

CONCEPT NOTE

Mobilizing the Civil Society of Mali In Support of the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement

1. Location

This project will be implemented at the national level and in the regions of Kayes, Sikasso and Segou over a two-year period: 2013-2014.

2. Focal Point Organizations

Oeuvre Malienne d'Aide à l'Enfance du Sahel (OMAES) is supporting Malian communities in the regions of Tombouctou, Mopti, Ségou, Sikasso and Kayes through over twenty development projects in the areas of food security, health, education, water supply, and governance. These projects constitute an average budget of about 700 million F CFA per year (approximately 1.4 million USD at 500 F CFA = 1 USD) of which more than 50% goes to food security and nutrition. The 2008 annual budget of OMAES was 710 million CFA, the 2009 budget was 638 million CFA, the 2010 budget was 979 million CFA and the 2011 budget was 1,025 million CFA. The 2012 forecast budget is approximately 800 million F CFA.

The technical and financial partners of OMAES are: the Government of Mali/World Bank, Government of Mali/BOAD, USAID/AED, UNICEF, ICCO, Hewlett Foundation and Turing Foundation.

To ensure the availability, accessibility and diversity of food, OMAES has undertaken from 1989 to 2012 dozen of projects focused on sustainable improvements in the food and nutrition situation of communities in the districts of Niafunké, Ségou and Kayes. For example, since 1998 OMAES has been implementing a family and community food security program funded by ICCO, which mainly focuses on women who are leading households and who have children under 5 years in Niafunké District in the communes of Soboundou, Koumaira and Banikane Narhawa. Through various external evaluations carried out on the field, this project has shown that a significant improvement in food security for the poorest families is possible without a general food distribution.

Regarding lobbying/advocacy campaigns, from 2000 to 2003 OMAES conducted a large campaign of capacity building of over one hundred civil society organizations (CSO). The organization also implemented an Advocacy for Local Food Security project in Mali (PSALM) over a five-year period (2004 – 2009) followed by the project of Shared Governance of Food Security (PGPSA) funded by ICCO. The main outcome of this latter project was the capacity building of local communities to influence food security and nutrition policies and strategies. The gains of PSALM and PGPSA include 18 functioning commune-level food security platforms in Niafunké, Tominian, Bla, Ségou and Kayes. The advocacy efforts of these platforms led to the achievement of various investments and community improvements such as boreholes for sustained water supply, markets, and community access to improved plots of land for agriculture (Moyen Bani Project.)

From 2008 to 2009, OMAES in collaboration with AMSS implemented a UNICEF-funded health and nutrition in Niafunké and Goundam Districts. OMAES has been an active participant in ICCO meetings regarding food security (six to date) and was the coordinator from 2008 to 2010.

Regarding Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN), OMAES is the civil society focal point for nutrition, recognized officially by the Government of Mali. The SUN initiative, which exists in a number of countries (e.g., Niger, Malawi, Guatemala, Bangladesh, Nepal, Tanzania, Zambia, Uganda, Ghana and Mali) intends to mobilize all the stakeholders (governments, United Nations organizations, multi-lateral and bilateral donors, the private sector, and civil society) in order to recognize the importance of nutrition and to reinforce it in the policies of these countries.

OMAES has demonstrated its leadership in civil society: The organization is currently the president of the National Civil Society Council, the Advocacy/Lobbying Network, and the International Association of Reading in Mali. It participates to the African Network for the Promotion of the Right to Food (RAPDA), which has its headquarters in Cotonou. OMAES is a member of the RAPDA Coordination Committee and the sub-regional focal point for Mali, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo and Benin as well as the president of the Malian network. In 2011, OMAES launched a wide-reaching campaign for social mobilization on behalf of quality basic education for all (2011 – 2014) with the support of the Hewlett Foundation (USA).

Helen Keller International (HKI) was founded in 1915 with the mission to save the sight and lives of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. HKI provides technical assistance to nutrition and eye health programs in 22 countries and has successfully conducted operations research and pilot studies and then assisted host governments and their partners to translate these initiatives into large-scale programs. HKI plays a leadership role in the organization of the Nutrition Forum of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and works in close collaboration with the West African Health Organization (WAHO). In Mali, HKI is the lead NGO working in nutrition and is well regarded as a nutrition expert by the Malian Government and partners, providing technical assistance to government and non-governmental partners in community-based management of acute malnutrition, neglected tropical disease control, vitamin A supplementation, and food fortification.

3. Successful Advocacy and Campaigning

In addition to development programming, OMAES has significant experience and success in advocacy. Between 2000 and 2003, OMAES implemented a large program which built the advocacy capacity of more than 100 civil society organizations (CSOs) in Mali. Additionally, OMAES organized the Advocacy for Local Food Security Project, which built the capacity of local communities in political and policy advocacy on nutrition and food security strategies and resulted in the establishment of 18 community food security platforms. Advocacy efforts have resulted in greater investment by community councils in borehole construction, market development, and community access to land. OMAES chairs the National Civil Society Council and supports the Advocacy and Lobbying Network, International Reading Association, and African Network on the Right to Food, which includes 20 African countries.

4. Purpose of Grant

a. Description of Malnutrition Situation

Poverty has become a generalized phenomenon in Mali: 63.8% of the total population lives in poverty and 21% of this population lives in abject poverty. If poverty is mainly seen in rural areas, it is also increasingly reaching large cities due to the degradation of the market place and migration. Regarding health, indicators are causes of concern and significant disparities exist between the urban environment and rural environment, between the regions and socio – economic groups

With poor infant and young child nutrition practices, underlying food insecurity, and high levels of poverty, Mali suffers from very high levels of malnutrition. Nearly 9 percent of children under five years of age suffering from wasting (acute malnutrition) and more than one-quarter from stunting (chronic malnutrition) (2010 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, MICS). Malnutrition continues throughout the life cycle with over 13 percent of women of reproductive age suffering from chronic energy deficiency (2006 Demographic and Health Survey). Micronutrient deficiencies are also at extremely high levels, with more than 70 percent of children 6 to 59 months and over half of pregnant women suffering from anemia (MICS). Exacerbating the situation is the fact that health worker capacity in nutrition varies widely in Mali, compounded by frequent stock-outs of critical nutrition and health commodities.

In order to position nutrition more prominently in national health, growth, and poverty reduction strategies, a National Nutrition Forum was organized in 2010, which resulted in the assignment of a Nutrition Focal Point and creation of a Nutrition Select Committee comprised of representatives from the Ministries of Education, Agriculture, Industrial Development, and Health, as well as the Food Security Commissioner. This Committee, along with civil society and international NGOs, developed a national-level Policy Document for the Development of Nutrition, which focuses on reducing acute malnutrition, chronic malnutrition, and anemia, as well as improving nutritional management of pregnancy and food security.

b. Problems to be Addressed by Project

Given the attention nutrition has recently received in Mali through the National Nutrition Forum and the establishment of a nutrition focal point, the timing is ideal for civil society to take on a more significant role in advocating for continued political commitment for, investment in, and planning of nutrition service delivery. This project, the Civil Society Alliance, will, therefore, strengthen the capacity, coordination, and effectiveness of Malian civil society to advocate for nutrition in a multi-sectoral manner that engages both the public and private sectors. While many Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) implement nutrition programs in country, their experience in advocacy, and particularly in nutrition advocacy, is limited. Moreover, partnerships among CSOs implementing nutrition programs with the broader non-health civil society community are lacking. A common voice on nutrition with a consistent message communicated by multiple stakeholders is urgently needed to ensure continued and expanded support for nutrition.

c. Key Targets/Allies/Partners

Seventeen nutrition partner organizations currently exist in Mali, as well as hundreds of CSOs. Thirteen took part in developing Mali's SUN proposal in August 2011. In order to reach key nutrition partners, these partner organizations, as well as CSO umbrella organizations, will be

engaged in this project. The National Civil Society Council, chaired by OMAES, is the lead representative of CSOs in Mali with national and regional offices, and is key to engaging CSOs across the country. With respect to CSOs engaged in nutrition, FENASCOM (National Federation of Community Health Associations of Mali), an umbrella organization of community health center management committees, has representatives in all regions of Mali as well as nationally. Similarly, GPSP (Pivot Group for Population Health) represents local public health NGOs. All of these critical civil society entities have contributed to this proposal and will participate in this project. Outside of the health arena, linkages will be made with CSOs and NGOs in the food security and agriculture sectors, food security initiatives such as Feed the Future, and the private sector, particularly the food and agricultural industries. HKI has strong relationships with the food industry, through its food fortification program, as well as local manufacturers of complementary foods and fortified flours, including Misola Association. Moreover, the National Nutrition Forum, which HKI helped to organize last year, has enjoyed political commitment and multi-sectoral participation and will be actively engaged in project advocacy activities.

d. Approaches

This project will apply several approaches. Alliance building and strengthening will be critical to coordinating and enhancing the organization of Malian civil society. Policy analysis will determine key advocacy messages. Capacity building through advocacy tool development and training will be another important approach. Advocacy campaigns will also be implemented in many forms, at community, regional, and national levels. Finally, continuous and supportive monitoring will ensure the quality of the advocacy efforts and their impact.

5. Description of Project

a. Goal, Objectives, Outcomes

The goal of this project is to create a positive policy and planning environment for nutrition in Mali. It will build the capacity, coordination, and effectiveness of Malian civil society to advocate for nutrition among policy makers and the private sector. It will enhance the capacity, tools, and activities for CSOs to engage in successful advocacy campaigns to promote evidence-based nutrition policy and programs among multi-sectoral partners. The project will begin with policy analysis, progress to CSO advocacy capacity building, and lead to advocacy campaigning and monitoring. Objectives include:

- Objective 1: Improve the Structural Environment for Nutrition Advocacy.
- Objective 2: Build the Capacity of Malian Civil Society to Influence and Advance the Nutrition Policy Agenda.
- Objective 3: Lead National and Community-level Nutrition Policy Campaigns to include nutrition in national policies and programs, including the Strategic Framework for Growth and Poverty Reduction (CSCR 2012-2017).

This project will result in nutrition policy and program analysis, CSOs equipped and trained to successfully engage public and private sector actors to promote nutrition, and ongoing advocacy by CSOs. Importantly, monitoring mechanisms will be put into place to ensure that advocacy is followed and that policymakers are held accountable.

b. Plan of Action

Objective 1: Improve the Structural Environment for Nutrition Advocacy

Activity 1.1: Mapping of nutrition actors and alliances in Mali

The project will begin by identifying and mapping civil society, Government, and private sector organizations that influence nutrition in all regions of Mali. A multi-sectoral approach will be taken that examines health, nutrition, agriculture, education, human rights, law, the press, academia, donor, Government, and the private sector (including the food industry). Since this project aims to improve coordination among and capacity of CSOs, it will be important to bolster linkages with public agencies, the private sector, and international organizations. Specifically, efforts will be made to expand beyond “nutrition/health CSOs” to other entities that impact nutrition, such as the food industry, suppliers of agricultural productivity commodities (e.g. seeds, fertilizer), and CSOs supporting agriculture, economic growth, and food security. OMAES will coordinate this mapping exercise, first identifying a lead CSO in 3 regions to coordinate mapping at the regional level. These lead CSOs will also act as focal points for other advocacy activities in this project. FENASCOM, GPSP, and the National Civil Society Council will all be important contributors to this process. This project will not necessarily create new groups, but build on existing groups, linking various nutrition-influencing CSOs into larger nutrition alliances, strengthening their capacity and equipping them with the tools for more effective advocacy. Through this mapping exercise, CSOs will be identified and listed in a Nutrition CSO Directory, which will provide organizational descriptions and contact information to further strengthen CSO alliances and partnerships.

Activity 1.2: Analysis of ministerial policies and programs for gaps in how nutrition is addressed

Once CSOs are identified, policy and programming gaps will be assessed, which will serve as the basis for advocacy efforts. A national policy analysis workshop will be organized to examine nutrition policies and protocols within the Ministries of Health, Education, and Agriculture. Policies and strategies already exist in support of child survival, infant and young child feeding, behavior change communication, and vitamin A supplementation, for example. The goal is to ensure that these policies, and training materials related to their implementation, reflect international norms and evidence-based best practices.

Priority will be given to Essential Nutrition Actions and Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition, to cover both preventive and recuperative nutrition strategies, with HKI providing technical leadership. This process will ensure that the design and implementation of development policies and programs are not detrimental to nutrition and that potential opportunities to improve nutrition are identified, which will be especially important outside of the health sector. A summary of the relevant policies and gaps, with recommendations to enhance their nutrition sensitivity, will be developed and disseminated to CSOs and Government partners for use in the development of a nutrition advocacy plan (see Activity 1.3).

Activity 1.3: Development of nutrition advocacy strategy

Once policy and service gaps have been elaborated, priority areas best addressed by CSO advocacy will be determined. This will take place following the national level workshop. A nutrition advocacy framework and plan will then be developed to reflect national level nutrition priorities, thus ensuring consistent, evidence-based messaging and approaches are incorporated

into advocacy efforts. Once the strategy is developed, it will be introduced to local CSOs that influence nutrition (i.e. the alliances organized through the CSO mapping) within each region. Regional advocacy strategy workshops will be organized to bring together the CSOs to review the plan and to outline how the plan will be implemented locally, and by which CSOs or groups of CSOs. The goal is also to ensure that consistent nutrition advocacy messages are being communicated to policymakers from the numerous nutrition advocacy partners and groups.

Additionally, entry points for the evidence-based nutrition interventions will be identified outside of the health and nutrition system. For example, the forum will identify agriculture policies (e.g. food security strategies), programs (value chain development), and agents (extension workers), into which nutrition communication messages or services can be integrated (e.g. nutrition counseling and assessment). Similarly, education (teachers, parent-teacher associations), safety nets, and other social and economic development sectors will be assessed. These opportunities for expanding nutrition service delivery outside of the health sector will be shared with CSOs and will also be integrated into other project activities and tools. The national and regional policy workshops will also be reconvened in Year 2 to reassess progress in the prior year and the need to adjust the plan or modify advocacy strategies or activities.

Objective 2: Build the Capacity of Malian Civil Society to Influence and Advance the Nutrition Policy Agenda

Activity 2.1: Development of nutrition advocacy tools

Many CSOs in Mali have limited, if any, experience in advocacy. Tools and training are needed to strengthen their role in nutrition advocacy. First, a set of core nutrition messages – evidence-based and likely related to Essential Nutrition Actions and Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition - will be developed, reflecting the priority gaps identified in the policy mapping and based on the needs identified during the advocacy planning. These messages will then be integrated into advocacy tools and campaigns, for use in both direct and indirect interventions, in line with the SUN Framework.

The PROFILES nutrition advocacy tool quantifies the health and economic impact of malnutrition in a report oriented to policymakers. This tool has been used in Mali in the past and will be updated for use in this project during year one. HKI will assist in providing technical leadership in this activity, resulting in the development of nutrition policy briefs for use as advocacy tools and talking points by CSOs. Moreover, other international advocacy agencies (e.g. Oxfam) will be engaged to help develop additional advocacy tools, strategies, and campaigns. As much as possible, this project will build on the advocacy efforts of current CSOs to ensure context-relevant methodologies and strategies.

Activity 2.2: Running nutrition policy and advocacy forums for capacity building

During the workshop to develop this proposal, it was noted by many partners that there is varying awareness of and capacity in Malian nutrition policies and protocols among Malian civil society. Therefore, as a starting point to the advocacy capacity building, nutrition policy forums will be organized to ensure all CSOs are on the same page with regard to protocols and approaches to treating and preventing nutrition. Through these forums, national policies and international nutrition norms (Essential Nutrition Actions and Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition) will be reviewed, and CSO leadership capacity in these approaches built.

This will serve to ensure understanding of and consensus on the malnutrition problems within Mali and the effective, evidence-based approaches to addressing nutrition. While nutrition programming is beyond the scope of an advocacy project, it is essential for effective and coordinated advocacy that CSOs are approaching nutrition in a consistent, harmonized, and effective manner (i.e. promoting the same types of interventions and targeting the same significant malnutrition problems.)

At these nutrition forums, the tools for nutrition advocacy that have been developed will be introduced to the CSOs. CSO leaders will be trained in the use of the tools and approaches, with an emphasis on coordinating advocacy efforts among CSOs. These forums will be held annually.

Objective 3: Lead National and Community-level Nutrition Policy Campaigns to include nutrition in national policies and programs, including the Strategic Framework for Growth and Poverty Reduction (CSCR 2012-2017).

Activity 3.1: Inventory of Government commitments regarding nutrition

An inventory of Government commitments regarding nutrition will be conducted and the profile analysis will be updated with information on the cost of nutrition in Mali. Policymakers in the areas of health, agriculture and education will be engaged through quarterly information sessions conducted by the Civil Society Alliance.

Activity 3.2: Development of a plan for monitoring the commitments of the Government regarding nutrition

A plan for monitoring the implementation of the Government's engagements regarding nutrition will be developed.

Activity 3.3: Setting up regional influence groups on nutrition

At the regional level, CSO alliances in nutrition (identified and organized after the mapping exercise) will be grouped by OMAES around regional agencies that will be the focal point in each region. Activities of the advocacy plan will be conducted by these stakeholders.

Activity 3.4 Holding campaigns at the national, regional and community levels to promote nutrition policy in programs

Sensitization and advocacy campaigns on nutrition by CSOs will take various forms at the national and regional levels. With the support of local lobbyists, OMAES will conduct these events to serve as discussion sessions covering the policy gaps and shortcomings identified during the stakeholders' mapping. The events will be broadcast through local radio stations and newspapers to increase the visibility and prestige of the SUN Initiative. The widespread participation by local entities will also add to the credibility of the movement. Journalists, donors, international NGOs, and university lecturers/students will also be invited to ensure broad participation and media coverage.

As much as possible, advocacy efforts will be integrated or conducted alongside major community health and nutrition events such as National Immunization Days, National Food Security Days, International Women's Day, etc. Communication around these events will enable the mobilization of communities for a greater understanding of and support to the process. These forums may include information sessions with regional and district policymakers; debates on radio/television broadcasts focused on nutrition; and activities with agriculture agents, education officials and business owners. The forums and other activities will strongly encourage the

involvement of community leaders, community health workers (community relays), women's groups, agriculture cooperatives, youth groups, religious leaders, and local media.

Every year, regional meetings will be conducted for the CSOs so that they can provide an update and share with each other their progress, challenges and advocacy strategies on nutrition. These update meetings will also facilitate information sessions on nutrition policies and protocols.

c. Monitoring and Evaluation

In addition to monitoring the indicators listed in the log frame, efforts will be made to measure the impact of nutrition advocacy. A monitoring plan will be developed during a workshop organized by OMAES, and advocacy monitoring meetings will be conducted quarterly at the regional level by the focal point agencies. Progress on improvements in nutrition policy/programming will be measured. This progress will then be fed back into the policy-level nutrition advocacy briefings (activity 3.1) to ensure that policymakers are aware that their actions are being monitored.

See Log Frame Annex and the Timeline for more information.

d. Budget

See Annex.

E. Management Structure and internal governance of CSOs:

Participating Organization: The financial management of this project will be overseen by the representation of the **World Food Program (WFP)** in Mali, which will be the participating organization. The WFP will also serve as an interface between the Civil Society Alliance and the other agencies of the United Nations. Furthermore, the World Food Program will support the advocacy efforts of the Civil Society Alliance to the Government of the Republic of Mali and currently hosting REACH initiative.

Piloting the Civil Society Alliance: L'Œuvre Malienne d'Aide à l'Enfance du Sahel (OMAES) will pilot this project, with HKI ensuring technical leadership, that is, development of nutrition advocacy tools, training in nutrition, and support to the advocacy activities to the Government.

OMAES will be responsible for the administrative management and coordination of CSOs. The funds will be sent to OMAES, which will provide a sub-grant to HKI and sign sub-contracts with national and regional actors for the implementation of activities at various levels such as workshops and forums. OMAES will also conduct trainings in advocacy.

On August 25, 2011, a workshop to develop a position paper on "Advocacy for Nutrition for SUN" was co-organized by Helen Keller International and OMAES. This workshop gathered together 13 national and international organizations intervening in nutrition in Mali. Once the mapping exercise is completed and nutrition advocacy frameworks developed, the project will build on already existing networks at the national and regional levels (for example clusters at the national and regional level). This opportunity to participate in the SUN project will be extended to other organizations having relevant nutrition activities. To this end, the program will closely work with the Nutrition Cluster piloted by UNICEF and REACH initiative hosted by WFP.