



Call for communication

International scientific symposium on:

MIGRATION, CLIMATE CHANGE, FOOD SECURITY AND RESILIENCE IN THE SAHEL»

6 - 8 November 2023 at Dan Dicko Dankoulodo University, Maradi - Niger

Introduction

The Sahel region faces recurrent problems of food and nutritional insecurity, natural resources degradation, climate change, and poverty. The region has seen the sharpest increase in hunger over the last decade, despite the mobilization and intervention of a wide range of actors to provide food aid to the most vulnerable communities.

In this context, several strategies have been developed by different partners to overcome this situation. Among them, The partnership between World Food Programme (WFP) and Sahelian higher education and research institutions can be considered as successful. Following the many successes achieved, six (6) higher education and research institutions, namely Université Nazi BONI (Burkina Faso), Université Gaston BERGER (Senegal), Université Abdou MOUMOUNI (Niger), Université Dan Dicko DANKOULODO de Maradi (Niger), Université de N'Djamena (Chad) and Institut Polytechnique Rural de Formation et de Recherche Appliquée (Mali), decided to join forces as a network. This commitment led to the creation in January 2020 of the “Réseau des Universités du Sahel pour la Résilience (REUNIR)”.

REUNIR aims to be a framework and active network of resilience, food and nutritional security, climate change and natural disasters in the Sahel. Initially composed of six (6) universities, REUNIR will have grown, by 2023, to 11 universities, with the addition of “University de Fada N'Gourma (Burkina Faso), Université de Ségou (Mali), Université de Diffa (Niger), Université Amadou Moctar Mbow (Senegal) and Université de Abéché (Chad).

In line with its objectives and as part of the implementation of its 2023 action plan, REUNIR will organize an international scientific symposium on “**Migration, Climate Change, Food Security and Resilience**” at the Dan Dicko Dankoulodo University in Maradi, Niger, in November 2023.

This symposium has been organized to discuss and to exchange on the major challenges undermining the development process and the importance of building the resilience of Sahelian communities and ecosystems.

• Background and rationale for the symposium

The Sahelian region is characterized by spatiotemporal disparities in climatic characteristics that affect livelihoods, particularly agroforestry and fisheries production. This is due to the fact that Sahelian countries are of almost permanent situation of extreme vulnerability, linked to droughts, pest attacks, ongoing land degradation and progressive desertification of the natural environment.

Over the past few decades, the Sahel region has seen a sharp increase in the number of food-insecure people. More than 6 million children under the age of 5 are considered malnourished. The human development index for Sahelian countries is among the lowest in the world, and poverty levels are very high, with low female participation in economic activities and poor access to basic social services.

Beyond food issues, other social challenges, such as increasing insecurity migration as well as the large number of refugees and internally displaced people, are having a negative impact on the Sahel. Growing insecurity as a result of worsening conflict situations in the Sahel associated with half a million internally

displaced people, is jeopardizing the livelihoods of Sahelian communities. The key challenges affecting the Sahel are outlined below.

- **Migration**

Migration is defined as the movement of people from their usual living environment to new horizons. It can be family or individual, temporary or permanent, occupational, forced or voluntary, and looking for a better life.

Migration issues are currently the subject of debate at all levels. It is estimated that some 8.4 million migrants leave West Africa for various destinations, mainly Europe.

Various sources now consider sub-Saharan Africa to be particularly vulnerable to climate change and its various impacts (IPCC, 2014). The effects of climate change, in the form of erratic rainfall, degradation of agricultural land, drying up of ponds and disappearance of vegetation cover, are at the root of the massive displacement of populations to areas where they can carry out their activities.

Migration, especially in the Sahel, is of major concern, with the both internal and cross-border mass forced migrations intensifying the main causes of which are insecurity, famine, extreme poverty, etc.. For more than a decade, the Sahel region has been plagued by growing insecurity linked to the actions of terrorist groups operating in the sub-region, and to intercommunal conflicts (between farmers-herders).

Van der Land *et al.* (2018) highlighted the importance of circular migration and the impact of remittances on adaptive capacities and resilience in West Africa. Environmental factors are therefore not the only variables to be considered in the decision to migrate. Therefore, Research must consider broader approaches that take into account the heterogeneity of West African contexts.

- **Food and nutritional security**

For about four decades, extreme climatic conditions have continuously pushed millions of people across sub-Saharan Africa into acute food insecurity. Climate-induced shocks to the food system now occur about every 2 years, and in some places are almost permanent. Under these conditions, farms in these countries or regions have no chance of recovering from the shocks. This means that we need to invest in the resilience of communities and ecosystems to overcome food shocks more quickly.. According to the United Nations, up to 65% of

productive land in Africa is degraded, and 45% is affected by desertification. Desertification reduces soil fertility and the amount of land available for grazing. In a joint statement at the annual meeting of the Network for Food Crisis Prevention in West Africa (RPCA) held in Lomé in December 2022, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) sounded the alarm.

These organizations pointed out that the number of people suffering from hunger in West and Central Africa will reach more than 48 million, including 9 million children, by the end of 2023 if urgent and sustainable solutions are not found. According to the latest results of the Harmonized Framework for Food Security Analysis, over 35 million people (including 6.7 million children) in the Sahelian region, or around 8% of the estimated population, are currently unable to meet their basic food and nutritional needs.

It's not enough for people to have access to food; they also need a nutritionally balanced diet, especially for children aged 0 to 5. Acute malnutrition is often widespread in these countries. The causes are social, cultural and behavioral, but this malnutrition is exacerbated by the growing and widespread insecurity in Sahelian countries. To meet this challenge, it is essential to mobilize scientific expertise to support the development strategies of these countries.

In addition, African countries in general, and those in the Sahel in particular, are affected by global shocks that undermine food systems, including volatile commodity markets, increases in energy and fertilizer prices, disruptions into international trade, and the ongoing events in Ukraine. These shocks have led to sharp increases in food prices across the region, exacerbating food insecurity as inflation strains meagre household incomes and threatens community resilience. All indicators point to the urgent need to find sustainable solutions to ensure that future generations have productive land to meet their needs.

- **Climate change**

Developing countries, particularly those in the Sahel, are vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. This vulnerability is manifested by a steady rise in temperatures, high spatiotemporal variability in rainfall, and increase in extreme events on a global scale. We may not yet know all the reasons for the rise in temperatures, but the main

cause is due to the enormous quantities of greenhouse gases (GHGs) emitted into the atmosphere as a result of human activities (industry, agriculture, livestock farming, transport, etc.). It is widely accepted that climate change will be difficult to reverse in the medium term.

- **Objectives of the International Scientific Symposium**

The aim of the symposium is to mobilize professors, researchers, PhD candidates, government agencies, extensionists, and communities to support peace-building and sustainable development in the Sahel. The main theme will be: "**Migration, Food Security, Climate Change and Resilience in the Sahel: What contributions can scientific research make to sustainable peace and development?**"

The main objective is to propose guidelines, and intervention strategies for achieving sustainable resilience of the populations and ecosystems.

Specifically, the symposium will focus on the :

- ✓ impacts of climate change, agroforestry and fishing practices in the Sahel;
- ✓ causes, consequences, and solutions of migration and food insecurity in the Sahel ;
- ✓ natural resources governance and sustainable land management for resilience;
- ✓ systems and/or approaches to managing cross-border migration flows.

- **Organization of the international scientific symposium**

The international symposium will last three (3) days, from **November 6 to 8, 2023** at the Université Dan Dicko Dankoulodo in Maradi, Niger. An inaugural conference will focus on **sustainable development in the Sahel - Issues and challenges**. **This will be** followed by five panels on the following topics:

- **Panel 1:** Food and nutrition security, migration and sustainable development in the Sahel ;
- **Panel 2:** Climate change and agroforestry and fishing practices;
- **Panel 3:** Natural resource governance and sustainable land management for resilience;
- **Panel 4:** Systems and approaches for the sustainable management of migration flux;
- **Panel 5:** Round table discussion on research, development issues and resilience.

Under the patronage of the Minister of Higher Education and Research, the symposium will be organized by REUNIR.

- **Expected results of the symposium**

At the end of the Colloquium, the following results are expected:

- ✓ The causes, consequences, and solutions of migration in the Sahel are analyzed;
- ✓ Systems and approaches for managing cross-border migration fluxes are analyzed.
- ✓ Mechanisms for good governance of natural resources and resilience building are analyzed;
- ✓ Current issues and challenges related to food and nutritional security are analyzed;
- ✓ The impacts of climate change and environmental risks are assessed;
- ✓ The impact of good practice on sustainable land management and resilience is well known.
- ✓ A final declaration on the proposed strategies and recommendations addressing the various crises is drafted and circulated.

- **Scientific Committee**

An International Scientific Committee made up of researchers and lecturers from REUNIR member universities has been set up. Its task is to receive proposals for papers, and to select and evaluate manuscripts after pre-evaluation by reading committees. Validated papers will be published as conference proceedings.

- **International scientific symposium format**

The symposium will provide a forum for the exchange and sharing research findings, as well as an opportunity for broad reflection, leading to proposals for strategies to address the various challenges hampering development in Sahelian countries. It will take place in a **hybrid format** (face-to-face and virtual) to facilitate the participation of communicators. The Colloquium will be held in **French and English**, and the sessions will be led by high-level academics and experts. All papers will be published as proceedings. A final declaration of the symposium will be available in French and English.

- **Conditions of participation**

The symposium is open to researchers, PhD students, professors-researchers, and experts from non-governmental organizations, private or public structures. Each potential participant has to register

and submit a abstract for one of the four topics of the panels presented above.

- **Submitting communications**

The abstract: it should be succinct (maximum 250 words), attractive and structured into problem/objective, materials and methods, main results/discussion and a maximum of five (05) key words.

The abstract should be provided in French and English, and should be one page in length, with the first name(s) and surname(s) of the author(s) and full address(es), professional status and institution of affiliation. Authors should submit their manuscripts to the following e-mail address: reunir@u-naziboni.bf, only complete articles will be considered. Texts should be in Times New Roman, font size 12, single-spaced. Participants and experts intending to submit papers for the international colloquium must respect the deadlines indicated in the table below.

Table: deadlines

Activity	Period
Call for applications	July 15, 2023
Abstract submission	1 ^{er} to August 30, 2023
Article acceptance notification	September 15, 2023
Submit full article	September 15 to 30, 2023
Participation registration	September 25 to 30, 2023
International symposium	November 6 to 8, 2023
Publication of the proceedings	December 2023

NB: registration is subject to payment of the registration fee:

- ✓ **Lecturers and Researchers:** 30,000 F CFA
- ✓ **Members of NGOs and other organizations:** 30,000 CFAF
- ✓ **PhD candidates:** 15,000 F CFA