Oxfam Terms of Reference for Research Consultancy

Building gender aware approaches to food crisis and resilience in Sahel: lessons from the 2012 crisis in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger

[December 2012]

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1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

**Gender dimensions of the food crisis: terra incognita?**

The situation of recurrent food crises and chronic food scarcity in the Sahel belt imposes a number of interrogatives in order better address the needs of the affected populations and work at their resilience and long term livelihood and wellbeing. The hazards of climate in the area add to a series of changes, such as access to land and natural resources, types of agricultural productions and related practices, access to markets and commercialisation of agricultural and pastoral outputs, domination of markets by powerful merchants setting unfair prices, access and provision of essential services, as well as governance and citizens’ voice and rights. Whilst the impact of environmental factors and macro-economic and local, and regional market facts in the making, deepening of, or relieving from vulnerability have received attention and focus by researches in the Region, the social implications of such trends and in particular the different implication resulting for women and men of all age have been less studied and analysed. The relationships between gender roles structuring the social, cultural and economic context, and vulnerability to food scarcity and food crises, have not been very well described unfolded.

Concepts such as population, community or household, provide only a partial insight for an analysis of vulnerability, as they are not taking into account elements of intra population, community or house marginalisation due to gender norms and roles. Gender norms, ie the unwritten rules that say who does what, who owns what, who controls what, who decides what and can operate publically. This contributes to weaken particular subjects and groups, women and girls, but also child boys or young landless men, and create the condition for their chronic vulnerability: “The reduction in field size in the most densely populated areas is also resulting in people becoming landless through lack of inheritance. In particular this is affecting women and young men. In Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso where land allocation is dominated by customary systems, progressive erosion of women’s rights to land is being seen”.

With little access to resources, a deficit of rights, including right to education, health and welfare, with a family codes that establish male dominance within families and with social spaces that

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preclude access to decision making, or public leadership, women find themselves in a very precarious and difficult situation in general, not only during crises.

In the particular context of Sahel, where vulnerability and crises have a chronic pattern and tend to follow each, strategies to cope with stresses and crises tend to become permanent too. As a consequence women’s and men’s responsibilities in ensuring family livelihood and survival may change: women may find themselves at a head of the family, in charge of supplying food, shelter and care, while men are forced to move in search of a temporary work that can last from one (1) year up to becoming a permanent resettlement in some cases.

This occurs in a context where women’s and men’s roles and behaviour are regulated by norms that are hierarchical and establish a differential access to rights, resources and decision making and leadership positions. As a result, women and particularly poor women, as well as other groups (young men, ethnic minorities, pastoralists and castes) find themselves with few choices and options in facing scarcity and crises. This will then determine their increased vulnerability and their subsequent scarce capacity to express resilience.

This is particularly evident in the coping strategies adopted by the poorest families: when men migrate leaving women and children behind, wives and children may have to rely on precarious coping mechanisms such as selling assets, begging in towns or even engage in dangerous practices like sex work. In pastoral families also young girls start to migrate, and become very vulnerable to violence or to be seen as sex workers. Arranging marriages with underage girls, a tradition that can turn into a sort of trafficking, is a particularly destructive strategy. As a result, the legacy of poor health, destitution and marginalisation will affect the future generations and the effects of such coping strategies on resilience are widely negative.

Face to these differentials in exposure, and consequently resilience expressed by women and men during the crisis, the response strategies play an important role in addressing different needs, and can help identifying mechanisms that can reduce gender related vulnerability and contribute to addressing and redressing inequalities. While actors must intervene with sufficient speed, scale and resource, there must also be a strong focus on targeting the people who most need help, and in appropriate ways, including women, pastoral communities and those affected by conflict.

The 2012 response in Sahel: an opportunity to build a gender aware approach to vulnerability and resilience

Ever since the first warnings of drought and poor harvests in Africa’s Sahel region emerged in late 2011, vulnerable communities in many areas of the region are threatened by a looming food crisis: in May 2012, UN agencies estimate 18.4 million people in nine countries are vulnerable to its impact.

In order to break the hunger cycle in 2012, Oxfam and its West African partners identified five major challenges, built on a thorough analysis of the current situation in the Sahel and learning from the experience of previous crises in this region. Amongst them they argue that:

- all actors should ensure that humanitarian interventions reach the most vulnerable people with the right assistance, including by ensuring adequate targeting of women and pastoralists.
- all actors should invest in longer-term interventions that reduce the chronic vulnerability of people in the region to future crises, including ensuring a more equitable distribution of

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1 IRIN News Africa, 2009, NIGER: Early marriage – from rural custom to urban business
Women’s role in small-scale agriculture, particularly in the marginal and degraded agricultural land of some areas of Sahel, is recognised to be one of the key elements that if supported and strengthened could contribute to resilience and escape from the cycle of food crises and hunger. Nevertheless, so far, within the frame of the 2012 Sahel crisis and response, the gender component of vulnerability has not been given sufficient focus, nor have gender been analysed in relation to other crisis factors related to climate, scarcity, or economic and social structures that contribute to the crisis.

The response to the humanitarian crisis in the region is going to be the ground for piloting approaches turned toward resilience and will offer the opportunities to evaluate the impact of such practices and validate them. This research can contribute to the comprehension of the mechanisms that enhance, or impede, communities to be resilient to shocks and crises, and can suggest possible ways for supporting communities in their efforts to build capacities in this domain by entrenching gender justice into their initiatives and by enhancing women’s agency.

Very little work has been done in this domain in the Sahel, and this research can lead the move towards an understanding of vulnerability and resilience through a gender lens, to identify where women or other groups at the margins can play an important role whenever their lack of rights and their subsequent demands are understood and supported by sensitive decision makers.

2. AUDIENCE AND USE OF REPORT

- This research will constitute the standpoint for specific response practices that drawing on gender informed perspectives; will provide Oxfam Humanitarian and Programmes’ teams with elements for improving their short term intervention tools as well and long term responses approaches both for programming and lobby/advocacy. It will respond to the recommendations expressed by the Oxfam-GB Regional Centre and the Oxfam Programme Governance Group, that have underlined the necessity to engender humanitarian responses to crises in the region and link them to the development work in the frame of the ONE PROGRAMME approach.
- This research will contribute to the shaping of GROW and Rights In Crisis campaigns, by informing about the specific vulnerabilities and needs of rural women in Sahel crisis affected areas. These findings will provide guidance to the gender strategy of GROW West Africa especially in its second major objective (investing in sustainable, resilient and productive agriculture benefiting small-scale farmers, especially women producers)
- This research will stand as a reference for the regional activities of Oxfam in building resilience, preventing crises, promoting disaster risk reduction, and embed gender justice among programmes, campaigns and humanitarian activities as planned in the regional gender strategy. In particular it will inform the joint initiative Oxfam is initiating on resilience bringing together West African and Horn of Africa experiences

3. RESEARCH PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this research is to provide insight about the links between vulnerability to the food crisis and women and men differential access, control and ownership of resources, tangible (such as

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land, labour, capital) or intangible (decision making, leadership positions, time, social networks, status etc.), within households and communities & how programs are being formulated, needs being assessed and programs are being executed. It has been recognized that limited access to rights, power and decision making is at the origin of women’s marginalization, poverty and exclusion in rural patriarchal societies; but how such exclusion acts to create or worsen vulnerability? How this affects not only women but their children, their dependants, and other household members relying on their work and care? How gender based discrimination interacts with scarcity, or other forms of social and economic exclusion (ethnicity, caste) to determine vulnerability to the recent Sahel food crisis? And how the changes in the region, at the origin of the food crisis, such as environmental degradation, resources’ concentration, socio-economic and policy related factors, contribute to women’s and general vulnerability? Based on such analyses, the research will identify, both short term and long term interventions which can contribute to women’s and men’s food security and resilience as well as lead to transformational changes in gender dynamics in the region. It will therefore look also at power relations within the family, the community and the humanitarian program delivery and see how this assists or not in getting women’s issues and rights on the table and foster female leadership to ensure this.

The specific objectives are:

- to record and analyse gender related patterns of vulnerability
- to gain understanding on how gender norms and roles interact with other factors in enhancing women’s and men’s of all age vulnerability
- to highlight interventions (both short term and long term) that could address gender based vulnerabilities and reinforce women’s and girls’ resilience through increased access to resources, decision making, leadership.

The research will first draw on general data and information from the humanitarian response activities in the crisis affected areas collected in a first phase of characterization of the gender dimensions of the Sahel 2012 food crisis as well as in additional documentation from a wide range of sources. The research will also look critically how gender sensitive the data as such are (quantitative and qualitative).

Then the research will focus on target areas selected in 3 countries (Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger) for specific case studies that are going to provide the qualitative data for analyzing gender as a contributing factor in vulnerability to the crisis. The case studies will also stand as ground for the analysis of humanitarian response practices that have positively influenced gender related vulnerability and positive example of gender justice as resilience building factor. Based on this recommendations will be drafted to inform future gender aware programmes and campaigns in the region.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research will entail primary data collection in specific selected fields, such as small agricultural producers, agro-pastoral producers or pastoral producers, in 3 target areas selected by the research team in collaboration with Oxfam humanitarian response teams. The focus of the qualitative analysis will be on gender as a variable that interacts with other factors to determine women’s, men’s of different age, and communities’ vulnerability and capacities. The research will rely on qualitative methodologies adapted to investigate gender power relations, as well as on quantitative data whenever available. The research will provide answers to the following questions:
**Vulnerability:**
- How gender norms, stereotypes, access to rights, resources and decision making and leadership positions, contribute with other factors (scarcity, poverty, lack of entitlement) to women’s and men’s of all ages and groups diverse vulnerability to the crisis?
- What are the consequences of these vulnerability patterns for women and men, of different age, caste, class, ethnicity, and their dependants as well as their communities while, coping with the crisis?

**Capacity, positive responses and resilience:**
- How women and men react to decrease their vulnerability to food security during the crisis, how do they employ their capacities, and how this increased their resilience and agency (access, control of resources, leadership, decision making power, participation in economic, social and governance, voice etc)
- How the humanitarian response practices support women’s and men’s capacities as well as establish specific mechanisms to respond to gender specific needs, have impacted positively on gender discrimination and how this has contributed to enhance women’s and men’s agency and resilience?
- What are the key recommendations for improved humanitarian/development practices (short, medium, long term interventions) that incorporate gender among the vulnerability factors and move toward gender aware resilience building? Also include attention to methodologies and approaches in order to later recommend on gender sensitive needs assessments, program formulation and implementation to respond both to women’s condition and position.

**5. RESEARCH PLAN AND SUGGESTED METHODS**

The research will include the following phases:

**A INCEPTION:** Based on literature review, preparatory meetings, discussion with stakeholders etc., the research team will prepare the a methodological proposal inclusive of:

1. Introduction
   - Research background
   - Brief literature review
   - Conceptual frame work of gender in relation with vulnerability to food crises
   - Research themes and questions
2. Research design and methodology
   - Selection of target areas for case studies in the 3 countries
   - Qualitative approaches and methods
   - Questions for focus groups or informants
   - Informant selection
   - Quantitative data collection and methods
   - Questionnaires & guidelines
3. Data gathering processing and analysis
4. Risks and limitations, ethical approach and informed consent
5. Detailed work plan and Research Team composition and responsibilities

This phase will be completed by the approval of the inception report by the Research Committee (see RESEARCH MANAGEMENT)
B FIELDWORK: will be carried out in the different areas selected by the research team in collaboration with the research management and humanitarian response managers at Oxfam. Oxfam’s country teams in Burkina, Mali and Niger will provide logistic support whenever possible to help the team arrange meetings with target actors, partner organisations, gender experts, stakeholders or other informants. The research team will elaborate a Country Synthesis Note to communicate preliminary results to Oxfam teams in the countries and with the research management.

C REPORT DRAFTING: The report should follow recommendation detailed in the ToR and a first draft should be sent for peer review to the Research Management as per the timing breakdown approved. The final report based on the recommendations and inputs will be sent for final review and approval before the final document is produced. A comprehensive 2-page summary of key-findings will be then produced.

Suggested methodologies:

- Desk review, literature analysis, secondary data collection
- Primary data collection based on quantitative and qualitative research methodologies adapted to gender and women’s studies (group discussions, life stories, testimonies,) in selected target areas, with an intersectional focus on ethnicity, class, cultural factors or other factors relevant for the analysis; data should include as much as possible direct testimonies and stories collection as well as other participative research methodologies.
- Analysis of positive coping experiences and good practices enacted during the 2012 Sahel crisis, and experiences gathered from emergency response actors, including testimonies and stories collection involving beneficiaries, humanitarian staff or other actors and stakeholders.
- Ensure to include both agro and pastoral communities.

6. ETHICS AND RISKS

Conflict of interest should be disclosed.
Interviews should be conducted with respect to cultural sensitivity of the interviewees and based on a clear consent.
Interviewees should be informed about the nature of the research, who is conducting it and for whom.

7. KEY SOURCES AND PEOPLE TO BE CONSULTED

- Key sources will include International Agencies, NGOs, UN Organisations, Governmental agencies, Decentralised administrative structures, Women’s Organisations and Women’s groups, CBOs, etc.
- People who to be consulted will include people knowledgeable on gender and social and agricultural context in the targeted countries (Mali, Niger, Chad, Mauritania, Burkina Faso and Senegal/Gambia) in West Africa context or at African and Global level.
- A complete and detailed list of contacts in the Sahel region will be provided to the research team selected for this assignment.
8. DELIVERABLES / FINAL REPORT

The overall objective of the research team will be to deliver a high quality and publishable report, but this project includes various deliverables:

a) The definitive Research Report should not exceed 50 pages; appendices can be added in annex. The report should include an executive summary which length should not exceed 3 to 5 pages.

b) After fieldwork in each of the 3 selected countries (Burkina, Mali, Niger), the research team will produce a Country Synthesis Note of the main findings and present them at the local level to discuss them with national stakeholders – No more than 10-15 pages each,

c) The research team will elaborate a clear and attractive Power Point Presentation (PPT) to present the main findings, conclusions and recommendations of the research report that can be used in different public arenas

d) The main researcher (project lead) will be asked to make a comprehensive Public Presentation of the final report based on the PPT presentation to development and humanitarian stakeholders. Oxfam will be responsible to organise this event.

Style and content of the report

Indicatively the report should include an introduction, a review of the available literature, a description of the research purpose, objectives and questions, the methodology applied including the research matrix, guiding questions and questionnaire (in annex), limitations of the study and research team profile. The research findings should be presented and analysed according to the research plan, using an accessible and plain language. Conclusions should highlighting and correlate results with the research hypotheses and validate or reject them. The report should include clear and workable recommendations for gender inclusive practices in dealing with crises such as the 2012 in the Sahel, based on gender induced vulnerabilities and approaches to break and by-pass it in the building of resilience.

9. PROPOSED TIMETABLE

Starting from the selection of the tenders, the suggested timeframe breakdown includes:

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<tr>
<th>First Quarter of 2013 – dates to be fixed with selected research lead</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation of the inception report</td>
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<tr>
<td>Field work</td>
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<tr>
<td>First draft</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final report</td>
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<td><strong>Total days of consultancy</strong></td>
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- Review and discuss the inception report with the research team and approve it
- Facilitate the research process and liaise among research team and Oxfam country teams in the target areas
- Review the first report draft and provide comments and inputs
- Approve the final version of the report
- Participate and/or support the research findings communication activities
- Monitor the overall quality for the process

The research team could be asked to interact with this Research committee or with some of its members for the sake of the research process

11. RESEARCH TEAM QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED
The research institution will have a demonstrated experience in gender and social sciences research, in relation with food security context and changes, better if in West Africa context. The research team should include a lead, and the team group should be of at least 2 members (French speaking).

Required research team lead qualifications:
- Proven experiences in designing and leading participatory researches focused on gender in rural socio-economic context and relevant publications in this specific field of research
- Proven experience in designing and leading researches on gender related to development interventions and gender-specific interventions, and relevant publications in this field.
- Proven experience as a research team leader, strong team leadership skills and the ability to work as part of a team with other experts; strong mentoring capacity in methodologies for gender research
- Extensive knowledge of gender issues at work in rural context, gender based division of work, access control and ownership of resources, hierarchies and decision making power relations, intra household power relations etc.
- A good knowledge of gender related socio-economic factors in the Sahel, including specific conditions affecting women and men, boys and girls and intersection with ethnic, caste, class or age factors, within the context of food scarcity and crises.
- Demonstrated ability to lead and endure field research activities in remote areas and poor living conditions of Sahelian contexts
- Ability to produce well-written reports, in a plain and approachable text, demonstrating excellent analytical and communication skills.
- Ability to coordinate the research team and to establish constructive relations with the organizational structures that will support the research (Management committee, regional and country staff)
- Ability to deliver a high quality product in a timely manner
- Excellent command of French / Good professional knowledge of English (written/spoken)

The Research Lead will be responsible for coordinating the research as a whole, will be in charge of communication with the Management Committee and will be responsible for the deliverables agreed upon.

Required team member/s qualifications:
- Bachelor’s degree, master degree, with at least 3-5 years of experience in gender research, or relevant and proven experience in gender research
- Very good knowledge of methodologies for qualitative and quantitative research employed in gender researches in a rural context
- Good knowledge of gender issues, sexual division of work, gender norms and stereotypes affecting access control and ownership of resources, women’s and men’s status, and good understanding of diversity and intersections related categories
- Experience in facilitating groups’ discussion in rural communities
- A good knowledge of the Sahel context as well as the specific conditions affecting women and men, boys and girls
- Endurance face to field work in remote area and poor living conditions
- Ability to work constructively as part of a team
- Excellent level of spoken and written French / Good knowledge of English (reading)

Please note this is a regional work and preference will be given to qualified researchers based in West Africa.

12. RESEARCH BUDGET

The total budget for the research project should not exceed 25 000 GBP / 20 000 000 FCFA

Disbursement will be delivered according to a timeframe that will be agreed with the research commissioning manager.

13. SUBMISSION OF TECHNICAL PROPOSALS

Submission of tenders should be made by email to the address indicated below, by specifying on the Cover page the research title Building Gender Aware Approaches to Food Crisis and Resilience in Sahel. The tender proposals should include at least the following:

   A. Preliminary research framework based on the ToR, inclusive of:
      1. A theoretical framework suggesting hypotheses for gender and gender related discrimination as co-factors at work in creating vulnerability to crises as well as opportunities for resilience.
      2. Suggested criteria and relevant questions for testing the research hypotheses
      3. A logframe or matrix that operationalize these questions
      4. Information on the collection methodology

   B) A timeframe for the research with clear details concerning the work to be executed, and specifying interim deliverables

   C) A detailed budget

   D) Research team description: composition, leadership and curriculum of all members

   E) An example of research report produced by the research team or research lead (or valid hyper links to online published papers, reports)

Place and deadline for submission of tenders:

Tenders should be submitted in French or English by email to igerard@oxfam.org.uk

The deadline for submission of tenders is 19 January 2013.

Research team should be able to engage in the work no later than 28th of January 2013.