



USAID | WEST AFRICA AND THE SAHEL

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REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION STRATEGY

USAID/West Africa and USAID/Senegal/Sahel Regional Office

December 16, 2020 - December 15, 2025

ACRONYMS

ACLED	Armed Conflict Local Event Data
ADS	Automated Directives System
AfD	Agence Française de Développement
AfWA	African Water Association
AfDB	African Development Bank
AFR	USAID Africa Bureau
AFRICOM	The United States Africa Command
ARV	Antiretroviral
BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
BMGF	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
CCRT	Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CEFM	Child, Early, and Forced Marriage
CH	Cadre Harmonisé
CILSS	Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel
CPS	Conflict Prevention and Stabilization
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DFC	[United States] Development Finance Corporation
DoD	Department of Defense
DRG	Democracy, Human Rights and Governance
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FFP	Food for Peace
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation
FIES	Food Insecurity Experience Scale
FMO	Financial Management Office
FP	Family Planning
FP/RH	Family Planning and Reproductive Health
FSN	Foreign Service National
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
FY	Fiscal Year
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFA	Global Fragility Act
GFSS	Global Food Security Strategy
GHSA	Global Health Security Agenda
GIS	Geographic Information System
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
HA	Humanitarian Assistance
HIP	High Impact Practices
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT	Information and communications technology
IDA	World Bank Group
ILO	International Labor Organization

ACRONYMS

ILOSTAT	International Labour Statistics
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IR	Intermediate Result
J2SR	Journey to Self-Reliance
JRS	Joint Regional Strategy for Africa
LER	Learning, Evaluation and Research
LPC	Limited Presence Country
ME/CLA	Monitoring and Evaluation and Collaborating, Learning and Adapting
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MEL	Monitoring Evaluation and Learning
MELT	Monitoring Evaluation and Learning team
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRCS	Monitoring, Reporting and Capacity Strengthening
NPC	Non-Presence Country
NPI	New Partnerships Initiative
NSS	National Security Strategy
NUP	New and Underutilized Partners
OAA	Office of Acquisition and Assistance
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OFDA	Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives
O2P	Optimizing Operational Platforms
OU	Operating Unit
P/CVE	Preventing and Countering of Violent Extremism
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PMP	Performance Management Plan
PPT	Powerpoint
PSC	Personal Service Contractor
PSU	Peace and Security Unit
PYD	Positive Youth Development
RDCS	Regional Development Cooperation Strategy
RDO	Regional Development Objective
REC	Regional Economic Communities
REGO	Regional Economic Growth Office
RF	Results Framework
RH	Regional Health
RHO	Regional Health Office
RISE	Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced
ROP	Regional Operational Plan
SBC	Social and Behavior Change
SBU	Sensitive But Unclassified
SCC	Sahel Collaboration and Communication
SDP	Sahel Development Partnership for Burkina Faso and Niger
SL	Sustainable Landscapes
SRO	USAID/Senegal/Sahel Regional Office

ACRONYMS

SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
STIP	Science, Technology, Innovation and Partnerships
SW	South West
TCN	Third Country National
TDY	Temporary Duty Assignment
TIP	Trafficking in Persons
TLD	Tenofovir, Lamivudine, and Dolutegravir
TSCTP	Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership
UEMOA	West African Economic and Monetary Union
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population Activities
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDH	U.S. Direct Hire
USG	United States Government
USTDA	U.S. Trade and Development Agency
VE	Violent Extremism
VEO	Violent Extremist Organization
WA	West Africa
WAEP	West Africa Energy Program
WAHO	West African Health Organization
WALK	West Africa Learning and Knowledge
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WB	World Bank
WEEE	Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment
W-GDP	Women's Global Development and Prosperity
WHO	World Health Organization
WPS	Women in Peace and Security
WTO	World Trade Organization
YALI	Young African Leaders Initiative

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FOREWORD

December 16, 2020

The USAID West Africa Regional Mission and USAID/Senegal and its Sahel Regional Office are pleased to share our joint Regional Development Cooperation Strategy (RDCS) for fiscal years 2020 through 2025. The RDCS complements bilateral USAID Country Development Cooperation Strategies and U.S. Embassy Integrated Country Strategies for the 21-country sub-region. As USAID regional platforms, we play a critical role in supporting USAID bilateral operating units and U.S. Embassies by providing programmatic and support services as part of the collective U.S. government (USG) effort to advance self-reliance in the sub-region.

Our approach to programmatic services considers that West Africa's diverse nations are connected by shared development opportunities and challenges, many of which are transboundary in nature or best approached collectively. For example, violent extremist groups operate across borders, and limiting their reach and influence requires a regional approach. Ecologically significant areas are often shared, and climate change affects the entire region. Increasing intra-regional trade and improving food security are, by their very nature, regional challenges. Improving access to quality health services and better controlling epidemics is more effective with regional cooperation and information sharing. Cooperation on such shared issues is seen vital to self-reliance by West African nations, who believe that they are stronger together. West Africa's empowered and active regional institutions provide logical partners to advance collective action on such shared issues. As we deliver our programmatic services at the local, national and regional levels, we will engage with these institutions to leverage the benefits of that collective action to complement the much larger USG bilateral programming in West Africa.

The second, equally important component of our Platforms' mandate is to deliver support services and oversight to USAID programming in 16 countries where there is no full-service USAID mission. Here, we share responsibility for providing procurement, financial, administrative management, and legal services, while overseeing bilateral programs in countries with limited or no USAID presence. Our Platforms also serve as USAID training centers and convene several communities of practice around development issues.

Our joint RDCS seeks to meet the 21st century challenges that West Africa faces by delivering programmatic and support services across the sub-region to our bilateral USAID and USG clients. It is our goal that through strong collaboration with these clients, and in working by, with, and through our regional, national and local West African partners, that we increase inclusive social and economic development in a more resilient, democratic, integrated West Africa.

We look forward to collaborating with you.



Daniel Moore
USAID/West Africa Mission Director



Peter Trenchard
USAID/Senegal Mission Director

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

West Africa's vast human and natural resources, and its trade and investment opportunities, hold the potential to yield inclusive economic growth for its nations and people. USAID's West Africa allied Regional Platforms' (USAID/West Africa [WA] and USAID/Senegal and its Sahel Regional Office [SRO]) goal for this joint 2020-2025 Regional Development Cooperation Strategy (RDSCS) is: ***Inclusive social and economic development increased in a more resilient, democratic, integrated West Africa***. The development hypothesis posits that if the four regional development objectives (RDOs) are achieved, then achievement of the goal will be advanced within the context of the assumptions and risks inherent in the social, political, economic, and physical environment of the region and its countries.

The programmatic choices for the two Regional Platforms under the RDSCS are framed by the fundamental principles that: (1) transboundary and multi-country engagements offer greater programmatic effectiveness and operational efficiencies in addressing some development challenges; (2) a targeted youth approach and a focus on gender equality through regional commitment, capacity, and policy harmonization provide strategic levers to advance a country's development objectives; and (3) the strong consensus for economic and political integration among West African nations offers strategic entry points to leverage and amplify U.S. government (USG) bilateral investments. When working in concert with USAID bilateral Operating Units (OUs) and other USG agencies, smart investments by regional platforms can play a catalytic role in accelerating countries' individual and collective journeys toward self-reliance.

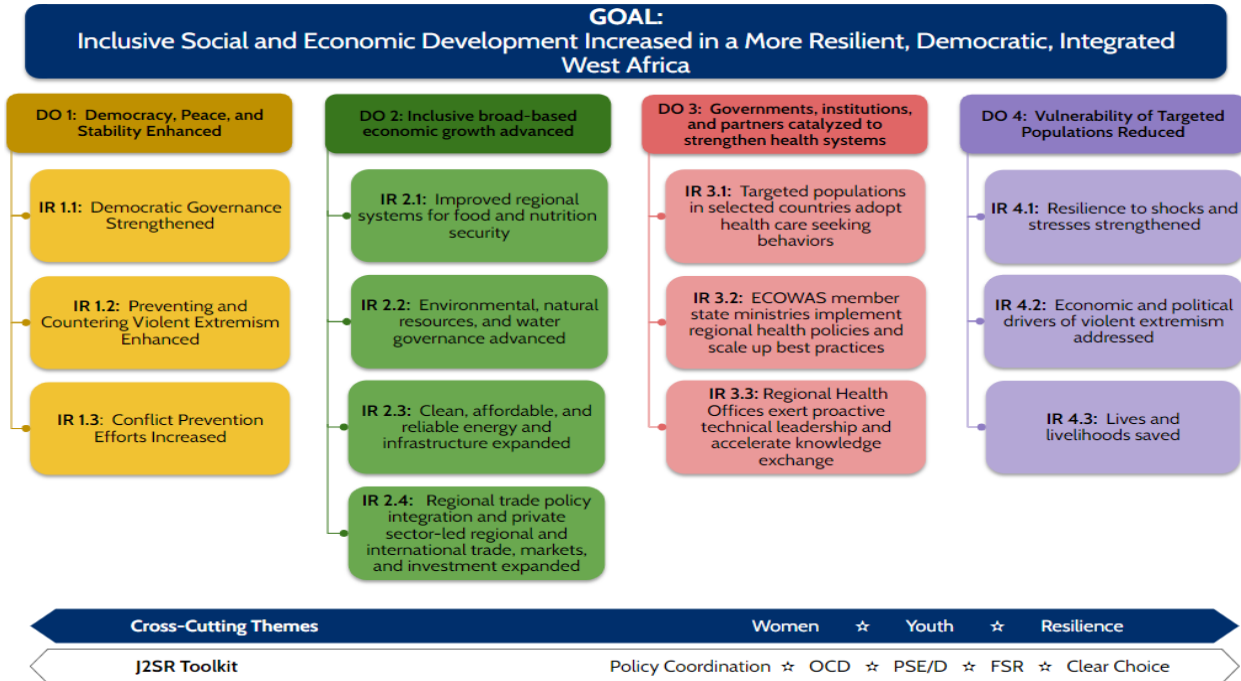
Regional Development Objective 1 (RDO 1): Democracy, Peace, and Stability Enhanced will support and strengthen regional and national capacity and commitment to open, accountable, inclusive, and democratic governance through strengthening participatory, representative, and inclusive political processes and government institutions; promote greater accountability of institutional leaders to citizens and to the law; and support partner countries' pathways toward stability and peace. RDO 1 will also address the risks of instability from violent conflict, and prioritize targeted conflict and violence prevention, peacebuilding, and preventing and countering of violent extremism (P/CVE) interventions across the sub-region. At the bilateral level, priority programs will be implemented with governments that demonstrate commitment to power sharing and resource redistribution, both of which are crucial for reducing exclusion, violence, and conflict.

RDO 2: Inclusive Broad-based Economic Growth Advanced: West African countries cannot advance development in a vacuum. RDO 2 focuses on achieving inclusive development results by establishing and enacting regional and transboundary policies and best practices at the multilateral level. RDO 2 aims to help partner countries by working with regional economic and development institutions such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), African Water Association, the G5 Sahel, and other transnational organizations in order to deepen regional integration. Building the necessary capacity and commitment will help increase trade, diversify production, and achieve sustainable resource management, increased access to water supply and sanitation services, electricity, resilience, and food security.

RDO 3: Governments, Institutions and Partners Catalyzed to Strengthen Health Systems: This objective emphasizes the catalytic approach of the Regional Platforms, given their limited resources, towards strengthening health systems in the sub-region. It aligns with the orientation of the RDSCS toward local and sub-regional institutions on the path to development, recognizing the importance of collaborating with client OUs, national government institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs), women and youth networks, regional bodies, the private sector, and other donor partners. Strengthening national health systems with relatively small, catalytic investments in USAID Limited and Non-Presence Countries (L/NPCs), and, at the regional level, working with the ECOWAS West African Health Organization (WAHO), the platforms will contribute to countries' paths towards self-reliance by mobilizing commitment, enhancing accountability, supporting capacity building, and accelerating actions by local leaders, healthcare providers, consumers (particularly women and youth), and donor partners.

RDO 4: Vulnerability of Targeted Populations Reduced: RDO 4 focuses on the most vulnerable population largely composed of poor rural households in an expansive geographic area covering Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad and The Gambia, where approximately 49 percent of the population are female and 69 percent are under the age of 25. This targeted population is especially vulnerable to environmental, social, political, and security stresses and risks due to extreme and dynamic contexts and its underlying lack of economic opportunities, chronic poverty, poor health and educational systems, long-running ethnic and political tensions, endemic corruption, and poor governance. These vulnerabilities often lead to humanitarian crises, economic disruption, susceptibility of youth recruitment to violent extremist organizations, and worsening gender inequities.

RESULTS FRAMEWORK



REGIONAL CONTEXT

The RDCS was developed jointly by the allied Regional Platforms (USAID/WA and USAID/Senegal/SRO). Both platforms deliver programs and support services in the West Africa sub-region and coordinate with each other and with bilateral actors in advancing the RDCS goal and advancing regional and country self-reliance. In implementing the RDCS, the two platforms will deliver transboundary and multi-country programs in: health; democracy and governance; economic growth and trade; agriculture; humanitarian assistance; and environment, while integrating gender equality, youth and resilience as cross-cutting themes.

Together the two platforms deliver services to 21 client countries in the West Africa sub-region that includes seven bilateral USAID missions, five LPCs and nine NPCs. USAID/WA focuses its results achievement on RDOs 1, 2, and 3 across the entire sub-region, while USAID/Senegal/SRO focuses on RDO 4 in the Sahel.

The ability of the two Regional Platforms to work regionally to achieve RDCS results, while supporting multiple country-specific priorities, is key to successful programming. The focused regional lens of the two platforms supports a cohesive approach to countries that are contiguous and share economic, cultural, and social dynamics and risks resulting from elections-based violence, herder-pastoralist conflicts, gender inequality, climate and pandemic shocks, youth discontent, violent insurgencies, and many other factors.

Social and Economic Overview

The 21 countries in West Africa are diverse in terms of resource endowments, income level, state of social and economic development, fragility and conflict. Five¹ of the eight oil exporting countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) are in the sub-region. Seven countries belong to the “other resource-intensive”² category, and the remaining nine are “non-resource intensive.”

In terms of income level,³ 11 countries are considered low-income, eight are lower-middle income, and two are upper-middle income. Ten countries are considered fragile.⁴ Based on the FY 2021 Country Roadmap⁵ dataset, just five of the 21 countries scored at or slightly above the median in the overall commitment dimension of self-reliance. However, in terms of overall capacity performance, the countries are more dispersed, with Gabon, Ghana, and Senegal as leading candidates to join the high-commitment, high-capacity group of countries.

Over the past decade (2009-2018), the average per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of 1.4 percent for the 21 economies outpaced the SSA average of 0.9 percent. However, the growth was significantly lower than the 2.4-2.5 percent of the previous decade (1999-2008). In contrast, as a sub-group, the ECOWAS⁶ member states registered a sustained increase in per capita growth trajectory from 1.5 to 2.0 percent over the past two decades,⁷ climbing to 2.3 percent in 2019, in comparison to a sub-region average of 1.5 percent. However, due in large part to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the outlook for 2020-21 is not encouraging. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) projects growth to contract by 3.0 percent for SSA⁸ and the outlook for recovery in 2021 is subject to great uncertainty.

The sub-region exhibits a significant youth bulge. For example, Niger has the world’s youngest population (and the highest birth rate) with a median age of 15.2, and Mali and Chad have median ages of 16.3 and 16.6, respectively. High rates of youth unemployment characterize both the formal and informal sectors. Youth face significant entry barriers to the job market resulting in marginalization, underemployment, and discontent. The right policies can shift the youth bulge to a demographic dividend.⁹

In West Africa, gaps in gender equality between women and men persist. Across nearly all indicators, including education, income, and health, outcomes for women are less positive than those for men. Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C), intimate partner violence, and child marriage continued to be prevalent in the region.¹⁰ West Africa is also the global epicenter for child marriage. For example, 76 percent of girls in Niger, 67 percent in Chad, and 52 percent in Mali are married before the girls’ 18th birthday, diminishing their educational, economic, and civic potential. Women and youth are facing increased vulnerability to trafficking given the fragile security and increasing migration trends in the Sahel and West Africa. Young women are migrating internally to capitalize on cross-border trade and boys are

¹ Oil exporting countries are economies where net oil exports make up 30% or more of its total exports. The five countries are Cameroon, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and Nigeria. Source: IMF SSA Regional Economic Outlook, Oct. 2019. Senegal is reportedly launching petroleum production and exports during the RDCS period.

² Other resource intensive countries pertain to those economies where non-renewable natural resources represent 25% or more of total exports. Source: *ibid*.

³ Low-income countries are economies with per capita Gross National Income (GNI) in 2016-18 of less than \$1,025 (Atlas Method). These include Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone, and Togo. Middle income countries are those with per capita GNI between \$1,025 and \$12,475. The two upper-middle income countries are Equatorial Guinea and Gabon.

⁴ Countries in fragile situations are economies which had WB’s average country policy and institutional assessment (CPIA) scores of 3.2 or less in 2016-18 and/or had peacekeeping/peace-building missions active within the last three years. Source: IMF SSA Regional Economic Outlook, Oct. 2019.

⁵ The FY2021 J2SR Roadmap was released in Oct. 2020. Detailed discussions of relevant J2SR sub-dimensions can be found in the Annex: West Africa’s J2SR Roadmap and COVID-19 Pandemic Shock Analysis.

⁶ ECOWAS member countries include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d’Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

⁷ USAID/West Africa, March 2020: Regional Economic Review

⁸ IMF Regional Economic Outlook, October 2020.

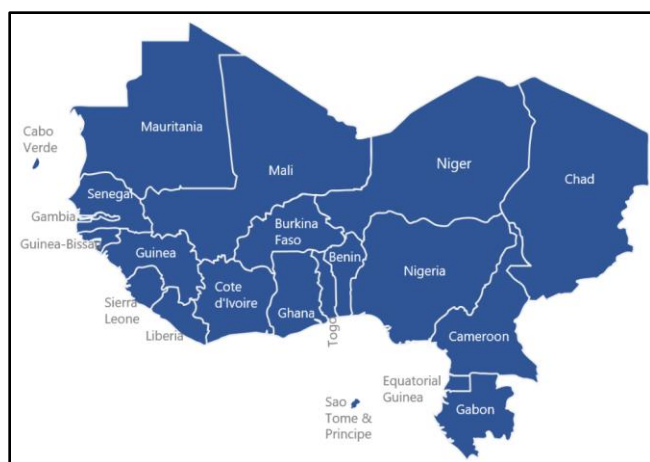
⁹ Lin, Justin Yifu. 2012. “Youth Bulge: A Demographic Dividend or a Demographic Bomb in Developing Countries?” <https://blogs.worldbank.org/developmenttalk/youth-bulge-a-demographic-dividend-or-a-demographic-bomb-in-developing-countries>

¹⁰ USAID/West Africa, 2020: USAID West Africa Gender Analysis: Final Report,

vulnerable to child labor. All 21 countries in the sub-region fall into Tier 2 of the Trafficking in Persons report, with half on the Tier 2 Watch List.

Across the sub-region, men own and control more land than women, and men on average make twice the income of women. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) index indicates that the region has a high level of gender discrimination, with an average score of 44.7 percent.¹¹ West African states' score on gender discrimination range between a low score of 32.4 percent for Burkina Faso to a high score of 56.7 percent for Guinea. A deeper analysis of the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) scores for West African countries¹² indicates that progress towards parity in educational attainment and in health and survival during the period of 2006-2018, mask the lower average scores in economic opportunity and political empowerment.

A 2020 USAID-supported gender assessment of the Trade Facilitation West Africa (TFWA) Program found that women along West Africa's trading corridors suffer more than men from lack of access to productive resources such as capital and land. Because of the small and often unregulated nature of the businesses conducted by women traders, they often do not benefit from changes in regulations or improvements in trade frameworks. Trade policies, ranging from those of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to the regional organizations and down to the national level, generally do not include gender considerations¹³ even though women are highly impacted as economic agents.



A review of USAID's Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced (RISE) initiative's gender achievements and challenges in Niger and Burkina Faso concluded that deep-rooted historical and perpetuating inequalities between men and women, due to institutional norms and structures, make it quite "impossible to build resilience in households and communities without also addressing systemic gender inequality." Burkina Faso and Niger are both characterized by deep-rooted gender inequalities and inequities in social, economic, political, and civic rights.¹⁴

Violent extremism and other forms of conflict¹⁵ remain persistent threats in the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin, and threaten to spread to the coastal states.¹⁶ Growing youth discontent and high levels of marginalization and unemployment increase youth susceptibility to violent extremism. Youth are often excluded from decision-making processes, both in informal and formal settings, resulting in frustration and disillusionment and contributing towards their participation in more illicit activities. Violent extremism and conflicts continue to destabilize countries, destroy communities, impede productivity growth, exacerbate the effects of weak governance, and increase the likelihood of humanitarian assistance needs.¹⁷ Ongoing vicious conflict cycles exacerbate

¹¹ The OECD Development Centre's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) is a cross-country measure of discrimination against women in social institutions (formal and informal laws, social norms, and practices). 0 = no discrimination and 100 equals very high discrimination. The WEF, Global Gender Gap Index measures the gap between men and women across four fundamental categories (sub-indexes). The index value ranges between 1 (parity) and 0 (imparity). OECD. 2019. [Social Institutions and Gender Gap Report](#).

¹² World Economic Forum, 2020. [Global Gender Gap Report 2020](#).

¹³ Trade Facilitation West Africa (TFWA). 2020 draft pending public release. [Regional Gender Assessment Report](#). World Bank and GIZ. 2020 (internal USAID use draft available). Assessment co-funded by USAID.

¹⁴ USAID/Senegal, 2018: RISE Gender Analysis, 2018.

¹⁵ Traditional conflicts include those between farmers and herders that are being exacerbated by increasing drought related to climate change.

¹⁶ USAID/West Africa Littoral States VE Risk Assessment.

¹⁷ Confrontations among groups arise, regardless of national borders, frequently in West Africa, and more severe, violent, and regional-scale episodes are on the rise. Fatalities generally overlap with the five conflict systems in West Africa that straddle national borders. These are: (1) Sahel-Sahara Conflict System (Mali, Niger, Mauritania, Algeria, and most recently spreading to Burkina Faso); (2) Lake Chad Basin/Boko Haram violent

poverty, drive large population segments into refugee status, destabilize weak institutions, and lead to violent relapse and increased fragility.

Table: Top Level Economic Data¹⁸

Measure	Poverty Headcount Ratio at \$1.90/day average (% of population, 2011 PPP)	Poverty Headcount Ratio at national poverty lines average (% of population)		Gini Index (measure of income inequality)	
	Country	2009-2018	1999-2008	2009-2018	1999-2008
Benin	51	35	37	39	46
Burkina Faso	50	51	43	43	38
Cabo Verde		52	35	50	
Cameroon	24	40	38	42	47
Chad	38	55	47	40	43
Côte d'Ivoire	28	44	46	42	42
Equatorial Guinea		77			
Gabon	3	33	33	42	38
Gambia, The	18		49	47	40
Ghana	13	32	24	43	43
Guinea	35	54	55	41	34
Guinea-Bissau	67	65	69	36	51
Liberia	40		53	37	34
Mali	50	46	41	39	33
Mauritania	6	47	31	38	33
Niger	47		47	41	33
Nigeria	54	48	46	40	43
São Tomé and	32	68	66	32	31
Senegal	38	52	47	40	40
Sierra Leone	52	66	53	40	34
Togo	52	62	57	42	45

Longstanding economic vulnerability to internal and external shocks suggests that West African economies suffer from inability to learn from their setbacks. The pace of economic structural transformation required to deliver increases in income growth and poverty reduction is overwhelmed by regional and country-level social, political, demographic, and environmental pressures. Reliance on primary commodities and similar goods production impedes economic diversification and weakens resilience to terms of trade shocks.¹⁹

Despite allowing free mobility across the region, West African countries conduct limited trade with one another beyond traditional agricultural products such as livestock, grains, shea butter, cotton, and fruits and vegetables, mainly because they produce similar primary commodities. Border closings driven by trade barriers, insecurity and disease factors have significantly threatened the income of economic

extremism (Nigeria, Chad, Northern Cameroon and Niger); (3) Gulf of Guinea Conflict System (Nigeria, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon); (4) Mano River Conflict System (Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia); and (5) Senegambia Conflict System (Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, and Guinea). The Lake Chad area (especially Northeastern Nigeria) is the source of the most violent episodes and humanitarian crises.

¹⁸ Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators.

¹⁹ Terms of trade shocks pertain to lower export prices relative to import prices which translate to lower export revenue and higher import bills, e.g., the 2015 collapse of global commodity prices negatively impacted African countries dependent on primary products for exports.

agents, including women,²⁰ who play a key role in cross-border trade. Only three of the 21 countries²¹ registered above the median score on *Trade Freedom* indicator. The full implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)²² as a platform for political willingness of member countries to open up their domestic markets will be put to test in translating political rhetoric to actions and commitment to deepen regional integration.

Analysis of the Fragile States Index²³ helps to better understand conflict drivers that can threaten sustained economic growth.²⁴ These data suggest that for the past decade (2009-2019), seven of the 21 West African countries registered worsening pressures related to state fragility. For example, security threats related to crime, terrorism, and coups were significantly high in Chad and Mali while threats due to fragmentation of state institutions along ethnic, racial or religious lines were high in Cameroon, Chad, and Guinea-Bissau. Economic inequality is extremely high in Guinea-Bissau and is present in most other countries. Politically related threats such as challenges to state legitimacy and deficient and unequal provision of public services were noted in Cameroon, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Côte d'Ivoire, and Togo. Demographic and environmental pressures were significantly elevated in Cameroon, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, and Mauritania. In the five-year period 2015-2019, Cameroon, Mali, and Togo exhibited persistence as fragile states while The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, and Senegal registered improvement. Chad exhibited heightened fragility in 2019, ranking seventh globally.²⁵ As the situation in Mali continues to deteriorate, fragility has increased in neighboring countries, particularly Burkina Faso.

Data from robust research indicate a positive relationship between economic growth and an improved business enabling environment, reinforcing the critical role for the private sector, working with the government, as economic agents to advance towards self-reliance. However, across the region, all 21 countries scored low to below the median for the self-reliance *Business and Investment Environment* indicator. This reflects West African economies' slow pace of structural transformation. West African economies must diversify their structure, since dependence on mostly capital-intensive, extractive (e.g., mining and energy), and other resource-intensive types of industrial growth provide limited scope for labor skills-learning and mobility. In contrast, growth in the manufacturing sub-sector holds a much greater potential for product diversification and technological innovation by enhancing labor skills, mobility, and employment. Similarly, a service sector that is dominated by transport, retail/wholesale trade, and government services may not be as responsive to skills-upgrading as in other higher-wage jobs in professional and financial services.

Securing sustainable sources of financing economic development is key to maintaining macroeconomic stability (i.e., sustained growth, low inflation). Official development assistance (ODA), consisting of predominantly grants and concessional loans, declined from its highest level of 6.5 percent of GDP in 1994 to just 3.0 percent in 2017. Given the shrinking ODA, combined with increasing exposure to non-concessional loans from China and other strategic competition, it is in the best interest of West African countries to exercise greater fiscal restraint and increase domestic revenue to create the fiscal space needed to finance their own development. According to the IMF's Debt Sustainability Analysis for low-income countries, eight West African countries are already in the *high debt* or *debt distress* categories, and sixteen²⁶ registered below the median score in the *Tax System Effectiveness* indicator.

²⁰ Women represent up to 70-80 percent of the total population of cross-border traders.

²¹ Only 12 out of 21 countries in WA have scores in FY 2021 *Export Sophistication* indicator.

²² AfCFTA entered into force on May 30, 2019 with the operational phase officially launched on July 7, 2019 as governed by 5 operational instruments (rules of origin, online negotiating forum, monitoring and elimination of non-trade barriers, digital payment system and the African Trade Observatory) as ratified by 30 member states and 54 of the 55 AU member countries as signatories. Full implementation of AfCFTA is planned to begin on January 1, 2021.

²³ The Fragile States Index (FSI) produced by The Fund for Peace (FFP), is a critical tool in highlighting not only the normal pressures that all states experience, but also in identifying when those pressures are outweighing a states' capacity to manage those pressures. The FSI is based on the FFP's Conflict Assessment System Tool (CAST).

²⁴ USAID/West Africa, March 2020: West Africa Regional Economic Review

²⁵ Chad registered a sharp increase in conflict and population displacement in the last couple of years; Fragile State Index 2020.

²⁶ Only 16 of the 21 WA countries have available data on the *Tax System Effectiveness* indicator.

Despite these headwinds, there may be a silver lining to West Africa's Country Roadmap indicators.²⁷ The demographic transition, as manifest in a declining dependency ratio in 18 countries, presents an opportunity to reap the demographic dividend or growth potential due to shifts in the population's age composition. Declining age dependency can be a boon to regional economic growth as fewer children and elderly relative to economically active adults can translate to productivity increases and less strain on fixed resources. However, reaping the benefits of the demographic dividend will require structural reforms that create conditions for job growth that absorb new labor market entrants and scale up human capital investments through job training and schooling. Increasing women and youth labor force participation rates can be the most effective way of maximizing human capital resources.

Additional Trends and Implications

A key finding of the Regional Landscape Analysis, based on an aggregation of the individual Country Roadmaps in the region, is that countries in West Africa scored low on *Open and Accountable Governance*, with only six of the 21 registering above the median on *Liberal Democracy Index* and all 21 falling below the median on the *Open Government* indicator. A commitment to open and accountable governance has the greatest potential to: build sustainable improvements in people's lives; drive higher levels of human capital accumulation and economic innovation; moderate social conflict and state-based violence; and advance sustainable regional and national economic growth.

A second key finding of the Landscape Analysis is that all countries in West Africa scored low on capacity indicators. This confirms the need to strengthen institutions and systems in addressing core development needs. With respect to commitment, most countries scored low on *Open and Accountable Governance*, but much higher on *Inclusive Development*. This presents an opportunity to incorporate an accountability-focused objective.

Finally, the Landscape Analysis identified significant populations in West Africa who are especially vulnerable to environmental, social, and political shocks due to extremely dynamic contexts, underlying lack of economic opportunities, poor health and educational systems, long-running ethnic and political tensions, endemic corruption, and poor governance. These vulnerabilities result in increasing chronic poverty and inequality; exacerbating gender-based violence, high rates of child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM); increasing the likelihood of humanitarian crises; and magnifying the susceptibility of youth to recruitment by violent extremist organizations (VEOs).

Alignment with Regional Partners

West Africa boasts a strong set of regional institutions empowered by their member states. These include ECOWAS, the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), and the G5 Sahel. The USAID regional platforms will collaborate with these regional partners, and others, to support efforts in building their commitment and capacity to advance implementation of aligned priorities. Modest but strategic investments in these institutions, in coordination with USAID bilateral programs, can pay dividends at national and local levels and increase return on USAID's large bilateral investments, across all sectors and initiatives in the sub-region. Relevant priorities by these key institutions follow, together with maps depicting the geographic mandate of each.

ECOWAS Priorities

- P/CVE/Conflict Prevention: Advance conflict prevention efforts and support member states with peaceful political transitions
- Agriculture: Scale new technologies and practices for food security and nutrition
- Trade: Implement harmonized trade regimes
- Energy: Support regional electricity markets and universal access

²⁷ USAID/West Africa, March 2020: Regional Economic Review and WA J2SR Landscape Analysis

- **Health:** Amplify evidence-based health practices; encourage adherence to international and regional health policies
- **Gender:** Support gender integration in formal and informal trade; implement 2019 Niamey Declaration of ECOWAS First Ladies to end child marriage and promote education and empowerment of girls

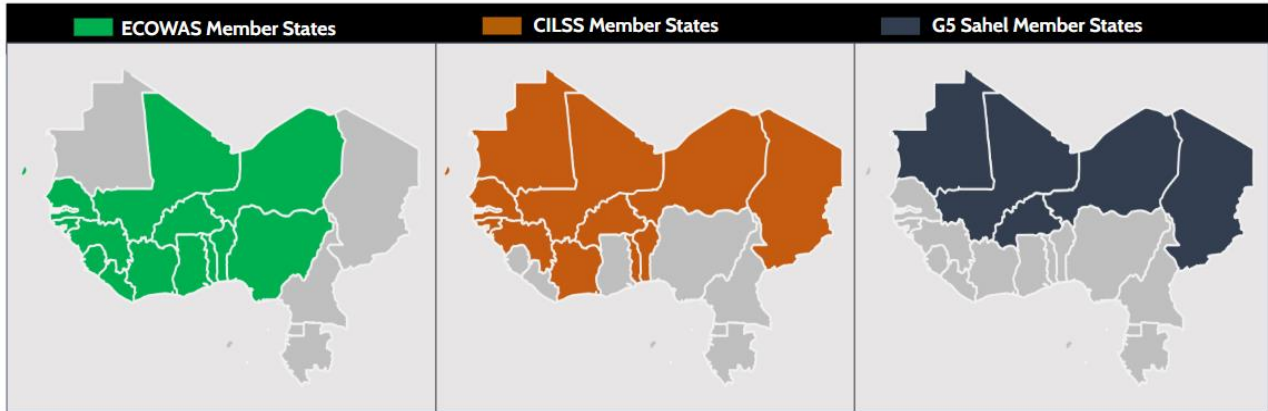
G5 Sahel Priorities

- **P/CVE:** Promote sustainable establishment of peace and security; expand development efforts to improve security, reduce conflict, and counter violent extremism
- **Democracy Rights and Governance (DRG):** Support communities and institutions to more effectively prevent conflict and strengthen social cohesion; support inclusive governance processes and the establishment of rule of law; empower young people in areas affected by conflicts and migration; and ensure effective gender equity and the socio-economic promotion of young people
- **Gender:** Address gender equality issues and support integration of gender approaches

Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) Priorities

- **Food Security and Resilience:** Promote data systems for evidence-based decision making to address gender equality, improve food security, resilience, sustainable land use, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Figure: Member States of Key Regional Organizations



STRATEGIC APPROACH

The RDCS is founded on a unified strategic vision with a specific focus on transnational, transboundary, and multi-country issues for the two Regional Platforms. Taken together, these efforts will support country level self-reliance by providing coordinated, demand-driven programs and services to 21 client bilateral USAID missions, country offices, and U.S. Embassies. A well-targeted regional program will reinforce and support USAID and USG bilateral investments, moving the region and its countries towards greater freedom, prosperity, health, resilience, and, ultimately, self-reliance.

The results framework consists of four RDOs to which both platforms contribute. RDO 4, however, largely represents the work of USAID/Senegal/SRO in the Sahel with a focus on Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and The Gambia. USAID/WA leads RDOs 1, 2 and 3, collaborating with SRO in RDO 4 on its work in countering violent extremism and promoting democracy, human rights, good governance, health, and food security.

A Regional Approach to Self-Reliance

West Africa's interconnected nations are stronger together; they understand that their journey to self-reliance will be best made in a collective, cooperative and coordinated fashion. How does the RDCS square the West African vision of *interconnectedness* with the Agency's bilaterally-oriented self-reliance framework? The USAID Policy Framework outlines the Agency's strategy on self-reliance as working to end our country partners' need for foreign assistance. While this long-term goal far exceeds the lifetime of the RDCS, USAID/WA and USAID/Senegal/SRO are laser-focused on addressing transboundary political, social, and economic issues that impede *multiple* countries' progress along their paths to self-reliance. Issues are addressed through two strategic axes:

- Regional integration through policy coordination and accountability
- Institutional capacity building

These two axes can be framed through the self-reliance foundations of commitment and capacity, i.e., (1) a commitment to effective, inclusive, and accountable solutions to sustainable economic growth, inclusive development, and democratic governance; and (2) building human and institutional capacity across economies, civil societies, governments, and populations.²⁸ Addressing regional issues within the self-reliance framework calls for regional approaches to commitment and capacity that can be conceptualized as a "regional journey to self-reliance," where regional commitment and capacity are advanced by building the commitment and capacities of regional organizations. These two axes are in turn reflections of the capacities and commitments of these organizations' member states - i.e., the countries themselves. Accordingly, USAID/WA and USAID/Senegal/SRO will work to enhance the commitment and capacity of these regional partners, together with that of national and sub-national partners, to harmonize policies and coordinate approaches to address the sub-region's many socio-economic development challenges.

As regional platforms, USAID/WA and USAID/Senegal/SRO can also support regional self-reliance by implementing regional programs through multi-country interventions or transboundary programs to address transboundary issues. USAID/WA and USAID/Senegal/SRO will use their convening power to work with regional partners and bilateral USAID OUs to support national journeys to self-reliance through regional development solutions. The mobility of people, livestock, pandemics, ideologies and conflict, goods, and technologies across national borders make individual country programming and actions more effective when supported by a regionally coordinated approach. Unique opportunities to advance self-reliance and build resilience through regional programs are harnessed by propelling sustainable economic growth and inclusive human development through private sector participation, trade liberalization, business enterprise development, access to finance, skills building, and strengthening democratic institutions and delivery of public services with accountability. Engaging youth and supporting

²⁸ USAID, April 2019: USAID Policy Framework.
https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/WEB_PF_Full_Report_FINAL_10Apr2019.pdf

women leaders also emerged as a cross-cutting approach that will support self-reliance objectives in the region.

U.S. Foreign Policy Alignment

The RDCS Results Framework (RF) aligns with the USAID and Department of State Joint Regional Strategy for Africa (JRS) as well as the National Security Strategy (NSS). The RF includes three cross-cutting themes: women, youth and resilience. Gender equality interventions are explicitly addressed throughout the RDCS, with a targeted focus on women commensurate with regional need, and USG initiatives that have a specific focus on women - including the Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act, the Women, Peace and Security Act, and the Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative (W-GDP). The RDCS cross-cutting theme of youth development links to both the JRS and NSS in addressing these foreign policy priorities. The RDCS integrates and supports a range of other USG Executive and Legislative mandates including but not limited to: Prosper Africa; Better Health for Development; Countering Violent Extremism; the Global Fragility Act (GFA); the Global Food Security Strategy, Combating Trafficking in Persons; and a focus on the Sahel.

Building Financial Self-Reliance

The regional context frames and constrains RDCS strategic choices through the following factors: weak resilience to increasing shocks and multiplying stressors, inadequate governance systems, expanding political conflict and violent extremism, a growing youth bulge and ongoing demographic transition, high rates of child marriage and harmful practices, increasingly vulnerable health and education systems, growing complex humanitarian emergencies related to internal displacement of people and migration, lack of diversity in economic production and trade, limited sources of investment finance, and a poor enabling environment for private sector engagement. Assets include empowered regional networks and institutions with a strong multilateral consensus and mandate for economic and political integration.

The COVID-19²⁹ pandemic poses additional significant shocks that threaten West Africa's fragile economic and social development due to: direct threats of the disease on health; disrupting education and other social sector institutions; pandemic-related economic downturns causing macroeconomic distress such as trade and investment slowdowns; increasing debt distress, job losses, and risks to income security of vulnerable workers, especially women and youth engaged in the informal sector; lack of adequate social protection programs; and increased Gender Based Violence (GBV) due to rising economic stress and lockdown restrictions. The pandemic also creates opportunities for authoritarian regimes to impose restrictions on freedom of assembly and speech, close political space; and for Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs) to gain followers and territory.

Engaging the Private Sector

Private sector engagement robustly fosters enterprise-driven development by promoting sustainable, market-based solutions to development challenges. RDCS implementation will strengthen the ability of credible private sector partners to implement sound economic governance in mobilizing public and private resources to finance regional development, while ensuring safeguards are in place for those resources to be spent in a transparent, accountable, and effective manner. The RDCS centers as well on accountability, transparency, and good governance by national governments, regional institutions, civil society, and the private sector.

New Directions

There are distinct pivots in the RDCS that build upon gains from the previous strategy. These include: (1) a stronger focus on gender equality and with a target on women, youth and other vulnerable populations,

²⁹ Refer to West Africa J2SR Roadmap Analysis Annex for more detailed COVID-J2SR related analysis.

and resilience building; (2) a more comprehensive and integrated approach to building resilience, deepening trade, addressing peace and governance challenges, conflict prevention, and countering violent extremism; and (3) redefining the relationship with regional organizations showing increasing commitment to inclusive growth and transparency that can leverage their mandate to advance self-reliance.

Strategic Donor Partners

The U.S. is the largest bilateral donor and second largest donor overall after the IDA (World Bank Group in the sub-region). France, United Kingdom (UK), and Germany are the other top bilateral donors. The largest multilateral donor is the IDA followed by the European Union (EU), the Global Fund, and regional development banks, including the African Development Bank (AfDB). The USG focuses on social and economic sectors, and peace and security with Nigeria, Ghana, and Senegal as the largest beneficiaries. There are several interagency collaboration opportunities that USAID/WA and SRO can seek to capitalize upon to inform the regional youth agenda. For example, the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) is considering different options to institutionalize youth issues into its strategic planning and engagements as part of promoting human security and to better understand the operational environment. AFRICOM's recently launched Youth Advisory Council is one avenue for strategic engagement. The AFRICOM Campaign Plan³⁰ is an important partnership element, especially for USAID/Senegal/SRO. The IDA and AfDB are largely invested in infrastructure. The EU focuses on the economy (job creation, trade) and social sectors (health, education) and peace and security in the Sahel.

Donor coordination takes place at both regional and bilateral levels with varying degrees of effectiveness. ECOWAS is responsible for overall donor coordination regionally, but the function is delegated to regional organizations for various sub-sectors. The G5 Sahel plays a donor coordination role in the Sahel. At the regional level, USAID plays a leading role in donor coordination in food security, energy and health, and a strong supporting role in peace and security. At the country level, USAID, EU, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and the World Bank (WB) are the main donor coordinators depending on sector and country.

Malign Actions and Global Power Competition

China has made \$28 billion in loans to West African governments since 2000, averaging over \$1.5 billion annually in new loans over the five-year period 2015-2020. Top recipient countries were Cameroon, Nigeria, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal. Chinese loans to West Africa fund infrastructure, mostly transportation (roads, railways, ports) and electric power projects. The IMF has warned about rising debt to China in countries that already have heavy debt loads including Cabo Verde, The Gambia, Ghana, Mauritania, and Togo. Chinese Foreign Direct Investment has averaged at or just below \$1 billion per year in West Africa since 2012.

A key challenge related to Chinese influence is that weak governance and corruption can put countries at risk of resource overexploitation or asymmetric arrangements that can jeopardize self-reliance. It is useful to note that China is less present in West Africa in comparison with the rest of the continent.³¹ China has been restructuring its interventions in a more conventional way around strategies/programs such as its "Belt and Road" Initiative, based on needs or plans of beneficiary countries, with some positive results.³² There may be an opportunity for donor coordination that includes China, although until a few years ago, China viewed itself as part of the developing world rather than a donor.³³ There is an opportunity to elevate USG-funded youth alumni networks (e.g., Young African Leaders Initiative [YALI]) while

³⁰ <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/639919/africom-campaign-plan-targets-terror-groups/>

³¹ Deloitte Africa, 2019: If you want to Prosper, Consider Building Roads - China's Role in African Infrastructure and Capital Projects. [online] <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/public-sector/china-investment-africa-infrastructure-development.html>.

³² Dreher, A., A. Fuchs, B. Parks and M. Tierney, 2017: Aid, China, and Growth: Evidence from a New Global Development Finance Dataset. [online] http://docs.aiddata.org/ad4/pdfs/WPS46_Aid_China_and_Growth.pdf Retrieved on 04/15/2020.

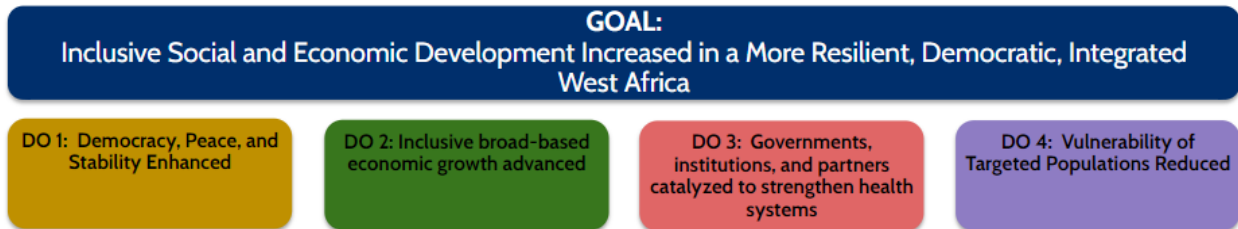
³³ Davis, S. and J. Woetzel, 2010: Making the Most of Chinese Aid to Africa. [online] <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-sector/our-insights/making-the-most-of-chinese-aid-to-africa#> Retrieved on 04/15/2018.

continuing to build relationships, especially with ECOWAS, and work to sensitize them on the risks of malign financial or economic arrangements for member states as China’s interventions grow.

New Partnerships Initiative (NPI)

The New Partnerships Initiative³⁴ is an agency wide approach to increase the impact of USAID investments by elevating local engagement, fostering creativity and innovation, and mobilizing untapped resources across Agency programs. The Regional Platforms will play a catalytic role in advancing country journeys toward self-reliance by working in partnership with regional and country actors to attain the aforementioned objectives. As the platforms work collaboratively with USAID bilateral OUs and other USG agencies, NPI will play an even greater role in the platforms’ strategic engagement at a national level and how those partnerships are leveraged alongside regional initiatives to catalyze national journeys to self-reliance. The Regional Platforms are uniquely positioned to take a different approach to “local” by (a) working with regional organizations and (b) working with multiple country governments to address transboundary political, social and economic issues; as well as to disseminate best practices and lessons learned across various national and community level interventions. The regional platforms’ approach to NPI must, therefore, consider both national and community partnerships as a function of the larger regional goal of a more integrated West Africa. This RDCS presents an opportunity to look at how future awards and even current activities may be aligned with bilateral OU objectives to amplify impact and scale best practices. Through NPI and locally-led development opportunities, the regional platforms intend to deepen impact by applying the new tools available, such as co-creation, to deepen its capacity building engagements and utilize its convening power to better engage New and Underutilized Partners (NUPs) identified through OUs in the region. The NPI also provides an opportunity to integrate gender equality principles and practices, including getting new and existing partners to engage more intentionally on gender equality issues. Furthermore, the strategic commitment to enterprise-driven development places priority on maximizing the platforms’ role as convener to engage private sector entities across the region, and the platform’s NPI strategy provides a pathway for elevating locally-led and locally-driven private sector partnerships.

RESULTS FRAMEWORK NARRATIVE



The allied West Africa Regional Platforms Goal for this joint RDCS is: **Inclusive social and economic development in a more resilient, democratic, integrated West Africa.** West Africa’s vast human and natural resources, and its trade and investment opportunities hold the potential to yield inclusive economic growth for its nations and people. The USAID/West Africa and USAID/Senegal/SRO 2020-2025 RDCS Development Hypothesis is that if the four Regional Development Objectives are achieved, then achievement of the Goal will be advanced within the context of the assumptions and risks inherent in the social, political, economic, and physical environment of the region and its countries. This context will be comprehensively monitored during RDCS implementation.

USAID’s strategic choices under the RDCS are framed by the fundamental principles that: transboundary and multi-country engagements can offer greater programmatic effectiveness and/or operational efficiencies in dealing with some development challenges; the consensus among West African nations for economic and political integration, supported by strong regional institutions (ECOWAS, G5 Sahel, and others) provide strategic entry points to link regional programs and policy institutions with USAID’s bilateral investments; and, working in concert with U S. Government bilateral OUs and other USG

³⁴ <https://www.usaid.gov/npi>

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agencies and other donor partners, regional programs can complement, leverage, and amplify USAID bilateral investments to accelerate countries' individual and collective journeys toward self-reliance.

USAID/WA, in concert with USAID/Senegal/SRO, will enhance the commitment and capacity of regional, national, and sub-national partners to harmonize policies and coordinate approaches for shared development challenges. Regional activities, when coordinated with USG bilateral OUs, add value to bilateral efforts to create partnerships, finance national development goals, and advance achievement of self-reliance objectives. USAID/WA and SRO have found that there are opportunities to advance self-reliance, related to financing self-reliance, Private Sector Engagement and Redefining the Relationship, by strengthening economic growth and human development through resilience building, private sector participation, trade liberalization, business enterprise development, access to finance including public sector reforms and private sector financial sector strengthening, skill building, and market systems development. Governance and security challenges, weak system and human resource capacities, and limits on women and youth participation must be addressed to build and sustain gains toward self-reliance. Other U.S. Government foreign policy considerations such as Prosper Africa, Better Health for Development, Countering Violent Extremism, and countering malign actions inform key elements of the RDCS Results Framework. Finally, the Regional Platforms will expand and improve their customer service and accountability to USAID bilateral missions and L/NPCs their programmatic investments.

Specific to the contributions of RDO 1, **Democracy, Peace, and Stability Enhanced**, to achievement of advancement of the RDCS Goal, each RDO element strengthens West Africa's progress in social and economic development by heightening resilience and democracy in the region. A commitment to democratic governance has the greatest potential to advance self-reliance and build sustainable improvements in people's lives, to drive higher levels of human capital accumulation and economic innovation, and to moderate social conflict and state-based violence. Recognizing that these are key drivers for transformative change, RDO 1 will support and strengthen regional and national actors' capacities and commitment to open, accountable, and democratic governance through: strengthening participatory, representative, and inclusive political processes and government institutions; promoting greater accountability of institutions and leaders to citizens and to the law; and building partner countries' pathways toward stability and peace. RDO 1 will also address the risks of instability from violent conflict, and prioritize targeted conflict and violence prevention and peacebuilding, and prevention and countering of violent extremism (P/CVE) interventions across the region. RDO 1 will support G5 Sahel, ECOWAS, and other regional partners to implement good governance and P/CVE interventions across select member states.

At the bilateral level, priority programs will be implemented with governments that demonstrate commitment to power sharing and resource redistribution, both of which are crucial for reducing exclusion and incentives for violence and conflict. RDO 1 will provide technical assistance to the G5 Sahel Women's Platform to build the capacity of the G5 Sahel National Women's Platform Coordination mechanisms in the G5 member countries.

RDO 2, **Inclusive Broad-based Economic Growth Advanced**, contributes to advancing RDCS Goal achievement through driving expanded, inclusive, and sustainable economic development. It will do so by building development capacity related to food and nutrition security; environmental and natural resources governance; water supply and sanitation services; clean, affordable, and reliable energy and infrastructure; and regional trade policy integration and private-sector led regional and international trade, markets, and investment expansion. RDO 2 focuses on establishing or enacting regional and transboundary policies and best practices by partner countries by achieving results at the multilateral level. This effort originates from regional organizations such as ECOWAS, CILSS, and the G5 Sahel and their subsidiary organizations, and transnational organizations that may be sub-sector specific. The RDCS aims to help the partner countries, as members of a regional economic community, to progress on a path of regional economic integration that will positively shape their capacity for sustainable and inclusive growth, resilience, and food security.

RDO 3, **Governments, Institutions, and Partners Catalyzed to Strengthen Health Systems**, advances RDCS Goal achievement as it links directly to social development, institutional strengthening, and increased resilience of West Africans. This objective emphasizes the catalytic approach of the

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Regional Platforms' Health Offices, given their limited resources, towards achieving strengthened health systems in the sub-region. It aligns with the orientation of the RDCS toward self-reliance progress focused on local and sub-regional institutions on the path to development, recognizing the importance of collaborating with client missions, host country government institutions, CSOs, women's and youth networks, regional bodies, the private sector, and other donors to reach the final RDCS goal.

RDO 4, **Vulnerability of Targeted Populations Reduced**, contributes to Goal advancement by building resilience to shocks and stresses, addressing economic and political drivers of violent extremism, and saving lives and livelihoods. RDO 4 is central to advancing results related to the RDCS goal because stability across the region is undermined when there are violent extremist organizations actively supported by local populations. Broad-based, inclusive economic growth cannot be achieved when significant populations are left behind or repeatedly beaten down by gender and age-related inequities, shocks and stresses, and violence resulting in a continued need for humanitarian assistance. USAID's coordinated "triple nexus" of interventions will address the complex intertwined problems in the region.

Regional Development Objective 1: Democracy, Peace and Stability Enhanced

RDO 1: Democracy, Peace, and Stability Enhanced

IR 1.1:
Democratic Governance
Strengthened

IR 1.2:
Preventing and Countering
Violent Extremism Efforts
Enhanced

IR 1.3:
Conflict Prevention Efforts
Increased

Development Hypothesis Statement: If the capacities of regional institutions and national actors to counteract the closing of political space, and commitment to democratic governance is strengthened, the ability of regional and national partners to counter violent extremism and prevent VEOs from spreading influence and presence is enhanced, and conflict drivers are peacefully addressed at the regional and national levels, then, with increased focus on gender equality, these efforts will together enhance democracy, peace, and stability in the region.

Development Hypothesis Narrative: Recognizing the key drivers for transformative change, **Regional Development Objective 1 (RDO 1): Democracy, Peace, and Stability Enhanced** will support and strengthen regional and national actors' capacities and commitment to open, accountable, and democratic governance through strengthening participatory, representative, and inclusive political processes and government institutions; promoting greater accountability of institutions and leaders to citizens and to the law; and support partner countries' pathways toward stability and peace. RDO 1 will also address the risks of instability from violent conflict, and prioritize targeted conflict and violence prevention and peacebuilding, as well as P/CVE interventions across the region. At the bilateral level, priority programs will be implemented with governments that demonstrate commitment to power sharing and resource redistribution, both of which are crucial for reducing exclusion and incentives for violence and conflict. At the regional level, RDO 1 will accelerate implementation of assistance, while addressing the needs expressed by the beneficiary countries and the regional institutions, working with two regional partners - ECOWAS and the G5 Sahel.

Declines in democratic governance and respect for human rights in West Africa accelerated in 2019.³⁵ Political processes across West African states have become increasingly restrictive, with opposition parties in many countries being excluded from political participation and governance. The space for independent civic and political activity has continued to shrink, as incumbent leaders worked to silence dissent. Elections are conducted with major procedural irregularities, power sharing is limited, political transitions are marred by a rise in violence and intimidation, and governments increasingly limit access to information. The manipulation of online content during the electoral period and the governments' increasing hostility toward the media threatens free expression and accountability in many countries in the region. Furthermore, violent extremism, as well as other forms of violence, remain a persistent threat that can destabilize countries and the West Africa sub-region, destroy families and communities, impede economic growth, redirect resources from productive use, and generate internal displacements that put pressure on the USG and regional and national partners' development efforts. Violent extremism is an increasingly serious threat to fragile Sahelian states that already face significant security and development challenges, and of particular concern to West African coastal states is the spillover of VEO influence and attacks from the Sahel.

Jihadist groups have proliferated in the central Sahel and reported violent attacks linked to militant Islamist groups in the Sahel have more than doubled on a yearly basis since 2017.³⁶ Although jihadist

³⁵ Freedom House, 2020: Freedom in the World 2020.

³⁶ Le Roux, 2019: The Complex and Growing Threat of Militant Islamist Groups in the Sahel, African Center for Strategic Studies.

groups are the main perpetrators of violence, community-based militias and government forces are also responsible for attacks on civilians and perpetrating human rights abuses against its populations.

Gender roles and norms have a significant impact on peace and governance. According to a regional gender analysis,³⁷ a gender-biased pattern is found in the peace and security sector where female community leaders skilled in peacebuilding are passed over for seats at conflict resolution dialogues and talks. Negative attitudes towards women, as political and community leaders, are associated with women's lower participation in politics. Furthermore, discriminatory practices or informal laws restrict women's access to public spaces in Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, The Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sierra Leone.

West African youth are particularly vulnerable to being victimized by violence due to being excluded from economic and political participation, limited access to education, marginalization, and targeted recruitment by violent extremist organizations. Youth are often excluded from decision-making processes, both in the informal and formal settings, resulting in frustration and disillusionment and potentially contributing towards their participation in illicit activities. Youth are also disproportionately perpetrators of violence as disillusioned youth, including young girls, become a recruitment base for violent groups. In order to promote a peacebuilding culture, raise awareness among youth in the prevention of VE techniques, and reduce vulnerability to radicalization and recruitment, USAID will support ongoing efforts to engage women and youth as positive actors for peace and tolerance in their communities and to promote them as leading agents of change in the proposed activities under RDO 1.

The proposed RDO 1 interventions are also informed by and directly respond to the priorities outlined in the new USAID Policy for CVE through Development Assistance, countering malign actions, and the strategic approach under the draft GFA Strategy, the State-USAID Joint Strategic Goal Framework, and the National Security Strategy. Interventions under RDO 1 will be closely coordinated with both USAID/Conflict Prevention and Stabilization (CPS)/OTI (Office of Transition Initiatives) crisis response activities and Department of Defense (DoD) AFRICOM efforts through USAID/WA's interagency Peace and Security Unit (PSU), which includes the Regional Peace and Governance Office (RPGO) staff, OTI Regional Advisor and DoD Liaison Officer. The PSU will allow for joint contextual tracking of dynamics, strategic analysis and coordinated responses across the region.

Under RDO 1, USAID will strengthen regional, national, and local institutions' and actors' abilities to promote peace and security, prevent violent extremism, address the causes and consequences of conflict, respond to drivers of conflict and fragility, and help transition nations from assistance recipients to enduring diplomatic, economic, and security partners. USAID will continue to prioritize learning, flexibility, and adaptability to meet new governance, as well as evolving conflict, social dynamics, and VE challenges. USAID will continue to work to empower women and youth to take a leading role in conflict prevention and peace building processes by promoting their roles as peacebuilders and champions of peace and active participants in the implementation of regional and national P/CVE strategies.

Self-Reliance: Key findings of the Landscape Analysis indicate that countries in West Africa have low government capacity and all 21 West African countries score below the median score on "*Open and Accountable Governance*." A commitment to democratic governance has the greatest potential to build sustainable improvements in people's lives, to drive higher levels of human capital accumulation and economic innovation, and to moderate social conflict and state-based violence.

- **Private Sector Engagement:** USAID will partner with regional, national, and CSOs, including the private sector, to strategically use their convening powers to ensure diverse constituencies are represented in shaping government policy. Further, USAID will build the capacities and commitment of key change agents in CSOs, youth and women networks, and the private sector to prevent and counter violent extremism risks they face.

³⁷ USAID/West Africa, 2020: USAID West Africa Gender Analysis: Final Report.

- **Financing Self-Reliance:** USAID will provide opportunities at the community level such as income-generating activities, especially for women and youth and other populations at-risk for VE recruitment.
- **Redefining the Relationship:** USAID assistance will strengthen partnerships, encourage dialogue, and provide opportunities for enhanced collaboration with key actors at the regional and national levels - particularly with ECOWAS, the G5 Sahel Executive Secretariat, the Lake Chad Basin Commission and African Union Commission, as well as like-minded donors such as the EU, Sahel Alliance,³⁸ and GIZ.
- **Countering Malign Actions:** USAID's foreign policy is based on sovereignty and independence, peaceful resolution of disputes, transparency, and adherence to open democracy. USAID aims to thwart Chinese and Russian malign influence by actively promoting the principles of good governance, openness, transparency, peaceful political participation, and democracy. With China and Russia's increasing investment in global state-run media, USAID will counter these malign actions through sustained information campaigns that elevate the superiority of liberal democracy and expose the false promises of authoritarian regimes.
- **New Partnerships Initiative:** The NPI presents an opportunity to engage new and innovative actors to promote peace and stability in the region through the application of participatory community-based projects. RDO 1 can pursue unique activities employing co-creation in NPCs where in-country engagement is limited and complex.

In achieving **Intermediate Result (IR) 1.1: Democratic Governance Strengthened**, USAID will strengthen the capacities of ECOWAS and the G5 Sahel Executive Secretariat to promote democratic governance in select member states through: promoting participatory, representative, and inclusive political processes; assisting civil society and government partners to advance civil and political rights, including freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly; enabling citizens to exercise their right to vote through periodic, free, fair, and peaceful elections; and supporting the abilities of civil society and independent open media to provide oversight. IR 1.1 efforts will also promote accountable governance and civic engagement by channeling resources to priority needs and holding governments accountable through monitoring how governments use public resources to meet policy commitments. Efforts under IR 1.1 will strengthen the organizational and technical capacities of youth networks and advocacy groups, national CSOs, and other civic actors that work on democracy and human rights issues, to constructively engage with governments, advocate on behalf of their constituents to shape policy and budget priorities, and play effective roles in providing oversight for the delivery of public services. IR 1.1 will: increase youth and women's political participation; strengthen the overall accountability of democratic institutions to women and gender equality by improving the transparency and accountability of public officials and institutions on their gender equality commitments; and ensure that democracy assistance, particularly in moments of post conflict transition, is gender responsive and ensures that youth and women's voices are heard.

IR 1.1 interventions will be complemented by **IR 1.3: Conflict Prevention Efforts Increased**. USAID will implement conflict prevention and mitigation activities by supporting countries experiencing political crises, demonstrating signs of fragility, or emerging from conflict. USAID will employ a strongly participatory approach by engaging a broad range of political actors, state institutions, regional bodies, CSOs, media, and government officials. USAID will encourage youth and women to be equal partners in preventing conflict by involving young leaders and women's organizations in developing responses to violence triggers, establishing and supporting capabilities to engage in peacebuilding that can anticipate and prevent instability and large-scale violence before it erupts. USAID will invest in both short-term efforts to mitigate escalating conflict risks and in longer-term efforts to address underlying vulnerabilities of violent conflict. IR 1.3 will address vulnerabilities that fuel conflict and undermine civilian security by enhancing partner nations' prevention and peacebuilding efforts. USAID will support civil society networks, religious and ethnic minorities, women and youth, and members of faith-based groups to contribute to conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts.

Under **IR1.2: Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Efforts Enhanced**, assistance will focus on taking proactive steps to promote peace and security, as well as address violent extremist threats,

³⁸ The Sahel Alliance is composed of eight EU countries and four multilateral institutions.

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including emerging threats, and contribute to ensuring that violent extremist organizations do not disrupt countries' progress. USAID will: work to reduce support for violent extremism as P/CVE efforts will strengthen abilities of regional partner institutions, national governments, and civil society actors, to better understand and prevent violent extremism; support efforts to implement regional and national P/CVE policies and strategies; and increase coordination states to implement regional P/CVE efforts in a collaborative and effective manner. Assistance will include training and capacity building for senior officials and technical specialists across government and regional institutions to design and implement effective P/CVE interventions to build the capacities of CSOs, equip key decision makers and actors in the region to better detect, and report on VE trends and prevent human rights abuses. In areas facing an active or imminent threat of extremist violence and recruitment, USAID's targeted efforts will improve community cohesion and P/CVE narratives and promote tolerance of marginalized religious and ethnic groups through inter-ethnic and religious dialogue. IR 1.2's approach will blend systems-level investments in the broader enabling environment with intensive community-level programming in limited geographic zones at immediate risk.

Under IR 1.2, USAID will support research to examine key violent extremism drivers and their interactions with gender and climate change in the tri-border Liptako-Gourma region of Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali. USAID will support mixed methods research to examine the effects of individual characteristics and context on youth attitudes towards VE and conduct a comparative qualitative study generated from focus group discussions and key informant interviews to analyze the relationship between youth attitudes towards VE and VE drivers. This planned research will provide a robust evidence-based analysis of gender-differentiated VE drivers that will inform the design of the next generation of conflict prevention and P/CVE programming. USAID will focus on gender roles and will identify and address barriers to women's participation in political and civic life and engage women as peacebuilding actors and peace ambassadors at the regional and national levels.

Assumptions:

- Regional actors are committed to proactively addressing governance, VE and conflict challenges, gender equality, and take ownership of these efforts with a credible, sustainable approach.
- The security environment permits the functioning of governments and strengthening of political processes.
- Governments demonstrate political will for accepting fundamental rights (freedoms of expression, association, peaceful assembly and religion) including those that reinforce women's roles as powerful actors and agents of change.
- National bodies/governments will be receptive to developing P/CVE approaches, adopt P/CVE strategies and pursue implementation.
- Security environment remains such that it allows implementing partners and USAID programs to access communities affected or at risk of VE.
- Partner country and international community military interventions continue operations.
- Recent increases in telecommunications access will continue.
- Regional organization(s) and national governments will lead conflict prevention efforts.
- The security environment (internal and external factors) will not override the peacebuilding efforts being made at the local level.
- Community, traditional, and religious leaders will be seen as legitimate and their perspectives valued, and will be interested to work with USAID.

Risks:

- The security environment continues to deteriorate making it difficult to implement USAID activities across the region and impeding USAID programs to operate in most affected areas.
- Lack of commitment on behalf of partner governments to promote and implement effective policies, projects and activities.

Regional Development Objective 2: Inclusive Broad-Based Economic Growth Advanced

RDO 2: Inclusive Broad-Based Economic Growth Advanced

IR 2.1:
Regional systems for food and nutrition security improved

IR 2.2:
Environmental, natural resources, and water governance advanced

IR 2.3:
Clean, affordable, and reliable energy and infrastructure expanded

IR 2.4:
Regional trade policy integration and private sector-led regional and international trade, markets, and investment expanded

Development Hypothesis Statement: If the regional system for food and nutrition security is improved; environmental and natural resource governance are advanced; clean, affordable, and reliable energy and infrastructure are expanded; and regional trade policy integration and private sector-led regional and international trade, markets, and investment are expanded, then inclusive broad-based economic growth will be advanced.

Development Hypothesis Narrative: Progress towards self-reliance for West African partner countries entails having credible commitments and sustainable capacities to create, diversify production, and deepen regional integration through productive investments and implementation of coordinated, harmonized policies. Member states of regional economic communities and organizations such as the ECOWAS and the G5 Sahel are key partners in advancing inclusive growth.

RDO 2: Inclusive Broad-based Economic Growth Advanced. RDO 2 focuses on achieving development results by establishing and enacting regional and transboundary policies and best practices across multiple countries. Countries need regional markets to maximize productive capacities. Several studies indicate that regional integration leads to accelerated growth³⁹ as individual country markets are too small to achieve economies of scale and not large enough to attract significant private investments; while landlocked countries rely on coastal neighbors to access global markets. Businesses achieve scale and cost competitiveness by sourcing across multiple countries and use of distribution networks. Trading is also greater among countries that are close, share a common currency, language, ethnicity, colonial heritage, and have a significant proportion of female traders.⁴⁰ An IMF study⁴¹ also points to significant positive linkages between intraregional trade and growth. However, infrastructure gaps in transport and connectivity to affordable and reliable energy remain.

Effective management of West African countries' porous borders is key to sustainable regional growth. Migration for employment is a key feature of youth mobility in West Africa, as individuals migrate in search of new job opportunities. However, human trafficking, child labor, and other forms of labor exploitation, must be addressed through regional security programs. Gender equality is crucial to advancing economic development and self-reliance; gender-sensitive programming will also take into consideration the critical role women play in these trading corridors.

West African countries' susceptibility to varying shocks and stresses have disproportionate effects on women, children, households, and communities. The negative effects of climate change significantly undermine the food and nutrition security of women and children. The resilience of households and communities to income shocks are severely tested. Through the regional agriculture program, regional systems for food and nutrition security will be enhanced through regionally coordinated and harmonized procedures to manage periodic or chronic food insecurity and malnutrition, mobilize responses, and avoid

³⁹ IMF, 2018: Regional Spillovers in SSA.

⁴⁰ West Africa Gender assessment, 2019 and the Gender Analysis of the West Africa Regional GFSS Design, 2019.

⁴¹ IMF, 2019: Our connected World.

food crises. Regional environment activities will advance water supply and sanitation services to urban and peri-urban households, reduce deforestation, and conserve biodiversity through improved natural resource management at the regional, national, and local level. The Regional Platforms will take advantage of a women's economic empowerment fund to form partnerships that can expand women's social and economic inclusion to increase access to markets, capital, and business development training.

RDO 2 will work in close collaboration with a wide range of USG interagency partners to achieve its objectives. Food security efforts will be undertaken with: National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and USGS' expertise in geospatial products; the MCC (Millennium Challenge Corporation) for agriculture inputs and resilience; Office of the United States Trade Representative, Department of Commerce, State Department, U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) and DFC (U.S. Development Finance Corporation) for trade, finance and investment as well as the 15 collaborating agencies in the Prosper Africa initiative; United States Department of Agriculture expertise in design and implementation of sanitary and phytosanitary regulatory systems and standards; and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for expertise on methodologies for collection of data on micronutrients. Power Africa in West Africa is closely linked to interagency work with USTDA (for feasibility studies), MCC (in scoping regional compacts for infrastructure, particularly roads and energy) and DFC for blended finance and other mechanisms to support private sector investments.

Self-Reliance: RDO 2 aims to help West African countries by working with regional institutions such as ECOWAS and CILSS and their subsidiary bodies, and with transnational organizations, private sector, national/subnational governments, civil society, and communities, to build the necessary self-reliance capacity and commitment to increase trade and diversify production, achieve sustainable growth through improved environmental and natural resource management, increased access to water supply and sanitation, build resilience, and achieve food security.

- **Private Sector Engagement:** Through Prosper Africa, USAID will connect U.S. and African private sectors with new buyers, suppliers, and investment opportunities to advance mutual prosperity and security. Engaging with the private sector through co-creation of market-based and enterprise-led approaches to diversify domestic and export production leads to increases in the capacity of the economy. USAID will also support ECOWAS reforms that incentivize private enterprise and free markets, attract investments, counteract malign interests, and foster self-reliance
- **Financing Self-Reliance:** Leveraging private sector resources is key to spur innovation, sustainability, and scale for impact. Enabling regional economic competitiveness through trade policy reforms and sustainable use of natural resources and environmental protection helps deepen regional trade freedom and promote sound economic policy. USAID/WA will leverage financial contributions, collective technical expertise, and partnerships with the WB, MCC (infrastructure development in road construction and in energy capacity projects), the DFC, and AfDB.
- **Redefining the Relationship:** Working alongside other donors to implement ECOWAS' Regional Agricultural Policy will help advance the region's commitment to self-reliance by addressing hunger, malnutrition, and poverty through resilient and sustainable agriculture. In collaboration with the WB, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Global Monitoring of the Environment and Security, and the Sahara and Sahel Observatory, USAID/WA will strengthen and sustain regional institutional capacities to provide demand-driven digital advisory services that include land use/cover change, agro-advisory, impact-based hydrometer/climate information, and warnings on food crisis prevention and management. The USAID/WA regional energy platform will invest in the capacity and commitment of ECOWAS energy institutions such as the West African Power Pool in their efforts to improve West Africa's energy supply; the Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency to develop commercially viable clean energy projects; and the Regional Electricity Regulatory Authority to regulate a regional electricity market.
- **Countering Malign Actions:** To counter China's growing investments in the water sector, USAID will work with NASA through the SERVIR USAID/West Africa program, to build the capacity of partner governments to use satellite data in managing groundwater resources, and improve flood

and drought monitoring. This partnership will advance the USG Global Water Strategy⁴² and leverages the USG's superior technical and scientific expertise to improve water security, transboundary natural resources management, and reduce conflict over shared resources. In the area of energy, USAID/WA, through Power Africa,⁴³ will address regional energy security through diversification of supply, improvement of the enabling environment, blended finance, and energy investment to counter malign interests in energy and help promote inclusive and transparent growth in the region.

- **New Partnerships Initiative:** Through NPI, RDO 2's focus on building the capacity of regional organizations such as the West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF), CILSS, ECOWAS and others, in implementing policies and best practices, will help strengthen the sustainability of USAID's investments. RDO 2 will also continue its deployment of grants to locally led, underutilized organizations and associations through activities such as Local Works,⁴⁴ Trade Facilitation West Africa (TFWA) and its partnership with the African Water Association (AfWA). Co-creation and concept review processes will help facilitate entry to compete for the Local Works awards. For example, the use of Leverage Awards by the Sustainable Shea Initiative resulted in \$102 million worth of shea nuts trade facilitated, 101 warehouses donated and over 48,226 women trained in 2020. This model serves as an Agency exemplar, and this same approach will be applied to future partnerships.

IR 2.1: Regional Systems for Food and Nutrition Security Improved. Countries benefit from sharing and scaling of knowledge and technologies that can diversify production and increase export competitiveness. Agricultural networks of youth, professionals, and institutions across West Africa represent important sources of agricultural expertise, and sources of innovative varieties of climate-sensitive seeds and sustainable farming practices. By collaborating regionally, USAID can leverage scientific capacity from multiple sources to meet common regional needs, and to facilitate sharing and exchange of West African expertise, technologies, and knowledge.

Gender inequality is one of the key drivers behind food insecurity among women. Yet current responses do little to address the deeply entrenched structural barriers that hamper their food security. Findings from the USAID/WA REGO commissioned Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS) indicate that the socially constructed gender roles of men and women interact with their biological roles to affect the nutritional status of the entire family and each gender.⁴⁵ Because of women's cyclical loss of iron and their childbearing, their nutrition status is particularly vulnerable to deficiencies in diet, care, and health or sanitation services. Inequities in access to and control of assets have severe consequences for women's ability to provide food, care, health, and sanitation services to themselves, their husbands, and their children, especially their female children. Women with less influence or power within the household and community will be unable to guarantee food distribution within the household.

Supporting the ECOWAS regional integration agenda towards promoting economic growth and self-reliance, as aligned with West Africa's Global Food Security/Feed the Future initiative, will advance U.S. national security priorities. USAID/WA's programs will: advance IR 2.1 efforts to address gender equality and improve regional information systems on food security; manage risks associated with animal, human, and environmental health through the application of an integrated "One Health" approach; promote farming systems that use climate-smart techniques; improve the efficiency and integration of domestic food markets; reduce barriers to food trade through policy advocacy and regulatory reforms and advance gender equality.

⁴² USAID: "Enabling Clear Choices in Water Security, Sanitation, and Hygiene: Clear Choice Framework" https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jrYWdxcF0KIG_oh3JWht_z_duOGCudg_MsYgpKc_MU/edit

⁴³ The Power Africa WAEP is implemented in 23 countries (including the Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, and the western half of the Democratic Republic of Congo; but excluding Ghana) some of which China has invested significantly in through its "Belt and Road" and "Made in China 2025" initiatives including funding energy generation, transmission and distribution.

⁴⁴ Local Works is USAID's flagship locally led development program. Locally led development means local people take the lead in the development process, including priority-setting, decision-making, management, and more. Through Local Works, USAID/West Africa (WA) issued a call to local actors for the submission of concepts focused on Building Effective, Reliable, and Sustainable Private Sector Associations in West Africa.

⁴⁵ USAID/West Africa, March 2020: Gender Analysis for the USAID/WA REGO Global Food Security Strategy Design

IR 2.2: Environmental, Natural Resources, and Water Governance Advanced. Addressing the environment, natural resources management, and water security from a regional perspective acknowledges the transboundary nature of these resources. Coordinating with other donors to provide input on the ECOWAS environment policy helps to enhance member states' commitment to build stronger regional systems, improve natural resource governance, and sustain inclusive economic development.

Consistent with USAID's Environmental and Natural Resource Management Framework, protection of biodiversity and habitats will be monitored. USAID's investments in water and sanitation contribute to biodiversity conservation and sustainable landscape resilience while advancing natural resource management for sustainable human use. Landscape-level natural resources management of productive agriculture and rangeland systems, forestry, and infrastructure promote healthy watersheds and ecosystems and underpin sustainable development for municipalities and utilities with nature-based solutions to provide clean, safe, and reliable delivery of basic services. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and water security investments aspire to tie all these aspects together in a coherent, comprehensive regional approach to development.

USAID/WA supports self-reliance for Africa by partnering with ECOWAS, the Mano River Union, and national governments to improve natural resources management and governance while reducing communities' vulnerability to resource-related conflict, extremism, and instability.

RDO 2 will also ensure the interconnected nature of natural resources and the opportunity to address gender equality in programming its regional environment, natural resources management and water security projects. Programming with an inclusive and gender sensitive approach around these shared resources allows for a broader view of the priorities and challenges across the region as manifested by transboundary forest landscapes fragmentation, wildlife trafficking networks, pollution, and downstream effects of water resource abstraction and damming for electricity generation on water users.

IR 2.3: Clean, Affordable, and Reliable Energy and Infrastructure Expanded. Regional power system integration and increased electricity cooperation between countries can enhance energy security, bring economies of scale in investments, facilitate financing, enable greater renewable energy penetration, and allow synergistic sharing of complementary resources. An interconnected regional power system links all national sub-systems and sub-sectors (e.g., manufacturing, agriculture, health, education, communications, transportation, tourism).

USAID's regional energy programming will support establishment of a regional power market that: promotes the use of clean renewable energy; improves efficiency; lowers costs; and fosters economic growth. The energy programs will also work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support regional partners to coordinate and commission the construction of transmission lines, develop market rules and regulations, and build operational capacities to enable multi-country energy trading that can lead to sustained economic development and advance countries' development outcomes.

IR 2.4: Regional Trade Policy Integration and Private Sector-led Regional and International Trade, Markets, and Investment Expanded. Regional trade and investment integration efforts reduce the cost and risk of doing business in West Africa, level the playing field, improve the business environment, and enable expanded production. IR 2.4 will engage key partners to deepen regional economic integration, promote two-way trade with the U.S. under the African Growth and Opportunity Act and Prosper Africa.

IR 2.4 will support the West Africa Trade and Investment Hub, an active Prosper Africa⁴⁶ partner. Supporting ECOWAS leadership on regional trade and investment will facilitate regional economic integration and policy harmonization. ECOWAS works to decrease regional trade barriers by standardizing regional/country trade and investment policies and objectives, advancing the region's trade commitment and capacity.

⁴⁶ USG initiative to substantially increase two-way trade and investment between the United States and Africa.

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Trade Programing will support ECOWAS to develop and implement its trade integration agenda that promotes free trade and sustainable growth. Trade facilitation and market integration have repeatedly been highlighted as the key to unlocking greater gains from trade in West Africa by ECOWAS Heads of States and Governments.

IR 2.4 will collaborate with development partners and host country governments to build ECOWAS and its member states' capacities for effective implementation of regional policies and instruments on trade facilitation. USAID/WA will support small-scale traders, including women and other key stakeholders, to integrate gender equality into trade facilitation reforms and programs in the region and advance the ECOWAS integration agenda.

The partnership approach of collaborating with both the public and private sector to help unblock trade and investment challenges in the region was informed by an evaluation conducted in 2017 of the Trade and Investment Hub⁴⁷ which established that a multi-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder public-private partnership approach that leverages direct private sector funding and brings in funding from other donors is the best approach to building self-reliance. National governments' roles on trade and investment facilitation policy development and implementation are critical. IR 2.4 incorporates a gender lens into its private sector partnership activities and takes advantage of the W-GDP Initiative to form strategic partnerships that expand women's social and economic inclusion to increase access to markets, capital, and business development training.

Assumptions:

- ECOWAS continues to work closely together with other regional institutions and member states to promote regional harmonization and integration.
- Business enabling environment in place for foreign direct investment to continue to grow over the medium term.
- Foreign exchange and commodity prices remain stable to allow West Africa to make significant economic gains from participating in global markets.
- Drought, disease and other climatic risks do not significantly impact agricultural productivity and electricity generation in the region.
- Private sector actors and other stakeholders will remain receptive to the trade interventions and be able and willing to partner financially.
- West Africa remains peaceful, secure, and stable over time.

Risks:

- Political and governance risks of working effectively in a region with many fragile states, and different election cycles.
- The complexity of designing and effectively implementing regional integration policies and strategies for a diverse group of regional and national stakeholders who have wide ranging priorities.
- Varied levels of institutional capacity and political engagement of key regional organizations and national institutions in West Africa to formulate and implement sound economic development and regional integration policies and strategies, incorporating a gender lens.
- Availability of funding from financial partners to sustain activity implementation.
- Climate change effects, drought, floods, natural disasters, market shocks and stresses impact livelihoods.
- Political instability, insecurity, significant youth unemployment, and rising violent extremism.

⁴⁷ USAID, 2017: Mid-term Evaluation of the West Africa Trade and Investment Hub
https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00N494.pdf

Regional Development Objective 3: Governments, Institutions and Partners Catalyzed to Strengthen Health Systems

RDO 3: Governments, Institutions and Partners Catalyzed to Strengthen Health Systems

IR 3.1:

Targeted populations in selected countries adopt health care seeking behaviors

IR 3.2:

ECOWAS member state ministries implement regional health policies and scale up best practices

IR 3.3:

Regional Health Offices exert proactive technical leadership and accelerate knowledge exchange

Development Hypothesis Statement: If targeted populations in selected countries adopt health care seeking and quality service provision behaviors, and ministries of health and other government entities implement regional health policies and scale up best practices, and Regional Platform Health Offices exert proactive leadership and accelerate knowledge exchange then their catalytic investments in governments, institutions and partners will strengthen health systems.

Development Hypothesis Narrative: RDO 3 is Governments, Institutions and Partners Catalyzed to Strengthen Health Systems. This objective aligns with the orientation of the RDCS toward local and sub-regional institutions on the path to development, recognizing the importance of collaborating with host country government institutions, regional bodies, CSOs, the private sector and other donors to advance the final RDCS goal. RDO 3 also recognizes that gender equality is crucial to advancing health outcomes as well as the elimination of and response to GBV. By strengthening national health systems using relatively small, catalytic investments in USAID limited and non-presence countries and, at the regional level with WAHO, USAID/WA contributes to multiple countries' path towards self-reliance. This is achieved by mobilizing commitment and accelerating action by local leaders, healthcare providers, consumers (particularly women and youth), and other donor partners, while strengthening the health system. RDO 3 is a behavioral integration and behavior-centered programming approach, focusing on accountability, transparency, and good governance of host country governments, WAHO, civil society, the private sector, healthcare providers and beneficiaries.

USAID also recognizes that gender roles and norms have a significant impact on health-seeking behavior and that gender social stratifications have resulted in unequal health benefits among various social groups of women and men. Gender norms and gender-related inequalities are powerful determinants of health and health disparities between men and women, and they are distinct from health differences based on sex. RDO 3 takes into consideration that the neglect of gender norms and inequalities in program design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation weakens the health of women and girls, boys and men, and gender minorities.⁴⁸

Self-Reliance: The Landscape Analysis indicates that countries in West Africa have low capacity, which confirms the need to strengthen systems for addressing core development needs, including health. With respect to commitment, most West African countries score low on "*Open and Accountable Governance*" but much higher on "*Inclusive Development*". This fact presents a solid rationale and an opportunity for the two regional platforms' regional health offices to incorporate an accountability-focused objective that motivates host country governments and partners to implement regionally agreed-upon policies and scale up best and high impact practices to overcome persistent health challenges.

- **Private Sector Engagement:** USAID, in alignment with WAHO priorities, will partner with ECOWAS member states to promote public-private partnerships in nutrition by establishing or strengthening national food fortification alliances. Preparations are also underway to engage the private sector in warehousing and supply chain management in the region. Engaging the private

⁴⁸ USAID West Africa, 2020: USAID West Africa Gender Analysis: Final Report.

sector in strategic partnerships will help increase investment in health care and increase the availability and quality of health services. Private sector engagement will be district-based and mobilization of local businesses to invest in improving Family Planning and Reproductive Health (FP/RH) care at public health facilities. This is in addition to supporting the implementation and reporting of high impact practices (HIPs) in selected private facilities in the targeted districts.

- **Financing Self-Reliance:** Leveraging private sector resources is key to sustainable investment in health care - increasing the availability and quality of health services. USAID will collaborate with WAHO to develop and harmonize regional policies to mobilize domestic resources for health. USAID also uses its catalytic investments to collaborate with local health management teams (public and private), regional and community leaders, as well as other donors and partners to ensure accountability and encourage increased investment for scale up of the priority high impact practices.
- **Redefining the Relationship:** Through strategic partnerships with key regional organizations such as the WAHO in its role to convene, advocate, assist, and hold ECOWAS governments accountable in formulating regional policies and implementing best health practices, USAID will help deepen regional partner countries' ownership of development solutions. USAID strengthens and expands the convening power and political capital of regional institutions to encourage national government, private sector, and civil society partners to implement regionally agreed-upon policies and scale up best and high impact practices in overcoming persistent health challenges, particularly for women and youth. Through close coordination and collaboration with other USAID OUs, partners, and other donors, USAID will work towards achieving common, shared goals in family planning and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, and facilitating the exchange of best practices in decreasing micronutrient deficiency throughout West Africa through food fortification policies and improved technology. USAID strengthens national supply chain systems in Burkina Faso, Togo, and Niger, by improving policy formulation, governance, strategy, coordination and optimization of the forecasting and procurement processes for family planning and HIV/AIDS commodities. USAID's engagement with regional organizations, such as the Association des Centrales d'Achat des Médicaments Essentiels and WAHO, will help operationalize family planning commodity security initiatives and build the knowledge repository for francophone public health professionals to learn from one another.
- **Countering Malign Actions:** Health is an essential ingredient in enabling growth and stability. A healthy, productive workforce requires sound investments in human capital (particularly in health and education). Therefore, high interest loans for large infrastructure projects may reduce available domestic resources (human, financial) for health and education, resulting in diminished progress towards self-reliance and negative impacts on health access, health status, and human capital. To mitigate these adverse effects, USAID will work with other donors and civil society to routinely track budget execution, and advocate for resource tracking to examine cash flows to frontline services and facilities, if health budgets are adversely affected by arrears in countries with a high debt burden. Particularly in settings where the health sector is decentralized, USAID will build awareness and capability among local health systems, grassroots and community groups for advocacy to promote accountability in the management and delivery of health services including independent monitoring of under-the-table and user fees. In partnership with the environmental sector, national park services, customs authorities and other stakeholders, USAID will apply a "One Health" to combat emerging zoonotic infectious disease threats. Specifically, USAID will promote interventions related to strengthening global health security measures in addressing pandemic issues, such as any Ebola-related lessons and international best practices.
- **New Partnerships Initiative:** USAID/WA is uniquely positioned to take a different approach to "local" by working with regional organizations to address transboundary political, social, and economic issues, as well as to disseminate best practices and lessons learned across various national and community level interventions. For example, RDO 3 will continue its work with WAHO to hold consultations with member states, allied states, such as Chad and Mauritania, and partners to develop and harmonize regional policies for domestic resources mobilization and to advance best practices in health at the regional and national levels. RDO 3 will continue to support WAHO in its role to convene, advocate, assist, and hold ECOWAS governments accountable for implementing best practices, cross-pollinating best practice ideas and formulating regional policies that enable institutionalization of those practices. These best practices advance progress in family planning, maternal, newborn and child health and towards the UNAIDS 95-95-

95 targets and HIV/AIDS epidemic control in the sub-region. To contribute to the GHSA, RDO 3 will continue to assist WAHO to implement its Regional One Health Approach, in collaboration with the ECOWAS Regional Center for Surveillance and Disease Control, ECOWAS Regional Animal Health Center, and the ECOWAS Department of Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources. In addition to regional organizations, RDO 3 will strengthen the capacity of local institutions to promote locally relevant research.

Through **IR 3.1: Targeted Populations in Selected Countries Adopt Health Care Seeking Behaviors**, programming aimed at promoting adoption of health seeking behaviors of clients and assisting health facility staff to offer services and care according to guidelines for key HIPs, USAID will contribute to strengthening national health systems. Target beneficiaries for FP/RH information, care, and products in urban and peri-urban areas are adolescents and youth aged 10-29, women of reproductive age 15-49, as well as couples with a focus on engaging men as partners. The other main donors and partners working in family planning that USAID collaborates with are the Ouagadougou Partnership key partners - the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Agence Française de Développement (AFD), the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, WAHO, the Children's Investment Fund Foundation, and DFID.

Related to HIV/AIDS, USAID will support prevention, treatment, and care services for all age ranges including children, youth and adolescents, and adult men and women. The main actors in the field of HIV/AIDS that USAID collaborates with are the Global Fund, UNAIDS and WAHO.

For nutrition, USAID's activities under IR 3.1 highlight the adoption of health care seeking behaviors. To ensure the elevated role of FP as a high impact, nutrition-sensitive intervention, USAID will work toward achieving improved nutrition practices and outcomes for mothers and children in urban and peri-urban areas of select Sahel cities/towns, such as Zinder in Niger, by integrating FP into nutrition rehabilitation programs and integrating nutrition counselling and referrals into FP visits. This approach supports targeted populations to practice health seeking behaviors that help to close the gaps of missed opportunities for FP and child nutrition integration.

It is estimated by WHO that one in three women and girls will experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime-usually from an intimate partner. Given the sensitive nature of GBV response and how challenging it can be for many service providers to provide a comprehensive response package to GBV survivors, USAID/WA, in collaboration with the USAID/Washington's Office of HIV/AIDS Gender and Sexual Diversity team, organized a one-week Training of Trainers on "Providing First-line Support for Survivors of Gender-Based Violence in HIV Settings." USAID staff and implementing partners participated in the one-week training and later cascaded it down to their staff, sub-contractors, and service providers. Social and behavior change (SBC) programming will continue to address social and gender norms, including the effects of GBV and intimate partner violence. In addition to engaging in community dialogues on these topics, SBC programming will also focus on raising these sensitive issues among service providers to ensure provision of quality gender-sensitive health services. These efforts to address GBV will continue throughout the duration of the regional strategy.

At the regional level and under **IR 3.2: ECOWAS Member State Ministries Implement Regional Health Policies and Scale Up Best Practices**. USAID will collaborate with WAHO to hold consultations with member states, allied states, such as Chad and Mauritania, and partners to develop and harmonize regional policies for domestic resources mobilization and to advance best practices in health at the regional and national levels. Through the ECOWAS Best Practices Forum in Health, USAID will promote WAHO and ECOWAS member states' dissemination of innovative practices including self-care interventions (e.g., self-administered injectable contraceptives) in the context of COVID-19, as well as exchanges among countries on progress made around the scaling up of selected practices.

Under IR 3.2, USAID will also work through WAHO to better position ECOWAS member states in their progress toward the UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets and epidemic control. This includes ensuring that health systems are following normative policies, such as: implementing differentiated prevention, care and

treatment; improving service delivery, including six months of Antiretroviral (ARV) dispensation, and ARV optimization with transitioning to Tenofovir, Lamivudine, and Dolutegravir; scaling up access to viral load; and eliminating user fees. This work will also contribute to an enabling environment necessary to achieve IR 3.1, given that targeted populations will be able to seek health services and practice supportive health behaviors while providers deliver quality health services.

For nutrition, USAID will support the integration of a regional nutrition observatory into an existing WAHO health information platform to provide regional accountability and transparency for nutrition policies, ensuring compliance with regional commitments, quality of interventions, and responsible management of resources allocated to food and nutrition security. Similar to other regional programming, the ultimate beneficiaries are consumers across the 15 ECOWAS countries, including Chad and Mauritania, with the highest intended impact on women and youth of reproductive age (15 to 49 years). USAID will partner with WAHO, U.S. CDC, and BMGF in implementing nutrition programs.

To advance health commodity security and contribute to achieving IR 3.1 and IR 3.2, USAID will support strengthening of the supply chain systems in francophone West Africa to ensure timely access to quality essential health products and services, improve in-country and regional collaboration and coordination, and support the global health security agenda, (GHSA). USAID will support scale up of best practices for distribution, warehousing, logistics, data visibility, and stock monitoring in the three focus countries. USAID will also strengthen WAHO's capacity to manage a regional early warning system to prevent overstock and stock out of health commodities - mitigating the need for USAID's funding of emergency procurements in the region. In addition, targeted countries will be better able to manage their health commodities which will improve regional commodity security through broad collaboration with governments, private sector, and other development partners. For maternal and child health, USAID will continue to support cross-border activities for polio eradication and WAHO's efforts to promote high impact practices that prevent maternal and child deaths.

To contribute to the GHSA, USAID will continue to assist WAHO to implement its Regional One Health Approach, in collaboration with the Regional Center for Surveillance and Disease Control, ECOWAS Regional Animal Health Center, and ECOWAS Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources. USAID will also support countries to strengthen their national One Health platforms.

Finally, under IR 3.2 USAID will collaborate with WAHO to develop tools - scorecards, performance profiles, and dashboards - that track member states' performance on scaling up HIPs and promote accountability and transparency. An intensive focus on systems and local institutional capacity, along with the continued prioritization of HIPs and related policies, better equips countries to reduce morbidity and mortality, combat infectious diseases, and advance equity in healthcare.

IR 3.3: Exert Proactive Technical Leadership and Accelerate Knowledge Exchange will focus on providing support to West African USAID OUs. It highlights the implementation approach of both Regional Platform Health Offices (RHOs) vis-à-vis engagement with bilateral OUs (primarily L/NPCs) in West Africa. To capitalize on the strategic advantage of the RHOs, this IR brings to the forefront the leadership role that RHOs are well-suited to play in the region as well as implementation of high impact and best practices. To communicate their pivotal role, RHOs use their convening power to engage with key stakeholders on strategic health issues that are regional in nature. The RHOs will continue to capitalize on ways to jointly address health challenges in the region in a manner that is beneficial and promotes the scale-up of high impact practices in West Africa. Furthering their objective of supporting USAID OUs in the region, the RHOs will provide operational support, backstopping, TDYs, and remote technical assistance. A regional modality of providing technical assistance is efficient and effective as the RHO staff have an in-depth knowledge of the region and other health programs in West Africa and provide timely, targeted, and in-depth expertise.

In addition, the RHOs proactively exercise their technical leadership, identifying and scaling up impacts and best practices, and connecting key stakeholders in the region. The RHOs are uniquely placed to

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contribute to new ideas and policies, gather and share knowledge, inspire OUs to adopt best practices, and contribute to implementation of regional best practices. Regional platforms can improve the quality of USG programming by facilitating the exchange of knowledge, building on existing knowledge management systems, and identifying opportunities to mobilize other stakeholders to address health gaps and fulfill regional and global commitments. The RHOs will also work with a range of partners that prioritize gender equality in their health interventions across the region. Programming will be more gender-sensitive and opportunities will continue to be explored to further institutionalize gender and to recognize the role it plays in health.

Assumptions:

- Other donors and key private sector actors commit to shared, common goals.
- Targeted districts and health facilities have access to adequate commodities and equipment.
- Beneficiaries cultivate an acceptance of health seeking behaviors.
- Health workers have improved perception of benefits and outcomes of best practices.
- Governments demonstrate increased commitment of resources to implement regional policies and best practices.
- Ministries of Health implement gender-related regional strategies and plans, such as the ECOWAS regional key populations HIV strategy.

Risks:

- Shocks and stressors such as increased conflict in the region and pandemics (e.g., COVID-19, Ebola) will reduce the ability of national governments to honor commitments to health systems strengthening.
- Security constraints prohibit partners from carrying out public health interventions.
- Other members of the Ouagadougou Partnership do not follow through on their commitments to fund the national Family Planning Action Plans.
- National governments, Global Fund, and UNFPA are not able to supply family planning and HIV/AIDS commodities.
- Ministries of Health do not sufficiently integrate gender sensitive practices into health programming and management through national protocols, norms and guidelines.

Regional Development Objective 4: Vulnerability of Targeted Populations Reduced

RDO 4: Vulnerability of Targeted Populations Reduced

IR 4.1:
Resilience to shocks and stresses strengthened

IR 4.2:
Economic and political drivers of violent extremism addressed

IR 4.3:
Lives and livelihoods saved

Development Hypothesis Statement: If the resilience of women, youth and vulnerable populations to shocks and stresses is increased, if economic, governance, and political drivers of their potential support to violent extremist organizations are addressed, and if lives and livelihoods are saved through humanitarian assistance, then these combined efforts will reduce vulnerability of targeted populations and enable them to pursue sustainable improvements in well-being.

Development Hypothesis Narrative: RDO 4 addresses significant populations in West Africa that are especially vulnerable to environmental, social, political, and insecurity shocks due to extreme and dynamic contexts featuring an underlying lack of economic opportunities, deeply rooted gender inequalities, poor health and educational systems, long-running ethnic and political tensions, and endemic corruption and poor governance. The targeted population is largely composed of poor rural households in an expansive geographic area, where in 2019 about 49 percent of the population were women and about 69 percent of the population are youth under the age of 25. The vulnerabilities highlighted above result in chronic poverty, humanitarian crises, and susceptibility to recruitment to support violent extremist organizations. These underlying vulnerabilities are worsened by both gender and youth inequalities, which again exacerbate the lack of resilience closing this vicious circle.

RDO 4 is central to advancing results related to the RDGS goal because stability across the region is undermined when there are violent extremist organizations actively supported by local populations. Integrating a gender perspective in CVE, peace and security is also crucial to improving regional resilience and advancing self-reliance objectives. RDO 4 utilizes a “triple nexus” approach, which refers to the interlinkages between humanitarian, development and peace actors all working towards collective development outcomes. The triple nexus also requires broad based interagency collaboration. Interventions under RDO 4 will be closely coordinated with both USAID/OTI crisis response activities and DoD AFRICOM efforts throughout the Sahel region. Broad-based, inclusive economic growth cannot be achieved when significant populations are left behind or repeatedly beaten down by gender and age-related inequities, shocks and stresses, and violence resulting in a continued need for humanitarian assistance.

USAID’s coordinated “triple nexus” of interventions will address the complex intertwined problems in the region and is supported by three intermediate results. **IR 4.1 Resilience to Shocks and Stresses Strengthened** will build resilience capacity from the community to the national level, reinforcing supportive systems and individual capacities. **IR 4.2 Economic and Political Drivers of Violent Extremism addressed** will tackle the core economic and political drivers of susceptibility to extremist organizations; and **IR 4.3 Lives and Livelihoods Saved** will mobilize humanitarian assistance when needed to protect lives and livelihoods and reduce backsliding into deeper poverty. It will be imperative that humanitarian assistance remain faithful to humanitarian principles, guided, and authorized by USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA). Consistent with these principles, USAID will seek complementarities among the three IRs to meet the immediate needs of local populations while investing in long-term development outcomes that address chronic deprivations.

A particular focus will be placed on enhancing the social, economic, and political agency of women and youth throughout all the RDO 4 activities. Women and youth are disadvantaged compared to adult men (and girls are worse-off than adult women), and yet they can have an outsize impact on the well-being of their communities. Barriers to gender equality include restrictions on mobility, lack of access and

affordability of key basic resources, low literacy, lack of access to finance, entrepreneurship, land ownership, reproductive health, and political participation. There are also circumstances where men have control over women's assets and reproductive health seeking behavior, which in turn limit political will and institutional implementation and enforcement of gender and youth policies and nondiscrimination laws. These circumstances exacerbate practices such as trafficking, FGM, early child marriage, and GBV/domestic violence. Placing a particular focus on women and youth and promoting their education, leadership and inclusion, and increasing their access to and control over productive resources will lead to reduced risk, enhanced livelihoods, improved health outcomes, and more representative governance.

Self-Reliance: USAID will support self-reliance by engaging local communities and governments in the Sahel region to identify and solve their own development challenges. Specific resilience programming under IR 4.1 includes support to national resilience institutions to enhance their capacity to monitor and oversee all development interventions, partnerships with national research institutions to build their capacity to develop localized technologies, and integrated governance strengthening to engage local communities and governments in identifying and solving development challenges. CVE programming under IR 4.2 will enhance local peace-building structures and processes and build the capacity of local governments to respond to their citizens' needs with local resources and engage the private sector in partnerships that sustainably create jobs. Finally, humanitarian assistance (HA) under IR 4.3 will seek to coordinate with and complement, not replace, local response initiatives, using approaches that build up self-sustaining local market systems. Linkages with CVE and resilience efforts across the RDCS are specified in the development-humanitarian nexus, which include non-emergency programming that is foundational to linking HA to long-term development and to the journey to self-reliance.

- **Private Sector Engagement:** Initiatives under RDO 4 will harness the power of existing Global Development Alliances to advance core business interests, facilitate private sector-led development, and drive sustained development impact throughout the region.
- **Financing Self-Reliance:** Initiatives under RDO 4 will build upon existing development credit authority agreements to strengthen agribusinesses in the region, as well as expand financing opportunities to targeted producer groups and entrepreneurs throughout the West African region.
- **Redefining the Relationship:** USAID in the Sahel is committed to improving and enhancing existing relationships with government stakeholders throughout the region. Specific examples under RDO 4 include strengthening the Ministry of Health service delivery capacity and supportive national policies in partner countries. By strengthening the government's own systems, USAID brings the latest in scientific advances while building self-reliance. In addition, in the humanitarian space, USAID is building local government capacity to monitor, anticipate, and reduce the risks and impacts of potential shocks, such as epidemics, floods, and droughts. These efforts will also enhance local capacity to respond and to assist their own citizens, thus reducing the levels of needed humanitarian assistance.
- **Countering Malign Actions:** Initiatives under RDO 4 ensure a sustained commitment to more responsive governance, increased transparency, reduced corruption, and expanded civil liberties. USAID is focused on strengthening collaborative efforts with international donors and regional partners who are committed to promoting inclusive and participatory institutions that support the region's economic growth and resilience.
- **New Partnerships Initiative:** USAID/Senegal/SRO intends to increase the number of NUPs to support long-term development outcomes in the region. USAID/Senegal/SRO has created an ambitious plan under existing regional projects to accomplish this, mostly through Government-to-Government Agreements, Global Development Alliances, Development Credit Authority, and direct grants to local organizations and under-utilized professional organizations. NUP partners include universities, regional research centers, and intergovernmental and international organizations, all of which support partner country self-reliance initiatives throughout the Sahel region.

Regional Considerations: RDO 4's geographic focus is largely in a six-country region of the Sahel (Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad and The Gambia), tied together by similar vulnerabilities such as gender and social inclusion challenges, and cross-border shocks, stresses, and instabilities. A regional approach is justified under RDO 4 because significant instability, as well as trafficking, in one

area can spread across borders. Shocks that affect one population can result in displaced persons within and between countries, affecting regional development by disrupting economic and social systems and posing significant burdens on host countries and communities. The regional approach to these cross-border challenges complements bilateral efforts by: promoting shared learning among partners and governments; facilitating the linkages between regional, national and local policies; taking advantage of economies of scale to efficiently use U.S. taxpayer dollars; and providing long-term stability in programs and staffing. Regional investments under RDO 4 that benefit particular countries are closely coordinated with complementary bilateral investments. These investments create reinforcing efforts across the full RDCS Results Framework that will allow for greater integrated programming with RDO 1, RDO 2 and RDO 3, including, but not limited to, the following: increased citizen-government dialogue (RDO 1), health sector service delivery (RDO 3), a focus on improving livelihoods and income generating opportunities (RDO 2), enhancing natural resources management (RDO 2), and increased trade and investment opportunities (RDO 2).

IR 4.1: Resilience to Shocks and Stresses Strengthened will be achieved through an integrated, multi-sectoral approach that addresses the multi-dimensional nature of vulnerability with clear consideration of the needs and vulnerabilities of women and youth, and seeks to build individual, societal, and governmental resilience capacities from local to national levels. This approach will enhance the social, economic, and political agency of women and youth and address the core economic and governance drivers of susceptibility to extremist organizations and other transnational threats, such as trafficking in persons. Activities under IR 4.1 will enhance social and ecological risk management systems, recognizing that well-functioning ecological systems provide and regulate essential services for human well-being. Approaches will target improvements in water security, WASH, enhanced productive land use, and natural resource-based conflict management, while improving local capacity for adaptive management to climate change and other shocks and stresses that are pervasive in the Sahel. Formal risk management approaches will complement these supportive systems by providing information to manage risk, practices to reduce risks, and modalities to respond quickly to reduce impact and facilitate recovery.

Activities will increase and sustain economic well-being, helping to improve livelihoods, including profitable diversification, which are essential for households to escape poverty. Men, women, young people, and households achieve this when they have individual capacity, access to resources, and opportunities to engage in inclusive, growing markets. Health investments under IR 4.1 will improve higher level health, family planning, and nutrition outcomes. Health and nutritional security are central to human well-being and reduce the risk of disease or death that can plunge a household back into poverty. Access to voluntary family planning reduces fertility rates and slows population growth, improving health outcomes for women and children, reducing pressures on natural resources and government services, and enhancing the ability of households to escape poverty. Improving access to health services particularly for adolescent mothers will improve their ability to benefit from economic opportunities.

IR 4.1 will also enhance the governance of institutions and organizations. Effective governance at local and national levels supports the sustained achievement of the other objectives by helping state and civil society institutions become more transparent, accountable, gender sensitive, and effective at delivering services. Improved governance empowers youth and women networks and communities to lead their own development and to give equal opportunities to men, women, and youth, resulting in local solutions to felt needs.

The evidence base for IR 4.1 has been drawn primarily from the RISE II Design Workshop with broad participation from USAID/Washington and USAID/West Africa, the RISE Mid-term Performance Assessment⁴⁹ (Resilience Strategy Review, Efficacy Review), the RISE Baseline⁵⁰ and Midline quantitative⁵¹ and qualitative survey,⁵² and the Shock Responsive RISE Programming assessment.

⁴⁹ USAID/Senegal, 2017: RISE Mid-term Performance Assessment

⁵⁰ RISE Baseline

⁵¹ USAID/Senegal, 2018: RISE midline quantitative survey

⁵² USAID/Senegal, 2018: RISE midline quantitative survey

IR 4.2 Economic and Political Drivers of Violent Extremism Addressed will be implemented through an integrated approach focused on improving local governance and creating economic opportunities using a gender equality prism to better tailor interventions. Activities under IR 4.2 will enhance government legitimacy and accountability. Responsive, accountable, and legitimate state institutions are central to addressing violent extremism. When citizens feel their government is not on their side, but is rather predatory and corrupt, then non-state, illegitimate organizations that promise justice, power, and security are more attractive, especially for restive young people who feel hopeless. USAID will enhance government legitimacy by strengthening citizen-government dialogue, increasing government responsiveness to priority needs, improving access to justice by all, and enhancing government demonstration of support for human rights particularly for women and youth.

Activities under IR 4.2 will collaborate and partner with the private sector to enhance economic opportunities through demand-driven skills training targeting youth through increased economic support, entrepreneurial training, and job creation through investments in targeted areas, particularly areas which are marginalized. Studies have shown that, for many residents of conflict-affected areas, VEOs are attractive because they promise jobs or livelihood protections “addressing” lack of opportunities and protection. USAID will contribute to fostering youth cohesion and mobilization among and between conflicting communities to promote stability, peaceful coexistence, and increasing sustainable economic opportunities for youth that incentivize collaboration.

Under IR 4.2, USAID will enhance government legitimacy and accountability. Activities will: support civil society advocacy and collective action efforts demanding policy reform and/or government action in response to citizen needs; support youth and women’s networks and civil society oversight of service delivery; elevate the role of civil society in donor decision-making processes; and strengthen civil society capacity to use innovative tools and approaches to monitoring public service delivery. On the policy reform side, major efforts will support enforcement of gender and education policies, bringing youth and women’s networks to the table. Organizing themselves in associations can be a powerful voice and force for democratic change. Activities will give youth access to the wider world and the means to mobilize. Women’s organizations are natural partners in the struggle for democracy and for the rights of women within democracies. It is expected that activities also will lead to improved delivery of services that respond to expressed citizen priorities, enhance management of local conflicts, strengthen risk reduction and shock response, and improve the local business environment.

The IR 4.2 investments are complementary to those under IR 1.2 in the following ways: (1) IR 1.2 includes interventions (such as radio programs to undermine the attractiveness of extremist ideologies and promote moderate voices and leaders) that are not planned under IR 4.2; and (2) IR 4.2 includes economic and livelihoods investments taking into account youth, which are not planned under IR 1.2. Where IR 4.2 and IR 1.2 interventions overlap geographically, they will be closely coordinated to ensure they are complementary, such as in the SDP (Sahel Development Partnership for Burkina Faso and Niger) cross-border region of Niger and Burkina Faso.

The evidence base for IR 4.2 has been drawn primarily from the Sahel Youth Analysis, the Niger Youth Assessment,⁵³ the RISE Gender Assessment,⁵⁴ the West Africa CVE Gender Assessment,⁵⁵ and the Niger DRG Assessment (SBU Document).

IR 4.3 Lives and Livelihoods Saved will be achieved through humanitarian assistance that includes food, non-food, and cash assistance to girls, boys, women, men and households, along with activities to support local communities and national responses. During and after crises, gender inequality and discrimination tend to be exacerbated. Women and youth, in particular, face increased challenges like extreme poverty, trafficking, abuses, violence, insecurity, and poor health status. USAID will ensure that its humanitarian response addresses critical protection issues as well as multi-sectoral needs. USAID will also support internally displaced persons (IDPs), with a focus on women and youth, to facilitate their

⁵³ UNICEF, 2019: [Niger Youth Assessment](#)

⁵⁴ USAID, 2018: Rise Gender Assessment

⁵⁵ USAID/West Africa: West Africa CVE Gender Assessment

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social inclusion to support safe transitions from emergency to recovery. Activities will be funded and managed by BHA, and iteratively determined annually based on monitoring of needs. Because BHA's regional office is located within the SRO, humanitarian activities can be more easily coordinated when they geographically overlap with SRO's development programming. While this RDCS does not authorize or direct HA programming, it does elaborate a strategic framework for collaboration and complementarity, while ensuring that humanitarian assistance remains faithful to humanitarian principles.

Consistent with humanitarian principles, USAID will identify ways that HA can be programmed to support local systems, such as market supply of agricultural inputs and nutritious foods. BHA investments in monitoring and projecting humanitarian needs will also inform activities under IR 4.1 and IR 4.2, many of which have crisis modifiers to allow for quick shock response. IR 4.1 and IR 4.2 shock responses will seek to complement community and local government responses and reinforce long-term provision of life-sustaining services, such as drinking water systems. By coordinating HA and development resources in crisis situations, USAID will be able to respond more flexibly to local needs and build toward sustainable recovery in the nexus between development and HA.

The evidence base for IR 4.3 has been drawn primarily from the Food for Peace Food Security Desk Reviews for Niger⁵⁶ and Burkina Faso.⁵⁷

Assumptions:

- Local and regional efforts to build resilience and adaptive capacities lead to reductions in conflict and poverty.
- Purposeful overlaps in CVE and resilience programming efforts lead to more sustainable country level self-reliance outcomes.
- Partner governments demonstrate political will to shift resources to priority needs, commit to increased transparency, and allow human rights organizations to operate.
- Improved security to attract investment and business development.
- Employed women and youth are seen as models to women and younger generations.
- Financial institutions are willing and able to make loans accessible, particularly to women and youth, at more flexible rates and conditions.
- Bilateral activities address gender gaps which are too specific to be addressed by regional activities.

Risks:

- The security environment continues to deteriorate making it difficult to implement USAID activities across the region and reduces women's mobility.
- Lack of commitment on behalf of partner governments to promote and implement effective projects and activities.
- The COVID-19 pandemic continues to hamper development activities.
- The "youth bulge", lack of education, and resulting marginalization, joblessness, and disenfranchisement of a significant portion of the population.
- The role of the development humanitarian nexus: the increased emphasis on the role of state-led institutions may risk squeezing out the acceptance and delivery of assistance that is independent, neutral, and impartial.

⁵⁶ USAID, 2017: [Niger Food for Peace Food Security Desk Review](#)

⁵⁷ USAID, 2017: [Burkina Faso Food for Peace Food Security Desk Review](#)

MONITORING AND EVALUATION AND COLLABORATING, LEARNING AND ADAPTING (ME/CLA)

ME/CLA priorities

The strategic orientation of the new RDCS is rooted in the Agency's Policy Framework and learning from the previous USAID/WA and USAID/Senegal/SRO strategies. The new priorities include: (1) promoting regional self-reliance to support national self-reliance; (2) building resilience across sectors; (3) integrating gender equality and youth-specific approaches throughout the strategy; and (4) specializing in regional programming to address multi-country or transboundary issues. Consequently, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Collaborating, Learning and Adapting (ME/CLA) is planned and will be elaborated in the Performance Management Plan (PMP) to support results achievement related to the above set of strategic axes.

Regarding regional self-reliance, ME/CLA approaches will be developed in line with a regional commitment and capacity framework to support commitment and capacity nationally (discussed further under Self-Reliance and Resilience Learning Agenda below). In particular, policy areas will be identified based on bilateral countries' and regional organizations' priorities. Regional harmonization, domestication, and national implementation will be monitored and potentially evaluated, based on the division of accountability between regional organizations and national governments, and between USAID regional platforms and bilateral OUs. Likewise, capacity development needs will be identified regionally based upon national needs and a framework will be developed to measure capacity development or capacity development outcomes. More details will be provided in the PMP.

While USAID/WA and USAID/Senegal/SRO will continue refining their approach to resilience, they will also systematically focus on a set of selected indicators to monitor progress, and on answers to pertinent learning questions to build knowledge, with the perspective of strengthening regional system resilience.

In addition to the standard collection of youth, age, and sex-disaggregated data, programs will use relevant qualitative and quantitative methodologies to assess positive youth development and collect gender sensitive data. Youth and gender equality indicators will track changes in youth engagement and assess gender gaps through the five-year duration of the new strategy. The regional CLA agenda includes collaboration on gender and youth with regional stakeholders ranging from ECOWAS to the AfDB and government ministries. Programs will continue to capitalize upon strategic opportunities to support targeted gender research. While there will be a continuous assessment of gaps in knowledge and areas for further gender analysis, additional opportunities for research have been identified.

While regional programming is not a new approach for USAID/WA and USAID/Senegal/SRO, the platforms will continue prioritizing regional portfolios and corresponding ME approaches that reinforce regional/national and cross-sector coordination, taking advantage of synergies and managing overlaps more efficiently. These approaches include: (1) selecting indicators that can be aggregated across sectors and/or countries; (2) conducting multi-country evaluations; (3) testing, identifying and scaling up best practices within and across countries and sectors; and (4) accumulating and/or sharing knowledge relevant to common regional/bilateral issues. These approaches will be developed within the framework of a regional knowledge hub that will be based at USAID/W. The development of the hub assumes close coordination among USAID OUs in the region.

Finally, USAID/WA and USAID/Senegal/SRO will monitor the direct and indirect consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and how they affect priorities, resource allocation, and strategic outcomes. USAID's COVID INFO system is under active development.⁵⁸ This system is set up to report on COVID-19 indicator data and upload quarterly and/or annual reports of activities that received Pillar 4 COVID-19

⁵⁸ <https://usaaidinfo.usaid.gov>

Economic Support funds. Three OUs (SRO, The Gambia, and Niger) received these funds and will report on COVID-19 indicators.

Overview of ME/CLA systems

The ME/CLA systems are designed to obtain the evidence base on which anticipated achievements will be assessed throughout the implementation of the RDCS. Evidence will be used to test the validity of the development hypotheses, the Results Framework, and the underlying critical assumptions and risks. The outcomes of these analyses will inform and guide strategy implementation through adaptive management. The Regional Platforms will monitor progress in achieving the strategy's planned outcomes through standard and custom indicators. Indicators will be strategically selected, keeping in mind benefits and costs.

Performance evaluations will be conducted as required or necessary to obtain descriptive information on how the strategy is implemented, whether and why planned results are achieved or not, what results other than planned are obtained, and how all results are perceived by beneficiaries, including regional partners and targeted populations such as women or youth.

With systematic, consistent and intentional monitoring and evaluation, USAID/WA and USAID/Senegal/SRO plan for a more active and organized learning agenda. Ensuring that the platforms are constantly monitoring, evaluating, learning, and adapting, the approach will be critical towards building lasting partnerships that lead to increased transparency and accountability across the region.

This learning approach is built upon the following pillars:

- Accumulating knowledge from systematic and intentional performance monitoring, strategic evaluations, periodic visits and dialogues with the field, geographic information system (GIS) data and secondary data, and information from research in areas relevant to the strategy;
- Organizing and analyzing data to support adaptive management of current and future portfolios;
- Sharing knowledge, best practices, and skills in the region, with bilateral missions and USAID partners, through USAID/WA and SRO newsletters, stakeholder meetings, learning events, and training for USAID and partner staff;
- Providing thought leadership on the intersection of transboundary, multi-country, and regional organization trends related to Agency policies through advisory services.

Capacity among some partners is a constraint in the ME/CLA effort. ME/CLA capacity building efforts will continue, grow, and improve, to not only benefit USAID/WA's partners and staff, but also partners and staff of other USAID OUs in the region. SRO is also committed to quality ME/CLA service delivery and capacity building throughout the region, particularly in non-permissive environments, to help support and strengthen implementing partners' and local stakeholders' ME/CLA systems.

Self-Reliance and Resilience Learning Agenda

The new strategy is developed around two mutually supportive approaches:

- Regional self-reliance.
- Resilience building by strengthening regional, national, sub-national and community systems.

Moving along the paths towards regional self-reliance and increased resilience requires working with regional entities such as ECOWAS, CILSS, the G5 Sahel, and other regional organizations or associations. Regional commitment requires national commitment for the implementation of the regional organizations' mandates towards regional policy formulation and harmonization and their support to national domestication/adaptation and implementation of regional policies. National commitment reflects the political will of each member state. Experience from the previous strategy identified the lack of national political will as an impediment to national implementation, especially in the area of the regional trade policy framework. A coordinated push from both the regional and bilateral OUs would help identify actual obstacles, opportunities, and synergies that can be leveraged to continue the path forward. As bilateral OUs work with national governments, USAID/WA and USAID/Senegal/SRO will work with

regional governance structures to strengthen feedback loops, monitor progress, and adjust policy implementation more effectively.

Building regional capacity and commitment also requires human/institutional capacity building interventions and continuous and consistent dialogue with the organizations' political and technical leadership teams. As with support to regional commitment, USAID/WA and USAID/Senegal/SRO may direct support to building regional capacity based on national needs, as identified by bilateral OUs and OUs ability to support national governments' capacity building efforts. However, unlike the case of commitment where regional organizations gain political will directly from national representatives in the organization, regional capacity does require a distinct set of skills as it relates to managing across different countries, languages, histories, norms, and governance structures.

To support this process, the following learning questions will help address the challenges that have been experienced around building regional commitment and capacity:

1. How can regional and bilateral USAID OUs coordinate their work to identify the issues that would benefit from regional support and build a regional self-reliance that is supportive of national self-reliance?
 - a. In what areas should regional commitment be strengthened to support national commitment?
 - b. What are the regional capacities that are needed to support national commitment and capacity?
 - c. How can USAID better engage with and support networks of youth and women leaders to build regional capacity?
 - d. How, when, and with what level of effectiveness do regional policies/practices/programs trickle down and impact micro/sub national end users?
2. How can USAID/WA and SRO support the development and resilience of embedded systems?
 - a. What are the most likely trajectories followed by the region towards self-reliance and resilience?
3. When and how are regional versus bilateral programs more effective and efficient in addressing similar issues in multiple versus single countries?
4. For the purpose of performance monitoring, what is the division of responsibility and accountability between regional and national levels, to support and monitor the country-level adaptation and implementation of regional policies most adequately? What framework can be used to measure and monitor capacity development?
5. How can USAID/WA and SRO create a learning environment to inform, better design and promote regional-bilateral collaboration?
 - a. What are opportunities for coordination across technical areas/USAID OUs to leverage synergies or economies of scale?

Description of ME/CLA Resources

At USAID/WA, ME/CLA resources will be organized around the knowledge hub and will include: a Mission MEL Specialist, a Program Analyst and Microeconomist, a Learning and STIP Advisor, a GIS Specialist, and a Communications advisor. These resource persons will also be working within an extended Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Team (MELT) which includes ME/CLA points of contact from USAID/WA's technical teams and OUs in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon. The MELT has existed for several years and has been responsible for implementing the Mission Orders on performance monitoring, evaluation and CLA, which will be updated during the development of the PMP to account for changes in ADS 201. Financial resources will be allocated to ME/CLA as stated in ADS 201. Additional human or financial resources may be made available through the West Africa Learning and Knowledge Hub.

USAID/Senegal/SRO has placed and will continue a concerted focus on ME/CLA. ME/CLA resources in SRO are organized around two distinct mechanisms. For CLA purposes, USAID/Senegal/SRO developed the Sahel Collaboration and Communication activity (SCC). SCC's purpose is to promote CLA for collective impact among USAID, implementing partners for the SDP approach, RISE II, Bridge activities in the Sahel partner communities, select national government institutions, and research institutions; and to

build local capacity for learning and adaptation. SCC will improve CLA among all stakeholders in order to enhance development results and help USAID better communicate those results. SCC's goal is: insured collaboration, learning, and communication among USAID implementing partners and stakeholders for improved development outcomes in targeted zones of the Sahel.

For ME purposes, USAID/Senegal/SRO developed the Monitoring, Reporting and Capacity Strengthening (MRCS) activity to complement and augment USAID/Senegal/SRO's performance management of activities within its portfolio. The MRCS activity will mainly support SRO and BHA activities in Niger and Burkina Faso, and provide limited assistance to Mauritania, Chad, and The Gambia. The MRCS activity enhances SRO's and BHA's commitment to program effectiveness across all sectors, and will help to make informed strategic and management decisions. Additionally, the MRCS will provide Third Party Monitoring in predominantly insecure areas and provide outputs and outcomes verification, evaluations/studies/assessments, and technical assistance and capacity building support for country-level Monitoring & Evaluation teams throughout the region.

Organization of ME/CLA between USAID/WA and USAID/Senegal/SRO

The two Regional Platforms will organize periodic ME/CLA planning, review, and coordination sessions. The platforms plan to engage in annual joint strategic portfolio reviews to discuss progress, issues, adaptive measures, ensure alignment, maximize synergies, and avoid duplication. Bilateral OUs will be encouraged to actively collaborate and co-lead these reviews for shared learning and best practices. This will provide an opportunity to obtain feedback on the relevance and effectiveness of regional interventions for bilateral results achievement. It will also allow for identifying country-level obstacles to regional programming that bilateral OUs can help to address. Activity-specific reviews can also take place in coordination with OUs in the region. Their purpose would be to share knowledge, explore complementarities, and maximize the potential for synergies, as well as coordinate overlapping interventions. The West Africa Knowledge Hub would offer a larger platform for knowledge production, sharing, application, mutual learning, and regional capacity building, especially in ME/CLA and other technical areas. It would also serve as a forum for coordinating and pushing the frontier of our knowledge and interventions in such strategic development areas as resilience and self-reliance.

ANNEX A: REGIONAL OPERATIONS AND STRUCTURE

West Africa's allied Regional Platforms support country-level self-reliance by providing coordinated, demand-driven programs and services to 21 bilateral USAID missions, offices and U.S. Embassies towards a free, resilient, prosperous, healthy, and self-reliant region. This section briefly outlines the regional and bilateral functions of the platforms.

Context

West Africa's strategic and geographic context shapes the architecture of USAID's bilateral and regional OUs in the sub-region. This architecture is ever evolving, adjusted as a function of programmatic objectives, security constraints, and opportunities for maximizing return on investment of taxpayer funds. Regional platforms have long played a central role in supporting bilateral investment in this large, complex and evolving sub-region: the current arrangement represents the sixth distinct configuration of regional platforms in West Africa since the 1970s, where the number of platforms has ranged between one and four. The current configuration, which includes the Sahel Regional Office (SRO), an OU under USAID/Senegal, arose from Agency Mission Management Assessments conducted in 2009 and 2012.

Within this broader context, it is useful to note that the vast majority of West Africa's allied regional platforms' effort is in support of bilateral programs in Limited Presence Countries (LPC's, also referred to as USAID Offices) and Non-Presence Countries (NPCs), which together constitute two-thirds of the countries in the West Africa sub-region. The "Regional Programming and Engagement" role, which is the focus of the main body of the RDCS, constitutes just seven percent of the total flow of USAID resources to the sub-region, which means that the vast majority of resources flow through bilateral USAID OUs and other Washington-based USAID OUs. As such, from a programmatic and management perspective, USAID's mission in the region is delivered through an interconnected and interdependent set of OUs (nested within an interagency setting), with regional platforms playing a strategic role in advancing self-reliance across the region by coordinating and delivering services (or functions) to individual or collections of USAID OUs and U.S. Embassies.

Functions

The following section briefly describes each function provided by the allied regional platforms, as well as how the two platforms interact with each other and their bilateral clients to ensure that they are responsive to customer needs. A Regional Operations Table depicts the overall division of responsibilities between the two platforms. Note that this division may be updated over time.

Regional Programming and Engagement

Provide Transboundary, Multi-Country Programs

The allied regional platforms deliver transboundary and multi-country programs to bilateral clients in economic growth, peace and governance, health, and resilience. These programs are designed and implemented on behalf of bilateral clients where a transboundary or multi-country approach offers programmatic or operational advantages.⁵⁹ USAID/Senegal/SRO focuses principally on the Sahel, while USAID/WA focuses across all ECOWAS and G5 Sahel countries, plus Cameroon. This principal, but not exclusive focus, is depicted in the Table. The YALI program is managed by the USAID/Senegal bilateral mission.

⁵⁹ Programming can also include space for demand-driven bilateral co-investment. Examples of ongoing RDCS regional activities experiencing large demand for buy-ins from bilateral OUs include the West Africa Trade Hub, RISE 2, Youth Connect, Voices for Peace, and YALI.

Collaborate with Regional Institutions for Strengthened National and Local Results

The platforms engage with regional institutions to build capacity and commitment towards improved delivery on their respective mandates. This includes, for example, harmonizing policies and systems, and coordinating implementation of transboundary programs. USAID/WA is the principal, but not sole, USAID interlocutor for the subregion's principal regional organizations, including ECOWAS, CILSS, and the G5 Sahel. Generally speaking, this relationship is embedded into USAID/WA's regional and multi-country programs. USAID/Senegal/SRO also collaborates with the Chad Basin Commission. In collaborating with these institutions, the regional platforms coordinate with the U.S. Embassy where the institution is located.⁶⁰

Coordinate and Sequence with Embedded Regional Staff

The Bureaus for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) and CPS and their component OUs play central roles in delivering USAID programs to address humanitarian needs and conflict prevention in the sub-region. Effective delivery of BHA and CPS programs requires that they are appropriately coordinated and sequenced with bilateral and regional development programs on the ground. BHA (Foreign Disaster Assistance [OFDA], Food for Peace [FFP]), and the CPS OTI and DoD units are embedded within SRO and USAID/WA, respectively to facilitate this coordination.

Oversight and Management of NPC and LPC bilateral Programs

A core role of both platforms is to provide oversight, mentoring, and technical backstopping to LPCs and NPCs, which as noted earlier, outnumber 'full' USAID bilateral missions by two to one. These bilateral programs themselves are not the subject of this RDCS and are governed by country-specific Results Frameworks and Integrated Country Strategies. The platforms' role in administering these programs includes direct supervision of the Country Representative and USAID staff in the OU as well as pooled support and technical assistance. The LPCs and NPCs assigned to each platform are listed here (and in the Table below).

USAID/Senegal/SRO: Burkina Faso (LPC); Mauritania (NPC); Chad (NPC); Cape Verde (NPC); The Gambia (NPC); Guinea-Bissau (NPC)

USAID/West Africa: Côte d'Ivoire (LPC); Benin (LPC); Cameroon (LPC); Togo (NPC); Equatorial Guinea (NPC); São Tomé and Príncipe (NPC)⁶¹

Technical Assistance: Provide Focused Technical Support for High-Demand Services

Both Regional Platforms provide limited, high-demand technical services to their client LPCs and NPCs. When possible, the OUs look to USAID/Washington to provide such services.

Pooled Support Services

The two platforms coordinate to provide support services for core Agency functions (EXO, OAA, FMO, Legal, Program Cycle, Environmental Compliance) focused on client LPCs and NPCs, plus USAID missions lacking the full set of such functions (USAID/Senegal provides support to USAID/Niger and USAID/WA provides support to USAID/Ghana). Within USAID/Senegal, these functions sit within and are managed by the bilateral mission (as opposed to SRO). In addition, both platforms can temporarily extend services to USAID missions requiring such services (these temporary arrangements are *not* depicted in

⁶⁰ The U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria is also the U.S. Ambassador to ECOWAS. The U.S. Ambassador to Mauritania is accredited to the G5 Sahel.

⁶¹ Oversight for Central African countries including Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and São Tomé and Príncipe will be considered under the O2P process for potential transitioning to the Central African Regional Operating Unit.

the Table). USAID/WA and SRO coordinate to provide environmental compliance services across the entire sub-region, as described in a 2014 MOU between the two platforms.

Convening

Convene on Specific Regional Issues and Regional Strategy

The Regional Platforms are able to convene on shared regional issues by leveraging their relationships with regional organizations, towards, for example, harmonizing policies across countries to increase returns on USAID bilateral investments, or to promote best practices, such as high-impact health practices. Several key regional issues such as resilience, food security, trade harmonization, countering violent extremism, and private sector engagement can benefit from such multi-country convening and collaboration. Collaboration, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) around regional programming, as well as the interplay between regional and bilateral investment offers additional opportunities for convening.

Serve as Centers of Excellence for Learning, Training, and Best Practices

The two platforms constitute a joint West Africa Learning and Knowledge (WALK) Hub with a tremendous accumulation of knowledge and learning in several technical areas that can be shared across the region. Examples of USAID/WA activities: regular convening of Communities of Practice in key technical areas; Science, Technology, Innovation and Partnerships (STIP) Advisor and GIS Specialist available to support OUs; and establishment of a West Africa Regional Development Outreach and Communications (DOC) Network that will streamline provision of high-quality DOC services in the region through shared resources and personnel. USAID/Senegal/SRO serves as a convening forum for a broader Agency strategy for the Sahel that includes Mali, Libya and the rest of the Sahel. The overlapping and chronic development challenges in the Sahel, including food insecurity, poor governance, and increased levels of political instability requires a team of full-time dedicated professionals with deep knowledge of the challenges in the region. In particular, SRO will continue to provide thought leadership for an Agency-wide approach to addressing insecurity and resilience in the Sahel.

Host USAID Regional Training Facilities

USAID/WA hosts conferences and trainings through its African Center of Excellence (ACE) which offers state of the art facilities including simultaneous translation services. USAID/Senegal will continue to serve as a centralized training center for staff, partners and stakeholders in the Sahel region, with a focus on resilience and CVE issues.

Valuing the Customer

West Africa's allied regional platforms recognize that they exist to serve and support bilateral clients and broader USG/USAID investment in self-reliance in the sub-region: "*Bilateral operating units' demand for regional roles should be the primary driver of Regional Platform mandates.*"⁶² The two platforms understand their mandates, and will employ several tools to remain focused on customer needs as part of a demand-driven approach:

1. Providing timely information on regional programs and services through regular newsletters and sharing of regular activity information.
2. Updating, or putting in place, Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) between the platform and each client, which include avenues for feedback and adjustment (such as through use of the Agency's new Customer Service Survey).

⁶² USAID, October 2019: Optimizing Operational Platforms: Regional Platforms

3. Updating the 2013 MOU between the allied regional platforms and AFR memorializing the relationship and division of responsibilities between the platforms, and the relationship between the two platforms and their bilateral clients.
4. Co-hosting annual meetings for all USAID OUs working in the region to ensure that activities and leadership are appropriately synced up.

Table: Regional Operations (by Country) for West Africa’s Allied Regional Platforms

Country	Regional Service/Function														
	Operating Unit Type	Regional Programming & Engagement					NPC & LPC oversight & management	Technical Support	Pooled Support Services					Regional Convening	
		RDO 1 Democracy+	RDO 2 Economic Growth	RDO 3 Health Systems	RDO 4 Vulnerability	Young African Leaders Initiative			Financial Management	Acquisition & Assistance	Legal	Executive/Admin	Environmental Compliance		Program Cycle
Sahel															
Mauritania	NPC	W	W	W	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	W,S
Mali	M	W	W	W		S									W,S
Burkina Faso	LPC	W	W	S,W	S	S,W	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	W,S
Niger	M	W	W	S,W	S	S		S	S	S	S	S	S		W,S
Chad	NPC	W	W	W	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	W,S
ECOWAS North West															
Cape Verde	NPC	W	W	W		S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	W
The Gambia	NPC	W	W	W		S,W	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	W
Guinea Bissau	NPC	W	W	W		S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	W
Senegal	M	W	W	W		S									W,S
ECOWAS Littoral															
Guinea	M	W	W	W		S							W		W,S
Sierra Leone	LPC	W	W	W		W							W		W,S
Liberia	M	W	W	W		W							W		W,S
Côte d'Ivoire	LPC	W	W	W		W,S		W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W,S
Ghana	M	W	W	W		W			W	W	W	W	W		W,S
Togo	NPC	W	W	W		W,S		W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W,S
Benin	LPC	W	W	W		W,S		W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W,S
Nigeria	M	W	W	W		W							W		W,S
Central African States															
Cameroon	LPC	W	W	W		W,S	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W
São Tomé & Príncipe	NPC			W		S	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W
Equatorial Guinea	NPC			W		S	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W
Gabon	NPC			W		S	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W

Key: W = USAID/West Africa; S = USAID/Senegal (inclusive of the Sahel Regional Office)