective outcomes' across the humanitarian and development sphere. Harnessing the potential of crisis modifiers requires specific stakeholders – articulated below – to take heed of the lessons generated across Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.

The experiences of the BRACED programme are reflective of a fundamental gap in programme design and operations at large. Addressing this gap means changes to programme design, funding flexibility, decision-making and accountability. Importantly, it requires a mind-set shift by well-intentioned aid practices to trust in their local partners, act early and put aside self-constructed institutional barriers for the good of those at risk.

### Recommendations for DFID and BRACED:

#### *Harnessing experience and sharing lessons*

- Knowledge-sharing and exchange between the three case study organisations and the 120+ organisations involved in BRACED can help integrate lessons learnt into future applications to the fund. Sessions on this topic should be convened at the **2018 BRACED Annual Learning Event**.
- Experiences should be shared through presentation of the findings to **BRACED** IPs at annual consortium gatherings in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, to the DFID Sahel advisers and to humanitarian advisers of

key donors such as **USAID and ECHO** (the EU Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department) in the Sahel, drawing on the specific cases in the Sahel documented in this report.

- DFID should host an internal seminar to share the findings from BRACED and discuss implications for resilient programme design in future resilience programmes – specifically targeted at **senior responsible owners** and technical advisers.

#### *Maturing crisis modifiers within BRACED*

- DFID should continue trialling crisis modifiers in its **climate and disaster resilience programmes**, taking on board lessons from BRACED (Section 9). Funds need to be made available, with creative thinking about ways in which these are held; one option could be at the programme or portfolio level. Clear application and decision-making structures are required, with technical advisers forming a core part of the decision-making body for the release of funds.
- **Fund managers** (whether DFID or private) should be able to **flex programme funds** and adjust outputs in light of changing circumstances. A consultative light-touch review should be conducted when shocks and stresses occur, with project outputs adjusted accordingly.
- Building on the current experience, a crisis modifier fund could be built into the future programme design of **BRACED** (extensions and expansions of the programme), with accompanying **evaluative learning methodologies** to document its relative value and support real-time changes to programme delivery.
- **Monitoring systems** for project delivery and for crisis modifiers – when activated – should be linked, allowing for more robust understanding of people's changes in vulnerability in and out of crises.
- Trialling of a crisis modifier mechanism requires an accompanying process of data collection to enable a **value for money analysis**. A systematic monitoring of key indicators, qualitative and quantitative, can then be used to assess intervention outcomes. Such an analysis would support donor decision-makers to understanding the relative value of crisis modifiers in relation to other possible options.

## **Recommendations for the international community**

### *Trialling crisis modifiers and generating evidence*

- Signatories to the **Grand Bargain** should consider the potential value of crisis modifiers as a means through which to deliver against their commitments in supporting early action, decentralised decision-making and improved responses to extensive risks. **ECHO** is well placed to follow up, given its role in monitoring progress against the Grand Bargain and its own investments in the Sahel, alongside the **Good Humanitarian Donorship** initiative.

- Crisis modifiers should be considered one of a suite of innovative financing options available to be mobilised to manage risk, explored further through the **Centre for Global Disaster Protection**.
- Joining up donors efforts: A donor meeting should be convened to share examples and plan for future pilots. Specifically, this should involve **USAID, DFID** and agencies delivering using a crisis modifier mechanisms, drawing on the work of the **RISE** Knowledge Manager for the **SAREL** initiative. Linked to this, lessons from crisis modifiers and other innovative financing mechanisms should be a feature of the upcoming **OECD Resilience Group** annual meetings.
- The Humanitarian Financing Task Team of the IASC (Inter-Agency Standing Committee), specifically the Sub-Working Group on the **Humanitarian Development Nexus**, and the equivalent UN Development Group on humanitarian, peacebuilding and development nexus, should jointly commission a review of the upcoming innovative financing options for managing risk, with a view to supporting a guidance document for donors to help in the selection of approaches to managing risk across their portfolios, offering practical suggestions for bridging the conversations around options for risk financing to shocks and stresses. Other possible audiences for such a discussion include the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development, specifically the theme on international development cooperation, and the New Ways of Working.

*Establishing a community of practice*

- The **Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre** would be well placed to convene a community of practice on innovative financing mechanisms. This could take as its starting point the thematic sessions convened at the **Forecast-Based Finance Global Dialogue – USAID's Resilience Evidence Forum** on 'resilience, evidence and financial services' – and linking with the Climate Centre's own work on shock-responsive programming and adaptive social protection and adaptive programming by **ODI**, among others. Working together, the community of practice could design engaging sessions at upcoming international events to share lessons on trialling different approaches in practice; and develop an understanding of what combination of mechanisms could be appropriate for different contexts – setting out options for donors and governments.
- The community should reach out to like-minded initiatives, to mature the design of crisis modifiers in support of global commitments. For example, this could involve linking with the **START Network's** own early action/early response funds and the Framework for Localisation, which seeks to advance the quality as well as the quantity of funds channelled through local actors (James, 2017). Links could also be made with the government of Germany's **Federal Foreign Office** and the German Red Cross framework for humanitarian adaptation to climate change and funds for preparedness and early action.

*Outreach and amplification of lessons*

- Once a body of evidence has been generated, specific sessions on crisis modifiers should be convened, bringing together diverse experiences from across a range of donors and contexts, with a view to enhancing programme design and delivery. Sessions would be well placed at the international level, such as the **Financing for Development Forum**, as well as technical convening spaces such as the **ALNAP 32nd Annual Meeting**, which focuses on improving humanitarian action through evaluation and learning.
- Crisis modifiers should be considered one of a suite of innovative risk financing mechanisms available at the **World Humanitarian Summit** engagement and outreach events, and should feature in the **OCHA** convened annual report. A review of progress should be a part of the high-level stocktaking event to take place 2018–2020.
- Respected climate, development, resilience and humanitarian networks and resource sites should publish special features on crisis modifiers in practice, tailoring style and terminology to reflect the audience. This includes the **Humanitarian Practice Network** dedicating an issue of *Humanitarian Exchange* to the topic of risk financing in shocks and stresses, and **PreventionWeb** hosting a 'featured collection' on the theme of crisis modifiers.

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BRACED aims to build the resilience of up to 5 million vulnerable people against climate extremes and disasters. It does so through a three year, UK Government funded programme, which supports 108 organisations, working in 15 consortiums, across 13 countries in East Africa, the Sahel and Southeast Asia. Uniquely, BRACED also has a Knowledge Manager consortium.

The Knowledge Manager consortium is led by the Overseas Development Institute and includes the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, ENDA Energie, Itad and Thomson Reuters Foundation.

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The BRACED Knowledge Manager generates evidence and learning on resilience and adaptation in partnership with the BRACED projects and the wider resilience community. It gathers robust evidence of what works to strengthen resilience to climate extremes and disasters, and initiates and supports processes to ensure that evidence is put into use in policy and programmes. The Knowledge Manager also fosters partnerships to amplify the impact of new evidence and learning, in order to significantly improve levels of resilience in poor and vulnerable countries and communities around the world.

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