

MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2023 MALI, BURKINA FASO AND NIGER

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FINAL REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Since 2019, the Strømme Foundation West Africa (SFWA) has been implementing a strategic plan (SP) in its countries of intervention (Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger) that covers the period 2019-2023. The SP is based on three thematic goals, including: 1) a strong civil society and public sector, 2) inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for marginalized and disadvantaged groups, and 3) improved livelihoods for the rural poor through income generation. The implementation of the SP was challenged by the changing context of insecurity, COVID-19 and the socio-political situation. After 3 years of operation, it is necessary to carry out a mid-term evaluation with the following specific objectives: to analyse the operational approach to the implementation of the strategy by SFWA; to analyse the strategy with regard to the criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability as well as cross-cutting issues and lessons learned; to analyse the effects and changes through some indicators of the logical framework.

Methodology

The methodology used is based on a participatory approach combining quantitative and qualitative surveys. The quantitative data collection was carried out using smartphones and made it possible to reach in the three countries: 1,341 CMMF women from the 2019 and 2020 cohorts; 724 SS students from the 2018 and 2019 cohorts; 60 students from SS2 (2018-2020 cohort) and 79 learners from the S3A (2018-2020 cohort). The qualitative survey involved individual interviews with resource persons (people from the SF, partner NGOs, technical service managers, communal authorities, etc.) and focus groups with women members of the CMMF and men (husbands of the CMMF women).

Analysis of the SFWA's organisational structure

In the search for better management of SFWA's activities, the SFWA had undertaken an organisational reform to transfer the management competencies previously vested in the regional office to the country offices. This was integrated into the 2019-2023 strategic plan and reflects SF's vision and willingness to better structure itself for more efficiency and effectiveness.

The analysis of the organisational structure shows overall good, simple structuring and decentralisation of tasks from the regional office to the country office as well as a commitment of staff to achieve the objectives set by the Strategic Plan. Despite the security and health challenges, the SFWA is able to produce results based on collaborative work between departments and sectors. However, it is noted that the current organisation has undergone changes though the organisational chart has not been updated. There is then a disparity in the understanding and appropriation of this organisation chart from one staff member to another or from one position to another. There is also a high level of staff mobility/departure, which may constitute a threat and requires reflection on the strategy for the retention of the staff. The risks of insecurity and political instability in the three countries constitute threats to the achievement of objectives.

The analysis shows a concentration/overload of activities within the Administration and Finance department of the regional office, whereas certain administrative tasks could be assigned to the Human Resources department. It is necessary to reflect on the possibility of sharing some administrative tasks with HR to ease the workload. As the communication department is a transversal component within the organisation, SF would benefit more from being involved in the SMT meetings in order to allow it to better represent the organisation externally.

In terms of quality, there is synergy between the staff for quality results. For the moment, there is no need to create an efficiency-quality department. What is important is to strengthen the existing system through communication and capacity building of stakeholders. However, in the medium and long term, it would be necessary to have a quality-efficiency specialist. In view of the changing political and security context in the countries of intervention and the difficulty of raising funds, it is not necessary to set up an operations department, as its work is already dealt with by the programmes department. However, given the level of appropriation of the organisational chart, a better description of tasks is necessary for greater efficiency in the interventions of each staff member.

In terms of the lessons learned from the faire-faire strategy, one can observe that despite the strong pressure of insecurity, the intervention approach made it possible to pursue the planned activities in the field by adapting the intervention strategies to the realities. Due to women's capacity building, there is emergence of female leadership in claiming their rights from the local authorities. We also note insufficient fundraising by partner NGOs outside the SF funding.

Evaluation of the Strategic Plan implementation

❖ In terms of relevance

The evaluation shows that the SP is very relevant. It was formulated with a contextual analysis, to take into account the needs of the beneficiaries and to comply with national and international policies (education of children outside schools, fight against poverty, promotion of women,). The SP is also readapting to the current evolution of the political, health and security context.

❖ Efficiency

The results of the MPI in all three SFWA countries show that the percentage of poor households decreased slightly from 61.1% in the baseline survey to 58.5% in the evaluation. The percentage of poor households decreased in Mali (from 72.76% to 57.3%) and Burkina Faso (65.24% to 55.3%). In Niger, there was a major increase in the number of multidimensional poor households, (62.7% in the evaluation compared to 41.1% in the baseline study). It is noted that 46.8% of households experienced one or more shocks in the twelve months preceding the survey. Niger has the highest proportion of households that experienced shocks, 50.6%, followed by Burkina Faso (47.2%) and Mali (42.5%). The most frequently mentioned shocks are: crop loss (16.4%); serious illness or accident (13.0%); death of a family provider (7.5%); loss of livestock due to fire, flooding, epizootic disease, theft (7.5%).

The most common coping strategies used to deal with the loss of crops are selling assets (30%), using savings (19.1%) and borrowing (17.7%). Particularly in Niger, the solidarity of relatives was

decisive during the period, notably the help of relatives living in the country (18.3%) and the help of relatives living abroad (15.6%). The proportion of households that were forced to sell assets to cope with shocks fell from 31.5% to 24.6% between the baseline survey and the mid-term evaluation. The downward trend is almost identical in all three countries.

Evolution of women's economic activities: 15% of women have not started or expanded any IGAs compared to 12.4% in the baseline study. In Niger, 29.1% of the women surveyed had not started a new IGA or expanded an existing one; 27.5% of the women had started a new IGA compared to 21% in the baseline study; 52% had expanded their existing IGA compared to 55.5% in the baseline study. Across the three countries, the proportion of women who acquired new goods and services for their households through their IGAs decreased between the baseline study and the mid-term evaluation, from 94.6% in 2019 to 83.4% in 2021, a drop of 11.2 percentage points. This decrease could be explained by the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a strong impact on women's activities. The analysis of the data shows that in view of the crises (health and security) that affect economic activities, women are obliged to invest more in food and health requirements than in goods and services.

Achievement of women's individual goals: The data analysis shows that in the baseline study, the women's biggest goals were, in order of importance, to acquire new goods (80.5% of the women in the baseline study), expand their IGA (53.6%); to acquire services (34.4%); and to start a new IGA (21.9%). The analysis of the evaluation data reveals that the objectives of acquiring new assets and acquiring services experienced a major decline of 28 and 14 percentage points respectively between the baseline study and the mid-term evaluation. In Niger, this decline reached 42 and 21 percentage points respectively. On the other hand, the objectives of expanding one's IGA and starting a new IGA increased by 3 and 6 percentage points respectively compared to the baseline and mid-term evaluations.

The interviews show that women have experienced difficulties in implementing IGAs because of the health and security situation and the difficulty of mobilising the savings needed to meet their needs. Faced with health challenges (COVID-19), 53.4% of women have reduced the quantity of production; 32% have reduced the selling price of products and 24.4% have temporarily stopped production. In Niger, the proportion of those who stopped the IGA reached 50%. Despite the crisis situations affecting IGAs, women remain positive and optimistic about the future of their economic activities. Thus, 90.5% think that their financial opportunities will improve in the future.

Appropriation and adoption of life skills: Of all the women who benefited from AL, the vast majority (85.40%) said they had benefited from life skills training: 95.1% in Mali, 85.8% in Burkina Faso and 72.3% in Niger. The level of appropriation varies according to the type of skill. The majority (52%) of respondents said they had acquired problem-solving skills; 49.6% on creativity; 45.8% on decision-making and learning to say "no"; 45.5% on citizenship. The most adopted life skills, in order of importance, are: problem solving (45.6%); creativity (39.8%); citizenship (34.9%); decision making - learning to say "no" (33.4%). Of the total number of women who benefited from AL, 41.4% stated that they had the ability to use a calculator in IGAs. This proportion reaches 65% in Mali and only 16.3% in Niger. As for the use of the telephone and/or the scale in IGAs, we note that this indicator has progressed between the baseline study and the mid-term evaluation, rising from 44.8% to 52%, a difference of 6 percentage points. In Mali, the percentage

of women able to use a calculator is 78% compared to only 20.6% in Niger. The majority (70%) of the women stated that they have difficulties in « reading and writing » and in calculating and this constitutes a real obstacle to the smooth running of their IGAs. They attributed this to insufficient learning time in the AL centres due to COVID-19 and other factors that affect learning conditions.

Current educational status of students from the SS 2018-2019 cohort: For SS students, the analysis shows that 19.3% repeated at least one grade after transfer. Interviews with pedagogical supervisors and parents show that school dropouts are not negligible. In terms of performance, around 83% of the pupils transferred to primary school got an annual average of 5/10 points or more; 26% were in the top 5. Among children from SS, 16.7% have already repeated a grade, including 21.2% of boys. Repetition is not negligible. However, in terms of performance, 74.5% obtained an annual average of 10/20 points or more, and 32% obtained a distinction of « fairly good » or « good ». However, the interviews show a high drop-out rate in SS in favour of gold panning or other economic activities.

❖ **Impact**

In terms of impact, there were less conflicts and more cohesion between members of different families. Women's participation in decision-making bodies within households has improved significantly between the baseline study and the mid-term evaluation, rising from 63.5% to 92.2%. Their participation in decision-making at the community level also improved from 41.8% to 70.4%. Although the level of participation at the community level is lower than at the family level, the percentage of participation is high and reflects the effects of the interventions on the populations.

❖ **Consideration of cross-cutting issues in the strategic plan**

The cross-cutting issues covered in the strategic plan are: gender mainstreaming, inclusion of people with disabilities, environmental protection, the fight against corruption, conflict prevention, implementation of accountability in the communes and analysis of the humanitarian-development nexus. Of these themes, the first four (gender mainstreaming, inclusion of people with disabilities, environmental protection, anticorruption) have been planned and funded for implementation from 2019 to end of 2020.

The data shows partial achievement of results on the field and indicates that more needs to be done to reach the targets at this level in the cross-cutting issues. Overall, many players do not master the SF gender policy and partner organisations do not have gender policies/strategies. Nevertheless, they make the effort to take gender into account based on their prerequisites with their limitations. The inclusion of people with disabilities remains a major challenge for the implementing partners to address by 2023. In the 2019-2020 data, for example, the inclusion of children with disabilities represents 0.54% of pupils in SS centres.

Conclusion and recommendations

The implementation of the SP 2019-23 experienced bottlenecks related to the changing security, political and health context, which impacted the implementation of activities in the countries of intervention. At the end of the evaluation, the following recommendations were made:

At the organisational structure level

- Update and popularise the organisation chart to ensure that it is owned by staff.

- Improve job descriptions for all positions to better clarify roles and responsibilities
- Implement a retention strategy to reduce staff mobility

Findings on the partnership

- Further strengthen partner NGOs skills in budget planning to limit financial constraints during implementation
- To further encourage NGOs to make realistic plans for a better use of resources in time

Findings on Programmes

- Strengthen skills training in promising activities for CMMF women to enable them to develop their IGAs and their economic resilience
- Further strengthen CMMF women in life skills to enable them to build resilience to crises
- Sensitise husbands on the positive effects of women's contribution to household expenses, to encourage them to accept or facilitate.
- Support the CMMFs in their official recognition and help them in developing promising partnerships with municipalities and microfinance institutions
- Define a post-transfer follow-up strategy to capitalise on the traceability of SS, SS2 students,
- Review the selection mode and profile of S3A beneficiaries to reduce dropouts after they have started their own job
- Strengthen the capacity of players in fundraising for the financing of IGAs of CMMFs
- Ensure that partner NGOs plan and implement actions to raise additional funds for the financing of women's IGAs

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AL:	Active Literacy
ADEFAD:	Aid to Children and Destitute Families Association
AFDR:	Association for Rural Development Training
IGA:	Income Generating Activity
ANTBA:	Association for Bible Translation and Literacy
ATPF:	Land Management and Forest Production
LS:	Life skills
CMMF:	Community Managed Micro Finance
FDC:	Foundation for Community Development
FS:	Strømme Foundation
MPI:	Multidimensional Poverty Index
ODK:	Open Data Kit
ONEN:	Nigerian Organization of Innovative Educators
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
SP:	Strategic Plan
S3A:	Strategy for Accelerated Apprenticeship for Adolescents
SS:	Speed School
SS2:	Speed School 2
TAP:	Primary Completion Rate
TBS:	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GBV:	Gender Based Violence

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I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This general introduction includes the background of the mid-term evaluation of the strategic plan (SP), a reminder of the orientations of this SP 2019-2023 and the objectives of the evaluation.

1.1. Background

The Strømme Foundation (SF) is an international NGO under Norwegian law with a mission to fight poverty. Currently, SF's interventions in the world cover three regional offices: Asia, East Africa, and West Africa. The Strømme Foundation West Africa (SFWA)¹ has been involved in development programmes through education, microfinance and capacity building in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger for several years (with SS in 2004 in Mali, 2006 in Burkina Faso and 2007 in Niger)². SFWA's regional office is based in Bamako (Mali) and the country offices in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) and Niamey (Niger).

SF operates based on a five-year strategic plan, the current one covering the period 2019-2023. This strategic plan (SP) aims to consolidate the previous achievements of the 2014-2018 plan on the one hand, and on the other hand, to place particular emphasis on strengthening the capacities of civil society and better collaboration with public players for the realisation of rights, to education, socio-economic inclusion, and access to employment.

To better establish a good monitoring and evaluation system, SF commissioned a baseline study that specified the baseline values of the indicators of the SP 2019-2023³ results framework.

The implementation of the SP 2019-2023 was confronted with the changing context marked by growing insecurity, particularly in the intervention areas, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the socio-political situation. After three years of implementation of the SP, it is necessary to carry out an evaluation to have elements of analysis and relevant recommendations to enable its reorientation on the one hand, and to envisage actions to be taken in the medium and long term on the other hand. This is the reason why the present mid-term evaluation has been commissioned.

1.2. Background of the development and orientation of PS 2019-2023

The development of SP 2019-2023 considers the contextual realities characterised by: i) a worrying situation of out-of-school children which negatively affects the achievement of SDG 4; ii) illiteracy among young people and women; iii) low socio-professional integration of young people and women; iv) low income of women; v) low civic involvement of communities; and vi) negative impact of insecurity and the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives of the population.

To address the problems of children's education and women's illiteracy, SF implements the Strategy for Accelerated Schooling (SS) for out-of-school children aged 8 to 12 years and the Strategy for Accelerated Schooling 2nd formula (SS2) for those aged 13 to 14 years to enable them to reintegrate the formal school curriculum. As for women, functional literacy, or Active Literacy (AL) targets primarily those

¹ Strømme Foundation West Africa

² SFWA (2018), *Strategic Plan 2019-2023*, Strømme Fondation West Africa; September 2018

³ SFWA (2019), *Baseline study and setting the reference values of the indicators of the strategic plan 2019-2023, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger*, Strømme Foundation West Africa Study Report.

in the CMMFs in order to enable them to develop and use their cognitive and instrumental skills to improve their IGAs and their daily lives

Faced with the low socio-professional integration of young people and women as well as the low income of women, SF is developing several programmes, including the Strategy for Accelerated Apprenticeship for Adolescents (S3A) and young people aged 15 to 25, Saving for Change (SfC), green jobs, the value chain (AVC) and Tamadash in Niger. Concerning the low level of community involvement, it should be noted that the three intervention countries have committed themselves to decentralisation and administrative deconcentration to allow for greater community participation in local development through citizen control of public action. However, the realisation of this political option is fraught with difficulties, including the weak capacity of communities to negotiate with the public authorities and, above all, ignorance of social and economic rights.

The implementation of SP 2019-2023 has been particularly marked by rising insecurity and the COVID-19 pandemic, which have particularly affected the already fragile social and economic situation. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and closed schools in the three countries, exacerbating the vulnerable situation of millions of children. This situation remains a challenge for the achievement of the SP goals.

In view of the above, the SP 2019-2023 has been built based on three strategic orientations or thematic objectives:

- 1) a strong civil society and public sector, whose activities are the development of the management and intervention capacities of partner NGOs; the reinforcement of collaboration with local authorities for the realisation of the right to education and training and; the reinforcement of collaboration with the States at central and deconcentrated levels.
- 2) inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for marginalised and disadvantaged groups, with activities including SS and SS2 for out-of-school children and AA for women.
- 3) Improved livelihoods of the rural poor through income generation, with activities including support to the creation and emergence of village groups, associations and networks for women's empowerment and advocacy; support to improve the incomes of rural women and youth through the SfC, S3A, AVC, Green Jobs Tamadash programmes

The expected impact of the SP is that the target households of the interventions achieve a standard of living that enables them to escape poverty. SF aims to see the target households reach a suitable level in the multidimensional poverty scale that incorporates resilience (the ability of households to cope with shocks).

1.3. Objectives of the evaluation

❖ Overall objectives

The overall objective is to analyse the operational approach to the implementation of the strategy by SFWA regarding thematic content and management capacity, to draw lessons from the implementation process of the different programmes and to propose recommendations for the improvement of

interventions and the overall management of the SP.

❖ **Specific objectives:**

The following four (4) specific objectives are expected from this evaluation (details are in the annexes)

Specific objective 1: To analyse the operational approach to the implementation of the strategy by the Strømme Foundation: *this involves analysing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of the organisational structure that supports the implementation of the SP and providing guidelines for improvement in the light of the changing context; to provide answers to questions such as: is there a need to create an operations Department at regional level? An Efficiency and Quality department at regional level? What would be the most appropriate structure at regional and country level to promote better achievement of objectives and results? What is the strategy for sustaining achievements, including disengagement? What lessons can be learned from the faire-faire approach and what improvements are needed?*

Specific objective 2: Analyse the strategy in the light of DAC/OECD criteria: *This involves carrying out the analysis based on the classic Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria of relevance and coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. Other criteria such as ethical analysis and cross-cutting issues will be added*

Specific objective 3: Analyse the effects and changes brought about through the collection of values of certain key indicators of the logical framework in relation to the effects and impact, while identifying shortcomings and areas for improvement. *The investigations will focus on the following points: the level reached by households in the MPI; the level of involvement of CMMF women associations in claiming their rights and the participation of women in decision-making bodies; access to and retention in primary and secondary education of children from SS and SS2; the level of adoption and reinvestment of life skills by AL learners; the level of improvement in women's socio-economic status and change in gender relations within their households; the resilience of households; and the access of S3A youth to decent employment opportunities.*

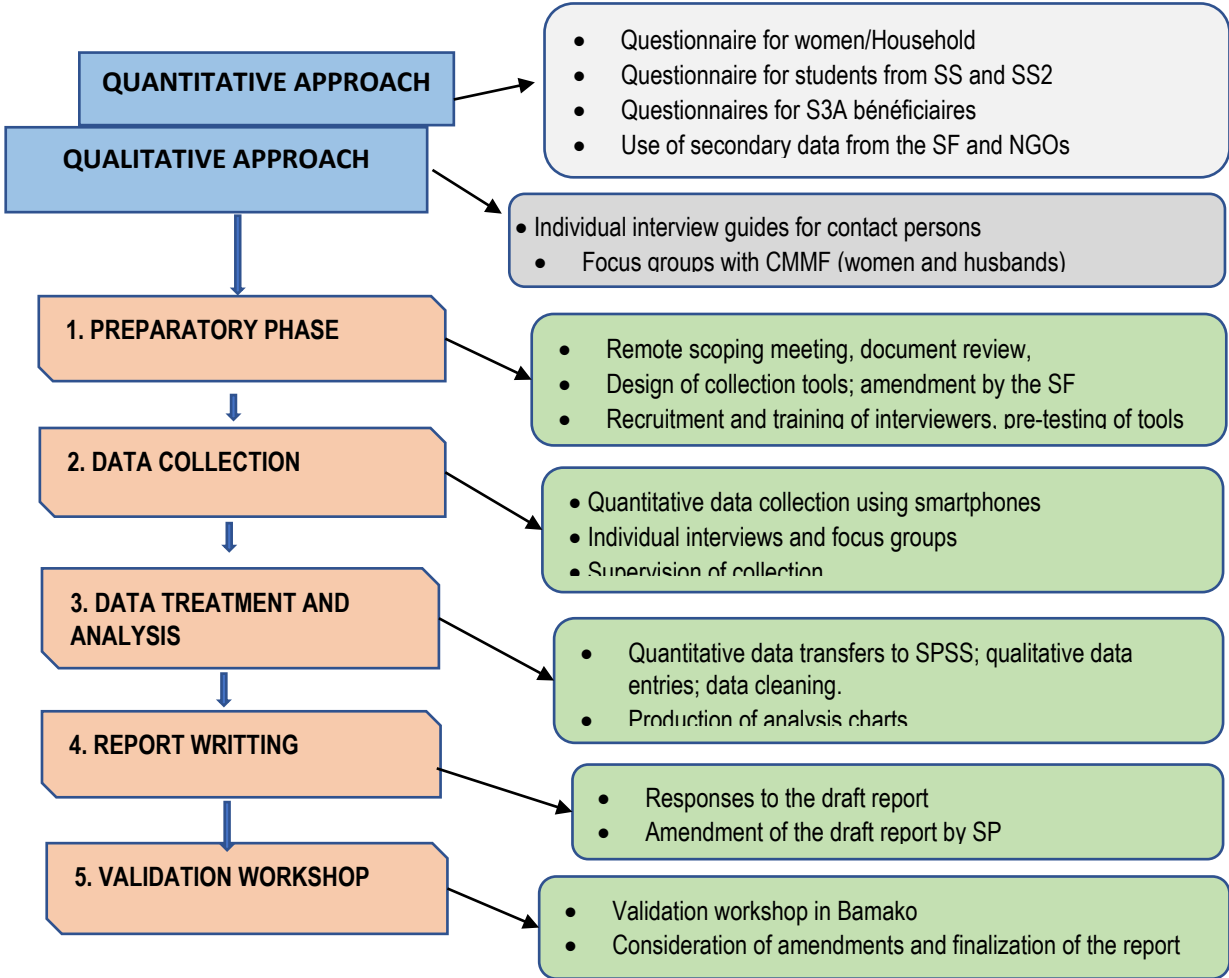
Specific objective 4: Analyse development approaches in relation to the evolution of the regional context and propose improvements: *this involves analysing the partnership with NGOs and other players and identifying SWOT; the consideration of cross-cutting issues; organisational and programmatic management capacities, etc.*

II. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Methodological approach

To facilitate the comparison of data, the methodology of this evaluation was inspired by that of the baseline study. It is a mixed methodology combining the quantitative and qualitative approach with an emphasis on the participation of all stakeholders of SP 2019-2023. The work approach was based on five (5) phases: i) the preparatory phase; ii) data collection; iii) data processing and analysis; iv) report writing, and v) the validation and finalisation workshop of the report. Figure 1 shows the methodological approach.

Graph 1: Presentation of the methodology



The scoping meeting between SF and the consultant took place on November 19, 2021 and enabled them to discuss the content of the evaluation, perfect the organisation of the work and the timetable. The data collection tools consisted of questionnaires and individual interview guides and focus groups inspired by the baseline study. For the quantitative survey, three (3) types of questionnaires were developed: 1) a household / women questionnaire; 2) a questionnaire for primary school students from the SS centres, 2018-2019 cohort, and secondary school students from SS2, 2018-2020 cohort; and 3) a questionnaire for adolescents and young people from S3A, 2018-2020 cohort.

For the qualitative survey, individual interviews and focus groups were conducted. The individual interviews were addressed to 1) government technical services; 3) SF staff; 3) partner NGOs; 4) communal authorities; 5) host school teachers; 6) community leaders. The focus groups were addressed to 1) CMMF women; 2) men/spouses of CMMF women.

In each country, interviewers and supervisors were recruited and trained for three days, including one day of pre-testing of the tools. The training of the interviewers was carried out by the principal consultant aided by the national consultants. It took place in Burkina Faso from 2 to 4 December 2021, in Mali from 8 to 10 December and in Niger from 14 to 16 December 2021.

2.2. Data collection on the field

2.2.1. The quantitative survey

❖ Sampling of the quantitative survey

Sampling was carried out at several levels according to the different targets. The following formula was used. This is the general formula for simple random surveys (SRS).

$$n \geq \frac{z^2 \cdot p(1-p)}{l^2}$$

n: Minimum sample size; *z*: z-score which is the number of standard deviations of a given proportion from the mean (the standard value of the 95% confidence level will be 1.96)

p: the probability of occurrence of the event (50%); *l*: the relative margin of error set at 5%.

a) The sample of CMMF women or households

To estimate the sample size (*n*) of households/women, the level reached by households in the MPI was the variable of interest. As this rate is not currently known, we considered *p*=0.5 a representative sample size. With a confidence level of 95% ($z_{\alpha/2}=1,96$), a tolerable margin of error of 5% ($l = 0,05$), the minimum size of the representative sample of women in each country is 384 recipients. This sample was increased by 15% per country to consider possible non-response. Thus, the sample of CMMF women or households is 442 per country, or 1,326 CMMF beneficiaries in the three countries. This sample was distributed in proportion to the number of beneficiaries in each region. Table 1 shows the planned sample of women/households and the number achieved. The completion rate is 101.1%.

Table 1: Samples of women/households in the planned 2019-2020 cohorts and those conducted per country

Country	NGO	Region	Cumulative members 19-20	Proportion	Sample of CMMF women/households		
					Planned	Completed	Rate of completion
Mali	AMSS	Tombouctou	2,525	0,315	139	140	100,7%
	APSM	Ségou	2,735	0,341	151	152	100,7%
	GRAADECOCOM	Sikasso	2,752	0,343	152	153	100,7%
Total Mali			8,012	1,000	442	445	100,7%
Burkina Faso	ADEFAD	Nord	2,663	0,396	175	177	101,1%
	FDC/BF	Centre-Est	4,061	0,604	217	216	99,5%
	ANTBA	Hauts-Bassins	--	--	50	50	100,0%
Total Burkina			6,724	1,000	442	443	100,2%
Niger	ATPF	Tillabéry	2,569	0,333	147	157	106,8%
	ONEN	Dosso	2,6	0,337	149	151	101,3%
	HALASSAY	Dosso	2,54	0,329	145	145	100,0%

	Total Niger	7,709	1,000	442	453	102,5%
	Total SFWA	22,445		1326	1341	101,1%

Source: Data collection for the mid-term evaluation of the strategic plan 2019-2023, December 2021

b) Sample size of SS beneficiaries 2018-2019

For children in the SS 2018-2019 cohort, the variable of interest is the rate of learners in the 2018-2019 cohort who actually entered primary school. Taking a rate of $p=0.93$ (simple average across the three countries), the calculation yields a sample size of 150 pupils per country. In view of the small number of pupils and in order to ensure high precision in the estimates, this sample was increased in each country, i.e. 250 pupils per country and 750 pupils in the three countries. Table 2 shows the planned sample of students and the sample reached by the survey. Completion rate is 96.5%.

Table 2: Distribution of the sample of students from the SS 2018-2019 cohort

Country	NGO and regions	Learners evaluated			Relative weight	Sample		
		G	F	T		Planned	Completed	Rate (%)
Mali	APSM (Ségou)	561	625	1186	0,3996	100	103	103,0
	GRAADECOCOM (Sikasso)	655	643	1298	0,4373	109	107	98,2
	AMSS (Tombouctou)	208	276	484	0,1631	41	50	122,0
	Total Mali	1424	1544	2968	1	250	260	104,0
Burkina Faso	AFDR (Nord)	310	289	599	0,2881	56	35	62,5
	ADEFAD (Nord)	287	237	524	0,252	84	71	84,5
	FDC (centre-Est et Centre-Nord)	250	245	495	0,2381	70	72	102,9
	ANTBA et SOS (Hauts-Bassins)	225	236	461	0,2217	40	42	105,0
	Total Burkina	1072	1007	2079	1	250	220	88,0
Niger	CDR (Tillabery)	243	276	519	0,1833	40	37	92,5
	ATPF (Tillabery)	436	410	846	0,2987	55	55	100,0
	ONEN (Dosso)	534	473	1007	0,3556	88	84	95,5
	Halassay (Dosso)	206	254	460	0,1624	67	68	101,5
	Total Niger	1419	1413	2832	1	250	244	97,6
Total global		3915	3964	7879		750	724	96,5

Source: Data collection for the mid-term evaluation of the strategic plan 2019-2023, December 2021

For the other target beneficiaries (SS2, S3A) 2018-2020 cohort, given their small number, it was planned to survey all target beneficiaries.

For SS2, out of a total number of 188 learners transferred, the survey only reached 60 students, including 53 in Mali, 5 in Burkina Faso and 2 in Niger. This low rate is linked to the absence of the target or to the difficulty of finding the students. For example, in Niger, out of 31 children transferred to the CEG of Nikki Béri, only 4 pupils remained when the interviewers visited. Interviews with parents of pupils in the villages of Kobodey and Fantou Zougou reveal that they have dropped out and migrated to Benin and Nigeria. In Burkina Faso, the class of learners concerned could not complete the training because the SS2 centre (Northern region) was closed due to insecurity.

In S3A, it was planned to reach all the learners in the cohort (143). However, a total of 79 were surveyed, 50 in Mali, 24 in Niger and 5 in Burkina Faso. At this level too, dropouts were noted. Some went to gold panning sites, others migrated to neighbouring countries (Benin and Nigeria) for the children of Niger.

Data collection technique

The quantitative survey was carried out with the help of information and communication technologies (ICT), smartphones using the Open Data Kit (ODK collect) platform. The data collected is sent daily to the server created for this purpose and the consultants daily monitor the progress and quality of the work and make calls when necessary.

Processing, data analysis and report production

The data collected using the smartphones was transferred to SPSS software for processing and editing. Once the database was ready, the variables were statistically analysed, and the various tables (simple tables, cross-tabulations, graphs) were produced for analysis. As for the qualitative data (in-depth interviews and focus groups), they were entered into the Word processing software. They were classified by themes and sub-themes in relation to the objectives of the evaluation.

The qualitative data was analysed directly from the content. The analysis and drafting of the report were preceded by triangulation of the information collected and the two types of data (quantitative and qualitative) were exploited in a complementary manner based on an analysis plan that took into account the objectives of the evaluation.

2.3. Difficulties encountered and limitations of the evaluation

The data collection experienced some difficulties that should be highlighted. Indeed, it took place at the end of the year (December 2021) and there was a problem of availability of players at all levels. At the SF, the actors were more preoccupied with finalising emergencies before going on holiday. The same is true at the level of the services.

On the field, the insecurity situation and the state of the roads made access to certain localities difficult. It was also difficult to find the SS2 students and S3A learners of the cohorts mentioned, the majority of whom dropped out. In some localities, some local elected officials able to respond to our guide were absent.

The security situation led to the selection of accessible areas to the detriment of red zones. It should be noted that the data collection was conducted in December (post-harvest period), while the baseline survey was conducted in September (lean season). This difference in timing may introduce some bias in the assessment of nutrition or food security in households.

III. ANALYSIS OF SFWA'S OPERATIONAL APPROACH

This chapter describes the current organisational structure of the Strømme Foundation, analyses the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with this structure, which supports the

implementation of the Strategic Plan 2019-2023, and proposes directions for improvement in light of the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and insecurity. It also analyses the organisational and programmatic management capacities and proposes recommendations for improvement. The analysis is based on the use of documents and interviews with SF staff in the three countries.

3.1. Analysis of the SFWA's organisational structure

3.1.1. Regional office organisation

In the search for better management of SFWA's activities, the Senior Management Team (SMT) has undertaken an organisational reform to transfer the management competencies previously vested in the regional office to the country offices. This process is justified by the principles of good management and the desire to strengthen the intervention capacities of the country offices through the recruitment of country programme officers and education specialists⁴. This process of decentralisation of operational tasks resulting from the implementation of the recommendations of the organisational review of SF carried out with the support of NORAD in 2017, the key actions of which are integrated into the strategic plan 2019-2023, reflects the vision of the SF and its desire to better structure itself for greater efficiency and effectiveness. The 2019-2023 SFWA organisation chart, contained in the technical note - Decentralisation of operational tasks from the regional office to the country offices (Burkina Faso, Niger) - shows the hierarchical links, collaborations, and functional links.

1) The Regional Office

The SFWA Regional Management based in Mali is composed of a Regional Director, represented by a Regional Director who ensures the overall management of the regional office and oversees the functioning of the Country Offices (Burkina Faso and Niger). Under his authority are: 1) the Programme Coordinator and Education Coordinator; 2) the Administration and Finance Officer; 3) the Country Coordinators; 4) the Human Resources Officer; 5) the Communication and Public Relations Officer; 6) the Community Microfinance Officer; and 7) the Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Officer.

In terms of hierarchy, after the Regional Director come: 1) the Administration and Finance Officer; 2) the Programme Coordinator; 3) the Burkina Faso and Niger Country Coordinators; and the Human Resources Officer. They form the SMT, which is the decision-making board at the regional office level.

2) The Regional Department of Administration and Finance

This department is managed by the Administration and Finance Officer who has under his direct authority: 1) an Internal Controller, 2) an IT and Technology Officer, 3) a Chief Accountant to whom are attached an Accountant, an Administration and Finance Assistant; a Secretary/Cashier; a Logistics Officer who has under his responsibility two (2) drivers

Under the supervision of the Regional Director, the Finance and Administration Officer at the regional Office ensures the coordination and control of the administrative and financial functions of the SFWA.

⁴ Technical note Decentralization of operational tasks from the Regional Office to the Country Offices (Burkina Faso, Niger)

He/she has a collaborative link with the administrative and financial departments of the country offices. Specifically, it centralises all financial data and has the mandate to analyse and approve NGO partners' requirements. As far as the internal controller is concerned, he makes sure that administrative and financial standards and procedures are respected. He analyses financial reports and submits them to the Administration and Finance Officer. The chief accountant works directly with the country office finance officers. He/she is responsible for entering financial information into the accounting software. The Logistics Officer is responsible for travel arrangements, organisation of workshops etc. He oversees the procurement process at all levels. He is aided by the rest of the regional office staff.

3) The Regional Programme Coordination Department

This department is under the responsibility of a Programme Coordinator who has under his authority, the heads of the following sectors: 1) Education, 2) Inclusive Economy (Community Microfinance or CMMF, Green Job, S3A, Tamadash), 3) PMEAL, 4) Other country programme officers, 5) National Education. The regional programme coordinator also acts as the education coordinator for the regional office.

He/she reviews the reports of the different programmes and supports them in their organisation and planning. He/she collaborates with the PMEAL Officer, the Inclusive Economy Officer, the Green Jobs Specialist, the SFC Programme Officer, in the implementation of activities and reports to the regional management.

❖ Education sector

The Education Coordinator is responsible for the development of education programmes and the local management of SFWA's interventions in the sector. He/she contributes to the achievement of the objectives defined for the sector and ensures the support and training of the field partners.

❖ The inclusive economy sector

The sector includes community microfinance or CMMFs, Green Jobs, S3A, AVC, the Tamadash project in Niger. The SFC Officer is responsible for the implementation of SFWA's SFC strategy and contributes to its strengthening, improvement, and adaptation in the field. She participates in the development and implementation of the overall strategies and programmes of the region. The position of Green/Jobs Specialist has been created to strengthen the new initiatives. It directly supports the CMMF programme in promoting economic activities for youth and women.

❖ PMEAL sector

It consists of a PMEAL officer and an assistant. The PMEAL Officer is responsible for quality improvement and optimisation and helps SFWA to develop as a resource and capacity building centre. He/she participates in the development and implementation of the overall strategies and programmes of the region. It is responsible for the coordination of planning, monitoring and evaluation activities, institutional learning and the capitalisation of lessons learned. It contributes to the improvement of the quality of interventions and the capitalisation of achievements.

❖ Country Programme Officers

Under the supervision of the Country Coordinator and in collaboration with the Regional Programme Coordinator, the Country Programme Officers are responsible for the regular monitoring of partners' projects, ensuring that activities are carried out in line with planned objectives. They ensure the timely production of partner reports, review reports and provide feedback to partners. They contribute to the development of funding requests according to the opportunities identified by the SF Office.

❖ **Special projects**

Special project officers manage projects funded outside of NORAD funding. For example, the EU project, the Pass+ project was additional funding. Since 2020, these projects have come to an end. Within the framework of the special projects, at the regional level, the organisation chart foresees the recruitment of an accountant, an education specialist and a monitoring-evaluator.

4) The Human Resources (HR) Department:

It is composed of a single staff whose mandate is to: ensure the administrative management of employees, recruitment of employees and establishment of contracts; manage the capacity building plan for FS staff, as well as the development of team building; plan the annual staffing budget for the countries; manage leave requests and the definition of HR strategy; support the legal advisors in the 3 countries etc. He/she participates in the SMT for decision making at regional level.

5) The Communication Department:

It is headed by a communication officer whose mandate is to ensure internal and external communication. It is attached to the Regional Directorate but does not participate in the SMT.

6) Burkina Faso and Niger country offices

The Country Coordinators represent and coordinate FSWA's activities in Burkina Faso and Niger and have under their authority the Country Programme Officers, the Country Administration, Finance and Human Resources Officer.

3.1.2. Country Office organisation

The structure of the country offices is as follows:

- 1) The Country Coordinator: Each country office is managed by a Country Coordinator who represents and coordinates SFWA activities in these two countries (Burkina Faso and Niger). He/she is primarily responsible and reports to the SFWA regional management.
- 2) The programme officer: In each country, below the country coordinator, there is a programme officer who plans, coordinates, and monitors the implementation of activities in collaboration with NGOs. Partners. The programme officers are attached to the country coordinators but work in collaboration with the regional programme coordinator for planning and technical support needs.
- 3) The Head of Administration, Finance and Human Resources: In each Country Office, there is an administration and finance department which also plays the role of human resources

management. A driver is attached to this department. Although the organisational chart provided for an Administration, Finance and HR Assistant, implementation has not followed due to financial constraints.

- 4) Education specialists: In each country office, there is an education specialist who ensures the quality of education interventions and provides technical support to partner NGOs in line with the strategic plan and collaborates with country-level sector actors.
- 5) Special Project Officers: Special projects are those funded by partners outside NORAD funding. In Burkina Faso and Niger, there are special project officers already mentioned. But with the end of these projects, the Project Officers are no longer part of the operational team in these country offices.

The decision-making board at the country office level consists of the (coordinator, programme officer and the administrative and financial officer. After the description of the organisational structure, the following sub-section analyses the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of this organisational structure.

3.1.3. Analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats

❖ Strengths

The overall findings of the analysis of SFWA's organisational structure show that there is a well-structured, lean organisational structure that responds to the "faire-faire" approach. This organisational structure is structured from the regional to the country level with hierarchical and functional links. There is a commitment from staff to achieve the objectives set out in the strategic plan in a context of constant change. Despite the enormous challenges, the current organisation of the SF manages to produce results based on collaborative work between departments and sectors. The quality and experience of most of the staff in implementing the various concepts, the introduction and application of the principle of non-discrimination, etc., are factors that contribute to the achievement of objectives in a rather fragile political, security and health environment. In terms of strengths, the analysis shows:

- good structuring and decentralisation of tasks from the regional office to the country office.
- a lean organisational structure that considers the "faire-faire" approach, which gives responsibility; to accompanies the NGOs partners in the implementation on the field.
- an organisational structure that promotes good communication with the Regional Director who is ultimately responsible for the mobilisation, control, and management of donor resources.
- the experience of the SF in implementing the concepts in the 3 countries.
- The existence of good collaboration with technical services and NGO partners.
- The contribution to reducing unemployment and improving the quality of education
- A fundraising capacity to implement special projects in different countries.

❖ Weaknesses

In terms of weaknesses, the following can be noted:

- the current organisational set-up has evolved without updating the existing organisational chart "the one in the technical note Decentralisation of operational tasks from the Regional Office to the Country Offices (Burkina Faso, Niger). For example, the posts of education specialists that currently exist are not included in the organisation chart
- insufficient visibility of the organisation chart (no display of the chart) and a disparity in its appropriation from one staff member to another or from one position to another: the interviews show that the staff know their hierarchical link, in particular the person to whom they must report, but overall, several staff members do not have a general knowledge of the organisation chart. This situation is reinforced by the mismatch between the current organisational set-up and the existing organisation chart. Consideration needs to be given to making the organisational chart with the hierarchical and functional links more accessible to all staff.
- High staff mobility, which requires a reflection on the retention strategy: The evaluation observed a frequency in the departure of staff both at the level of the regional office and at the level of country offices and partner NGOs. This frequency of turnover could negatively affect the work if there is a delay in recruiting replacement staff and also expose the organisation to a loss of expertise. This situation requires a strengthening of the overall management style with a particular focus on the retention strategy. The planning and implementation of team building activities, training, and staff retention strategies could help to strengthen leadership and motivation in the workplace.
- **A lack of appropriation of decentralisation by some staff. This requires better task definition and accountability for all staff.**
- A high workload in the administration and finance department. The interviews reveal a concentration of activities in this department. Despite the commitment of the staff, there are sometimes delays in the completion of certain administrative and financial tasks. The department could be restructured to lighten its workload and improve its efficiency. To this end, certain administrative tasks devolved to this department could be entrusted to the human resources department, which has less work to do.
- The PMEAL sector, which plays a role in the quality of interventions, does not have a respondent in the country. The interviews show that it is necessary for the country offices to have a monitoring and evaluation officer to ensure better monitoring in the field and to improve the work of PMEAL in terms of quality and capitalisation.
- At the level of the Regional Office, the non-existence of a procurement unit is raised as a difficulty. Depending on the circumstances, a team of five people is called upon to perform this role. However, the problem of staff availability sometimes makes it difficult to mobilise this team, resulting in delays in the execution of tasks. To overcome this problem, the establishment of a specific unit to ensure the awarding of contracts has been expressed. This does not necessarily imply the recruitment of new staff but rather a reorganisation and empowerment of the actors; hence the need to reflect on the restructuring of the administration and finance department and the HR department.
- The Communication Officer reports to the Directorate General, but does not participate in the SMT. As communication is a cross-cutting issues within the organisation, SF would benefit more from

being involved in SMT meetings and from being able to better represent the organisation internally and externally.

- At the level of the Regional Office, the organisational chart does not distinguish between staff dedicated to the tasks of the Regional Office and those in charge of managing programmes on the field in Mali. This gives the impression that the Regional Office and the Mali country office form a single entity, whereas the actions of the programmes on the field in Mali are equally vast. How do staff manage to coordinate field activities in Mali and in other countries? Like Niger and Burkina Faso, the team for the Mali country office must be mobilised to focus on country planning and implementation. It was up to the Regional Office to take the lead. This reality requires deep reflection within SF.
- The technical note on the decentralisation of operational tasks from the Regional Office to the Country Offices (Burkina Faso, Niger)⁵ aimed to ensure the transfer of management skills to the country offices for better adaptability to the realities on the ground. At this level, some partners mentioned slowness in responding to certain urgent requests reformulated and addressed to the country coordinators "because in general they are obliged to pass on the information to the regional office before taking any decision". This leads these partners to believe that the country coordinators have no decision-making power and that this needs to be improved to facilitate responsiveness to the emergency situations that these countries are experiencing.
- At country office level, the administrative, financial and HR manager does not have an assistant. This makes it difficult to segregate tasks and to comply with administrative and financial standards, as these comments show.

«The person who holds the chequebook is often the same person who makes the purchases. This is not compatible. But the lack of staff forces us to do this. If we had staff, the person who records the financial information would not have to do the bank reconciliation. You need someone else to do it ».

Extract from an interview with an SF staff.

- Secondly, temporarily recruiting trainees to carry out the tasks of the Executive Assistant meets financial concerns but does not give the SF a higher profile. Given the importance of this position for a structure, it is necessary in the immediate future to consider this position in order to enhance the image of the SF and facilitate the flow of information and the archiving of administrative data.
- The lack of a monitoring and evaluation specialist at country office level was identified as a shortcoming. It was noted that the PMEAL in the regional office plays a central role in terms of quality but has difficulty covering the country offices due to the workload. In the future, consideration should be given to strengthening country offices with qualified staff capable of monitoring and evaluation. If staff are not recruited, emphasis should be placed on redefining tasks and building capacity in this area.

⁵ Technical note Decentralization of operational tasks from the Regional Office to the Country Offices (Burkina Faso, Niger)

- At the country level, with the implementation of special projects, there is a lack of a holistic view of the education sector. We note that the Education component, which is a flagship programme, does not facilitate a holistic vision of all interventions in this field. However, this vast sector of intervention requires a holistic view and better capitalisation of interventions. In the absence of an Education Coordinator, the description of the tasks and the accountability of the Education Specialists must take this aspect into account.

❖ **Opportunities**

In terms of opportunities, we note:

- The availability of certain technical and financial partners (TFP) to finance the concepts of the SF (case of special projects). With the current situation marked by insecurity and the health problem leading to a resurgence of children dropping out of school, climate change, several partners are involved in financing alternative education (SSAP, education in emergency situations, etc.), girls' education, the promotion of women, etc.
- Availability of NGO partners to support the SF in achieving its development objectives
- Better understanding by SF of development issues in the 3 countries

❖ **Threats**

- The risk of insecurity in the three states and terrorist threats undermine the achievements.
- Political instability and transitional regimes, particularly in Mali and Burkina Faso.
- The end of special projects is a threat to the implementation of the plan's activities
- High staff mobility within the SF and partner NGOs. If this problem is not solved, the departure of experienced staff may contribute to slowing down the implementation of activities and the achievement of results.

To meet the challenge, the judicious use of resources needs to be strengthened and particular emphasis needs to be placed on the mobilisation of complementary resources. In this respect, it is not necessary at this stage to recruit a resource mobilisation person specifically to help achieve the objectives. This recruitment could take place in the medium term. But for the time being, it is necessary to strengthen the capacities of the staff in setting up projects with a view to mobilising funds.

3.2. Analysis of the issues relating to restructuring

• *Is there a need for an operations Department at regional level?*

The triangulation of interviews with staff in the regional office and the country offices (Niger and Burkina Faso) reveals two trends:

The first trend (majority overall) which does not see the creation of a specific department dedicated to operations. The fact that SF is part of the "faire-faire" approach makes it possible to do without such a department. The creation of an operations department will increase the organisation's operating costs (employees' salaries). For this category of respondents, the programme department acts as an operations department.

The second trend (minority) approves the creation of an operations department to separate tasks that really need to be separated. This will reduce job-related conflicts, better define roles and responsibilities, and facilitate rapid processing of files. The evaluation found that, given the unfavourable political context and insecurity in the countries of intervention and the difficulty of raising funds, the establishment of an operations department is not necessary. However, given the low level of ownership of the organisation chart by the majority of staff, a redefinition of tasks and better accountability of staff is necessary for greater efficiency in the interventions of each staff member.

- ***In order to better achieve results, is there a need for an Efficiency and Quality Department at Regional level?***

The efficiency-quality criterion is becoming important for SF. This is demonstrated by the fact that there is a quality standard for all concepts. The regional management, the regional programme coordinator, the PMEAL and the specialist programme coordinators contribute to the quality assurance of the services at the technical level. For financial aspects, the Administrative and Financial Officer contributes to improving the quality of data provided by the partner NGOs.

The Senior Management Team is a virtual meeting place organised every two (2) months and is chaired by the Director of the Regional Office. Given its importance, this meeting is extended to the rest of the SF staff (Regional Office and Country Offices) to ensure a participatory and inclusive approach. The evaluation notes that there is synergy between the different departments to ensure the quality of interventions. Regarding technical aspects, programme specialists submit technical notes to the regional programme coordinator. The latter examines the documents received and ensures that they correspond to SF's quality norms and standards. The programme specialists first conduct a quality control review of the reports provided by the implementing NGOs. After validation they submit them to the PMEAL, which in turn also carries out quality control of the data. For the financial aspects, the financial officers work with the partner NGOs to improve the quality of the financial reports, they ensure the coherence between the technical and financial reports in collaboration with the regional programme coordinator and the PMEAL who play a central role in quality.

The evaluation notes that there is a synergy between the staff in taking quality assurance into account. In conclusion, in the short term, there is no need to create an efficiency-quality department. Nevertheless, a better definition of tasks and the empowerment of actors will help to strengthen the quality of interventions. It is also necessary to strengthen the system through communication and capacity building of stakeholders. It is also important to ensure the strict application of the guidelines for each concept to guarantee the desired quality.

However, in the medium and long term, it appears that an efficiency-quality department would be necessary. Given the multiplicity of SF concepts (SS, SS2, S3A, CMMF, AL, etc.) and the adoption of the faire-faire approach, there is a need to improve the quality control process to review performance from the bottom up. This will enable NGOs partners to make a change in their working practices to ensure quality interventions and beneficiary satisfaction. The rationale for setting up a long-term quality-efficiency department is that the SF delegates through the faire-faire approach. Although tools and instruments exist to enable partner NGOs to deliver quality services, a more assiduous and robust quality control system is

needed. Quality should be emphasised at every stage (design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) to minimise underperformance.

For example, at the level of S3A and SS2, there is wastage which raises questions. This situation is sometimes linked to the strategy for choosing beneficiaries within the communities (insufficient governance), inconsistency between the trade chosen and the trade desired, insufficient kits etc.

As far as AL is concerned, field surveys show that some AL centres are opened late, and the standard programme is not exhausted in most cases. The actual skill level of the women participating in the AL centres is often low and the volume of hours is not effectively delivered by some facilitators. Regarding the management committees for the SS centres, it emerged from the interviews that there are committees that do not play their role and responsibilities etc. It often happens that partner NGOs do not respect the norms and standards in terms of education, contracting and proximity monitoring.

These various dysfunctions mentioned above are sufficient proof of the usefulness of setting up an « efficiency-quality" department in the future. This involves rigorously controlling the entry and exit of all SF products and services to reduce the risks of "counter-quality »

❖ ***What would be the most appropriate structure at regional and country level to promote better achievement of objectives and results?***

To achieve results, it would be necessary to implement the decentralisation of tasks while strengthening staffing such as the recruitment of monitoring and evaluation officers, administrative assistants, at the country level, etc. These measures could further improve the intervention strategies of the SF and its NGOs partners. These measures could further improve the intervention strategies of SF and its partner NGOs. It will be necessary to give importance to innovation to obtain quality results by adopting an appropriate approach.

To harmonise the views of SF employees, a review of the tasks of the various positions is useful. This would facilitate communication, collaborative action between departments and between staff. Strengthening communication internally and externally could help to anticipate problems and promote the sharing of experience for the adoption of the quality approach.

The evaluation found that at the Regional Office level, there is no dedicated post for Theme 1: Strong Civil Society and Public and the level of progress on this theme is low. The staff designated to monitor this objective should keep a close eye on the evolution of indicators.

3.3. Analysis of the partnership and the faire-faire approach

In this part, the analysis focused on the collaboration between SF and technical services of the State as well as non-state actors (NGOs). The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the faire-faire approach were analysed and proposals for improvement were made.

3.3.1. Assessment of the collaboration between the partners

➤ State technical services

The Strategic Plan 2019-2023 focuses on multi-stakeholder partnership. To facilitate the framework for the implementation of the results, collaboration has been established with state actors in the three (3) countries from the central to the deconcentrated level. The harmonisation of interventions with national government priorities, the respect of norms and standards in the field of non-formal education, the appropriation of initiatives undertaken by the technical services of the State for better sustainability are all elements that justify the establishment of a partnership between the State services and SF. The partnership with state actors is reflected in the signing of commitment agreements in the three (3) countries of intervention of SF.

In Mali, thanks to the partnership between SF and the Ministry of Education, the SS programme has been reviewed in 2019. This is how additional themes have been integrated. These include WASH, natural disasters, citizenship, conflicts etc. The focal point participates in the follow-up of activities while reinforcing the pedagogical quality.

In Niger, the Directorate General of Literacy and Non-Formal Education is working to ensure that the SS division is anchored in the Ministry of Education.

In Burkina Faso, the SS Permanent Secretariat was officially created in 2019 following the abolition of the SS Sub-Regional Permanent Secretariat which was based in the regional office in Mali. Its mandate is to coordinate NGO interventions in SS and ensure compliance with norms and standards. There is a plan for scaling up SS. In all three countries, there are SS Focal Points who are involved in monitoring activities on the ground.

➤ **Local authorities**

Within the framework of the partnership, the local authorities of the communes benefiting from SF concepts contribute to the planning and implementation of activities. They participate in the choice of intervention localities and work with partner NGOs in the implementation of activities. Local authorities are represented at the accountability sessions organised by the SF. One of the strengths of the partnership with the technical services and local authorities is the training of teachers in the host schools.

3.3.2. SWOT analysis of partnership with state actors

The following table summarises the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Table 3 : Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of doing business and partnership with the state

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good collaboration with the Ministries of Education of the 3 countries in the implementation and monitoring-evaluation of activities • Technical capacity building of host school teachers (pedagogical monitoring) • Participation in the development of manuals as well as in the revision of the SS, SS2 programmes • Existence of consultation frameworks with technical services and other actors involved in education • Alignment of interventions with national priorities • Existence of curricula for each concept • Existence of a permanent SS secretariat in Burkina Faso as well as focal points in other countries • SF contributes to the in-service training of teachers and school leaders in public schools • Provision of supplies and equipment to schools in the beneficiary municipalities • The initiation of accountability sessions involving state actors 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient monitoring of children transferred to formal schools, • Insufficient holding of the Sub-Regional Partnership Council • The lack of governmental oversight for certain concepts (S3A, CMMF). • Insufficient monitoring and follow-up due to limited resources
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SF and other donors are willing to support governments to make education available to all • The existence of SMCs is an opportunity to strengthen the monitoring of pupils in host schools 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insecurity, • Political instability, • Covid-19

In terms of weaknesses, shortcomings were noted in the involvement of technical services in the implementation and monitoring of activities in the field. This is the case, for example, of the non-involvement of the education academies (AE) in the implementation and monitoring.

In some countries, such as Mali, there are no SS2 and S3A focal points. Advocacy should be done by the SF to get governments to appoint focal points. In terms of anchoring, it appears that the S3A has no official supervisory body. This is a challenge.

In terms of opportunities, the importance of the concepts developed by the SF is increasingly recognised by governments, communities, and even other donors. With the accentuation of the security crisis, the need for support in terms of SS, SS2, S3A is being felt and other technical and financial partners are beginning to show interest. The States remain mobilised to support the efforts of SF.

Regarding threats, we note the growing insecurity, political instability, and covid-19 which are factors that can negatively influence the achievement of results. Mitigation measures are the entrenchment of the faire-faire approach, capacity building, orientation towards realistic planning. Considering other sectors, such as humanitarian aspects, are measures that allow for the relief of beneficiaries and support them with development interventions.

3.3.3. SWOT analysis of partnership with non-state players

The partnership with the NGOs is based on a "faire-faire" approach. The "faire-faire" approach has enabled the institutional and organisational skills of NGOs partners to be strengthened through training. With the faire-faire approach, the partner NGOs have established partnerships with local authorities to facilitate the implementation of activities. For example, in the circle of Kadiolo, the town hall of Fourou provided Gradecom's field officer with an office. This initiative shows that the partnership is taking root.

Overall, the partner NGOs appreciate the intervention approach of the SF, which is based on trust and on the evaluation of performance results. They affirmed to be involved in the different stages of implementation of activities and appreciate the communication approach of the Strømme Foundation.

The following table summarises the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the partnership with private actors.

Table 4: Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of partnership with private actors

<p><u>STRENGTHS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rooting of collaboration between NGOs and the SF through faire-faire • Skills development for NGO staff • Most of the NGO field workers involved in the different SF concepts come from the communities of intervention • The ability to carry out activities in a difficult context (insecurity) • Involvement of NGOs in the implementation and monitoring of activities • Improvements in the knowledge of staff on the digitalisation of data collection and other themes (gender and inclusion, rights-based approach, climate change, education in emergencies etc.) 	<p><u>WEAKNESSES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient fundraising from other donors and heavy dependence of NGOs on SF • Insufficient timeliness of reporting by some implementing NGOs. • Insufficient quality of financial reports produced by partner NGOs • Deficient compliance with SF procedures in the procurement of goods, • Deficiencies in transparency with the publication of tenders.
<p><u>OPPORTUNITIES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are technical and financial partners with a particular interest in education • States are committed to the promotion of SS 	<p><u>MENACES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insecurity, • Political instability, • COVID-19 • Break in funding • Instability of NGO partner staff due to financial conditions

In view of the weaknesses and threats, it is necessary to continue to strengthen the capacities of NGOs to improve the quality of interventions. It is also necessary to strengthen the monitoring of these NGOs in the field.

3.3.4. Improvements to be made to the faire-faire approach

Despite the merits of the faire-faire approach, there are important issues to be addressed to sustain the partnership with the NGOs. In terms of the financial conditions of the employees of the partner NGOs, the

evaluation notes the frustrations of the staff in relation to their remuneration in the three countries. The problem of remuneration was raised by almost all the staff surveyed in the partner NGOs in all countries. This situation contributes to the departure of qualified and competent staff and may contribute to slowing down the pace and quality of work of partner NGOs. This would contribute to a reduction in the performance of the NGOs and require more resources to train the replacements. In terms of implementation of activities, NGO staff feel that the workload is high compared to the salary. Supervisors, CMMF group leaders are the most concerned. Monitoring the CMMF groups of the former Strategic Plan (2014-2018) contributes to the workload while there is a reduction of staff under the current Strategic Plan (2019-2023). It would be useful to find alternatives to reduce the workload. In terms of budgeting for planned activities, the partner NGOs claim that they are not consulted on the costing of certain types of activities. This is the case, for example, with the installation kits for S3A beneficiaries, the prices of which vary from one region to another in the same country. This aspect deserves to be considered by SF for the rest of the Strategic Plan period (2019-2023).

To further consolidate the faire-faire approach, it is necessary to continue with the capacity building of the partner NGOs. The improvement of financial conditions, although not an immediate response, deserves special attention for better staff retention. SF must also continue to strengthen the capacities of partner NGOs so that they improve the quality of their performance. The evaluation notes an insufficient synergy of action between partner NGOs in the same country. Collaboration is limited to virtual exchanges (phone calls) at the will of the staff. The initiation of synergy of action (exchange visits) between partner NGOs in the same country could contribute to a better exchange of practices, acquire new knowledge and increase the visibility of SF's actions.

3.3.5. Lessons learned from the faire-faire approach

At the halfway point in the implementation of the SP (2019-2023), the lessons learned from the faire-faire are:

- Insecurity has not totally prevented the implementation of activities in the intervention zones. The NGOs supported by SF were able to innovate by adapting their strategies to the realities on the ground (use of public transport, telephone calls, etc.),
- The support of the NGO partners has helped to strengthen the countries' education systems, foster youth employability and promote the local economy,
- Through the capacity building of women, there is an emergence of women's leadership in claiming their rights from local authorities.
- Insufficient resource mobilisation by NGO partners outside of SF funding,
- The massive displacement of populations due to the conflict makes it difficult to see the results of NGOs partners.

3.3.6. Proposals for more successful partnerships

The success of the partnership with the partner NGOs depends on the following elements being considered

At the partner NGOs level

- Continued capacity building of NGOs. As they do not have the same experience and there are additional themes, there is a need to further equip NGO staff,
- For the remainder of the plan period, there is a need to involve the partner NGOs more in the design and budget planning of the activities. This will allow a better estimation of the budget for the operationalisation of the activities
- In the long term, a review of the financial conditions of NGO staff is useful to retain qualified human resources and make a return on investment.

At the level of the State technical services

- Strengthening the institutional capacities of MNE and its branches will make it possible to develop the synergy of action between the stakeholders by updating the map of the players and to reduce the overlap between the players
- The reinforcement of the support of the beneficiary states and communes in terms of supplies and equipment to reduce the problems linked to the reception of the transferred pupils.
- There is a need to involve educational supervisors in the design and implementation of activities to ensure sustainability after the withdrawal of the Strømme Foundation.
- The Strømme Foundation's focus on peri-urban areas is useful. These localities are increasingly home to children who are not in school or who have dropped out of school due to the forced displacement of populations.

IV. EVALUATION OF THE CURRENT SITUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2023

This chapter analyses the strategic plan against the classic evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. It also analyses ethics, crosscutting issues and lessons learned. Before analysing these different criteria, it is necessary to present the socio-demographic characteristics of the people surveyed.

4.1. Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

1) Women members of the CMMF surveyed

The quantitative survey reached 1341 women members of CMMF in the three countries, including 443 in Burkina, 445 in Mali and 453 in Niger. Their average age was 39.84 years, including 39.10 years in Mali, 39.30 years in Burkina Faso and 41.11 years in Niger.

Regarding formal education, many women (76.5%) had not attended school. Only 16.5% and 6.8% have primary and secondary education respectively. Of all the women, 15.5% stated that they were literate in local languages. Regarding marital status, the majority (82.2%) of the women surveyed stated that they were married; 11.5% were widows and 4.8% were single. The analysis here does not aim to distinguish between different types of marriage.

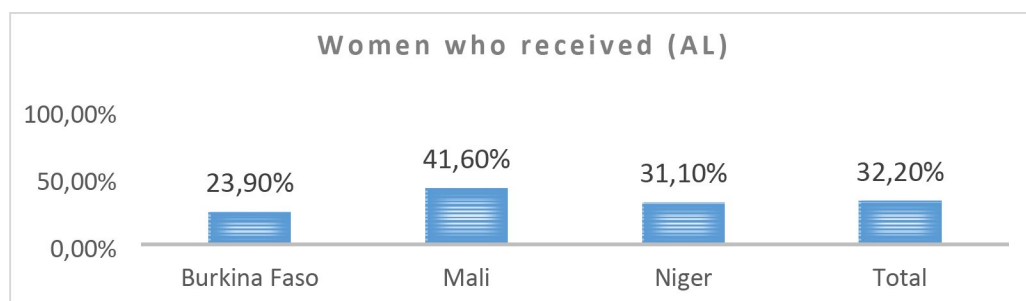
Table 5 : Marital status of women surveyed

Marital status	Country			Ensemble
	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	
Single	11,7%	2,2%	0,7%	4,8%
Monogamous spouse	39,3%	41,8%	61,1%	47,5%
Polygamous spouse	40,6%	43,8%	19,9%	34,7%
Separated/divorced	0,5%	1,8%	2,2%	1,5%
Widow	7,9%	10,3%	16,1%	11,5%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

2) Women who benefited from AL

Of all the women surveyed, 32.2% had benefited from Active Literacy, i.e. 41.6% in Mali, 23.9% in Burkina Faso and 31.1% in Niger. In absolute numbers, this represents 432 women who benefited from AL: 185 in Mali, 106 in Burkina Faso and 141 in Niger.

Graph 1 : Proportion of women made literate through AL by country



Regarding age, many of these women receiving AA are young. Indeed, 52.1% of them are between 17-35 years old with an average age of 36.14 years. Looking at formal education, the data shows that 29% of these women have attended school, the majority (64.5%) having a primary education level. Through the focus groups, the women indicated that AL is a means of strengthening their skills in their daily activities and in everyday life. However, the number of women who benefit from AL is very low compared to the high demand. The aspects on women's skills will be further explored in the section on life skills.

3) Students from the SS 2018-2020 cohort

A total of 724 students from SS centres were reached by the survey, 51% of whom were boys and 49% girls. In Burkina Faso, the survey reached more girls (56.4%) than boys (43.6%). On the other hand, in Mali and Niger, more boys were reached, respectively 55.4% and 53%.

4) Students from the SS2 cohort 2018-2020

Concerning SS2, as already mentioned, there were 60 pupils, of whom 53 were in Mali, 5 in Burkina Faso and 2 in Niger. Of these children surveyed, 55% were boys and 45% girls. Their average age was 15.78 years.

5) Learners from the S3A 2018-2020 cohort

Concerning S3A, 79 adolescents and young people were surveyed: 50 in Mali, 24 in Niger and 5 in Burkina Faso. Of these, 40% were boys and 60% were girls. Their average age was 22.05 years. Of these children, 22% had not attended formal school and 78% had attended school, of which 49.5% had primary education and 28.5% had post-primary or secondary education. After this overview of the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, the following sub-chapter analyses the relevance of the Strategic Plan 2019-2023.

4.2. Relevance

Relevance looks at the extent to which interventions are pertinent to the priorities of the targeted beneficiary groups, stakeholders, and donors. It also looks at whether the needs of the beneficiaries have been considered in the design and implementation of the project in the light of the context and its evolution.

The analysis considers the following research questions: Do the objectives of the strategy take into account the context and its evolution (economic, social, political, cultural, security, logistical constraints, regulatory framework, and capacities)? Is the strategy relevant to the needs/priorities of the identified beneficiaries, stakeholders, donors? Are the planned activities and outputs consistent with the overall objective and the achievement of its objectives? Were the inputs and strategies identified and were they realistic, appropriate, and adequate to achieve the results?

4.2.1. Considering the context and its evolution

The document analysis and interviews with stakeholders and direct beneficiaries show that the objectives of the SP 2019-2023 are closely linked to the context of the three countries of intervention and take into account the needs of beneficiaries and the evolution of this context.

Indeed, the development of this SP proceeded through a participatory evaluation of the 2014-2018 strategy with communities, technical services, communes, partner NGOs and SF staff. Consultation and planning workshops were organised before the strategy validation meeting in Niger to validate the document. This process made it possible to consider the context and its evolution, but also the needs of the beneficiaries in terms of education, the fight against illiteracy among young people and women, the problem of their socio-professional integration, the low level of citizen involvement of the communities, etc. It should be added that a basic study served to establish the situation of the SP indicators and other complementary studies such as the feasibility study in Niger⁶ made it possible to give orientations to the interventions. Based on these contextual realities, the SP was constructed based on three strategic orientations or thematic objectives: i) a strong civil society and public sector; ii) inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for marginalised and disadvantaged groups; iii) improved livelihoods of poor rural households through income generation.

The implementation of SP activities through the « faire faire » strategy, using partner NGOs, allows activities to be carried out with the participation of the communes, customary authorities, and technical services. An important aspect to highlight in the implementation of the SP is the consideration of the changing security and health context (COVID-19 appeared in March 2019) which have affected the

⁶ SAWADOGO Alamissa, July 2019. Feasibility Study of the Capacity Building Programme for Adolescent Girls and Young Women for Life Skills Adoption and Socio-Economic Inclusion (Tamadash) in Niger. Study report of the Stromme Foundation.

interventions requiring readaptation strategies. Indeed, facing insecurity and the health crisis, capacity building actions for players were initiated by SF for a change in behaviour to cope with chronic insecurity and also the COVID-19 pandemic. In its implementation, this strategic plan was forced to take into account the changing context which did not remain static in the three countries, due to insecurity caused by terrorist attacks, and the health crisis linked to Covid-19 (which appeared in March 2019).

In response to the insecurity context, several strategies were adopted.

- Supervision of activities by telephone:

Some of the SF's partner NGOs were no longer able to travel to the insecure areas and carried out supervision using the telephone, as shown by the following comments:

« With the security situation, there are areas that we cannot supervise, but we maintain contact with these areas by telephone. So with oral accounting, the women cannot lie because we ask for the day's savings; the amount of the fund; the number of weeks counted in stones for women; the number of loans; and the total amount allocated; and so on. We follow all this by telephone in some villages where we are obliged to do so »

(CMMF Facilitator, NGO ADEFAD, Lougouri village, North Burkina Faso).

- Stopping activities in insecure areas, redeployment of facilitators

Some partner NGOs, due to the deteriorating security situation, have, as a precautionary measure, stopped their activities in certain areas, such as the communes of Thiou, in the northern region of Burkina Faso; the communes of Sy, Ouolon and Siadougou, in the Mopti region of Mali; and the commune of Tamou, Ouro-Guéladjo, in the Tilabéri region of Niger. Others have been redeployed to more secure villages to continue their work.

- The autonomous operation of CMMF groups in insecure areas:

In this respect, it is worth noting the resilience of the players of some CMMF groups (communes of Sy, Ouolon and Siadougou, Mopti region of Mali), who continued to operate autonomously based on the rules they already knew, leaving it to the NGO GRAADECOM to focus on monitoring the newly created CMMF groups.

- Compliance with the safety instructions issued by the authorities:

As security regulations prohibit the use of motorbikes in certain regions of Niger, the NGO APTF replaced the facilitators' motorbikes with unmarked supervision vehicles in those areas where motorbike traffic was prohibited. *These forms of adaptation have enabled the partner NGOs to stop and then resume their activities at the right time, and to carry out as many of these activities as possible, which, although they were negatively impacted, did not see any change in objectives. With the health crisis linked to Covid-19, it appeared important to consider the protection of the populations in the areas of intervention. The partner NGOs proceeded with:

- A rearrangement of their work schedule:

The calendar was stopped for a while (about a month) to comply with the instructions

- Raising awareness of the application of barrier measures

Training/awareness-raising sessions for participants on barrier measures were organised before reopening the centres, with strict compliance with barrier measures.

- The introduction of double shifts for SS learners

Regarding education activities, while some NGOs (such as AMSS/FS, Mali) introduced double shifts to reduce the number of learners in the same space, others such as ADEFAD in Burkina Faso went door to door to explain and convince children to resume their learning.

- Budgetary rearrangements:

In other NGOs such as Halassay (Dosso Niger), the funds allocated to certain activities were reallocated to the fight against Covid-19, and to the implementation of barrier measures. Overall, in the three intervention countries, faced with Covid-19, the implementation of the strategic plan was based on the improvement of sanitary equipment (buckets, hydro-alcohol gels, soap), the respect of barrier measures, and the reorganisation of the timetable, which allowed the implementation of the strategic plan to continue.

We note the « faire-faire » approach that allows for capacity building of the implementing actors, as well as the flexibility of FS to adapt to the circumstances, which allowed it to continue its activities in the field.

4.2.2. Considering the needs/priorities of beneficiaries

Whether in the field of education, vocational training or IGAs, the needs of beneficiaries are considered. In education, given the large number of children out of school, the intervention of the SF is perceived as relevant responses to fill a gap, a challenge faced by the governments of the three countries. SS and SS2 are educational alternatives that contribute to the achievement of the ministries' objectives in terms of education and contribute to the attainment of SDG 4.

According to the beneficiary populations, SS has contributed greatly to the enrolment or return of many children to school, as one parent said:

« As far as SS is concerned, we find it good and very important for our people, because without it, many of our children would not have the chance to go to school. We appreciate the work that the facilitators and supervisors do to ensure that our children go to school (...). SS came to our rescue because we were really in need. »

(APE President in the Northern region of Burkina Faso.

Some of the needs of parents in relation to education are expressed not only in terms of the quality of learning but also in terms of efficiency and the number of years of learning in the primary cycle, as these comments make it clear.

«We liked the arrival of SS because of the education of the children. Since there was no school here and their 3 years of education to get to college is beneficial, better than 6 years of education in primary school. If they could come back and strengthen the education of children while increasing the number of recruits».

Focus-Group husbands of CMMF women, Dah, Mali).

The students who benefited from the SS and SS2 strategies that we met expressed their satisfaction with going to school, hoping for a better future at the end of their training, as this boy confided.

As for AL, it is perceived as a strategy to improve women's knowledge of reading, writing and their skills to reinvest them in their daily activities. Despite the high demand, the number of beneficiaries remains low. The multiple demands of the AL expressed by the women remain unmet.

Concerning S3A, the opinion of the partner NGOs in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger is that it meets the needs of young people for vocational training and socio-economic integration by giving them access to training in sewing, agriculture, cattle raising, carpentry, electricity, catering, etc. This helps to reduce delinquency. This helps to reduce juvenile delinquency, rural exodus and (forced) child marriages.

For CMMF activities, it was found that its relevance lies in the fact that many women did not have the opportunity to develop IGAs and those who had money did not know how to make it bear fruit. During the focus groups, women testified that before the establishment of the CMMF groups, they did not have much knowledge about IGAs, and the satisfaction of their financial needs was entirely based on the contributions of their husbands.

4.2.3. Alignment with national and international policies and priorities

SP builds on national and international development policies and programmes. In accordance with the international commitments to which they have subscribed, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger have put in place national policies, programmes, and laws.

At the SF level, the implementation of Thematic Objective 1: Strong civil society and public sector is aligned with SDG 1 (Eradicate poverty in all its forms everywhere); SDG 16 (Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, ensure access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels); and SDG 17 (Strengthen the capacity to implement and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development) In addition to the fact that Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger have signed up to the SDGs, these countries have also opted for greater community participation in local socio-economic development.

Thus, this thematic objective, in Mali, the law N°2015-052/ of 18 December 2015 instituting measures to promote gender in access to nominative and elective functions aims in its article 1⁷ and 3⁸ at the inclusion of all citizens, especially women, in the participation in the development of the country with equal opportunities. In Burkina Faso, strategic objective 1.1 of the PNDES⁹ : «Promote good political and administrative governance”, aimed at strengthening democracy and human rights, improving regional and

⁷ « In nominations to the Institutions of the Republic or to the various categories of public services in Mali, by decree, order or decision, the proportion of persons of either sex must not be less than 30 ».

⁸ Candidate lists for local elections must alternate between sexes as follows: if two candidates of the same sex are registered, the third must be of the other sex.

⁹ Burkina Faso. National Economic and Social Development Plan (PNDES) 2016-2020.

international cooperation, public administration, and accountability, is perfectly in line with thematic objective 1 of SF.

Also, SF thematic objective 1 is in line with the overall objective of Niger's Economic and Social Development Plan (PDES, 2017)-2021¹⁰, which aims at improving the level of well-being of the population at several levels (socio-economic, respect for others, human capital, demographic transition, inclusive economic growth, etc.).

However, discussions with women in the three countries in relation to this thematic objective reveal a mixed situation: while some women feel that they have the same rights as men, others say that women's rights are poorly asserted: « We don't know our rights in order to assert them. We need to be taught at the grassroots level, otherwise we don't know anything to claim » (Woman, 41 years old, Focus-Group CMMF woman, Kalsaka, North Burkina).

Some women believe that this situation is linked to culture, as women are taught from childhood never to oppose and to always submit. For them, the exchanges proposed within the framework of the AL activities will make it possible to combat ignorance, to awaken women, to make them understand their rights and duties, so that they feel equal to others and can claim a place. These priorities are also those of the SF's partner NGOs in terms of capacity building for civil society.

At the level of education, in view of the great need to enrol out-of-school children and young people, thematic objective 2: « Inclusive quality education and lifelong learning for marginalised and disadvantaged groups » is achieved through the development of the SS concept for out-of-school children (8-12 years), and the SS2 concept for out-of-school children (13-14 years).

According to the parents we met, these strategies are an opportunity for children and their families, contributing to enrolment or return of many children to school, and allowing many others who had not had the chance to go to school to enter a formal education system, and one of them asserts that: « Especially regarding the SS, we find it good and very important for our populations, because without it, many of our children would not have the chance to go to school. We appreciate the work that the facilitators and supervisors do to ensure that our children go to school (...) All I know is that SS has come to relieve us because we were really in need. (President of APE /Koudombo, North Burkina).

The students who benefited from these strategies confided that before joining the learning centres, they helped their parents by working in the fields, doing petty trade, herding animals, and doing handicrafts. Some also attended Koranic school. Almost all of these pupils said that they could not go to school because of their parents' lack of money and because of their work in the fields. Some of them also say that it is because of ignorance (on their part or on the part of their parents), or because of a lack of birth certificates. Thus, the intervention of the Stromme Foundation is seen as providing solutions to fill a gap, an obligation of the states in education, and summarised by a parent of a pupil in these terms:

« We liked the arrival of the project because of the education of the children. Since there was no school at home, their 3-year training was good for us. Their 3-year training is better than 6 years of training in

¹⁰ Republic of Niger. Ministry of Planning, September 2017. Economic and Social Development Plan 2017-2021. A reborn Niger for a prosperous people. Available at: www.plan.gouv.ne/uploads/documents/PEDS-2017-2021.pdf

public schools. If they could come back and strengthen the education of the children while increasing the number of recruits and years of training».

Focus-Group husbands of CMMF woman, Dah, Mali).

These activities, linked to SF thematic objective 2 « Quality, inclusive education and lifelong learning for marginalised and disadvantaged groups », are based on MDG4 « Ensuring equitable, inclusive and quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all », and appear to be in line with the legal provisions and priorities of the three intervention countries. Thus, it is noted that:

In Mali, it is in line with Law 99 - 046 of 28 December 1999 on the orientation of the education system, establishing education as a national priority (Article 2), and guaranteeing the right to each citizen (article 4)¹¹. In Niger, this objective is in line with Law No. 98-12 of 1 June 1998, on the orientation of the Nigerien education system, in its articles 7 (Education is a national priority) and 8 (The right to education is recognised for all without distinction of age, sex, social, racial, ethnic or religious origin)¹². In Burkina Faso, it is in line with the Burkina Faso Education/Training Sectoral Programme (PSEF: 2012-2021), which aims to promote non-formal education for adolescents (Specific Objective 2); and literacy for young people, including women (Specific Objective 4).

In addition, the strategic orientations of the Strategic Development Programme for Basic Education (PDSEB) Period: 2012 - 2021¹³ (adopted by the Council of Ministers on 1 August 2012) relate to girls/boys, equity; improvement of education and the fight against illiteracy. Operating in the same countries of intervention, the SF's partner NGOs also share the same priorities in education.

Under thematic objective 3: « Improved livelihoods of the rural poor through enhanced income generation », the strategy was to build the capacity of women in CMMF groups to start and develop their IGAs through agricultural value chains, and to develop a training and job placement programme for youth.

The capacity building of women from the CMMF groups to initiate and develop their IGAs through agricultural value chains was carried out through CMMF activities. The relevance of these activities is that many women had no resources and were limited to their homes. Those who had some money did not know how to make it work. In addition, it was found that women needed to get together and discuss their difficulties, and the CMMF groups filled this need and enabled women to do IGAs. In Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali, many of the women interviewed during the focus group discussions said that before the CMMF groups were set up, women did not have much knowledge and relied entirely on their husbands' input:

As for the AL strategy, it is perceived as enabling them to improve their reading skills in the local language, which was impossible for the women, and as enabling them to come out of ignorance, because studying gives them access to knowledge. Indeed, for some of the women interviewed in the three countries, the fact that many women have never been to school, or dropped out early, is seen as an evil that active literacy can remedy.

¹¹ République de Mali, law 99 – 046 of 28 december 1999 on Education policy law education policy law. Available at : <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/103433/125635/F-893978704/MLI-103433.pdf>

¹² République of Niger. Law N° 98-12 of 1 june 1998, on policy of the education system.

Available at : <https://www.men.ne/LOSEN.htm>

¹³ MENAP/LN (2011). Strategic Development Programme for Basic Education (PDSEB, 2012 – 2021). Burkina Faso

The training and professional integration programme for young people was developed through the S3A strategy (placing young people in apprenticeships). According to partner NGOs in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, this strategy meets the needs of young people for vocational training and socio-economic insertion by giving them access to training in sewing, agriculture, cattle raising, carpentry, electricity, catering, etc. Thus, these strategies make it possible to integrate or reintegrate children and young people into the education system, to reduce juvenile delinquency, rural exodus and forced marriages. The young people trained through this strategy say that the fact of having been selected is an opportunity to benefit from free training that they would not have been able to get elsewhere and has the advantage of not remaining idle.

Thematic goal 3, « Improved livelihoods and income for rural youth and women », is linked to MDG 4 (already mentioned); MDG 5, « Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls »; and MDG 10, « Reduce inequalities within and between countries ». It is easy to see that all of these SDGs (4, 5, and 10) are addressed by the above-mentioned priorities and laws of the three countries. Also, the partners NGOs of SF, as implementing agencies of development projects and programmes in the three countries of intervention, are in agreement with these priorities.

Thus, it is clear that the strategic plan meets the needs of the beneficiaries, and the orientations of the SF strategic plan, relating to the thematic objectives (1, 2, and 3), are in line with the priorities, laws and development options of the three countries of intervention. The planning of activities was done in common agreement with the field players and beneficiary communities; the implementation was aimed at building capacities on the rights and advocacy of women, youth and CBOs, intervention and governance capacities, as well as collaboration with the States, it can be said that the planning and implementation are in line with the expected results, namely: to engage women, youth and CBOs in the defence of their rights, and to improve the intervention and governance capacities of partner NGOs.

Similarly, the activities are consistent with the objectives of thematic objective 2, whose implementation strategy (Develop the concept of SS for out-of-school children (8-12 years) and the concept of SS2 for out-of-school children (13-14 years) by involving the beneficiary communities, technical services) aims to achieve the following results: access to improved primary education for out-of-school children (8-12 years), access to improved quality secondary level 1 education for out-of-school children (13-14 years), and access to improved literacy and life skills for girls and women (15-35 years).

Regarding the thematic objective 3, the objectives and implementation strategies, namely the strengthening of the capacities of women in CMMF groups to start and develop their IGAs through agricultural value chains and the development of a training and vocational integration programme for young people (15-25 years old) are in line with the expected results, i.e. « incomes of vulnerable women through CMMF groups are improved for economic inclusion », and « economic opportunities for youth are improved ».

4.3. Coherence Analysis

This is the extent to which interventions are consistent with other interventions within the country, sector or institution. Indicative research questions are: To what extent are the activities implemented consistent and adequate to inform the achievement of results (the relevance of indicators, source of verification and

assumptions)? To what extent is SF accountable to beneficiaries and partners (involvement of beneficiaries, communities and local players in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of activities)? To what extent has SF coordinated with other players on the field in the 3 countries (different ministries, other agencies, and decentralised structures)?

4.3.1. Consistency and adequacy of activities in relation to expected results

The Strategic Plan document 2019-2023 is coherent. The strategic plan is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as with the states' objectives. The evaluation notes that the activities related to each concept are well described in the three (3) countries. These activities are most often distributed proportionally to the three (3) countries (Mali, Niger and Burkina) except for a few cases. The basic document of the strategic plan shows that the main elements of a logical framework are respected. These include the setting of indicators, sources of verification, assumptions, and risks. The investigations carried out by the team of consultants in the three (3) countries show that the activities carried out by the partner NGOs are largely in line with the planning made in the basic document of the Strategic Plan.

The strategy put in place to facilitate the achievement of results is the monthly planning of activities which are subsequently funded by SF. The monthly and annual reports provided by the partner NGOs are used to feed the database of the Strategic Plan. Some partner NGOs mentioned difficulties related to the delay in the disbursement of funds by SF as part of the implementation of monthly activities.

4.3.2. Accountability of the Strømme Foundation to beneficiaries and partners

Within the framework of the SF's 2019-2023 Strategic Plan, the establishment of fruitful partnerships with state technical services, partner NGOs and beneficiaries made it possible to identify needs and address solutions. SF has put in place an annual feedback mechanism to state actors and partners as well as to the communes. Each year, this session is held in each country in September and the objectives are: to create favourable conditions to enable the parties to participate in the systematic process of reflection and reformulation of strategies; to create a space for learning in order to improve processes and capitalise on achievements; to work in a collaboration and accountability momentum which implies the follow-up of commitments, transparency on actions and results and accountability

These accountability sessions also consist in presenting the balance sheet of achievements by NGO and encouraging a critical analysis of what has been achieved and what has not worked well in the implementation of activities and the partnership; contributing, through exchanges and analyses, to the improvement of strategies for implementing actions; contributing, through exchanges, to realistic and harmonised operational planning with a view to achieving annual objectives and performance on the one hand and the Strategic Plan on the other hand; evaluating the partnership through respect for mutual commitments and analysing any challenges or risks linked to the implementation of actions and partnership; etc.

Interviews with the heads of technical States services in the three countries indicate that the contribution of SF to the promotion of education, particularly the inclusion of out-of-school children, is considerable. The education formulas (SS, SS2, AL) contribute to the improvement of education indicators. However, challenges remain in terms of keeping children in school after their transfer to the formal system. Efforts

must be made by SF but also and above all by State actors for better monitoring of these vulnerable children.

At this level, state actors should be more committed not only to strengthening the functioning of educational alternatives, but also to working to reduce school dropouts. The evaluation found that educational supervisors are excluded not only from monitoring activities but also from accountability sessions. This is a shortcoming insofar as they constitute the first level of hierarchy at regional level in education. For the rest of the Strategic Plan period, pedagogical supervisors should be considered in monitoring activities and participation in accountability sessions, if we want to move towards sustainability of actions after the SF's withdrawal.

It should also be stressed that SF should work towards better monitoring of the implementation of accountability sessions by the communes. Indeed, for this activity, SF provides communes through NGOs with the organisation of accountability sessions and then activity reports are provided. However, better monitoring is needed to make sure of the players who participate in these sessions, representativeness, the content of the activities to ensure the quality of the activities.

4.3.3. Coordination between the different actors in the three countries

In the implementation of the activities, several coordination mechanisms were put in place to pilot the activities with the actors. At the central level in the three countries, SF has signed memoranda of understanding with the governments to clarify roles and responsibilities. On this basis, focal points have been appointed and contribute to the supervision of activities on the field in the intervention areas.

To ensure the coordination of actors, the Partnership Council was set up. This body functioned when the function of Sub-Regional Permanent Secretariat existed in the regional office. After the suppression of this function, the countries were mandated to ensure the functioning of the Partnership Council. It was with this in mind that Burkina Faso was chosen to lead the first chairmanship. Subsequently, an irregularity was observed in the functioning of the Partnership Council due to insecurity and the mobilisation of financial resources by the states. After the launch of the new partnership in 2020, Burkina Faso was supposed to organise a sub-regional workshop in 2021, which did not take place.

At the country level, steering committees have been set up, bringing together different actors involved in education concepts. These steering committees are held and have made it possible to avoid certain overlaps between TFPs in the intervention zones. These bodies have also made it possible to review the standards and procedures for implementing the concepts. At the regional and circle level, the evaluation found that the education academies are not involved in the design, implementation, and monitoring process. In budget planning, this body is not considered. The Education Activities centers (Centres d'Animation Pédagogique) are involved and participate in the monitoring of activities on the field. The quarterly pedagogical meetings and the accountability session are coordination forums initiated by SF. The evaluation notes that the establishment of these mechanisms was relevant and made it possible to resolve problems observed in the field through the participatory approach.

At the beginning of the opening of schools, meetings are organised with schools to explain the different concepts of promoting the commitment of school officials and teachers. Some respondents noted the slowness of decision-making. There are delays in processing requests from technical services. Country offices have to refer to the regional office for decision-making. For certain reformulated requests that are not significant, the country coordinators are obliged to pass the information on to the regional office for decision-making. In the continuity of the actions, it would be useful to carry out advocacy with the States to hold regular Partnership Council meetings to further strengthen the coordination mechanisms.

4.4. Effectiveness analysis

Effectiveness is the extent to which the objectives of the interventions have been achieved or are to be achieved in the light of changing realities. It is an analysis of the results achieved compared to those expected. This analysis makes it possible to see to what extent the planned activities were implemented, the results achieved, what worked and what did not work in the implementation of the SP, etc.

The analysis of this criterion refers to specific objective 3 of the mid-term evaluation. The following points should be examined:

- the level reached by the target households in the multidimensional poverty scale compared to the baseline situation in 2019,
- the level of commitment of CMMF women's associations in advocating for their rights and the participation of women in local decision-making bodies and processes,
- access to primary education for out-of-school children aged 8 to 12, their retention rate in 2020-2021 and their performance in primary school.
- access to secondary education for SS2 children, their retention rate.
- The level of adoption and reinvestment of life skills by AL learners,
- the level of improvement in the socio-economic status of women members of the CMMF groups,
- the capacities of CMMF women's households (2019-2020) to cope with shocks,
- access to employment opportunities for young people in the S3A programme 2018-2020 cohort.

4.4.1. Analysis of the evolution of household poverty

This sub-point relates to the analysis of the economic situation of women members of the CMMF groups and is based on data collected from 1341 women members of the CMMF groups and their households (445 in Mali, 443 in Burkina Faso and 453 in Niger). Poverty analysis has long been based on a single indicator, income. This monetary approach to poverty provides only a partial picture of it, hence the approach advocated by the University of Oxford in the United States (Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative), which has set up a dozen or so indicators to analyse poverty, to take account of its "multidimensional" nature.

The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) focuses on households, counting deprivations in the areas of health, education, and standard of living.

1) Calculation of the MPI

The MPI is constructed using ten indicators covering three dimensions: education, health and standard of living. For the baseline study as well as for the present evaluation, the following variables were selected along the three dimensions: education, health, and standard of living.

- Education: It considers the number of years of schooling (a household is considered poor if no member of the household aged 10 or more has completed 5 years of schooling); school attendance (a household is poor if a child of school age does not attend school).
- Health: this takes into account malnutrition and child deaths. The household is poor if it has one child aged between 6 and 59 months with a brachial circumference of less than 12.5cm (a malnourished child). The household is considered poor if it has had a child death in the last 5 years.
- Standard of living: Several indicators are considered. A household is considered poor if it does not have access to electricity for lighting (multifunctional platform, generator, solar energy, etc.); if the floor of the house is not tiled or cemented; if it does not use potable water as water for drinking (tap water, from tap water dealers, standpipe or borehole); sanitation problem (mode of rubbish disposal and mode of wastewater disposal); fuel use problems (no access to gas); assets, including transport or communication goods owned (possession of radio, TV, telephone, bicycle, motorbike, tricycle, refrigerator, fan, air conditioner, washing machine, computer mixer).

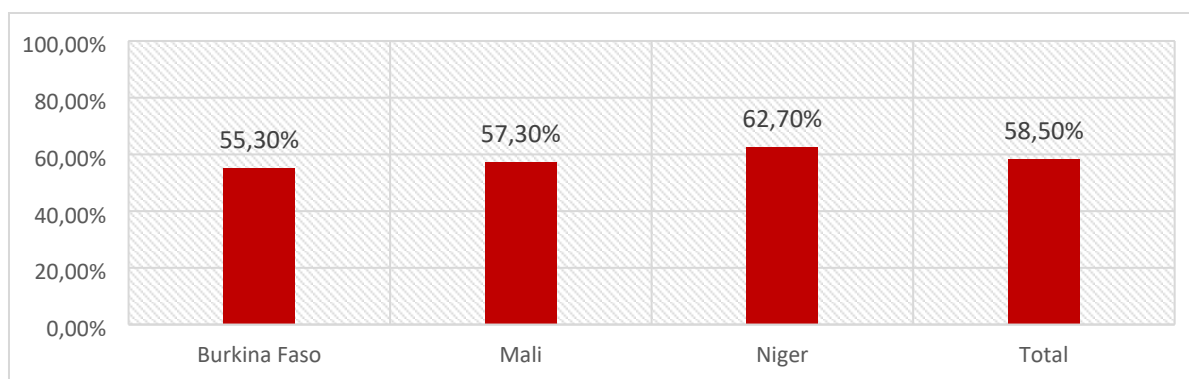
The 3 dimensions of the MPI have been weighted equally (1/3 each). However, different weights are assigned to the indicators. Thus, the two indicators of education and health each have a weight of 1/6 while the six indicators of standard of living each have a weight of 1/18. A household is considered poor if, and only if, the analysis of the indicators shows that it is deprived of essential services whose weighted sum is greater than 30% of all deprivations considered. It is also considered "multidimensionally poor" if it suffers deprivations in at least 3 of the 10 domains covered by the indicators. Despite its limitations and criticisms, the main merit of the MPI is that it reminds us that poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon.

2) Analysis of the results

Before making a comparative analysis of the MPI results, it is important to remember that the two surveys took place in two different periods that could influence household deprivation and MPI values. The baseline survey took place in September, a lean season when rural households are busier with fieldwork and face food shortages, rainy season health problems, etc. As for the mid-term evaluation, it took place in December (end of harvest period) when people are less exposed to food insecurity and IGAs or commercial activities are developed.

The results of the IPM in all three SFWA countries show that the percentage of poor households has fallen slightly from 61.1% at the baseline survey to 58.5% at the mid-term evaluation; a drop of 2.6% percentage points despite the crisis situations (health and security). This situation of the MPI could be explained by the effects of the support actions carried out during this period of implementation of the SP 2019-2023 for the benefit of the target household populations.

Graph 2 : Proportion of poor people by country



The country analysis shows differences in the evolution of the MPI from one country to another. Between the survey (2019) and the mid-term evaluation (2021), the percentage of poor households decreased in Mali (from 72.76% to 57.3%) and Burkina Faso (65.24% to 55.3%). As for Niger, there has been a considerable increase in the number of multidimensional poor (62.7% in the evaluation compared to 41.1% in the baseline study). This increase is justified by the negative impact of COVID-19 and the security situation. The results of the situational analysis of the impact of COVID-19 carried out by the SFWA in its intervention areas showed a negative impact of COVID-19 on the living conditions of households, and Niger was the country most affected¹⁴. To better understand the MPI in the three countries, it is important to examine the contribution of each sub-indicator to multidimensional poverty formation.

3) Analysis of MPI sub-indicators by country

The table below shows the different components of the MPI. As can be seen, based on the methodology adopted, the nature of poverty differs across dimensions and across indicators. We note that for all countries, the indicators by dimension have fallen slightly. The interpretation of these indicators highlights the difficulties experienced by the populations of these three countries.

Table 6 : Pourcentage des pauvres par type de privation

Indicators	Country			Whole
	Burkina	Mali	Niger	
Years of schooling	23,3%	17,5%	36,0%	25,7%
School attendance	14,2%	7,4%	13,0%	11,6%
Infant mortality	14,2%	20,7%	10,6%	15,1%
Nutrition	4,5%	7,2%	9,3%	7,0%
Electricity	50,8%	29,9%	73,5%	51,5%
Cooking fuel	96,4%	99,3%	99,8%	98,5%
Soil	53,7%	60,9%	93,6%	69,6%
Sanitation	97,5%	98,0%	97,4%	97,6%
Water	74,7%	77,3%	81,5%	77,9%
Assets	2,5%	4,3%	39,1%	15,4%

¹⁴ FSWA (2020). *Situation analysis to evaluate the needs of targets affected by the COVID 19 pandemic in the operating areas of Strømme Foundation's West Africa, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger*, Study report, April 2020

As in the baseline study, these are indicators relating to living conditions that contribute most to poverty in the three countries covered by the evaluation. It can be seen that asset-based deprivation (15.4%) contributes less to poverty as a whole but contributes more to poverty in Niger (39.1%) than in Burkina Faso (2.5%) and Mali (4.3%). Health and education contribute less to poverty despite being a major challenge in all three countries.

As regards the health dimension, the poor are more likely to suffer from infant mortality (15.1%). This proportion is higher in Mali (20.7%) than in Burkina (14.2%) and Niger (10.6%). As for the education dimension, almost a quarter (25.7%) of the deprivations of the poor are attributable to children not attending school. Niger records more poor people on the multidimensional level (36.0%) in terms of schooling, followed by Burkina Faso (23.3%) and Mali (17.5%).

The deprivations that affect the greatest number of poor people according to the MPI in the three countries are the same as those in the baseline study, namely: cooking fuel, sanitation, access to drinking water and electricity. Indeed, in all countries, almost the entire population suffers from a lack of adequate energy for cooking. The rate is 98.5% overall in three countries.

4) Analysis of poverty by region

Burkina Faso

Analysis of poverty by region shows that the North has more multidimensional poor (67.8%) than the *Hauts-Bassins* region (62%) and Centre-Est (48.1%) regions. It should be noted that in the baseline study, two regions were concerned, namely the *Hauts-Bassins* and the *Nord*, whose MPI was 71% and 61% respectively. The MPI has increased in the North region. This increase in the MPI could be explained not only by the effects of COVID-19, but also by the terrorist attacks that forced some populations to abandon their property and flee their villages.

Let us analyse the sub-indicators of the MPI by region to better understand the types of deprivation that people are facing.

Table 7 : Percentage of the poor by type of deprivation by region in Burkina Faso

Indicators	Region		
	CENTRE-EST	HAUTS-BASSINS	Nord
Years of schooling	25,0%	34,0%	18,1%
School attendance	9,7%	12,0%	20,3%
Infant mortality	15,7%	6,0%	14,7%
Nutrition	0,5%	12,0%	7,3%
Électricity	51,4%	0,0%	64,4%
Cooking fuel	98,1%	82,0%	98,3%
Soil	53,2%	28,0%	61,6%
Sanitation	96,8%	96,0%	98,9%
Water	78,2%	38,0%	80,8%
Assets	0,0%	0,0%	6,2%

Source: Survey data, authors' construction

Analysis of the above table shows that most of the poor in the Nord region suffer more deprivation in sanitation (98.9%), cooking fuel (98.3%), soil type (61.6%), electricity (64.4%), school attendance (20.3%), and possession of transport or communication goods (6.2%) than those in the Centre-Est and Hauts Bassins regions. These results confirm the high number of poor people according to the MPI in the Nord region. The school enrolment rate is low in the Nord, while the Hauts-Bassin is the region with the highest number of dropouts (34%). This situation could be explained by the cotton fields and gold mining sites in the area. Many children drop out of school to go to either the cotton fields or the mining sites to earn money.

The table shows that there are more poor people in the Centre-Est than in the Haut Bassin and the Nord in terms of infant mortality and potable water. The proportions of the poor are respectively 15.7% and 94.0% in the Centre-Est, compared to 14.7% and 93.2% in the Nord and 6.0% and 88.0% in the Haut-Bassin. Even if access to potable water, cooking fuel and sanitation has improved slightly, they still represent a huge difficulty for the populations of the three regions.

Mali

The results of the study reveal that the poor according to the MPI are numerous in Sikasso (75.2%) compared to Timbuktu (68.6%) and Segou (65.1%). A similar trend in the multidimensional poverty rate is observed in Timbuktu and Segou. Let us interpret the sub-indicators according to the three regions of Mali.

Table 8 : MPI indicators by region in Mali

Indicators	Region		
	Segou	Sikasso	Tombouctou
Years of schooling	11,8%	30,1%	10,0%
School attendance	11,6%	31,7%	23,6%
Infant mortality	15,1%	28,1%	18,6%
Nutrition	10,5%	5,9%	5,0%
Électricity	10,5%	19,0%	62,9%
Cooking fuel	99,3%	100,0%	98,6%
Soil	55,9%	41,2%	87,9%
Sanitation	98,7%	99,3%	95,7%
Water	74,3%	81,7%	75,7%
Assets	11,2%	0,7%	0,7%

Source: Survey on setting indicators for the SF Strategic Plan 2019-2023

Analysis of the sub-indicators by region reveals that the multidimensional poor in these regions suffer more from deprivation in terms of cooking fuel, sanitation, and potable water. The challenges faced by the population of Sikasso are enormous compared to those in the regions of Segou and Timbuktu.

Niger

The results of the study show that the Dosso region (50.7%) has more poor people than the Tillabéry region (43.9%) according to the MPI. In the baseline study, the Tillabéry region had more multidimensional poor than the Dosso region (57.04% versus 34.42%). This change in situation is due

to the inaccessibility of certain villages in the Tillabéry region, which were replaced by other villages that were not included in the baseline study. Analysis of the indicators presented in the table below shows that multidimensional poverty in terms of schooling (43.3%) is higher in Tillabéry. While other deprivations are high in the Dosso region.

Table 9: IMP situation by region in Niger

Indicators	Region	
	Dosso	Tillabéry
Years of schooling	32,1%	43,3%
School attendance	14,9%	9,6%
Infant mortality	12,5%	7,0%
Nutrition	10,8%	6,4%
Electricity	79,7%	61,8%
Cooking fuel	100,0%	99,4%
Soil	96,6%	87,9%
Sanitation	97,6%	96,8%
Water	84,5%	75,8%
Assets	41,6%	34,4%

Following the analysis of poverty, the next sub-chapter deals with the shocks experienced by people and the strategies adopted to cope with them.

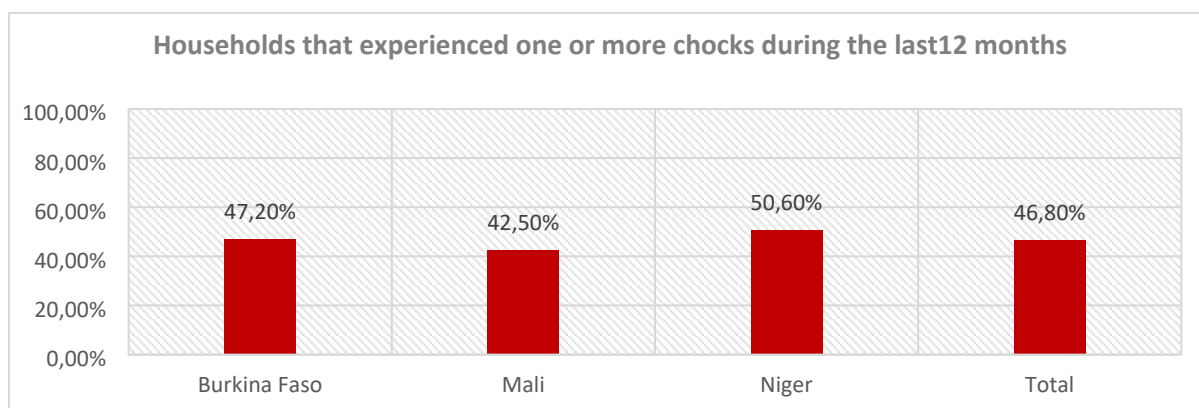
4.4.2. Analysis of household resilience to shocks and solutions adopted

Resilience is defined as the ability of families, communities, and systems to resist, absorb, adapt and recover from the negative effects of shocks or high levels of risk without compromising their long-term prospects (UNICEF, 2012). More specifically, in this evaluation, resilience is addressed in terms of endogenous or institutional responses to the vulnerability of EPC women's households (2019-2020) to shocks.

❖ Extent and types of shocks experienced by households

The evaluation data shows that 46.8% of households experienced one or more shocks in the twelve months prior to the survey. Niger has the highest proportion of households that experienced shocks. Indeed, half of the households (50.6%) in this country were affected, followed by Burkina Faso (47.2%) and Mali (42.5%).

Graph 3 : Proportion of households that experienced shock(s) in the last 12 months



Analysis of the data shows almost the same types of shocks experienced by households at the mid-term evaluation as at the baseline study. The shocks most mentioned by the women surveyed were, in order of importance: loss of crop due to fire, flood, insect infestation or theft (16.4%); serious illness or accident (13.0%); death of a breadwinner (7.5%); loss of livestock due to fire, flood, epizootic disease or theft (7.5%). Other types of shock such as loss of employment (0.9%), bankruptcy of a family business (0.5%), significant drop in income (0.6%), etc. were mentioned by the women but in small proportions.

Table 10 : Comparison of household exposure to different types of shocks between baseline and mid-term surveys

Chocks	Surveys	Mali (%)	Burkina Faso (%)	Niger (%)	Total (%)
Crop loss due to fire, flooding, insect infestation, theft	Baseline survey	11,11	11,6	17,7	
	Mid-term evaluation	14,8	10,2	24,1	16,4
Serious illness/accident	Baseline survey	8,18	14,55	12,76	
	Mid-term evaluation	10,3	18,1	10,8	13,0
Death of a family provider	Baseline survey	7,55	9,28	9,98	
	Mid-term evaluation	7,6	10,2	4,6	7,5
Loss of livestock due to fire, flood, epizootic disease, theft	Baseline survey	10,27	11,18	3,71	
	Mid-term evaluation	7,9	11,7	2,9	7,5

Source: Data from the baseline study & mid-term evaluation of the strategic plan 2019-2023

The table above shows that between the baseline survey and the mid-term evaluation, the percentage of households that experienced crop loss increased by 3 percentage points in Mali (from 11.11% to 14.8%) and by 7 percentage points in Niger (17.7% and 24.1%). This crop loss situation requires particular attention in relation to food security in the coming months.

❖ Strategies adopted to cope with crop loss

The most common coping strategies used to deal with the loss of income are selling assets (30%), using savings (19.1%) and borrowing (17.7%). Particularly in Niger, the solidarity of relatives was a determining factor during the period, notably the help of relatives living in the country (18.3%) and the help of relatives living abroad (15.6%).

Table 11: Household strategy for coping with crop losses

Crop loss due to fire, flood, insect infestation, theft, drought, insecurity	Mali	Burkina Faso	Niger	Total
Sale of assets	36,4%	31,1%	25,7%	30,0%
Use of savings	16,7%	42,2%	11,0%	19,1%
Borrowing	24,2%	13,3%	15,6%	17,7%
Help from relatives living in the country	1,50%	4,40%	18,30%	10,50%
Help from relatives living abroad	6,10%	4,40%	15,60%	10,50%

The following table shows that when faced with the shock of a serious illness or accident, the first strategy adopted is borrowing (36.6%), followed by selling assets (34.3%) and help from a relative living in the country (20.6%). Help from a relative was a strategy used much more in Niger (38.8%) than in other countries. When faced with the loss of livestock, borrowing was the first strategy used (14%), followed by the use of savings and the sale of assets, which were mentioned less frequently. After the death of a family provider, the strategies adopted were using savings (23.0%), help from a relative living in the country (22.0%) and borrowing (21.0%)

Table 12 : Strategy adopted to deal with loss of livestock, serious illness, death of a supporter family

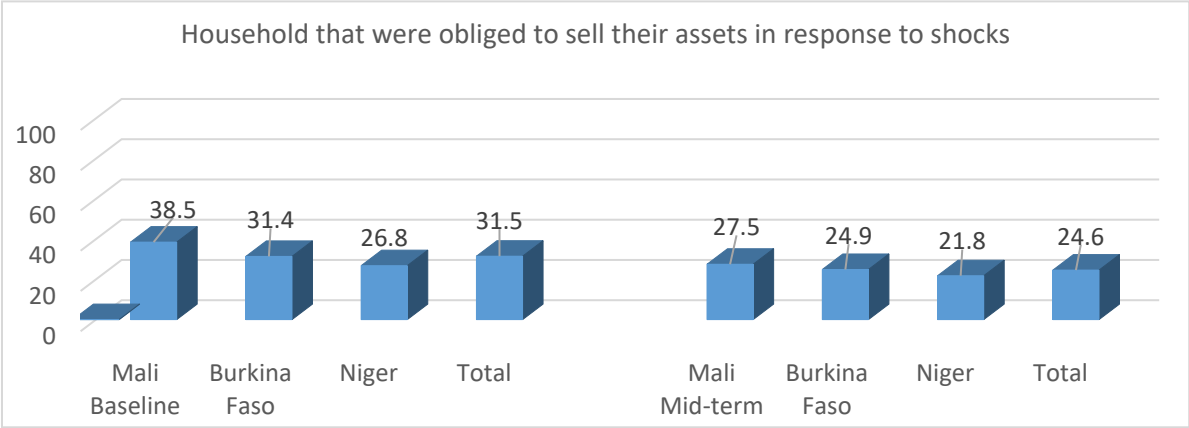
Strategies for dealing with serious illness/accident	Mali	Burkina Faso	Niger	Total
Borrowing	46,3%	37,0%	20,4%	36,6%
Sale of assets	37,5%	32,6%	30,6%	34,3%
Help from relatives living in the country	16,3%	8,7%	38,8%	20,6%
Use of savings	17,5%	17,4%	12,2%	16,0%
Strategies for dealing with livestock loss	Mali	Burkina Faso	Niger	Total
Borrowing	14,3%	15,4%	7,7%	14,0%
Use of assets	11,4%	7,7%	0,0%	8,0%
Sale of assets	2,9%	9,6%	0,0%	6,0%
Strategies for dealing with the death of a family provider	Mali	Burkina Faso	Niger	Total
Use of savings	11,8%	40,0%	4,8%	23,0%
Help from relatives living in the country	11,8%	26,7%	28,6%	22,0%
Borrowing	20,6%	28,9%	4,8%	21,0%
Sale of assets	26,5%	17,8%	4,8%	18,0%

Other strategies were cited in the different countries. These were: migration of some family members, receiving money or food from the family, 'hunting, foraging, fishing, digging termite mounds' and consuming seed stock. These strategies were employed by minorities of households. The focus groups with women noted that these households intentionally took actions to protect themselves and recover from shocks and stresses by purchasing agropastoral assets under the tontine envelope; a significant proportion of the CMMF invested remains, ranging from 33% to 53.5%. This explains why the CMMF has enabled beneficiary households to develop their capacity to absorb, adapt and even transform, thus becoming more resilient. Faced with chronic food insecurity, the survival strategies most frequently developed by households are the sale of livestock products. It is therefore necessary to:

- continue to build the adaptive capacity of households,
- focus on inclusion as a necessary social dimension of household and community resilience,
- continue to invest in savings groups to strengthen social capital, particularly in areas where it is beginning to deteriorate.

The data shows that in all three countries the proportion of households that were forced to sell assets to cope with shocks fell from 31.5% to 24.6% between the baseline survey and the mid-term evaluation: a decrease of 7 percentage points. The trend of decline is almost identical in all three.

Graph 4 : proportion of households that were forced to sell their assets in response to shocks



4.4.3. Level of improvement in socio-economic status of female CMMF group members 2019-2020 cohort

The level of improvement in the socio-economic status of women members of the EPC groups in the 2019-2020 cohort is analysed through improvements in income and involvement in decision-making processes and changes in gender relations within their households.

❖ Evolution of women's economic activities

The evaluation data (Table 13) show that:

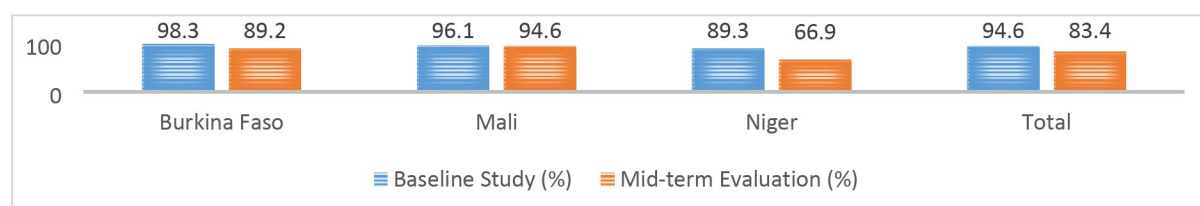
- 15% had not started or expanded any IGAs compared to 12.4% in the baseline study. In Niger, 29.1% of the women surveyed had not started a new IGA or expanded an existing one. The interviews revealed that most of these women are young married women. Among them, the husbands are migrant and regularly send money to their wives but are opposed to the involvement of women in IGAs. Therefore, to benefit from the advantages of being a member of the CMMF group, the women participate in the tontine without carrying out IGAs.
- 27.5% of women started a new IGA compared to 21% in the baseline study.
- 52% have expanded their existing IGA compared to 55.5% in the baseline study. The proportion of women who expanded their existing IGA was higher in Burkina Faso (65.4%) than in Mali (47.2%) and Niger (43.3%). The proportion of those who started a new IGA and expanded their existing IGA is higher in Burkina Faso (20.5%).

Table 13 : Proportion of women who started or expanded an existing IGA through the CFE

Member of the EPC group, have you started an IGA or expanded your existing IGA	Baseline survey				Mid-term evaluation			
	Mali (%)	Burkina Faso (%)	Niger (%)	All (%)	Mali (%)	Burkina Faso (%)	Niger (%)	All (%)
Did not start or expand an IGA	8,0	7,8	21,5	12,4	11,3	4,3	29,1	15,0
Started an IGA	20,0	22,6	20,2	21,0	30,9	26,3	25,4	27,5
A agrandi son AGR existant	65,0	49,1	52,3	55,5	47,2	65,4	43,3	51,9
Started an IGA and expanded his existing IGA	7,0	20,5	6,0	11,1	10,6	4,0	2,2	5,6
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Across the three countries, the proportion of women acquiring new goods and services for their households through their CMMF activities decreased between the baseline study and the mid-term evaluation, from 94.6% in 2019 to 83.4% in 2021, a drop of 11.2 percentage points. This decrease could be explained by the COVID-19 pandemic and insecurity in the three programme countries. Qualitative interviews with women allow a link to be established between the expansion of IGAs and the consistency of women's income.

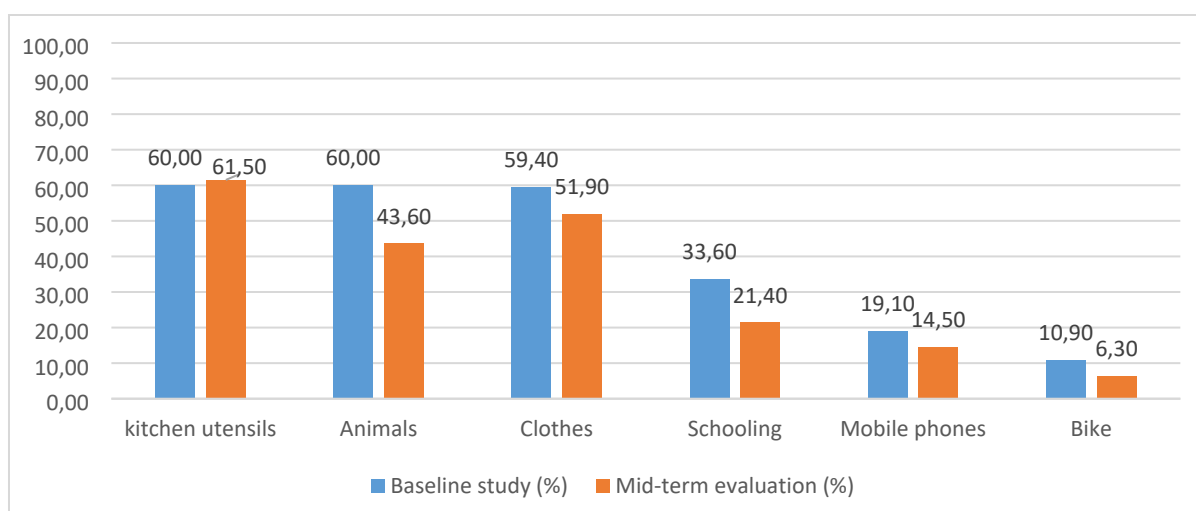
Graph 5: Comparison of the acquisition of new goods and services between the baseline study and the mid-term evaluation



Source: data from the baseline study & mid-term evaluation of the strategic plan 2019-2023

The analysis by country shows that Niger is the most affected by this reduction in the capacity to acquire new goods and services, with a drop of 22.4 percentage points compared to only 9 points and 1.5 percentage points respectively for Burkina Faso and Mali. Interviews with women show that this drop in capacity to acquire new goods and services can be explained by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the insecurity in the intervention area. The analysis of the data shows that in view of the crises (health and security) that affect economic activities, women are obliged to invest more in food and health needs than in goods and services. The activities have helped to address food insecurity.

Graph 6: Comparison of the level of acquisition of asset types between the baseline study and the mid-term evaluation



4.4.4. Achieving women's individual goals

Analysis of the data shows that at baseline, across the three countries, women's biggest goals were, in order of importance, to acquire new assets (80.5% of women at baseline), expand their IGA (53.6%); acquire services (34.4%); and start a new IGA (21.9%). The analysis of the evaluation data reveals that the objectives of acquiring new assets and acquiring services experienced a sharp decline of 28 and 14 percentage points respectively between the baseline study and the mid-term evaluation. In Niger, this decline reached 42 and 21 percentage points respectively. On the other hand, the objectives of expanding one's IGA and starting a new IGA increased by 3 and 6 percentage points respectively compared to the baseline and mid-term evaluations.

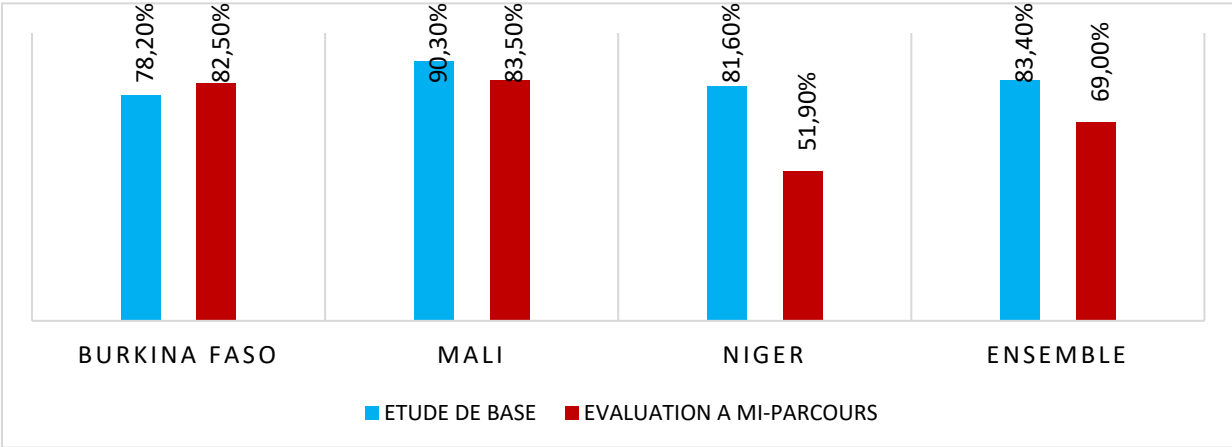
Table 14 : Evolution of individual objectives set at the beginning of the cycle between the two studies

What were the individual objectives set	Burkina Faso		Mali		Niger		All	
	Baseline survey	Mid-term evaluation	Baseline survey	Mid-term evaluation	Baseline survey	Mid-term evaluation	Baseline survey	Mid-term evaluation
Acquire new assets	93,1%	69,1%	71,8%	55,1%	76,9%	34,4%	80,5%	52,7%
Expand IGA	49,3%	53,7%	60,7%	64,7%	50,6%	52,1%	53,6%	56,8%
Acquire services	56,6%	52,1%	20,2%	4,9%	26,9%	5,5%	34,4%	20,7%
Start a new IGA	31,7%	36,6%	12,9%	22,7%	21,3%	24,3%	21,9%	27,8%

Source: Data from the baseline study & mid-term evaluation of the strategic plan 2019-2023

Analysis of the data shows that at the baseline study in 2019, 83.4% of the women reached their targets by the end of the cycle. For the mid-term evaluation, this indicator is 69% in all three countries, a drop of 14 percentage points. Only the percentage of women in Burkina Faso who reached their targets at the evaluation is higher than in the baseline study (82.5% compared to 78.2%). At the mid-term evaluation, the percentage of women in Niger who had achieved their objectives was 51.9% compared to 81.6% at the baseline study, a drop of almost 30 percentage points.

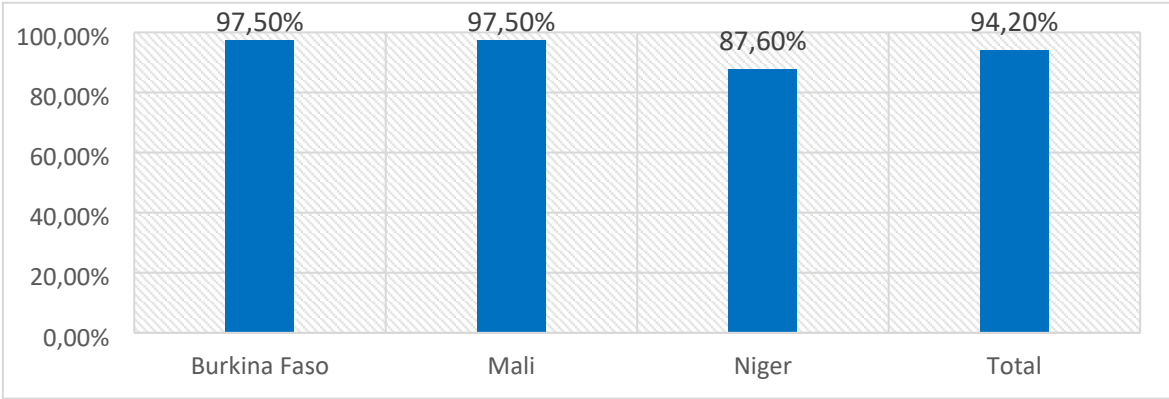
Graph 7: Level of achievement of women's individual goals at the end of the cycle



4.4.5. Evolution of IGA economic activities and women's income

Despite the crises (security and health), 94.2% of the women surveyed stated that over the last three years (period of SP implementation), their economic situation has improved thanks to the IGAs they carry out. The income from their IGAs has enabled them to improve their living conditions and those of their families, particularly in terms of their contributions to family expenses. It should be noted that about 12.5% of women in Niger were not able to improve their economic situation through their IGAs.

Graph 8 : Percentage of women who have improved their income in the last 3 years with the CMMF group



The following graph shows that 52.8% of women experienced difficulties in implementing IGAs during the past year due to the health and security situation and the difficulty of mobilising savings to meet their needs.

The qualitative interviews show that the difficulty of accessing financial services adapted to their situation becomes more complicated for some women. The tontines they organise, and the working capital of some Village Women's Associations are unable to solve their financial needs in the long term. According

to them, the small amount of loans or contributions (in the case of the tontines) just allows them to start a small economic activity, but sometimes fails to meet the high financial needs of women. Furthermore, the microfinance institutions that exist in rural areas do not adequately meet women's needs. They require savings or a guarantee that they would find difficult to constitute and guarantees that they cannot provide.

It is noted that 28.6% of women had to stop practicing IGAs at some point in the last 3 years because of COVID-19 (86.6%) and insecurity (43.0%). This information shows that COVID-19 has had more negative impacts on activities than insecurity. Since the advent of COVID 19, women's IGAs have been faced with challenges including: problem of disposal due to lack of buyers (42.7%); difficulties in accessing raw materials (22.9%); problem of disposal due to border closures (17.7%); problem of transport (13.0%).

Table 15 : Major challenges facing women's IGAs since the COVID pandemic

Q413. What are the major challenges your AGR has faced since the COVID-19 pandemic?	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	Total
Flow problem due to lack of buyers	68,6%	37,3%	22,5%	42,7%
Difficulties in accessing raw material	27,8%	26,5%	14,6%	22,9%
Flow problem due to border closure	34,3%	12,4%	6,6%	17,7%
Transport problem	17,4%	7,6%	13,9%	13,0%
Conservation problem	11,1%	5,2%	9,7%	8,7%
Problems in accessing loans	11,7%	1,3%	4,4%	5,8%
Total	443	445	453	1341

Faced with health challenges (COVID-19), 53.4% of women have reduced the quantity of production; 32% have reduced the selling price of products and 24.4% have temporarily stopped production. In Niger, the proportion of those who stopped the IGA reached 50%.

Table 16: Strategies to address the challenges of COVID-19

What strategies have you adopted to meet the challenges	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	Ensemble
Decrease in production quantity	59,8%	55,1%	34,1%	53,4%
Reduction of sales prices	34,5%	37,0%	18,2%	32,0%
Stopping the IGA	23,5%	7,8%	50,6%	24,4%

Despite the crisis situations affecting IGAs, women remain positive and optimistic about the future of their economic activities. Thus, 90.5% think that their financial opportunities will improve in the future

Table 17: Women's views on their financial/economic opportunities in the coming years

How do you see your financial/economic opportunities in the coming years?	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	Total
Less (reduction)	0,7%	2,7%	1,3%	1,6%
Same (unchanged)	3,4%	6,7%	13,7%	8,0%
More (increase)	95,9%	90,6%	85,0%	90,5%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
	443	445	453	1341

4.4.6. Appropriation and adoption of life skills by women and adolescent girls targeted by the programme

❖ AL beneficiaries' skills in reading and writing

Regarding communication in French, the data show an improvement in women's skills. Those who can read and write represent 30% compared to 11.7% in the baseline study; those who can only read represent almost 6% compared to 2% in the baseline study.

Table 18 : Women's French language skills

Skills in French	Baseline survey				Mid-term evaluation			
	Mali (%)	Burkina Faso (%)	Niger (%)	All (%)	Mali (%)	Burkina Faso (%)	Niger (%)	All (%)
Reading	5,3	0,4	0,8	2,2	5,5	7,5	4,3	5,8
Writing	1,8	0,4	2,7	1,7	5,3	3,4	1,4	3,7
Reading and writing	13,5	11,4	10,3	11,7	39,2	18,4	24,8	29,9
Can neither read nor write	79,4	87,8	86,2	84,4	50,0	70,7	69,5	60,6
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

In terms of local language skills, those who said they could 'neither read nor write' were only 35.2%, compared to almost 78% in the baseline study. The evaluation found that 50% of the women could 'read and write' in the local language, compared to 24.6% in the baseline study. These results are significant because many of the women identified in the baseline study had a very low level of education, but since the period of implementation of the SP, the situation has begun to change.

Table 19 : Women's local language skills between baseline and evaluation

Do you have local language skills?	Baseline survey				Mid-term evaluation			
	Mali	Burkina Faso	Niger	All	Mali	Burkina Faso	Niger	All
Reading	6,1%	1,5%	5,4%	4,3%	7,0%	21,2%	7,0%	10,4%
Writing	--	--	--	--	3,8%	5,7%	5,0%	4,4%
Reading and writing	46,0%	10,7%	16,7%	24,6%	64,9%	32,1%	44,0%	50,0%
Can neither read nor write	47,9%	87,8%	77,9%	71,0%	24,3%	41,0%	44,0%	35,2%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Source: Data from the baseline study & mid-term evaluation of the strategic plan 2019-2022

Despite the encouraging results, it should be noted that efforts still need to be made to improve the skills of AL women, as the 35% of women who "can neither read nor write" constitute a significant proportion. Then, when we consider the whole group, including non-AL beneficiaries, we realise that 73.2% "can neither read nor write". Those who can "read and write" represent only 22.4%.

The qualitative interviews show that AL beneficiaries acquire more skills and a more valued social status that allow them to distinguish themselves from non-beneficiaries. Most women have understood the usefulness of active literacy and want to benefit from it. However, this demand is not being met.

The interviews revealed points to be considered to improve the effectiveness of the AL. The opening periods of the centres (December) coincide with the harvest period, and this affects women's attendance. Thus, women's absenteeism affects their learning. According to the women surveyed, the duration of the AL training is insufficient to enable them to master the modules taught. They feel that, with their poor prerequisites, they have difficulty retaining some of the modules taught and they often have to repeat them. The desire is to increase the duration of the training in order to favour the appropriation of the modules by the women.

Some of the women who come to the AL centres have young children, but there are no facilities for children who disrupt the classes. It is therefore necessary to think about a community day-care facility next to the AL centres to relieve the mothers.

❖ CMMF women achievement on life skills

The interventions at the level of AL have enabled them to acquire life skills that facilitate their activities. The survey data shows that out of all the women who benefited from AL, the vast majority (85.40%) claimed to have benefited from life skills training; that is 95.1% in Mali, 85.8% in Burkina Faso and 72.3% in Niger.

The level of appropriation varies according to the type of skill. The majority (52%) of respondents said they had acquired problem-solving skills; 49.6% on creativity; 45.8% on decision-making and learning to say "no"; 45.5% on citizenship. These results confirm the effect of the project interventions on the beneficiaries. However, it should be emphasised that despite the positive opinion of the respondents towards these beneficiaries, there is still a need to strengthen the women so that they can better assume their role.

Table 20 : Life skills acquired by women in CMMF groups

Types of life skills	Mali	Burkina Faso	Niger	All
Problem solving	46,0%	80,2%	36,3%	51,8%
Spirit of creativity	42,6%	36,3%	73,5%	49,6%
Decision-making, learning to say "no"	50,6%	60,4%	24,5%	45,8%
Citizenship	72,7%	27,5%	14,7%	45,5%
Leadership	61,9%	14,3%	27,5%	40,7%
Effective Communication	36,9%	49,5%	29,4%	37,9%
Interpersonal relationship	34,1%	36,3%	24,5%	32,0%
Self-awareness	35,8%	30,8%	15,7%	29,0%
Critical thinking	14,2%	11,0%	11,8%	12,7%
Empathy	11,9%	22,0%	0,0%	11,1%
Stress management	14,2%	13,2%	2,0%	10,6%
Emotion management	13,6%	12,1%	2,0%	10,0%

Source: Data from the baseline study & mid-term evaluation of the strategic plan 2019-2023

It can be seen that the skills are different for women. The most adopted life skills are, in order of importance: problem solving (45.6%); creativity (39.8%); citizenship (34.9%); decision making; learning to say "no" (33.4%). The other skills are weakly adopted.

Table 21 : Level of adoption of life skills by women in daily life

Skills	Mali	Burkina Faso	Niger	All
Problem solving	71,9%	37,9%	28,4%	45,6%
Spirit of creativity	28,6%	26,8%	74,1%	39,8%
Citizenship	25,4%	57,2%	8,6%	34,9%
Decision-making/Learning to say "no"	49,7%	33,1%	15,4%	33,4%
Leadership	22,7%	37,9%	15,4%	27,4%
Effective communication	43,8%	16,7%	19,8%	25,6%
Interpersonal relationship	25,4%	24,5%	19,8%	23,5%
Self-awareness	12,4%	20,8%	20,4%	18,2%
Empathy	17,8%	3,7%	0,0%	7,0%
Critical thinking	7,6%	6,7%	3,7%	6,2%
Emotion management	13,0%	4,5%	0,0%	5,8%
Stress management	6,5%	5,6%	1,2%	4,7%

Source: Data from the baseline study & mid-term evaluation of the strategic plan 2019-2023

❖ Outcomes of the use of the calculator in IGAs

Of the total number of women who benefited from AL, 41.4% claimed to have the capacity to use the calculator in IGAs. This proportion reaches 65% in Mali and only 16.3% in Niger. Compared to the baseline study, where 92.8% of the women said they were able to use a calculator, the current training at the AL level needs to be improved. Indeed, less than half of the AL beneficiaries can use the calculator. This situation requires attention in the implementation of AL. It should be noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a strong impact on SP activities, including the implementation of AL. It should also be added that the qualitative interviews with women show that the activities (sale of doughnuts, cakes, etc.) carried out by some women do not necessarily require the use of a calculator.

Table 22 : Ability to use calculators in IGAs by women in AL

Are you able to use the calculator in your IGAs?	Baseline survey				Mid-term evaluation			
	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	Total	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	Total
Yes	93,7%	87,5%	97,1%	92,8%	34,0%	64,9%	16,3%	41,4%
No	6,3%	12,5%	2,9%	7,2%	66,0%	35,1%	83,7%	58,6%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Considering all women, including those who did not benefit from AL, only 20.4% are able to use the calculator in IGAs (35% in Mali, 18.7% in Burkina Faso and only 7.1% in Burkina Faso).

❖ Outcomes of use of the telephone and/or the scale in IGAs

As for the use of the telephone and/or the balance in the framework of your IGAs, we note that this indicator has progressed between the baseline study and the mid-term evaluation, rising from 44.8% to 52%, i.e. a difference of 6 percentage points. In Mali, the percentage of women able to use a calculator is 78%, while in Niger it is 20.6%.

Table 23 : Female EPCs' habit of using the telephone and/or the scale in IGAs

Do you usually use the phone and/or the scale as part of your IGA?	Etude de base				Evaluation à mi-parcours			
	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	Total	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	Total
Yes	65,6%	41,9%	26,4%	44,8%	48,1%	77,8%	20,6%	51,9%
No	34,4%	58,1%	73,6%	55,2%	51,9%	22,2%	79,4%	48,1%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

❖ **Difficulties encountered in acquiring skills**

The majority (70%) of the women in the above-mentioned CMMF members stated that they have difficulties in "reading and writing", and in calculating. They showed that this is a real obstacle to the smooth running of their IGAs. They attribute this to the lack of learning time due to COVID-19, which for some time slowed down their learning activities, and the fact that most of them have never attended school. As for the husbands of the women in the CMMFs, the majority were happy with their wives' participation in the CMMF groups and did not find any negative effects of their wives' participation in the groups. In Mali, the women in the groups (almost 50%) have difficulties in calculating. They find the learning time very short (less than a year). In Niger, the analysis of the interview of CMMF women in Mokko, Farrey, Say, Garankadey, Kayan shows the following results: More than the majority of women in the CMMF groups (60%) have difficulties with reading, writing and arithmetic. However, some women, especially the young ones and those who have been to traditional schools (40%), are at ease with learning. They do not have great difficulty in literacy and in subjects such as arithmetic and measurement.

The following table 24 presents the capacity building needs of women. These are, in order of importance, literacy, numeracy, creativity and problem solving,

Table 24: Need for capacity building

Q210. What are your skill building needs ?	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	Total
Reading, writing	62,1%	54,6%	32,7%	49,7%
Calculating	60,5%	51,0%	34,4%	48,5%
Spirit of creativity	35,0%	30,1%	49,9%	38,4%
Problem solving	40,6%	29,7%	25,4%	31,8%
Effective communication	21,9%	22,2%	14,1%	19,4%
Decision-making / learning to say "no"	12,6%	19,8%	22,1%	18,2%
Self awareness	9,7%	16,4%	10,6%	12,2%
Interpersonal relationship	11,1%	13,5%	9,7%	11,4%
Critical thinking	13,5%	5,2%	7,1%	8,6%
Stress management	7,9%	8,1%	3,8%	6,6%
Emotion management	5,0%	7,0%	4,0%	5,3%
Empathy	3,8%	3,4%	2,6%	3,3%

4.4.7. Current school status of students from the SS 2018-2019 cohort

1) Retention rate of SS students

It should be remembered that 724 pupils were affected by the survey, 51% of whom were boys and 49% girls.

❖ Analysis of repetition, retention of children

Analysis of the data shows that 19.3% of SS pupils repeated at least one grade after transferring to formal school. This proportion is higher in Burkina Faso (21.7%); 18.4% in Niger and 18.2% in Mali. The percentage of repeaters is higher among boys (21.7%) than among girls (17.7%).

These repetition rates in primary school are worrying when one considers that at this level of education, repetition is regulated to minimise the waste of resources.

Table 25: Percentage of repeaters from SS after transfer

Have you ever repeated a year?	Country				Gender		
	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Yes	21,7%	18,2%	18,4%	19,3%	21,7%	17,7%	19,3%
No	78,3%	81,8%	81,6%	80,7%	78,3%	82,3%	80,7%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Source: Data from the baseline study & mid-term evaluation of the strategic plan 2019-2023

❖ Causes of repetition

Looking at the reasons why primary school pupils repeat a year, we see that the most important reasons are « Do not understand teachers' explanations » (56.9%); lack of time to revise (43.1%); distance between school and home (22.6%)

Table 26: the causes of repetition for pupils from the SS

Reasons	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	Total
Do not understand teachers' explanations	51,1%	48,9%	71,1%	56,9%
Lack of time to review lessons	55,6%	34,0%	40,0%	43,1%
Distance from home to school	28,9%	23,4%	15,6%	22,6%
Overload of domestic work	35,6%	12,8%	8,9%	19,0%
Domestic activities	24,4%	12,8%	8,9%	15,3%
Animal care (breeding)	24,4%	4,3%	0,0%	9,5%
Fatigue due to field work	17,8%	2,1%	0,0%	6,6%
Lack of school materials	4,4%	6,4%	2,2%	4,4%
Gold panning	11,1%	0,0%	0,0%	3,6%

Source: Data from the mid-term evaluation of the strategic plan 2019-2023

The surveys only covered students who were still enrolled in school, not dropouts. Therefore, primary survey data cannot be used to calculate the retention rate of students. It is therefore necessary to use secondary data collected by NGOs. But this secondary data was not compiled during the collection.

Nevertheless, interviews with educational supervisors and parents of pupils show that dropouts are not negligible. These interviews reveal that the children transferred need to be better monitored at home but also at school for a period to ensure their retention and success. This is necessary to ensure the impact of the interventions. It emerged from the interviews that the children benefit from little or no follow-up and specific actions after the transfer. This situation is of concern not only to NGOs but also to School Management Committee.

2) Performance of SS students

The analysis of academic performance shows that about 83% of the pupils who transferred to the primary school obtained an annual class average of 5/10 or more. Only 17% of the pupils did not obtain the passing grade; 45% obtained a between 6 -7 average and 18% for the mention good to very good.

Table 27 : Annual averages of SS students over the past year

Grade	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	Total
1-4 /10 (Weak)	21,60%	15,70%	15,30%	17,40%
5 / 10 (Fair)	26,10%	9,00%	20,50%	19,50%
6 - 7 / 10 (Fairly good)	38,60%	56,00%	43,70%	45,10%
8 - 9 / 10 (Good)	13,60%	17,20%	19,20%	16,90%
10 / 10 (Very good)	0,00%	2,20%	1,30%	1,10%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Source: Data from the mid-term evaluation of the strategic plan 2019-2023

Considering the annual ranking, 26% of the students from the SS were in the top 5 rankings.

Table 28 : Rangs annuels pour la dernière classe fréquentée des élèves venant de la SSAP

Ranks	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	Total
Between 1st and 5th	19,3%	22,5%	35,2%	26,0%
Between 6th and 10th	23,2%	24,4%	32,0%	26,7%
Between 11th and 15th	17,9%	15,5%	11,9%	15,0%
Between 16th and 20th	15,9%	8,5%	7,0%	10,2%
21th and over	23,7%	29,1%	13,9%	22,3%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

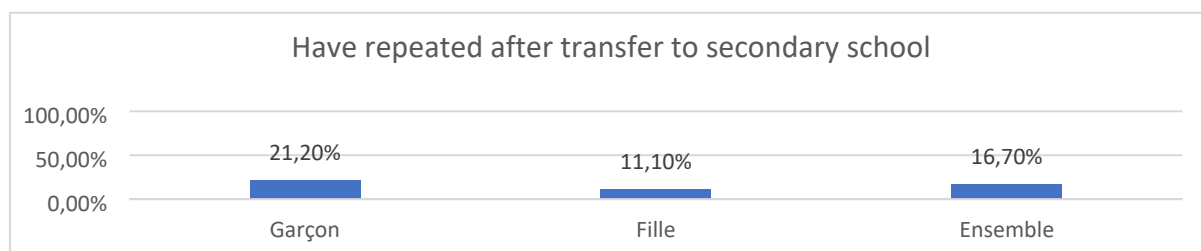
Source: Data from the baseline study & mid-term evaluation of the strategic plan 2019-2023

4.4.8. Current school status of SS2 students 2018-2020 cohort

1) Retention rate of students from SS2

Among secondary school pupils from SS2, 16.7% have already repeated a year, including 21.2% of boys. Repetition is not negligible.

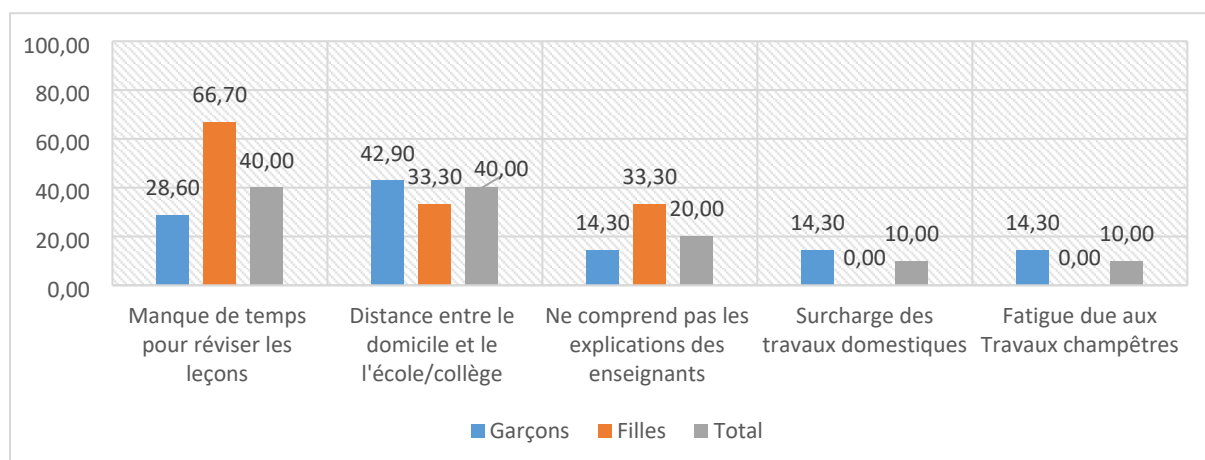
Graph 9: Proportion of secondary school pupils from SS2 who repeated a year after transfer



Also for SS2 pupils, given that only those currently enrolled in school were collected, the primary data do not allow for a calculation of the retention rate. This necessitates the use of secondary data collected by NGOs, but which was not compiled during the collection. However, the interviews show a high drop-out rate, especially for gold panning or other economic activities. Indeed, these children from SS2, given their age, are exposed to dropping out in favour of economic activities.

For these pupils, repeating a year is due to the lack of time to review lessons (40% of respondents) and the distance between school and home (40%). The lack of time concerns more girls (67%).

Graph 2: Causes of repetition for children from SS2



2) Performance of SS2 students

In terms of academic performance, 74.5% of these students obtained an annual average of 10/20 points or more, and 32% were awarded the distinction good or good.

Table 29: Class averages of children from SS2

Q207 Grouped class average	Boy	Girl	Total
1-9 / 20 (Did not get the passing grade)	33,30%	17,40%	25,50%
10 - 11 / 20 (fair)	33,30%	52,20%	42,60%

12 - 13 / 20 (fairly good)	29,20%	21,70%	25,50%
14 - 15 / 20 (good)	4,20%	8,70%	6,40%
	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

In terms of the annual ranking, 20% of children from SS2 are in the top 5 of their classes in the annual ranking of the past year. These data show good performance but point to the need for better monitoring of pupils.

Table 30: Ranking of pupils from SS2 children in the annual ranking

What was your annual rank for the last class you attended	Boy	Girl	Total
Between 1st and 5th	18,20%	22,20%	20,00%
Between 6th and 10th	27,30%	22,20%	25,00%
Between 11th and 15th	6,10%	14,80%	10,00%
Between 16 and 20th	12,10%	3,70%	8,30%
21th and over	36,40%	37,00%	36,70%
Total	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%

4.5. Analysis of efficiency

Efficiency refers to the extent to which interventions have used the least costly resources possible to achieve results, taking into account outcomes versus inputs. It is an analysis of the use of resources (human, financial, material, etc.) in relation to the results achieved. The analysis will seek to see to what extent the resources allocated to the programmes were proportional and adequate for the achievement of the results on the beneficiaries and what recommendations can be made on the optimisation of resources; to what extent are the initiatives developed by SF efficient (cost effectiveness and efficiency), are the budget lines necessary, realistic and relevant? What incentives should be put in place to develop the loyalty of actors at the level of SF and partner NGOs?

It allows us to analyse the initiatives developed by SF taking into account the cost effectiveness and efficiency ratio, to analyse whether the budget lines are realistic and relevant and to analyse the approach to building actors' loyalty at the level of the SF and partner NGOs.

To optimise the use of financial resources, the SF signed an agreement with partner NGOs to standardise the cost of the different concepts. This agreement made it possible to maintain the cost per learner (SS, SS2, S3A, AL). The overall cost of the 2019-2023 strategic plan is 21,912,215,153 CFA francs. During the year 2022, the resources mobilised by SF are 6,861,093,329 FCFA. The level of expenditure is 6,424,790,815 CFA Francs or 94%. The maximum of the budget is allocated to the Education matters, followed by the Inclusive Economy, and finally the Civil Society and Public Sector.

In some respects, the principle of using resources at lower cost has been considered by SF. Despite the departure of several staff, the implementation of activities continued. The digitisation initiative to monitor implementation made it possible to reduce transport-related expenses. The expertise of the partner NGOs has facilitated the implementation of the planned activities, even if difficulties were noted in the field.

Compared to the S3A, it was noted by the partner NGOs that the amount allocated to this area of expenditure is lower due to the specificity of the geographical areas.

The principle of standardised unit costs sometimes poses difficulties for NGOs because of the geographical characteristics of certain regions. It so happens that some NGOs operate in regions that are much further away than others. The cost of transporting suppliers means that they are forced to adjust in order to have kits to install the learners.

According to the beneficiaries and even the NGOs, the amount allocated for the S3A does not allow for the purchase of kits up to expectations. Therefore the S3A beneficiaries have requested that the composition of the kits be reviewed so that they can be more operational after setting up on their own. For SS, the beneficiary communities are responsible for providing premises for the centre, accommodation for the centre's facilitator, whose community contribution is estimated at 100.000 F CFA¹⁵. This contribution is relevant, but with the evolution of the security context in addition to political instability, some communities are becoming more and more socially and economically vulnerable. This sometimes makes it difficult to honour their engagements. In order not to further harm communities directly affected by the consequences of conflicts, an easing of these financial conditions deserves to be considered, especially for the most disadvantaged areas.

In the implementation of the plan, were initiatives to reduce the costs of activities. For example, at the regional office level, with Covid-19, there was a preference in terms of communication networks over buying an expensive plane ticket. The use of these social networks has reduced supervision costs.

Based on the cost-effectiveness analysis, the different educational concepts are offered at a lower cost compared to the traditional education system.

Table 31 : Unit cost of concepts according to SF

Unit cost per concept according to the Strømme Foundation			
SS	SS2	S3A	AL
139 600	345 193	725 906	14 5228

Source: Fondation Strømme

A comparison of these two tables shows that the unit cost of training an SS student in the Strømme Foundation interventions is lower than that of the conventional system according to the costs set by UNESCO. The interviews show that it is in Niger where the cost of an SS student is lower than in the FS. Since the other concepts (SS2, S3A, AL) are in the experimental phase on the government side, the evaluation could not get details on their cost.

In the field, it was found that students in the SS, SS2 centres are generally in the top ten in the host schools. This indicates the quality of the supervision of pupils by the facilitators in the SS and SS2 centres. However, initiatives need to be developed to reduce attrition.

¹⁵ Fondation Stromme Afrique de l'Ouest, Plan Stratégique 2019 2032, P 61

« If we take the AL, apart from SF, there is no TFP that agrees to finance the AL programme because it is an expensive programme ». SF Agent

The cost-efficiency analysis of the concepts indicates that in record time, the SS trains students who become references in the host schools. Within 9 months, SS students are able to catch up on 3 years of learning. In the short term, the evaluation notes that in some measures SS, SS2 and AL are efficient. In the medium and long term, the cost-effectiveness of the concepts is at risk.

The increase in the drop-out rate after transfer to host schools jeopardises the achievement of results. Many students from SS, SS2 and S3A beneficiaries drop out in favour of gold panning or emigrate etc. Among young girls, the search for wedding trousseaux and child marriages are factors that influence their retention in school. There is also a lack of effectiveness in the evaluation of SS students. For example, according to the annual report for the 2020-2021 school year of the NGO GRAADECAM,¹⁶ out of 583 SS pupils enrolled, 565 were assessed, i.e. a rate of 96.4%. The dropout rate is 3.08%. According to the same report, the dropout rate for the 2019-2020 cohort, out of 500 pupils transferred from primary school, 47 dropped out.

Regarding the agricultural value chain (CVA), the partner NGOs received 7,000,000 CFA francs to support the women CMMF in the dynamics of supporting agro-sylvopastoral activities (agriculture, market gardening, transformation of agricultural products, livestock, input subsidies, training, etc.). The evaluation notes that targeting only agriculture for the use of this fund has created discrimination. The realities of the areas vary, there are women who do not practice agriculture. Activities such as trade are requested by women in the Timbuktu region, and they would like the Value chain fund to be used for more than just agriculture. A broad opening towards other generative activities was more appropriate for women than targeting only agriculture. In the field, it was found that the fund was used differently by the partner NGOs. The repayment of the 30% is not considered as in the case of Timbuktu.

In the implementation of activities, SF introduced the principle of annual agreements with partner NGOs. Consequently, disbursement is done on an annual basis. At the start of the plan, the annual implementation budget was about 5 billion CFA francs. With the evolution of the context, this annual budget has been reduced (approximately 3 billion per year). As a matter of fact, at this rate, the risk of not reaching the overall budget for the implementation of the Strategic Plan is high. Initially, the budget planning considered the financing of projects that were being implemented, such as the European Union project and the Pass+ project. In 2021, these two projects have been finalised and this created a budgetary gap. At this stage of implementation, these finalised projects have not been replaced. This explains the decrease in the annual cost of implementing the activities.

The disbursement of funds by partner NGOs is linked to the validation of financial reports. To improve the quality of the reports, the administration and finance department of the regional office initiated a quarterly call to identify problems and provide solutions to finance-related issues. This participatory approach helped to solve shortcomings that were identified by partner NGOs, such as inconsistencies between narrative and financial reports.

¹⁶ONG GRAADECAM, Rapport Annuel 2020-2021,

To ease the disbursement process, the Administration and Finance Department is releasing the fund over two months instead of one to avoid delays in the implementation of activities by partner NGOs.

Hope was based on the funding of an IDB project of about \$20 million. For the time being, this new project has not been obtained. The process was slowed down because of the recent coup in Burkina Faso. The evaluation notes a certain coherence of the budget lines allowing the implementation of activities. However, the partner NGOs are facing difficulties. This is the case, for example, with the purchase of S3A kits. The budget allocated for this purpose does not allow for the kits desired by the beneficiaries. An insufficient budget allocated to quality control monitoring was noted by certain agents of the State's technical services.

« Only a part of the achievements of the NGO partners is reported to the technical services through the financing of what they call quality control whose allocated budget does not allow to see the totality of their achievements » Agent technical service of the State_Dosso_Niger.

In view of the increased security issues, it would be useful to review the budget allocated to this sector according to some participants in the evaluation. The context varies from region to region. For example, in Niger, it was stressed that the means of transport should be better adapted to the realities on the ground during monitoring and evaluation activities.

« The other element is that we need to reinforce the budget in terms of security; because today, when we have to go to the field, things have changed, until now, it is a challenge for us, we need escort, we need a close guard, all this must be integrated in the budget » FS_Niger staff member

In 2020, there was a break in the provision of funds for IGAs for AL women. This created a vacuum and demotivation among these women. The renewal of this budget was requested by the women and the partner NGOs. Challenges were identified in the production of financial reports within the time limit. For some NGOs, the delay in the consumption of funds was observed despite the various technical support provided by the SF. Some end the year without consuming all the funds made available to them. The administrative and financial staff of some NGOs is insufficient to produce financial reports on time even though the SF takes charge of this position. Some NGOs did not want to recruit an accountant specifically for the financial monitoring of the Strategic Plan activities.

The evaluation proposes, in the future, to further strengthen the capacity of NGOs to consume funds to facilitate the achievement of results by the end of the strategic plan period. This will involve encouraging them to make realistic and sustainable plans. It was also recommended that budgeting be made flexible to consider unforeseen circumstances during the implementation of activities in the field by partner NGOs.

- What incentives have been put in place to increase the loyalty of actors at the level of SF and partner NGOs?

One of the measures to support and retain the staff of the SF and partner NGOs is based on capacity building on multidimensional themes (governance, gender, education in emergency situations, rights-based approach, etc.). This training is well appreciated and helps to strengthen the quality of interventions with beneficiaries. They helped to develop the self-esteem of the staff. In addition, we note the

establishment of the principle of governance and transparency between the SF and the partner NGOs. The latter positively appreciate the communication system of SF, which allows the flow of information to be fluid.

Within SF, there is also the application of the principle of equality, non-discrimination of religion and ethnicity. This strategy facilitated the integration of newly recruited staff and strengthened interpersonal relations. Within SF, there is a specific fund dedicated to capacity building of internal staff. In the framework of the retention of actors, the challenges to be met are the following:

- Staff are asked to bring the bill in case of illness for reimbursement. According to some staff interviewed, this strategy is "infantilising". It does not allow staff to ensure confidentiality, especially in the case of certain illnesses that can cause marginalisation in the workplace.
- Another finding is that FS staff are not affiliated to private medical insurance. Some expressed the need to go to private medical insurance firms for the welfare of the staff and to be effective in the workplace.
- There is no standard document for emergencies such as accidents, removal of staff from the field, evacuation plan. With the increasing security crisis, the development of such a document is necessary to better protect staff and to be effective in case of emergency.
- It was observed that there is no collaborative link between the human resources of SF and the partner NGOs.
- Several actors interviewed questioned the salary, which seems to be lower than that of other international NGOs in the three countries. In addition, with the signing of the contract each year by the staff of the partner NGOs, some of them do not have the possibility of taking out loans from banks in order to carry out personal projects.

Based on the findings, it is necessary to improve upstream a staff retention strategy based on the participatory approach. Improved salary conditions and the introduction of performance-related bonuses, capacity building to update knowledge and skills, a clear organisation chart and job descriptions are elements that could contribute to staff retention.

4.6. Analysis of the impact

Impact can be defined as "long-term effects, positive and negative, primary and secondary, induced by a development action, directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally"¹⁷. In this evaluation, the aim is to identify the positive and/or negative changes produced by the interventions, directly or indirectly; intentionally or unintentionally. The analysis seeks to measure the actual difference made by the interventions to the intended beneficiaries; the profile of beneficiaries affected (intended or unintended);

¹⁷ Glossary of key terms related to evaluation and results-based management, CAD/OCDE, OCDE, Paris, 2010. At : <http://www.oecd.org/development/peer-reviews/2754804.pdf>.

4.6.1. Improving the income of CMMF women and contributing to their household needs

One of the changes brought about by the CMMF is the improved income of the women in the groups. Across the three countries, 94.2% of women have seen their incomes improve. Women in the CMMF groups contribute to the needs of their households. Among these needs, food represents almost 80% of the contributions in the three countries. This is followed by children's clothing, their health and contributions to school fees.

Table 32 : Contribution of CMMF income to household needs

Que faites-vous avec le revenu issu des activités 'EPC:	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	Total
Contributes to household food needs	86,2%	69,9%	79,0%	78,4%
Takes care of the children's clothing	79,5%	66,7%	34,9%	60,2%
Contributes to children's health	75,8%	43,1%	42,4%	53,7%
Contributes to the cost of schooling for children	72,7%	32,6%	29,4%	44,7%
Contributes to the health of adult household members.	49,0%	21,1%	16,3%	28,7%
Supports the husband in social expenses (weddings, funerals, etc.)	26,9%	31,5%	21,9%	26,7%

Source : Survey of the mid-term evaluation of the Strømme Foundation's strategic plan

In terms of the change brought about by CMMF in the lives of households, we note that for the three countries, more than 8 out of 10 women members of the CMMF groups have acquired new goods and services for their household thanks to the CMMF over the last 3 years. The effectiveness of these gains is corroborated by the qualitative survey. Three women from the Kalsaka CMMF in the north of Burkina Faso testify to the contribution of their CMMF activities in improving the living conditions of their households

Fati O. : Since I joined the group, I really thank God because I really manage to buy some school supplies, clothes for my children and even often I buy fish for the sauce the day my husband doesn't give me enough money. Also last year with our gain I bought a goat.

Mariam S. : When we were not in the group we did not participate in household expenses; even a simple pen for our children who go to school, it was the head of the household who had to take care of it. But since we started the activities, we have had a really good education to the extent that when the children go to school, even if it's a hundred francs, we manage to give them for their small needs. Our husbands even encourage us because they have noticed a positive change in us since we joined the group. I was able to buy a goat and the rest I bought some kitchen utensils.

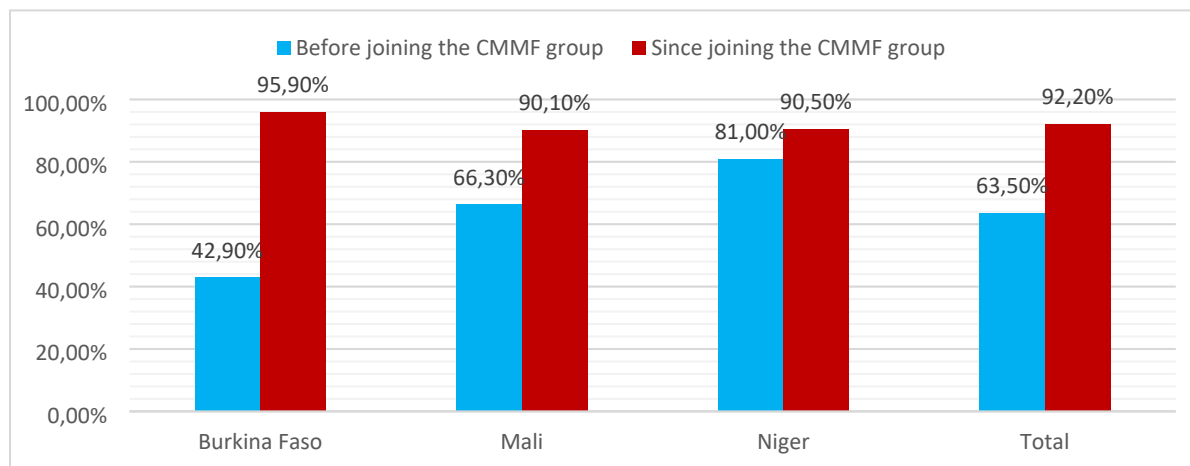
Extract from the focus group with the CMMF women of Kalsaka

4.6.2. Changes in women's participation in household decision-making

Comparative analysis of the data shows that women's participation in household decision making improved significantly between the baseline study and the mid-term evaluation, from 63.5% to 92.2%; an

increase of 28.7 percentage points. This data clearly shows that women are involved in decision-making at the family level. This participation improved significantly after the inclusion of women in the CMMF groups.

Graph 10: Changes in women's involvement in household decision-making between the baseline study and the mid-term evaluation



Through the focus groups, women almost unanimously expressed their satisfaction with this improvement in their participation in family decisions

«When we were not in the CMMF groups, we did not participate in household expenses; even a simple pen, it was the head of the household who had to take care of it. But since we started the activities, we have had a really good education, so much so that when the children go to school, we always manage to get even 100 CFA francs to motivate them. Our husbands even encourage us because they have noticed a positive change in us since we joined the CMMF group. I was able to buy a goat and some utensils». Woman (CMMF East Region).

Studies¹⁸ have shown that certain socio-demographic and economic factors influence women's participation in household decision-making. These include schooling/literacy, having a job or income-generating activities, and a high standard of living in the household, all of which contribute to changes in gender relations within couples and, in general, to the improvement of women's social status.

The CMMF women do not hesitate to confirm their participation in decisions concerning their household and expressed this in the focus groups during the qualitative survey.

¹⁸ Confère par exemple les données de l'Enquête démographique et de santé réalisée en 2010 et les données quantitatives issues des entretiens qualitatifs réalisés en 2011 sur le thème « genre et décision économique au Burkina Faso ».

CMMF focus group in Farrey/Niger: In relation to household decision-making, we are consulted, and we have our say in the life of the household, whether it is about children, health or family property.

CMMF focus group of Fourou/Sikasso in Mali: Now, thanks to the CMMF, we are involved in all the decision-making in the household, since the men have seen our importance through the expenses, we make with the money we earn through IGAs. In my household, no decisions are taken in my absence, because this consideration that I have is due to my integration in the CMMF group and the contributions that I make in the household.

This participation of women in household decision-making is also recognised by their husbands.

Husbands of the CMMF women of Loulouni/Sikasso, speak out on the participation of CMMF women

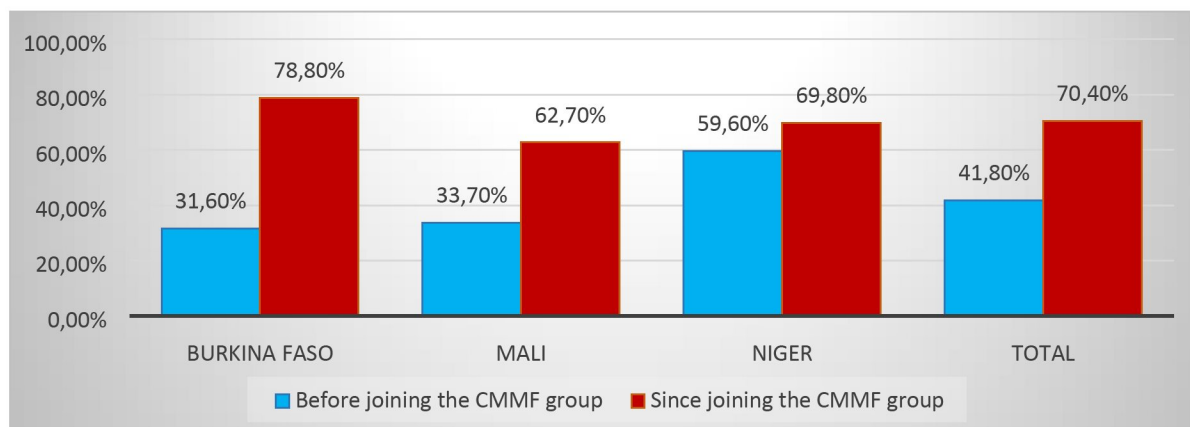
Focus group of husbands from Loulouni/Sikasso in Mali: For them, women are well involved in household decision-making; before, they were not consulted when there was a problem in the household because they could not solve anything. But now, thanks to the CMMF, they help us with expenses and for this reason, if there are decisions, we consult them and they are involved in the decision-making process as well. The women are involved because they help us with good ideas, because they have received training with the project. The knowledge and experience they have can help us to build the household. That is why the level of their involvement is very high now.

One of the major crises during the implementation of the strategic plan is COVID-19, which has had a major influence on economic and social life in the three countries where the Strømme Foundation is active. When asked about the impact of COVID-19 on their involvement in household decision-making, the majority of the women felt that there was no change in the impact on their participation in decision-making. Especially in Burkina Faso, one in three women saw an improvement in their involvement in household decision-making. One might ask whether there has not been a change in the role of women with the increase in the cost of living caused partly by the health crisis.

4.6.3. Changes in women's participation in decision-making in communities and municipalities

Women's participation in decision making at the community level has also improved from 41.8% to 70.4%. Although the level of participation at the community level is lower than at the family level, the percentage of participation is high and reflects the effects of the interventions on the populations.

Graph 11 : Changes in women's involvement in decision-making in their communities between the baseline study and the mid-term evaluation



The participation of women in the CMMF groups has increased considerably since the establishment of their groups. From 41.8% of women before the CMMF, this participation has almost doubled to 70.4%. This evolution is even more noticeable in countries like Burkina where participation was very low (3 out of 10 women before CMMF). Since CMMF, 8 out of 10 women participate in decision-making at both community and commune levels. Women are thus present in the management structures that have been set up, such as the management committees for education (COGES), health, management of water points, etc. They are also present as municipal councillors. They are also present as municipal councillors, focal points of projects concerning their development or that of their children. They actively participate in the development of their communities by giving their opinions on the actions initiated or by providing their material contribution or services. Women from the CMMF groups in Mali and Burkina Faso talk about their participation.

CMMF focus group of Kadiolo/Mali: Thanks to the CMMF, we are no longer afraid to take part in commune meetings like men. Thanks to the advice of the CMMF groups, we do not remain on the sidelines because we are women.

CMMF focus group of Kalsaka in Burkina: there has been a lot of improvement in this area, because since our group has existed, there has been no meeting or training in the town hall until the mayor has informed us. However, this was not the case when we were not in a group, and this is also understandable because we were not known individually. So we thank ADEFAD because thanks to them we know that we also exist. But we think that they can do more than that to support us, so let's ask for their support.

Many men are in favour of the participation of women in the development of the communes. In view of their dynamism, their initiatives, the knowledge they have acquired in various fields and their commitment to development in the communities and communes. It is noted that by seeking collaboration with the communes, women increase their chances of working with the communes and of being identified as potential partners in the event of intervention by other development actors. Thus, after their establishment or official recognition, the women contact the town halls of their commune to be identified as a partner,

given that the various development partners have the communes as their entry point for intervening with the communities. There is no doubt that this approach can promote good collaboration and the involvement of CMMF groups in development actions. This approach is positive for the CMMF groups because some communes already provide them with support to facilitate the implementation of their activities with the granting of plots of land for collective fields, the provision of meeting rooms for meetings and training, etc.

The interviews show that women's participation will be stronger when they are able to read and write, hence the urgency of learning the basics of reading and writing through active literacy (AL). These interviews show that women have a low level of decision-making power in these communes or communities. This means that, for the most part, their participation in activities outside the household must first be approved by their husbands. This is an opportunity to engage men, husbands of participating women and other male leaders in the target communities in the project activities for their support.

4.6.4. Other changes noted

In addition to the changes already analysed, other changes brought about by the CMMF are noted. These are:

- Solidarity and social cohesion are strengthened; indeed, there is a considerable decrease in conflicts among the women's CMMF groups, and the development of cohesion among members of different families.
- Several husbands noted the strengthening of their couples due to CMMF (more cohesion in families). Women are more open because of the knowledge they have gained about life skills. Their behaviour in the home has improved and some men report that their wives have changed considerably for the better since joining CMMF groups.
- Access to land for women is still not very widespread, but some women's groups manage to obtain plots of land for their needs. This is the case of the acquisition of land for the construction of the headquarters of the Djiguitougou association of Tin (commune of Orodara) and a plot of land of two (02) hectares for the Sababougnouma association of Fananga (commune of Kourouma) for an agricultural exploitation.
- The CMMF groups have become platforms for passing on information, mobilising community women and carrying out activities for the benefit of the villages. The village authorities go through the leaders of the CMMF groups to pass on information about women.

4.6.5. Limitations related to changes at household and community level

While the survey results reveal many positive behavioural changes on the part of husbands of CMMF women, some men refuse to allow their wives to join the groups. Among the women in the groups, some husbands are resistant to their wives' autonomy and emancipation. In addition, it should be noted that not all areas of change are observed. There are still decisions in the household where few husbands involve the women. Among these household decisions are those related to marriage in the family.

LONG APSM of San/Ségou in Mali explains this situation in these terms: There are women who participate in household decisions. We have an indicator for that. We interview women to see if they are involved in household decisions. But some of them tell us that when a girl marries into the family, they are involved, but it is the man who always has the last word. On the other hand, in other families, it is the men who decide everything without involving the women, and many things happen in the family without the man's knowledge.

The empowerment of women also depends on the promotion of gender equality within the family. When the family provides environments of equality and justice, economies and societies prosper and maximise their development potential. Husbands of women in the EPC group in Réko, Burkina, explain the resistance observed.

4.6.6. The challenges ahead

While the interventions of the strategic plan have already produced significant changes in women in EPC groups, several challenges remain to consolidate the gains and to facilitate the scaling up of these changes to a larger scale in households and communities. These challenges include the following:

At the economic level

At this level, one of the challenges is to support women's CMMF organisations in accessing all resources (land, equipment, credit, etc.). Regarding IGAs, we note that trade and processing of agricultural products, agriculture and market gardening are the most developed activities for women in the CMMF groups. To increase the productivity of women traders, they need to have access to quality products on a continuous basis and to know how to manage their business. Similarly, those who process agricultural products into foodstuffs and those who market them need equipment and credit to build up stocks and acquire processing equipment. The development of these activities requires larger amounts of funds which lead women to seek credit from microfinance institutions. Also, the strengthening of their negotiating power and their management capacities should enable them to become more competent in convincing institutions of their ability to manage loans.

For women farmers, access to fertile land remains important. However, the land tenure system in the three countries is still largely communal and does not facilitate the optimisation of exploitation by women. They do not have land titles and therefore have no security. The main problem at present remains the acquisition of good quality land of sufficient size to allow good exploitation and good yields. The steps taken by certain groups of women CMMFs to obtain land that they can use and make viable is a good start that can be encouraged and supported.

At the social level

It is also important to develop and disseminate the knowledge and techniques necessary to effectively implement the practical commitment to integrate women into the development process. Gender inequalities are largely due to the persistence of harmful social norms and stereotypes that are deeply rooted in cultures. Several researchers have demonstrated that culture is a major agent of sexism and violence against women. This issue affects women's daily lives. Changing mentalities and raising

awareness on an ongoing basis are essential to raise awareness of these injustices that deprive communities of opportunities for sustainable development, innovation, and social progress. These realities lead us once again to question the inclusion of men in CMMF activities. Their inclusion will facilitate greater awareness and understanding of the role of women in economic and social life.

4.6.7. Impact of COVID and insecurity on women's activities

To curb the spread of COVID-19, the governments of the three countries implemented a series of strong containment measures that were essentially identical and had the effect of reducing the rate of spread of the virus. All these containment measures had several objectives, namely: to limit the gathering of people and impose physical distancing of the inhabitants; to strongly reduce the mobility of the populations both nationally and internationally; to interrupt the economic activities likely to participate in the spread of the virus; etc.

When interviewed, more than half of the women in the CMMF groups had difficulty carrying out their IGAs. Even though decontamination measures were implemented 1-2 months later, many measures remain, and income-generating activities are very much affected. Studies have shown that certain sectors remain very affected by the measures taken, such as market gardening, processing of agricultural products, sale of vegetables and fruit, cattle raising, textiles (weaving of cloths) and catering. These are the types of IGAs carried out in the CMMF groups.

According to the results of the field survey, the containment measures have weakened their activities and reduced their income. With the closure of the markets, market gardening fruit and vegetables have suffered from a lack of customers such as wholesalers from the cities or other neighbouring countries. The closure of the borders, which persists, has led to an increase in the price of imported products and reduced the number of customers for certain products such as shea butter sold in neighbouring countries and exported to Europe. Some women, such as traditional cloth weavers, have seen their activities come to a halt due to a lack of yarn and imported dye.

Table 36: Challenges faced by IGAs since COVID -19

What are the major challenges your IGA has faced since the COVID-19 pandemic?	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	Total
Flow problem due to lack of buyers	68,6%	37,3%	22,5%	42,7%
Difficulties in accessing raw material	27,8%	26,5%	14,6%	22,9%
Transport problem	17,4%	7,6%	13,9%	13,0%
Flow problem due to border closure	34,3%	12,4%	6,6%	17,7%
Conservation problem	11,1%	5,2%	9,7%	8,7%
Problems of access to loans	11,7%	1,3%	4,4%	5,8%

Source: Survey of the mid-term evaluation of the Strømme Foundation's strategic plan

With COVID-19, more than half of the SFC women experienced a reduction in income with the health crisis.

Table 37: Decline in CMMF women's income due to COVID-19

Have you experienced a drop in income in the last 3 years?	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	Total
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Yes	79,0%	49,4%	41,9%	56,7%
No	21,0%	50,6%	58,1%	43,3%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Source: Survey of the mid-term evaluation of the Strømme Foundation's strategic plan

We realise that the Covid 19 crisis, faced with the heterogeneity of women's situations, has amplified the disparities and deepened the inequalities between those with a minimum of resources and those with few resources. The revival of certain women requires targeted support to better take into account the diversity of situations.

The impact of insecurity, which has been rife in the three countries since the beginning of the strategic plan, has had negative effects on the CMMF. It is important to note that in some areas affected by insecurity, there is a displacement of population which leads to dislocation of CMMF groups. There is also the loss of livestock caused by unidentified armed men (HANI), a risk that is increasingly high in insecure areas. In such a context, women find it very difficult to obtain goods for their IGAs (trade, processing of agricultural products etc). This is also one of the causes of the abandonment of IGAs that encounter supply and distribution problems.

Another finding is the difficulty for CMMF women to benefit from life skills training. In all three countries, at least 1 in 3 women said that they were prevented from doing so. Among the three countries, the proportion of women is highest in Burkina Faso, at 39.5%. The reasons that explain the prevention of CMMF women from benefiting from life skills are mainly COVID-19 and insecurity. Indeed, the Corona virus pandemic and insecurity make it difficult for women to gather and travel, which makes it difficult for them to participate in the various training sessions.

Table 38: Causes of non-participation of CMMF women in life skills training

Q418. What were the reasons	Burkina Faso	Mali	Niger	Total
Because of covid-19	84,6%	82,1%	80,0%	82,5%
Because of the security context	66,3%	21,4%	30,4%	41,6%
Because of illness	0%	5,5%	4,8%	5,2%
Because of lack of time	0%	6,2%	13,6%	9,6%

Source: Survey of the mid-term evaluation of the Strømme Foundation's strategic plan

4.6.8. Impact of COVID-19 and insecurity on other programmes

These two crises have a direct impact on education, which is the suspension of educational activities. The advent of COVID-19 led to the closure of schools in 2020, including the SS, SS2 and S3A centres, for 2 to 4 months. The closure of schools had an impact on the retention of students in school and has led to a decline in the academic performance and employment of S3As. Some pupils did not return to classes when they reopened, and the suspension of educational activities for several months resulted in a drop in the level of the majority of pupils. To remedy this situation, the animators of the SS and SS2 and S3A centres developed initiatives to catch up on courses by organising home schooling for children. A facilitator from the SS centres in Rondolo, Burkina Faso, explains: "As an innovation, we were obliged to give remedial lessons to catch up. We also raised awareness about wearing a mask and ADEFAD provided us with equipment (hand-wash, masks, gel, soap)". As for the CCEB of Bassi in Burkina Faso, he

expressed himself on the issue of the impact of covid-19 on the implementation of the activities of the SF: "The impact of covid-19 on the implementation of the activities of the SF, particularly the SS in our constituency was mainly the disruption of classes due to the temporary closure of schools in the meantime. This did not allow the completion of the teaching programmes".

In October 2020, teaching activities resumed with the respect of the barrier measures established in the different countries: use of masks, regular hand washing, distancing etc. These measures are currently being relaxed despite warnings of the arrival of the more contagious and deadly COVID-19 virus.

With insecurity, schools have been closed since 2019 leaving internally displaced students (IDPs) without an education solution, schools that are forced to close due to attack warnings. The number of schools closed due to violence has increased sevenfold between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger from April 2017 to July 2020 according to a Save the Children study¹⁹. The same study estimates that nearly 4,000 schools continue to be closed due to insecurity affecting 700,000 children in the three countries. These closures keep many out of school and disrupt learning. The facilitator of the SS centres in Rondolo, Burkina Faso, points out that "there are disruptions due to attack alerts, which often require the closure of classes for several days. As a result, living with fear in our stomachs every day does not allow us to be at ease in our work to give the best of ourselves".

Faced with this situation of permanent stress for teachers and pupils, the centre facilitators are developing initiatives to be more resilient in the face of the permanent insecurity. Insecurity also has an impact on the planning and field activities of implementing partners. The NGO AMSS in Timbuktu, Mali, points out that insecurity affects their planning and indicates that there are, for example, workshops that bring together the different actors to share experiences that have been suspended.

One of the solutions used by the field workers is to be in permanent telephone contact with the security officer of the partner NGO and the community leaders who issue the first alerts when they perceive indicators of danger. There is also the use of public transport by the partner NGO teams to access the targets instead of using motorbikes. There is also caution, distrust and above all the fact of not exposing oneself to danger, stresses the SS supervisor of the AMSS/Tombouctou NGO in Mali.

4.7. Sustainability

The analysis of sustainability consists in seeing if the results of the strategic plan can be sustained after 2023 (end of the plan), taking into account the degree of appropriation of these results by the beneficiaries and the different actors in the three countries. This involves analysing two dimensions of the question relating to strategies for the sustainability of achievements and disengagement and assessing the sustainability of the various concepts developed, namely the CMMF, SS, SS2, S3A and AL. The analysis of sustainability will also take into account the level of strengthening of civil society and partnership with local communities which is an important dimension in relation to the sustainability of achievements.

¹⁹ See ; [Sahel_Armed_groupsFINAL_FRJ Revue Eric et Jessica_final3.pdf - Google Drive](#)

4.7.1. Existence of an exit strategy

As part of the implementation of this strategic plan, a formalised plan for disengagement and sustainability of the achievements has not been identified and is not known to all players. An official from the Bassi town hall in Burkina Faso made this clear during the survey. For him, "there are no clearly elaborated strategies to prepare for the withdrawal of SF, but we are aware that every project has an end, so the communal authorities with all the parents and councillors have already started to reflect on the issue. At the level of the town hall, we are focusing on sensitisation, communication for behavioural change, so that the communities learn to take their destiny in hand instead of waiting every day for the saviour to come from elsewhere. I think that at this level, the mayonnaise has begun to take hold.

Indeed, the Strategic plan 2019-2023 has above all identified the important aspects to be taken into account for the sustainability of the achievements such as local partnership with the communes, local ownership through "faire-faire" with national partner NGOs, accountability, learning through participatory planning, advocacy, conflict prevention, social transformation through the strengthening of systems for the protection of children and women, the promotion of gender equity and the construction of social peace. As soon as the strategic plan was implemented, an implementation plan for the sustainability of the achievements and an exit plan could be drawn up with the participation of the stakeholders.

4.7.2. Assessment of the sustainability of the achievements of the different programmes

The results of the qualitative surveys identify CMMF and SS as the interventions that will continue after the strategic plan. For the interviewees, the education concepts, especially SS, meet the necessary conditions for sustainability. Indeed, the states and some implementing partners such as ADEFAD have already put in place sustainability mechanisms as they are already developing this programme and mobilising financial resources for its implementation.

There is also the CMMF programme which is designed and implemented with sustainability factors in mind (women's empowerment programme, self-managed by the beneficiaries themselves without direct financial support from SF. Only women's capacity building and monitoring is integrated in the programme which is very successful. Concerning the CMMF, the NGO APSM San/Mali justifies this statement with the following elements: "Women have already seen the interest and have made the difference between the CMMF and the traditional tontines. In some places, they thought it was like traditional tontines, but then they understood. The difference is that with the CMMF, you keep your money for a year; secondly, you can take out loans and thirdly, there is the social aspect. At the end of each meeting, the chairperson is asked to see if there is anything happening with a member. They are happy when they come to the CMMF meeting. In one village, during the month of Ramadan, the women, apart from the CMMF fund, contributed one hundred francs to buy bags of sugar and share it among themselves. They had eight bags to share between them. So even after the project was withdrawn, they could continue.

For the town hall of Farrey in Niger, 'the CMMF is certainly the programme that will continue after the withdrawal of the Foundation and its partners, because the CMMF has become a passion for women. The sustainability of SS is explained by the Bassi town hall in Burkina Faso in the following terms: "We think that in the field of education, if the trend continues, the results obtained at the level of SS will be able to last even after the SF interventions. As the population starts to become aware, with the sensitisation, they will be able to take over for the well-being of their children. With SS, some parents who were reluctant to send their children to school no longer hesitate to do so. For those surveyed in Niger and Mali, SS2 should also be added. For Burkina Faso, the results remain mixed and there is no real appropriation of this concept.

However, there are factors likely to threaten the sustainability of the interventions, such as COVID-19 and insecurity with population displacements, inter-community conflicts that separate families and lead to the dislocation of groups.

4.7.3. Consideration of ethics

Underlying all humanitarian action are the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence. These principles, derived from international humanitarian law, have been adopted by the United Nations.

The principle of humanity aims to alleviate human suffering wherever it occurs. In development work, the aim of humanitarian action is to protect and ensure respect for human beings who are victims of poverty, facing problems of education, employment etc. The principle of neutrality, on the other hand, supports non-partisanship for humanitarian actors. It is linked to non-discrimination, which must be observed without political, racial, religious, or ideological bias. In relation to impartiality, actions should be carried out solely based on needs and rights, without distinguishing between nationalities, races, genders, religions, beliefs, classes, or political opinions. Independence refers to actions that are independent of political, economic, military, or other agendas in the areas where they are carried out. Interviews with SF staff allow us to understand how these principles are considered in the values promoted by the organisation and in its interventions in the field. As a result, the humanitarian principles have practical operational relevance. The inclusion of humanitarian principles in the values of SF enables it to distinguish itself from other actors and to fully promote rights and dignity; promote social justice; develop solidarity.

In practice, these values are considered at three levels, namely, the community level, the level of the implementing partners and SF itself from the point of view of internal management. As some SF actors say, these values are also considered in the programming cycle, namely design, planning and proposal, implementation, and monitoring/evaluation/learning.

In SF plans and programmes, context analysis is fundamental. It helps to clarify how the proposed action will affect the context in which it will be carried out. It includes situational analyses, diagnostic studies carried out by SF before designing strategic plans, programmes, and projects. This usually includes an analysis of the problems and actors, including an assessment of the risks associated with the context.

The importance of this analysis is based, among other things, on the need to ensure that the assistance provided does not further expose individuals and communities to risk, various forms of rights abuse or undermine the capacity of communities.

In relation to the selection of beneficiaries, SF is very impartial. In relation to the different programmes, the selection of beneficiaries considers gender and inclusion. The principles of participation and accountability to communities and implementing partners are also considered. The selection of beneficiaries is guided by clear criteria known to the actors.

The intervention strategy of SF is "faire-faire". The NGO works with local partners to ensure the implementation of programmes in the three countries. Requirements are observed regarding the partnership developed with these partners in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Procedures are applied to ensure that these local implementing partners observe the above humanitarian principles. In addition, partner selection principles exist that include criteria consistent with the Foundation's humanitarian principles and values. In addition, the practices of implementing partners in terms of staff recruitment, beneficiary selection, etc. are reviewed and studied.

In the design of projects and programmes, risk analysis is carried out by the Strømme Foundation. In the context of compliance with humanitarian principles, the risk analysis of non-compliance with humanitarian principles is carried out. The identified risks of non-compliance are assessed. The levels of risk are studied and a management plan and mitigation strategies for the risks of non-compliance with humanitarian principles are integrated into the projects and programmes designed.

Compliance with standard procedures is also an element of compliance with humanitarian principles. Together with its partners, SF examines the gap between its procedures and those of its partners. Agreements are explicitly agreed and considered in the contractualisation with partners. Overall, a review of the Foundation's practices shows that it takes ethics into account in its interventions. In accordance with humanitarian principles and its values, all measures are taken to ensure ethical behaviour.

4.7.4. Consideration of cross-cutting issues in the strategic plan

The cross-cutting issues or CCIs concerned in the strategic plan are gender mainstreaming, inclusion of people with disabilities, environmental protection, the fight against corruption, conflict prevention, implementation of accountability in the communes and analysis of the humanitarian-development nexus.

Of these issues, the first four (gender mainstreaming, inclusion of people with disabilities, environmental protection, and the fight against corruption) have been planned and funded for implementation in 2019 to the end of 2020. Accountability is considered in outcome 1 of the logical framework (Women, young people and partner CBOs are involved in claiming their rights) with, among other indicators, the % of target communes that organise an annual accountability session with communities (with the support of partner NGOs). The implementation of the other cross-cutting issues has not been the subject of any

orientation or financial support, as each implementing partner has developed its own initiatives and strategies.

It is therefore a question of analysing how these issues have been considered in the programmes developed in the three countries by first identifying what was planned and what has been achieved, then highlighting the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats with regard to taking these issues into account, and finally making useful recommendations for the continued implementation of the strategic plan.

4.7.4.1. Analysis of the 4 cross-cutting issues funded and implemented in 2019-2020 in the SP plan

By referring to the physical assessment of the implementation of the activities of the 4 issues, we realise that less than half of the activities have not been carried out in the area of gender and gender equality. These are the implementation of recommendations from the gender audits of NGOs, the development of gender policy documents for NGOs that wish to do so, which have a level of achievement of 0%, and the gender audit of the organisational structure of the 15 partner NGOs of SF, which has been carried out at 50%. Out of the 15 NGOs in the three countries, only the 4 NGOs in Burkina have benefited from this audit.

When we also look at the anti-corruption and good governance activities, we realise that they are also partially carried out. Two activities out of five have not been implemented. These are the conduct of communications to community leaders on anti-corruption and the orientation of suppliers, which are based on SF on management procedures and anti-corruption. An interim audit by a firm was partially completed.

Table 39 : Report on the physical implementation of the activities of the cross-cutting issues funded by CCI

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Level of achievement</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Manager</i>
<i>CCI #4 Genre et égalité des sexes</i>			
<i>Conducting a gender audit of the organisational structure of the 15 partner NGO of the Stromme Foundation in each of the three countries</i>	<i>50%</i>	<i>Data collection in progress</i>	SF
<i>Support for the implementation of the recommendations resulting from the gender audits of NGOs</i>	<i>0%</i>	<i>Funds allocated but awaiting gender audit</i>	NGO
<i>Support for the celebration of specific days dedicated to women</i>	<i>100%</i>		SF
<i>Support for the development of gender policy documents for NGOs wishing to</i>	<i>0%</i>	<i>Awaiting gender audit</i>	NGO
<i>Conducting an evaluation of gender mainstreaming and gender equality in the Stromme Foundation's programming and planning system</i>	<i>100%</i>		SF
<i>CCI #2 Environment and climate change</i>			
<i>Train community actors (COGESs and EGs) on climate issues</i>	<i>100%</i>		SF

<i>Train the leaders of the Associations and CMMF Groups on improved cookstove manufacturing techniques</i>	100%		NGO
<i>Introducing mobile centres into education concepts</i>	100%		NGO
<i>CCI #3 Inclusion in strengthening civil society and the public sector</i>			
<i>Training of programme staff (25) on inclusive programming</i>	Cancelled	Change of approach	SF
<i>Training the 30 people from NGO partners on inclusive programs</i>	100%		SF
<i>Support for identified learners with minor disabilities</i>	100%		NGO
<i>Strengthening management committees on the inclusion approach and their roles and responsibilities in the process of caring for children with disabilities</i>	100%		NGO
<i>CCI #4 Anti-corruption and good governance (partners)</i>			
<i>Formation du personnel des ONG (responsables administratifs et financiers, chefs de projet) sur la gestion de la transparence et les mesures anti-fraude</i>	100%		SF
<i>Ensuring the follow-up of the implementation of the actions recommended at the end of the PAT and RAT of NGOs</i>	100%		SF
<i>Performing an intermediate audit by a firm</i>	90%		SF
<i>Conducting communications in favor of community leaders on the fight against corruption</i>	0%		NGO
<i>Orientation of suppliers who are in the MSDS base on management procedures and anti-corruption</i>	0%		SF

Source: SFWA (2020) Progress report ICC, 22/01/2020

The data in this table shows a partial achievement of the results on the field and indicates that more needs to be done to achieve the objectives at this level.

❖ **Gender mainstreaming and gender equality**

At the level of SS, SS2, S3A, all stakeholders (state and implementing NGOs) affirm that gender is taken into account. The NGO ADEFAD in Burkina Faso testifies: "Gender is taken into account both in the recruitment of staff and in the selection of beneficiaries (targets) of the SS, SS2, S3A centres for the implementation of its activities. For the year 2019, some agents were trained on gender. Out of 49 facilitators recruited in 2020, 30 are women and 19 are men.

The implementing NGOs also insist on awareness-raising to combat gender-based violence that negatively influences girls' education. Awareness sessions on child marriages and unwanted pregnancies were organised for traditional and religious leaders and parents to raise awareness of the importance of keeping girls in school. However, the baseline study noted the good academic results of girls in the centres, which often allow them to be transferred. But from the 6th or 7th grade in Mali, inequalities reappear because they encounter numerous obstacles such as the distance from secondary schools, difficulties in paying for schooling due to lack of means on the part of parents.

In view of the importance of the obstacles that girls may encounter in secondary school, it was recommended that the follow-up identify the critical points of girls' schooling with a view to taking concrete action to ensure that gender balance is truly assured. When we questioned the actors, particularly the

implementing NGOs and the deconcentrated services of the State, we noted that these aspects had not yet been sufficiently taken into account.

All in all, we note that many actors do not master the gender policy of the SF, that partner organisations do not have a gender policy/strategy, they make the effort to take gender into account on the basis of their prerequisites with their limitations.

❖ Consideration of the inclusion of people with disabilities

The statistical data provided by the partner NGOs on the inclusion of people living with a disability in the baseline study gives results that show that out of all beneficiaries of all concepts in the three countries, 1.3% live with a disability. It is noted that 4.4% of AL beneficiaries and 3.8% of SS2 beneficiaries are people living with a disability. For SS and S3A beneficiaries, the proportions of people living with a disability are 1.5% and 0.4% respectively.

In the 2019-2020 data, for example, the inclusion of children with disabilities represents 0.54% of pupils in SS centres compared to 1.5% in the baseline study.

Table 40: SS learners with disabilities at the end of the school year 2019-2020 in the three countries

Countries	Number of learners evaluation			Learners with disabilities			Percentage of SS children with disabilities		
	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T
Mali	5 626	5 354	10 980	20	22	42	0,36	0,41	0,38
Burkina Faso	2 084	1 916	4 000	25	23	48	1,20	1,20	1,20
Niger	2 640	2 352	4 992	9	9	18	0,34	0,38	0,36
All 3 countries	10 350	9 622	19 972	54	54	108	0,52	0,56	0,54

Source : SFWA, SS results end of school year 2019-2020

While the proportion of children with disabilities is low in SS centres in 2019-2020, there are no children or young people with disabilities among S3A learners, whereas in the baseline study they represented 0.4%. This decline in the inclusion of people with disabilities in the implementation of the strategic plan programmes can be explained in part by the deterioration of the education situation, vocational training for young people with a view to employment, and the overall economic situation in the three countries caused by the security crisis, COVID-19 and other disasters such as floods and drought in the intervention areas.

It is often noted that in crisis situations, vulnerable people see their situation deteriorate considerably if actors do not focus on them. This is what happens with the inclusion of people with disabilities, who are left behind in this context. Thus, the inclusion of people with disabilities remains a major challenge for the implementing partners to meet by 2023.

❖ Consideration of environmental protection and the fight against climate change

In addition to the activities financed by CCI, SF programmes include the setting up of a unit for the transformation of plastic waste into pupil desks in San, Mali. This is an integrated activity of APSM, providing schools and centres with desks, which collaborates with CMMF women for the supply of the raw material which are plastic bags. The NGO APSM San/Mali explains the interest of such a project: "When

the official inauguration of the unit took place on 11 August 2021, the women of the CMMF who supply the unit with plastic bags were already trained in the types of waste sought. So it is beneficial for these women and the environment is protected, because these bags are not biodegradable. So it's not good for agriculture because they never rot in the soil. And if animals eat them, it kills them. This project also fights against the abuse of wood because these tables and desks should come from wood. Young people are also employed in this unit to make it work. They have been trained in Burkina Faso to be efficient. So the advantages of this project are many and should be developed in other areas. This initiative of APSM for the protection of the environment is reinforced by others such as the mobile sheds to house the centres.

❖ **Anti-corruption mainstreaming by partner NGOs and accountability**

Accountability and anti-corruption enable citizens to have control over the actions of the communes, thus constituting a vector for positive change that can contribute to local development. Generally speaking, the implementing NGOs have been able to accompany the communes in holding their accountability day, the objectives in the three countries being to enable elected representatives, CMMF women, young S3As and community leaders to have a setting for exchange and consultation on the management of their communes.

However, in order for accountability to bring citizens and their elected representatives closer together in a collaborative manner, training for communal agents, civil society, technical services, COGES, AMEs and APEs to develop their knowledge in the fight against fraud and corruption, public finance management applied to the Strømme Foundation's intervention sector, including education, training and youth employment, and the socio-economic promotion of women, must be carried out. Exchange workshops can be organised to enable municipal officials to be accountable to the communities and to enable the population to question and challenge the municipal officials on their actions.

In addition, advocacy and communication at the commune level and at a higher level such as the region or national level to bring to the attention of decision-makers concerns that cannot be solved at the local level and to draw attention to needs and constraints on the ground, and to make the population widely aware of the progress made and of the progress still to be made. Some indications of improved public management at the commune level should be perceptible now. In Burkina Faso schools, for example, the problem of providing pupils with supplies, including those automatically transferred, has been solved, and the delays in delivering these supplies have been resolved. In any case, the issue of accountability at the level of the SFs and implementing NGOs should be reviewed in its approach and content for greater effectiveness.

4.7.4.2. Other cross-cutting issues taken into account

Given the context of insecurity and COVID-19, two other themes have been invited into the implementation of the strategic plan. These are conflict prevention and peacebuilding and the humanitarian-development nexus.

❖ **Conflict prevention and peace-building**

In view of the current context of violence in the three countries of intervention of the SF, conflict prevention and peace promotion have a predominant place. We note that all the implementing NGOs are developing

initiatives in their areas of intervention for conflict prevention and peace promotion within the framework of the strategic plan 2019-2023, even if the initiatives remain insufficient.

In Burkina Faso, for example, the FDC is working to invite people and communities to get together and cultivate solidarity. The NGO has benefited from training on conflicts to strengthen its skills, which enables it to be proactive in this area. The importance of tensions within the various communities means that the workers insist above all on the concepts of cohesion, understanding and living together.

In Mali, the NGO APSM explains that in 2021, they organised training on living together, good governance, conflict prevention techniques, forgiveness, and dialogue in the communes of Tiéguena, N'Torosso and Djeli. The beneficiaries of these training sessions are municipal councillors, village chiefs, representatives of youth organisations, donzos and leaders of the Cafo. In these communes, conflicts between farmers and cattle breeders and land conflicts are very frequent. These are cascade trainings and those who participate in them are required to make restitution in their villages.

In the villages, there are endogenous conflict management systems that are used. The griots are called upon and if they do not resolve the conflict, religion men are called upon, and in the third instance, the village chief and the mayor. The last instance is the recourse to cousins before going to court if the problem is not resolved. The endogenous system of conflict resolution is widely used because in these communes of intervention, trial and imprisonment of the offender causes serious cracks in the social fabric.

Given the context of the importance of endogenous conflict prevention and resolution systems, the baseline study suggested capitalising on endogenous conflict resolution mechanisms and promoting peace in the communities and enhancing them through planned actions. At the current stage of the implementation of the strategic plan, this capitalisation has not been carried out. It is therefore important to undertake it during the year 2022 to contribute to the strengthening of actions in this area.

Moreover, in this context of generalized security crisis and COVID-19 that the 3 countries of intervention of SF are experiencing, the recruitment of children by non-state armed groups appears as a new phenomenon. A study conducted by Save the Children International in 2021 confirms that "Non-state armed groups are taking advantage of the continuing degradation of the environment to recruit vulnerable children who are becoming the first victims of the ongoing conflicts in the Central Sahel »²⁰. The same report states that in 2020, according to the latest report of the UN Secretary General on children and armed conflict, 1 in 3 child victims of grave violations were in West and Central Africa. In Mali alone, according to official data, in 2019 more than 277 children were maimed or killed as a result of the conflict, which was double the total number in 2018. In Niger's Tri-border region, "armed groups have already killed more than 60 children since the beginning of 2021".

This phenomenon is growing, and the causes of child and adolescent recruitment are often facilitated by economic and social pressures and the need for protection. Thus, many children in the three countries

²⁰ Etude de Save the Children International ; Conflits au Sahel : les enfants abandonnés- l'histoire du recrutement illégal des enfants par les groupes armés au Sahel ; Octobre 2021

who are not in school because of the security crisis, COVID-19 or just because they are girls, are at greater risk of being victims of violence such as recruitment.

In view of the current findings, it can be said that the situation of children is insufficiently considered in current policies, particularly in conflict prevention and resolution strategies. While it is necessary to put in place a real investment plan to rebuild and relaunch an education system that is regularly attacked, but which also fails, it is also necessary to define and put in place prevention and demobilisation plans to reduce the risks of recruitment of adolescents. Reflection and preventive actions must be initiated in the various SF areas of intervention to curb the phenomenon.

❖ Analysis of the humanitarian-development nexus

The humanitarian-development nexus can be defined as a programming approach that takes into account both the immediate and long-term needs of communities affected by a disaster or crisis. From this perspective, development objectives do not neglect emergency response aspects in order to best ensure the safety, dignity and capacity to thrive of vulnerable and at-risk populations. The humanitarian-development nexus implies a concrete dual mandate for organisations that carry out both emergency and development interventions. The nexus also implies strengthening the links between actors so that they act in a concerted manner with better collaboration in accordance with humanitarian principles, especially in situations of prolonged crisis.

Whether in Burkina Faso, Mali or Niger, the areas of intervention of SF are confronted with the COVID-19 health crisis and above all the security crisis characterised by attacks by Unidentified Armed Men (HANI) on the civilian population, the defence and security forces, and government officials responsible for basic social services, particularly education.

If we look at the situation in Burkina Faso, for example, as of 30 November 2021, there were 1,501,775 internally displaced persons, 61.21% of whom were children. In the field of education, the number of schools closed as of 31 October had risen from 2,244 to 2,877, directly affecting nearly 345,000 pupils²¹.

In the areas of intervention of the SF, CONASUR counted 57,852 internally displaced persons, including 35,642 children, 9,067 men and 13,143 women as of 31 October 2021. These figures are increasing day by day with the intensification of attacks and the constant alerts of attacks.

Faced with the consequences of this growing insecurity, SF's interventions at the level of education are trying to consider some internally displaced children who are outside the education system in the SS and SS2 centres. When the question of the integration of the humanitarian-development nexus is put to partner NGOs in the current country context, they generally answer in the affirmative. For the FDC in Burkina Faso, "there is an evolution of SF interventions towards the consideration of humanitarian issues. In the Tapsoba area in Bittou, two SS centres have been set up for internally displaced children who have

²¹ Source : *Enregistrement des personnes déplacées internes ; CONASUR-Burkina Faso ; 31 Octobre 2021*

dropped out of school. For the transfer of children to schools, the provincial directorate must issue certificates for their access to schools in their new destinations or their village of origin. The FDC currently has a dual mandate, that of humanitarian and development work. In terms of humanitarian work, it is involved in education in emergency situations (ESU) in the Sahel region, the Centre Nord and in the province of Koulpélogo.

For the FDC, the new needs in relation to the crises are numerous. Among these needs, the FDC cites for example: "The need to consider education in emergency situations (ESU) with the emergency context, the satisfaction of food needs in areas where many internally displaced children are hosted. Canteens often arrive late. School canteens must be opened as soon as the school year starts, and dry rations must be considered. We need to take into account the need for psychological support for displaced children who have been traumatised and adapt the SS intervention strategy in areas where there are many IDPs. These communities cannot make a material contribution because they are destitute. It is necessary to opt for prefabricated mobile tents rather than straw hut centres. In addition, the remuneration of facilitators must be increased.

In addition, in response to COVID-19, the implementing NGOs, the decentralised education services, the SS, SS2, S3A and AL centres were provided with hand-washing devices, nose covers, cleaning products and solutions. But the focus was on prevention of the disease with awareness raising in the centres, among partners and CMMF groups. Whether it is COVID-19 or the security problem, SF interventions are characterised by ad hoc budget adjustments to meet certain emergency needs without any real in-depth reflection on the humanitarian-development nexus.

In view of the scale of the crises in the three countries of intervention, it is important that the Foundation reflect on the humanitarian-development nexus to examine the possibilities of having a dual mandate for its organisation in order to better structure its emergency and development interventions.

The major challenge for taking into account cross-cutting issues is to ensure that staff and all partners know and understand these themes and the policies that underpin them. Therefore, there is a real need to popularise, for example, the gender policy and the child protection policy of the SF at all levels. It is also important to support partners in developing their policies, strategies and action plans to take better account of these issues. Emerging themes such as the humanitarian-development nexus, conflict resolution and peace promotion must be considered for efficient consideration.

4.7.4.3. SWOT analysis of the consideration of cross-cutting issues

<p>Strengthe The SF has a technical capacity on which to build further expertise on cross-cutting issues.</p> <p>Implementing NGOs able to integrate these approaches and develop policies on these issues</p>	<p>Weaknesses The activities planned for the 4 themes have not been implemented</p> <p>Failure to hold the capitalisation and sharing workshop for the 4 cross-cutting issues</p>
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<p>Existence of policies for cross-cutting issues that materialise the SF's commitment to their integration</p> <p>Capacity of the SF to seek funding for the integration of cross-cutting issues.</p>	<p>After 2020, CCI funding could not continue for the following issues</p> <p>Thematic budgets have not been budgeted in a participatory way with stakeholders</p> <p>Thematic budgets do not match the ambitions for these issues. Limited financial resources to support cross-cutting themes including operational gender: (5% of the budget has been allocated).</p> <p>The SF does not have sufficient operational tools to guide staff and partners in the integration of all cross-cutting issues.</p>
<p>Opportunities</p> <p>Openness of the SF headquarters to the development of cross-cutting themes</p> <p>Availability of a national and international legal framework favourable to the consideration of cross-cutting issues</p>	<p>Threats</p> <p>Emergency situations (insecurity, COVID-19) can have a negative impact on initiatives concerning cross-cutting issues. The importance of emergency programmes can relegate cross-cutting issues to a secondary position.</p>

4.8. Analysis of lessons learned and good practices

4.8.1. Lessons learned

Through the data provided by the evaluation, the following lessons can be drawn:

- For the organisational structure of SF, it is necessary to popularise the organisation chart at the level of the Regional Office and the country offices for better appropriation by all staff.
- The educational alternatives developed by the SF (SS) constitute relevant responses to the current situation marked by the recrudescence of closed schools and children out of school.
- SSs can help increase enrolment rates when there is an effective mechanism for post-transfer monitoring of students in host schools.
- The SS2 programme needs to be reviewed to improve the retention of children in the education system and their success in school.
- The initiative of the plastic waste processing unit contributes to the protection of the environment and the creation of a community-based economy. It allows for the development of local solutions for equipment.
- The Days of Excellence initiative provides a stimulus for the children in the SSAP centres.

In the implementation of the strategic plan, the evaluation found good practices.

4.8.2. Good practices to be capitalised from the faire-faire approach

The evaluation notes that the faire-faire approach remains a relevant strategy in view of the security crises in Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso. Mutual trust between the Strømme Foundation and the partner NGOs is becoming more entrenched. Among the good practices related to the faire-faire approach, we note

- The existence of a pool of NGOs and staff with expertise in the concepts. Thanks to the expertise of the partner NGOs, there is a beginning of transfer of knowledge to others and communities in the field of education
- The continuation of activities in a context of insecurity and covid-19. In the midst of a health crisis, activities have not been totally interrupted, for example, women have continued with the contribution. The SS centres remained open to the CMMF component through the adoption of barrier measures.
- Protection of the environment and climate change through the plastic waste processing unit in San. This unit has created employment for local youths as well as economic opportunities for CMMF women's groups, etc.
- Capacity building of actors is a good practice as it helps to correct shortcomings in the implementation of activities and contributes to quality improvement.
- The annual accountability sessions organised by SF are a forum for stakeholders to capitalise on achievements and make recommendations to address challenges.
- Collaboration between partner NGOs and other NGOs in the regions of intervention has made it possible to finance the obtaining of birth certificates for SS students, as in the case of AMSS and NRC in Timbuktu.
- The search for solutions by local authorities to the advocacy of CMMF groups and associations was analysed as a good practice. For example, the Fourou Town Hall reduced the price of celebrating a marriage from 12,500 CFA francs to 5,000 CFA francs following advocacy by the CMMF groups.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This mid-term evaluation assessed progress in the implementation of the strategy plan 2019-2023. It also examined the organisational structure of SF at both the regional and country office levels. The evaluation notes that with the "faire-faire" approach, the organisational structure put in place is simple and efficient. The implementation of the Strategic Plan 2019-2023 has experienced bottlenecks. The changing security and political context and the covid-19 health crisis are factors that have impacted the implementation of activities in the countries of intervention. At the end of this mid-term evaluation, multidimensional findings have been identified to inform SF and other stakeholders on the level of progress of the activities for the beneficiaries.

The organisational and institutional analysis of SF showed that the organisational chart is light and operational and that the staff remains committed despite the difficulties. Respect for the segregation of duties in certain departments, the need to reinforce staff, the redefinition of tasks, the adoption of

appropriate measures to reduce staff mobility are among the challenges that need to be addressed to contribute to the achievement of results.

Despite the contextual dynamics, the strategic plan remains relevant because it considers national and international policy concerns and community needs and adapts to the changing context. Halfway through, results have been achieved by SF in collaboration with partner NGOs and the State's technical services.

The adoption of the faire-faire approach by SF is an alternative way of offering services to communities where insecurity is rife. It has ensured the continuity of actions and it was found that the CMMF programme was more resilient. The evaluation notes an improvement in the economic situation of women members of CMMF groups in Mali and Burkina Faso despite the negative impact of COVID-19 and insecurity. However, Niger has very critical indicators that drag the other two countries down. This situation deserves special attention.

On the other hand, with fewer human resources, SF has ensured the planning and coordination of activities. In the short term, the efficiency is visible because S, SS2 pupils are generally the first in terms of rank at primary school level. However, in the long term, the increase in the level of drop-out of pupils, the insufficient adoption of a post-transfer monitoring system, the non-pursuit of trades by S3A beneficiaries, the rural exodus, the departure of pupils to gold panning sites, the early marriage of girls, and the displacement of parents are factors that negatively impact on the efficiency of the interventions.

Finally, cross-cutting issues are considered, even if this requires a strengthening of activities. The humanitarian-development nexus was limited to the provision of hygiene kits and the broadcasting of awareness-raising messages by community radio stations. In the future, it is necessary to consider humanitarian interventions that will support the development axis.

Based on the findings related to the shortcomings noted in the field, recommendations were made in the short and long term to enable SF and players to improve the quality of interventions.

Recommendations

1) Short-term recommendations

For the rest of the Strategic Plan 2019-2023 period and for the successful transition to a new Strategic Plan post 2023, we make the following recommendations

Findings/problems	Recommendations	Organisation concerned
Findings on the Organisational and Institutional Structure		
Low visibility/readability of the SF organisation chart	Update and popularise the organisation chart to ensure that it is owned by staff.	SF (Regional Office and country representations)
	Implement a staff support plan to ensure ownership of the organisation chart	SF (Regional Office and country representations)

Insufficient knowledge of the content of the job description by the staff	Improve job descriptions for all positions to better clarify roles and responsibilities	SF (Regional Office and country representations)
High staff mobility (turnover)	Implement a retention strategy to reduce staff mobility	SF (Regional Office and country representations)
Weak mobilisation of additional resources to support the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2019-2023	Further mobilise fundraising (special projects) to ensure the implementation of the activities planned in the strategic plan	FS
Findings on the partnership		
Low level of disbursement of funds by some NGOs	Further strengthen NGO partner skills in budget planning to limit financial constraints during implementation	SF and partner NGOs
	To further encourage NGOs to make realistic plans for a better use of resources in time	SF et partner NGOs
Findings on Programmes		
Insufficient capacity of women to use LS in IGAs	Strengthen skills training in promising activities for CMMF women to enable them to develop their IGAs and their economic resilience	SF et partner NGOs
	Further strengthen women CFEs in life skills to enable them to build resilience to crises	SF et partner NGOs
	Raise awareness among husbands about the positive effects of women's contribution to household expenses, so as to encourage them to accept or facilitate.	SF et partner NGOs
Weak capacity of organisations to mobilise external resources	Accompany the EPC groups in their official recognition and support them in developing promising partnerships with municipalities and microfinance institutions	SF et partner NGOs
	Depending on the realities of each country, encourage the anchoring of CMMF groups at the level of a government department to enable the concept to be perpetuated after the withdrawal of the SF	SF and partner NGOs, State Technical Services

No provision of attestations/certificates to S3A beneficiaries	Discern attestations/certificates for S3A beneficiaries to facilitate their socio-professional integration or to be solicited by NGOs for the transfer of skills at community level.	SF and partner NGOs, State Technical Services
Low involvement of CMMF women in commune accountability sessions	Strengthen the involvement of women in CMMF groups in holding accountability sessions	SF et partner NGOs
Insufficient monitoring of pupils transferred to host schools; high attrition of children	Define a post-transfer follow-up strategy to capitalise on the traceability of SS, SS2 students,	SF et partner NGOs
	Strengthening and empowering COGESs for close monitoring of transferred children	FS, partner NGOs, COGES
Low level of disbursement of funds by some NGOs	Further strengthen the capacity of NGOs to make realistic plans for better use of resources in time	SF et partner NGOs
Insufficient monitoring of pupils transferred to host schools; high attrition of children	Define a post-transfer follow-up strategy to capitalise on the traceability of SS, SS2 students,	SF et partner NGOs
	Strengthening and empowering COGESs for close monitoring of transferred children	SF, partner NGOs, COGES
Findings relating to cross-cutting Issues		
The conduct of audits on cross-cutting issues at the level of partner NGOs remains a necessity if the SF wants to support them in the development of their policies and strategies.	Carry out audits on cross-cutting issues, starting with the one on gender and equality for the benefit of the 11 other partner NGOs. These audits can be conducted by internal resource persons including focal points who will see their capacities strengthened in the various areas.	SF
For the fight against corruption, training was carried out to build the capacity of the staff of the FS and of the administrators of partner NGOs. But mechanisms have not been put in place to combat the phenomenon.	Promote the recruitment of suppliers for the needs of the SF and implementing NGOs at the level of each structure. Raise awareness among suppliers, field partners and municipal stakeholders on issues of fraud and corruption.	SF and NGOs

Inclusion of people with disabilities: Although actions were initiated in 2019/2020, the analysis of the data collected in the implementation of the strategic plan reveals shortcomings in the inclusion of people with disabilities	Sensitize implementing partners on the need to consider inclusion in the 2022 and 2023 programs. Ensure appropriate support for persons with disabilities	SF
Protection of the environment and climate change: Training for the benefit of community actors (School committees) on climate issues has been carried out, but no capitalization of learning has been done	Organize a learning capitalization workshop, the results of which will be shared with stakeholders and integrated into the programs of implementing partners	SF and NGOs
With regard to environmental protection, mobile centers have been created for the benefit of education. Not all the partners had set up centers in their areas of intervention.	Given the security context and the need to protect the environment, the development of mobile centers should continue by reviewing the budget allocation devoted to these centers so that they are stronger and more secure for the children. Partnerships should be developed with United Nations agencies such as UNHCR and UNICEF, which already use these mobile infrastructures.	SF and NGOs

2) Long-term recommendations

The following recommendations are intended to improve the quality of interventions in the future.

Findings/problems	Recommendations	Organisation concerned
	Findings related to the organisational and institutional aspect	
Multiplicity of concepts requiring in-depth analysis of management, implementation and monitoring/evaluation	Set up a quality department or strengthen the SMEAL sector to regularly monitor the organisational and institutional aspects of SF, the implementation and monitoring-evaluation of activities for a better image of the SF	SF
	Ensure the adoption of the quality approach by the SF and partner NGOs in all dimensions	SF and NGO

Insufficient consideration of the humanitarian-development nexus	Conduct strategic reflections to give importance to humanitarian interventions in the light of the changing context	SF and NGO
Findings on programmes		
Insufficient monitoring of pupils transferred to host schools; high attrition of children	Define a post-transfer follow-up strategy to capitalise on the traceability of SS, SS2 students,	SF and partner NGOs, state Services
	Strengthen and empower COGESs to closely monitor transferred children	SF, partner NGOs, COGES
Low performance of the S3A component	Review the selection mode and profile of S3A beneficiaries to minimise dropouts after setting up their account	SF, partner NGOs, Technical Services, Communities
Insufficient mobilisation of additional resources to enable CMMF groups to implement IGA projects	Strengthen the capacity of actors in the mobilisation of resources for the financing of IGAs of CMMF groups	SF and partner NGOs
	Ensure that NGO partners plan and implement actions to raise additional funds for the financing of women's IGAs;	SF and partner NGOs
Findings relating to cross-cutting Issues		
Gender and gender equality: The evaluation on the integration of gender and gender equality in the programming of the Stromme Foundation West Africa carried out in August 2020 made relevant recommendations, but many have not yet started of achievement	The programs team should reinvigorate the implementation of these recommendations by prioritizing them and seeking funding for implementation	SF
Gender and gender equality: Analysis of data on the personnel of the FS and its partners shows a low representation of women (10 women and 57 men). Various obstacles prevent their access and retention in their positions In addition, the partners do not have a mastery of the texts/policies that underlie gender, including the gender policy of SF	Carry out a gender analysis that makes it possible to consider the specific needs and strategic interests of women by adapting working conditions, creating conditions for the reception of young children in the workplace, etc.	SF and partner NGOs
The humanitarian-development nexus, the resolution of conflicts and the promotion of peace are themes that have been the subject of debate and reflection in recent years within civil society, which sees more and more the need for them to be taken considered due to the emergency context that is developing in the various countries.	Organize reflection meetings on the content and strategies concerning these themes. Implement and follow up on the recommendations that will come out of these meetings.	SF