USAID/OTI BURKINA FASO REGIONAL PROGRAM

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ACRONYMS

BFRP	Burkina Faso Regional Program
CNIB	Carte Nationale d'Identité Burkinabè
CVE	Countering violent extremism
DCOP	Deputy chief of party
FDS	Burkinabè defense and security forces
GMU	Grants Management Unit
ID	Identity document
IDP	Internally displaced person
IGA	Income generating activity
ISGS	Islamic State in the Greater Sahara
JNIM	Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal-Muslimin
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation, and learning
MPSR	Patriotic Movement for Safeguard and Restoration
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives
SMT	Senior Management Team
SRS	Strategic Review Session
TAP	Transition activities pool
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VDP	Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland
VE	Violent extremism
VEO	Violent extremist organization

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

The Burkina Faso Regional Program (BFRP) launched in July 2018 to seize a critical window of opportunity to address the rising threat posed by violent extremist organizations (VEOs) in Burkina Faso. This engagement by the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), implemented by Chemonics International, intended to capitalize on the nascent but proactive response of the Burkinabè government to the growing crisis, the existing political will to improve relations between security forces and communities in crisis, and the potential for active civil society participation in addressing the problem. BFRP programmed towards an initial goal of strengthening community resilience to violent extremism (VE). As the security environment rapidly deteriorated, BFRP refined its goal to support stability with an overarching objective focused on mitigating the destabilizing impacts of violence and insecurity. BFRP sought to achieve this goal by programming toward four sub-objective clusters:

1. Empower community leaders to respond to VE
2. Mitigate livelihood disruption and foster economic solutions adapted to the local context
3. Revitalize traditional community mechanisms addressing social fragmentation
4. Enable critical local service delivery

BFRP leveraged its **$9.5 million** transition activities pool (TAP) to implement **220 activities** supporting locally led solutions to address the most pressing sources of instability in the program's target communities. BFRP awarded grants to **114 partners** consisting of local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community groups, and host-country government offices. BFRP cleared its first activity in October 2018, completed its final activity in December 2021, and reached an estimated **1.5 million beneficiaries** across northern and eastern Burkina Faso.

SECTION 2

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Burkina Faso entered a period of socio-political instability in 2014 with a popular uprising that led to the resignation of President Blaise Compaoré after 27 years in power. VEOs from neighboring Mali and Niger seized on the geographic isolation and longstanding anti-government grievances of communities in Burkina Faso's northern regions to assemble a fractious network of jihadist insurgent groups in the country, the most active being Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS). By 2016, VEOs had demonstrated their ability to strike targets across the northern tri-border area as well as in Ouagadougou, prompting the G5 Sahel countries to deploy a counterterrorism task force in June 2017. President Roch Kaboré, who was elected in November 2015, established the Emergency Plan for the Sahel (PUS), a four-year plan designed to improve basic services, governance, and security to counter violent extremism, in August 2017.

USAID/OTI awarded BFRP in July 2018 as VEO activity gained momentum in the north and expanded into eastern provinces bordering Niger and Benin. In December 2018, the Burkinabè government entered an accord with France authorizing the deployment of French Operation Barkhane forces. In January 2019, the same day that the government declared a state of emergency in 14 provinces, the country suffered the greatest outbreak of intercommunal violence spurred by VE. By mid-2019, VEO attacks increased to a near daily occurrence with greater civilian casualties, sparking a displacement crisis. Whereas there were only 50,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) at the start of 2019, violence had displaced over 500,000 people by the end of the year, primarily in the Sahel and Centre-Nord regions.

In response to the worsening crisis, the government of Burkina Faso passed a law in January 2020 creating the Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland (VDPs), or local self-defense militias like the pre-existing Koglweogo and Dozos to fight VEOs alongside government security forces (FDS). In mid-2020, journalists and human rights organizations began documenting cases and allegations of human rights abuses by FDS and VDPs against civilians. Over the course of 2020, FDS and VDP killed more civilians than did VEOs. This tragic outcome was also reflective of the de facto entente between JNIM and ISGS, often described as "the Sahelian exception," which unraveled in 2020 and resulted in increased inter-group clashes. VDPs on the front lines and communities supporting VDPs increasingly became VEO targets.

Despite escalating violence, the COVID-19 pandemic, and more than one million IDPs, Burkina Faso held peaceful elections in November 2020 and reelected President Kaboré. Credible reports indicated that the government brokered a temporary ceasefire with JNIM to ensure peace during the elections. In the months that followed, local authorities acknowledged holding their own local dialogues with VEOs to end local violence. However, popular support for Kaboré and confidence in his administration's handling of the conflict began to erode after the June 2021 attack that left 130 civilians dead, and then again after the November 2021 VEO ambush on a gendarme unit in Inata killed at least 49 gendarmes and four civilians. Protests erupted in

Ouagadougou and major regional cities in November 2021 calling for government action to end the violence and for Kaboré's resignation. Kaboré responded by firing his prime minister and restructuring the government in December 2021. Despite preliminary reforms holding FDS leadership to account for the Inata massacre, authorities reported the arrests of a dozen disgruntled soldiers for allegedly plotting a coup in early January 2022. Two weeks later, soldiers mutinied to demand additional support for FDS on the front lines and for families of fallen soldiers. During the resulting security crisis in the capital, dissident soldiers representing the Patriotic Movement for Safeguard and Restoration (MPSR) successfully took over the government, forced the resignation of President Kaboré, and introduced Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba as interim president on January 24, 2022.

At the time of BFRP's closeout, 13 percent of schools in Burkina Faso remained closed due to insecurity and the number of IDPs was estimated at over 1.5 million and growing. The dual shocks of COVID-19 and domestic and regional insecurity dampened a decade-long streak of economic growth, with GDP forecasted to contract for a second year in 2022. The southwest of the country has witnessed an uptick in VEO activity beginning in the second half of 2021, as have neighboring countries to the south, particularly northern Benin. With popular sentiments in Burkina Faso running highly in favor of the path taken by neighboring Mali to establish a democratic transition on its own terms and to take command of its security response to VEOs, the interim government's ability to collaborate with the international community on a transition plan will strongly shape the trajectories of the worsening security and humanitarian crises.

SECTION 3

PROGRAM OPERATIONS

Over the 43-month period of performance, BFRP stood up, managed, and closed down a dynamic, field-facing operating platform in a complex, remote management context. BFRP leveraged OTI program performance tools, including rolling assessments, program performance reviews, management reviews, and strategic review sessions, to assess and adapt program operations as shown alongside key political, security, and activity context on the Program Timeline on page 7.

STARTUP PHASE

With BFRP's initial problem set most prevalent along Burkina Faso's northern border with Mali and the tri-border region with Mali and Niger, BFRP established its headquarters in September 2018 and opened two satellite offices in the north: one in September 2018 with two Sahel region grants management units (GMUs) and one in November 2018 with one Nord region GMU. The security context deteriorated enough during the startup phase that BFRP discontinued expatriate travel to these offices in March 2019.

WHEN OPERATIONS AND CONTEXT ALIGN

In the face of increasing levels of violence and insecurity and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, BFRP program effectiveness improved significantly from 2019 to 2020 thanks to pivotal operational reforms, including the use of procurement bids collected by phone instead of hard copy, cash grants, the data collection hotline, mobile money platforms, and revised procurement approval authorities. In combination with a revised activity cycle, BFRP shortened its yellow light to green light average from 78 days to clear new activities in Year 2 to only 45 days in Year 3.

EXPANSION TO FADA N'GOURMA

As the conflict context evolved and VE activity spread south and east from the tri-border region, BFRP opened a third satellite office in September 2019 with two GMUs covering communities in the Est and Centre-Est regions.

EXPATRIATE EVACUATIONS, STAFFING SCALE UP, AND COVID-19

In March 2020 following a program performance review, BFRP implemented a significant staffing expansion coinciding with evacuations of US national personnel due to the COVID-19 pandemic authorized departure. BFRP onboarded a new chief of party, filled two new expatriate positions including a deputy chief of party and a second senior grants and subcontracts manager, and added a second grants manager and a second procurement specialist to each GMU. Concurrently, due to COVID-19, BFRP shifted to a remote work model for all staff in March 2020 which lasted until October 2020, and US national staff returned or fielded to Burkina Faso upon the reopening of the Ouagadougou International Airport in August 2020.

PHASED CLOSEOUT

BFRP's SMT detailed a phased closeout plan in December 2020 based on the availability of TAP funding in the program's final year and on an approach that consolidated programming impact in geographic regions according to strategic priority. In February 2021, BFRP reduced staffing in one office from two GMUs to one to concentrate on five key target communities in the Est region rather than 10. Another office closed first in August 2021. Since the most recent semi-annual report covering the period ending September 2021, BFRP closed the Nord-Est office in October 2021, the Est office in December 2021, and the headquarters in January 2022. Sequenced with the closure of each office, BFRP transferred over 1,000 pieces of non-expendable and expendable program property to 59 local partners, including nine vehicles, of which two were transferred to the USAID/OTI Littorals Regional Initiative. Chemonics-Washington provided virtual recruitment skills workshops to all BFRP staff and job placement support to other USAID projects in Burkina Faso. By program close, Chemonics-field had completed all in-country deregistration procedures in line with local requirements.

On December 2, 2021, BFRP held a closeout workshop in featuring presentations by BFRP staff and grantees and panel discussions with USAID partners. Host country ministry counterparts, the USAID country representative, and the US Ambassador to Burkina Faso attended the workshop. The event served as a handover of three years' worth of lessons learned, programmatic insights from BFRP cluster evaluations, and a series of legacy documents highlighting BFRP approaches, learnings, and recommendations for USAID and local partners continuing to work on democracy and governance, countering violent extremism (CVE), and resiliency in Burkina Faso. One USAID implementing partner and panelist underscored the opportunity for handover at the event, stating, "The important work done by BFRP partners on promoting social cohesion between disenfranchised groups in Burkina Faso should be continued by government, civil society, and donor agencies."

SECTION 4

ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

BFRP implemented a total of 220 activities within target communities across the Sahel, Nord, Est, and Centre-Est regions of Burkina Faso. BFRP provided local associations, NGOs, mayors offices, and provincial and regional authorities with 202 in-kind and hybrid cash/in-kind grants and implemented 18 direct distributions of goods and services and short-term technical assistance activities. BFRP applied sequencing and layering leading to improved community relationships with local authorities, more cooperation between youth and elders, reduced conflict over resources, improved relationships between IDP and host communities, stronger leadership from local leaders, and increased incomes for beneficiaries to support their families.

CLUSTER 1: EMPOWER COMMUNITY LEADERS

Local leaders play an influential role in Burkinabè communities and their actions in the face of violent extremist threats can have an outsized impact on community stability. BFRP designed programming to support local leaders, especially women and youth leaders, to take ownership of their community roles and implement their own community actions combating VE and instability, especially through public events, trainings, and networking activities. Interviews with community members following BFRP programming showed that leaders were more engaged on CVE issues, insecurity, and violence in their communities, and that they have increased their efforts to communicate and collaborate with community members. Achievements from select activities with local leaders include:

- In the Nord region, BFRP awarded a grant to a community group to work with leaders of local youth organizations to hold a campaign featuring interactive radio shows, debate competitions, and community meals pairing youth leaders with IDP youth to discuss social cohesion and peace. The campaign inspired the youth leaders to undertake self-financed initiatives following the activity, including hosting a day of dialogue, setting up meetings with local

authorities, establishing provincial and communal level youth groups, and hosting bicycle races and soccer matches between IDPs and local youth.

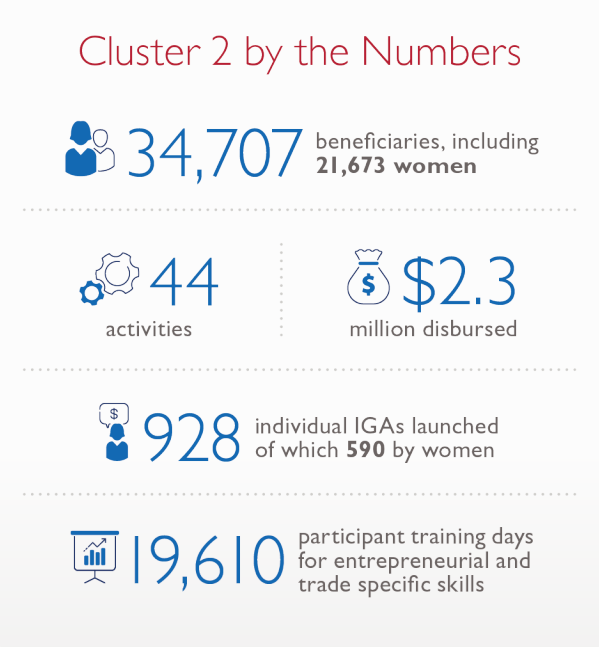
- In the Sahel region, BFRP supported the training of 30 youth leaders, 20 community leaders, and 10 local authorities to implement a multi-faceted campaign to spread awareness on social cohesion, including 90 tea debates with 1,800 participants, 60 educational chats between youth and community leaders mobilizing 1,200 participants, and a local radio theater production.

- In the Est region, BFRP worked with traditional leaders to establish a network of 73 local leaders, including 21 women, from 11 villages to champion community-level resilience to extremist threats and influence. The activity provided rich grounds for the network's members, ranging from traditional leaders, religious leaders, and heads of women's and youth associations, to propose local solutions to their problems.

- In the Nord region, BFRP supported the formation of a peace committee consisting of local leaders and IDPs. After receiving CVE and conflict prevention and management trainings, each of the 18 committee members held community chats with as many as 50 community members to discuss local conflict dynamics and apply conflict mitigation skills firsthand. Following the BFRP activity, the committee used a mutualized financing approach to fund small interventions in the community, improving interactions between residents and IDPs.

CLUSTER 2: MITIGATE LIVELIHOODS DISRUPTION AND FOSTER ADAPTED ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

The lack of basic needs and livelihoods opportunities is the strongest destabilizer for communities in Burkina Faso outside of direct security factors. BFRP's activities under this cluster supported vulnerable populations to identify opportunities adapted to the context of their local economies, acquire skills and knowledge to leverage those opportunities, and secure the necessary materials to generate income. Interventions to mitigate livelihoods disruptions in BFRP's target regions included the rehabilitation of community vegetable gardens; the rehabilitation of community mills; training sessions on processing and marketing local products; entrepreneurship and financial management trainings; practical trainings and



apprenticeships to learn trades like cell phone repair, hair cutting and styling, secretarial work, butchery work, driving moto-tricycles, and mechanical repair; and supplying materials for local income-generating activities. BFRP's activities fostered economic opportunities and increased communities' resilience against livelihood disruptions, including the following key activities and results:

- Fourteen activities focused on training and equipping 9,758 vulnerable women in the Sahel, Nord, and Est regions to run existing or launch new income generating activities (IGAs). These activities improved women's ability to meet their basic needs, care for their families, save for emergencies, and invest back into their businesses. Successful activities included rehabilitating women's centers, including donating mills, looms, and other equipment for economic activities, and installing community mills for women to process local agricultural products. BFRP also provided trainings and start-up kits for women to run locally adapted economic. Integrated activities with both IDP and host community women generated significant second-order social cohesion benefits, as women from diverse backgrounds overcame stigma and social tension to work together and act in each other's shared interests for economic stability.

- Fourteen activities focused on training and equipping 1,341 vulnerable youth, of which 545 were young women, in the Sahel, Nord, and Est regions to run existing or launch new IGAs. BFRP trained and provided IGA start-up kits to youth.

CLUSTER 3: REVITALIZE TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY MECHANISMS

With a weak or non-existent justice system in many of the program's communes, communities often turn to traditional mechanisms to manage conflicts. BFRP supported existing mechanisms to promote positive interactions within and between communities to reduce tensions. The 59 activities under this cluster helped to raise awareness, inform, and mobilize communities through community gatherings, discussions around tea sessions, and the use of town criers in traditional conflict resolution spaces. Beneficiaries set up or revitalized dialogue frameworks to address stigmatization and reduce ethnic and religious conflicts. Training, workshops, and dialogue spaces for local leaders resulted in the establishment of inclusive peace committees made up of individuals from diverse ethnic groups. Key activities under this cluster include the following:

- Intergenerational dialogues between elders and youth as VEOs often exploit social divides between young and old to recruit within their communities. The dialogues provided an opportunity to analyze existing intergenerational gaps and propose actionable solutions.

- Socio-cultural activities involving *parenté à plaisanterie* kinship techniques (a traditional joking and lighthearted manner of diffusing conflicts, typically shared between ethnic groups that live in the same community), cultural caravans, sports, and theater improved the inclusion of different ethnic groups.

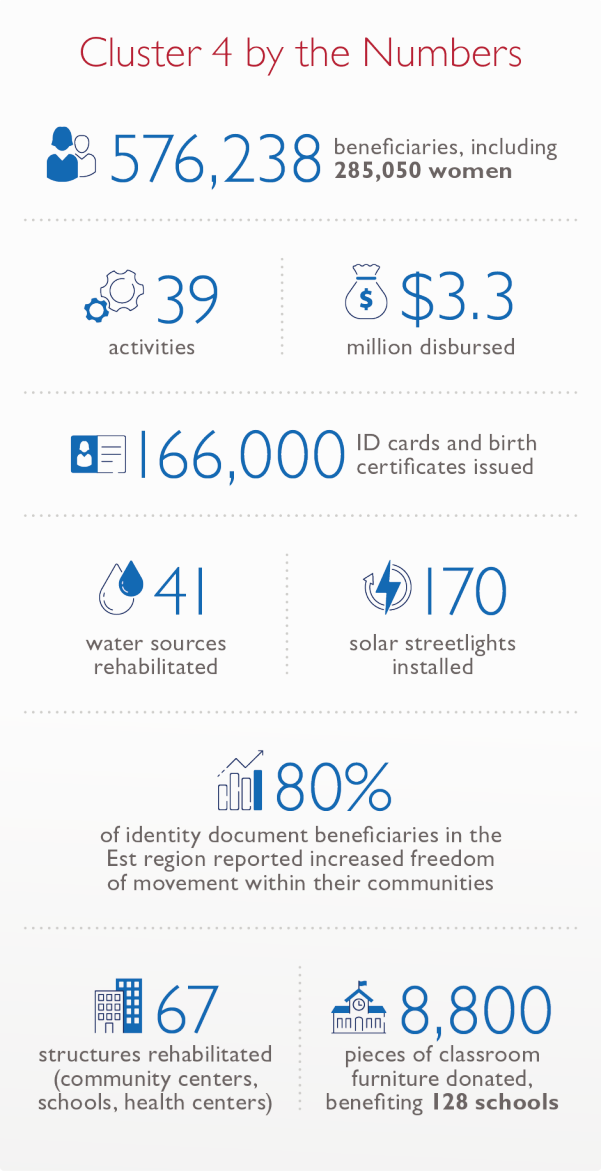
- Facilitated dialogues between IDPs and host community members including traditional leaders, women, and youth helped improve the inclusion of different ethnic groups and IDPs in target communes, reducing intergroup tensions.

CLUSTER 4: ENABLE LOCAL ESSENTIAL SERVICE DELIVERY

Local, regional, and national government authorities face significant resourcing, security, and infrastructural challenges to delivering essential services to their constituents in Burkina Faso, especially in areas impacted by violence. Populations relying on weakened or absent state institutions for services experience inter-community conflict over limited resources, grow disillusioned with their government, and become vulnerable to VEO recruitment, internal displacement, and economic hardships. BFRP activities under this cluster focused on the provision of identity documents and increasing access to education, health care, safe public spaces, and water to improve the critical links between communities and local authorities, including:

- BFRP organized 18 free ID card campaigns in partnership with local mayor's offices to deliver national ID cards and birth certificates to host community members as well as IDPs. Holding an identity card is key for community members and IDPs to access critical local services, such as education and healthcare, and to move freely through FDS checkpoints to access markets and earn livelihoods.

- An estimated 300,000 students in Burkina Faso have seen their schools close due to insecurity, and host community schools are often unable to absorb the influx of displaced students, creating tensions that exacerbate conflict. BFRP provided 128 schools across the Sahel, Nord, Centre-Est, and Est regions with more than 8,880 desks, chairs, and chalkboards, as well as books and school supplies, and rehabilitated classroom buildings and school infrastructure to accommodate more students. BFRP equipped and/or rehabilitated schools, increasing access to public education services and creating spaces for positive interactions between displaced and host children.



- To improve access to health care and reduce tensions linked to limited-service delivery, BFRP worked with local authorities to equip six community health in Est region and rehabilitate a health clinic. BFRP donated more than $165,000 in equipment and non-medical supplies to the clinics, including examination tables, patient beds, benches, chairs, gurneys, stretchers, and IV stands. This helped prepare the municipalities to meet the growing demand for health services from both host and IDP communities. BFRP also trained the health centers' management committees in maintenance and fundraising techniques to help secure financing in situations with limited public funding and high service demands. Following the rehabilitation of the health clinic, a resident stated, "I think that the current health services are much better than before and that makes us really proud because we feel like we are listened to by the authorities."

- In Burkina Faso, community members often congregate in the evenings to discuss issues affecting their community. In many communities, they have been unable to do so in recent years due to deteriorating security, undermining traditional mechanisms that promote peaceful cohabitation and a sense of community. To improve the sense of security after dark, BFRP partnered with local authorities to install 170 solar powered streetlights and 340 public benches with USB sockets in popular public areas in the Sahel region, where

residents had been afraid to congregate. Local authorities and community members reported that the lights dissuade VEOs from entering the commune at night and have revitalized socio-economic life. For example, some vendors decided to stay set up in areas lit by the solar lamps longer into the evening thanks to the increased sense of security the lights provided, increasing their daily income.

SECTION 5

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Given the complex, fast-changing environment in the north and east of Burkina Faso, the program encountered and overcame significant operational and programmatic challenges. Consistent with OTI's Act-Adapt-Assess framework, BFRP identified innovative and adaptive solutions to many of these challenges during implementation and continuously shared program learning internally and with USAID and local partners working towards stability in Burkina Faso.

DYNAMIC SECURITY CONTEXT

Contextual analysis facilitates adaptive management. Aside from a relative lull in VEO attacks on civilians in late 2020 due to increasing inter-group clashes and alleged negotiations with Ouagadougou to hold the November 2020 elections, the security context steadily deteriorated over the course of BFRP implementation. The spread of VEO activity in Burkina Faso during BFRP drove entire communities to become internally displaced, and others to become isolated as VEOs encircled them and cut off road access. The security context presented challenges for program operations, like the closure of banks due to encroaching VEO presence, making local activity payments possible only via BFRP's mobile money system. Monitoring the situational context is a shared responsibility among BFRP leadership, staff, grantees, service providers, and beneficiaries, to ensure management remains flexible and adaptive. BFRP formalized an activity risk matrix developed by the risk management team and updated every two weeks for SMT review and decision-making. This tool ensured BFRP took appropriate and timely action to ensure the safety and security of project staff, grantees, and beneficiaries, including suspending activities to monitor the context, relocating activities to secure locations when possible, or canceling activities when the context was not permissive according to *Do No Harm* principles.

REMOTE PROGRAM OVERSIGHT, GRANTS MANAGEMENT, AND MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING (MEL)

Tools adapted for successful remote management contexts. In a remote management environment, BFRP developed integrated communications and feedback mechanisms to make timely and informed decisions around program strategy, activity development and implementation, and internal operations. In target communities where BFRP local staff could not travel, a list which fluctuated on a biweekly and sometimes ad hoc basis in line with BFRP contextual analysis, the project depended on field program assistants to monitor activities and provide updates on community security, trends, and other atmospherics. This daily and weekly reporting from field program assistants, risk management staff, monitoring and evaluation team members, and grants management staff was key for BFRP leadership and GMUs to ensure that programming was appropriate for the context at the time. BFRP utilized locally appropriate tools, such as WhatsApp security and implementation monitoring groups for close to real-time incident reporting and activity updates and a third-party data collection service designed to call beneficiaries to measure

program performance, to overcome remote management challenges. These mechanisms allowed staff to quickly communicate events as they occurred. Risk management staff from the regional offices reported weekly in implementation meetings and in weekly all staff meetings to enrich the activity cycle with dynamic contextual insights.

EMPOWERING LOCAL LEADERS

Community leaders play an important role in the social dynamics in Burkina Faso. BFRP's experience showed that the more communities work together, the more they will learn to understand and accept each other. Local leaders are instrumental to shedding harmful stereotypes based on ethnicity, social status, or religion, and to render the social climate more stable. The use of contextually appropriate gatherings, such as dialogues, tea debates, and committee meetings, was extremely effective in facilitating communication and acceptance between groups, as well as in identifying and developing solutions to local problems. Dialogues should be included in all activities where community conflicts are present, even if the activities do not specifically target the groups in conflict. Community leaders engaged in BFRP programming were more aware of their roles and responsibilities in promoting community stability and took proactive steps to fulfill these roles. Leaders' participation in community-led initiatives also contributed to increased beneficiary engagement in their own efforts to promote social cohesion.

As a result of community leaders' actions, inclusiveness towards women and youth improved. Direct beneficiaries of the program and community members observed that leaders, often male, engaged women and youth more following BFRP activities, which led to more inclusive communities. While a gap still remains in the inclusion of women compared to men, communities are now creating women-only platforms to promote their empowerment and engagement, overcoming socio-cultural constraints and allowing them to openly discuss key issues and develop their own solutions.

MITIGATING LIVELIHOODS DISRUPTION AND FOSTERING ADAPTED ECONOMIC SOLUTIONS

Ensure IGAs are appropriate for the local economic context. While grantees often play a role in designing IGAs and often have strong contextual knowledge, including other key stakeholders in activity design can decrease the risk of unsustainable ventures. For example, women in in the Sahel region who received training and equipment for their food supply businesses under a BFRP grant later experienced challenges in sourcing essential supplies, such as gas butane for their gas cookers, as the market was cut off due to the escalating conflict. Involving those beneficiaries in the activity design phase may have yielded better alternatives for cooking in the local context, such as locally made charcoal cookstoves. Subsequent BFRP activities included market analyses to lower the risk of committing to unsustainable ventures.

Include community members in defining beneficiary criteria and verify during implementation that criteria are respected. Selecting IGA beneficiaries is essential to realizing the objectives of the activity and doing so with community participation ensures buy in and transparency to set the IGAs up for success in their future markets. BFRP activities included management committees made up of community members to avoid grievances that can arise in the beneficiary selection process. After

the grant award, BFRP then verified that the committee's selection criteria, included in the grant, are respected in final proposed beneficiary lists. This approach ensured that beneficiaries who receive trainings, kits, or access to BFRP support are objectively qualified to succeed in their IGAs and not selected for unrelated reasons.

Active participation in IGAs led to the identification of tenable economic workarounds by female beneficiaries. Through their active participation in the IGAs, as well as the ongoing utilization of discussion spaces that were formed during activities, female beneficiaries analyzed, identified, and began to collectively implement solutions to bypass the challenges pertaining to the worsening economic and security environment. This included coordinating group orders to avoid multiple trips between the source of goods and markets and thus limiting insecure travel. Beneficiary groups pooling their orders have expanded to include non-beneficiaries, suggesting that this collaborative method may provide economic stability and has been passed on to the wider community.

Economic workarounds helped IDP beneficiaries increase their income. In light of the ongoing internal displacement crisis, BFRP favored IGAs that were geographically transferable so that beneficiaries could mitigate some of the economic shocks inherent in displacement if forced to flee. In general, IDPs are likely to need additional support to meet their basic needs. Factoring this into programming in areas of displacement is important to ensure those who are displaced are able to launch IGAs. For IGAs such as mechanics that have a longer lead time, BFRP found it necessary to modify the activity design to incorporate vocational training and job placement to ensure beneficiaries had the extended support necessary to launch their businesses.

Investing in women benefits the whole community. Insecurity and violence affect women's livelihoods disproportionately and a household's stability usually depends on a woman's capacity to contribute to basic family needs. BFRP's IGAs targeting women showed that as women's income increases, they typically invest more in their children's education, health, and nutrition. Therefore, investing in women's economic empowerment contributes to increasing the whole community's resilience against destabilizing effects of violence and insecurity.

Include equipment donation in IGAs. In a context where livelihoods have been disrupted due to violence and insecurity, especially for women, it is essential to combine training for IGAs with the physical equipment and raw materials needed to implement them. Additionally, this calls for rigorous needs and market assessments in the activity development phase to ensure that the equipment provided to beneficiaries can be found and repaired locally, mitigating delays due to the breakdown of equipment or disruption of supplies.

It is essential to include business entrepreneurship training in activity design. Equipment and personal determination are often not enough to launch a successful IGA if core business acumen and financial management skills are lacking. BFRP activities found that incorporating entrepreneurship training with an emphasis on marketing and accounting provided for longer-term potential for the sustainability of the IGA.

REVITALIZING TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY MECHANISMS

Community mechanisms should be identified and empowered. BFRP found that trainings, workshops, spaces for dialogues, and community peace committees were effective mechanisms for countering VEO narratives, mobilizing communities, and reducing stigmatization for greater community stability. BFRP supported trainings for community members to better understand VEO tactics to exploit existing or historical divisions and grievances. Beneficiaries in the Nord region, through activities like the "Women Talk to Reduce Stigma" activity, came to realize the importance of social inclusion, rejecting stigmatization of specific communities, mainly the Fulani, as VEO accomplices. BFRP supported peace committees, made up of individuals from diverse ethnic groups, to act in traditional conflict resolution spaces, including hosting public gatherings and using town criers to mobilize and inform community members. To address social stigma and conflict that directly impacted agricultural productivity, local populations organized neighborhood working groups to improve access to fields for different community members during the planting and harvest seasons.

Inter-religious platforms are efficient in mobilizing and engaging communities in the process of community stability. Where politics may fail to achieve results (e.g., social cohesion, mutual acceptance), religious leaders stand out as an effective alternative solution. Continuous support to engage inter-religious platforms can further the process of stability and mitigate the risk of violent extremism in their communities. For example, interfaith iftar meals organized by BFRP unlocked a new approach for local religious leaders to engage their communities for fellowship and social cohesion to prevent conflict. Residents confirmed that this was the first time they had seen leaders from the different local faiths come together and that the activity created social bonds between community members that perhaps did not exist before, motivating them to strengthen their own interfaith activities going forward.

ENABLING LOCAL ESSENTIAL SERVICE DELIVERY

Local officials should be the face of service delivery activities. After identifying local government partners through a thorough vetting process, BFRP activities strengthened local authorities' ability to provide essential services to their populations. By supporting certain local service needs, BFRP activities alleviated budgetary limitations for local government, eliminating the need to pick and choose which services to deliver and allowing officials to better meet community needs through the services they continued delivering on their own. BFRP implemented service delivery activities with minimal branding so that populations perceived the services as coming from the government, thus improving the relationship between communities and local officials.

Identity document campaigns are effective entry activities. Prior to initiating activities under other clusters that would require beneficiaries to move freely and access public and private services, identity document campaigns can grow the pool of potential beneficiaries and increase the success rate of future programming. Having identity cards helped beneficiaries start and grow their businesses. The mobility that identity documents provided had significant implications on beneficiaries' ability to buy and sell goods, market their products, and conduct trade in other villages, particularly for those living outside urban centers. Beyond the contributions to financial security through increased mobility, beneficiaries described being able to deposit and withdraw

money from the bank, look for employment, register for humanitarian aid, and access mobile money services. Additionally, beneficiaries expressed pride that they could now prove they were Burkinabè and the peace of mind that comes with belonging.

Consider second-order effects. Local service delivery provided a sign of stability amidst an otherwise deteriorating security context. Local leaders and authorities, community members, and IDPs said the expanded access to local services, beyond simply improving access to water, electricity, or civil documents, increased their overall sense of community and cohesion and increased confidence in local authorities and trust in the FDS. In addition to undermining the VEO narrative that the state is not capable of taking care of its citizens, the provision of local essential services reduced conflict-exacerbating, second-order tensions through increased social cohesion and stronger links with the state.

CROSS CUTTING LESSONS LEARNED

Regardless of training objectives, add CVE. The inclusion of CVE training modules in all capacity building activities and IGAs is essential to ensure the success of beneficiaries in the context marked by VE. CVE modules allow beneficiaries to identify potential risks and find solutions to increase individual and community resilience to VEO activity in their regions.

Obtain representative local buy-in for selecting beneficiaries. The establishment of diverse participant selection committees – consisting of local authorities, community members, women, youth, and IDPs, for example – helped ensure activities supported the right beneficiaries who were the most likely to initiate their own independent initiatives and thus amplify positive outcomes or to succeed at their IGAs. Criteria included individuals who had demonstrated a certain level of engagement in their communities and who were already recognized and respected by community leaders for social cohesion activities and those who had relevant trade-specific skills or experience for IGAs.

Layering interventions magnifies impact. BFRP found that, in many cases, a critical mass of activities in one geographic space determines the strength of outcomes. For example, in the Est region, beneficiaries who received a rehabilitated borehole from a BFRP activity spoke just as often about receiving identity cards as they did about improved access to water, and many also mentioned support to schools. This indicates that even if beneficiaries only participated in one activity, they experienced or perceived the benefits of multiple activities. Women in particular reported that having identity cards and access to clean water reduced conflicts over services and contributed to improved outcomes in terms of mobility, safety, and their ability to care for their families. It is clear that the whole community noticed BFRP's support for service provisions, rather than just direct beneficiaries. BFRP successfully layered multi-sectoral local service delivery programming in at least a dozen target communes in the Nord, Sahel, Centre-Est, and Est regions.

Lasting activity gains are possible in insecure environments. The program was able to successfully identify community conflicts that VEOs were leveraging, such as disputes over water and land and mistrust between IDPs and host community members, and implement training and in-kind grants to successfully mitigate these conflicts. BFRP's 2021 Cluster Evaluation in the Est region suggested that activity beneficiaries continued to implement what they learned from the activities long after

activity closure. Across the board, social cohesion was strengthened even for those acknowledging the deteriorating security situation. The improved relationship between IDP and host community members contributed significantly to mitigating the destabilizing effects of violence and insecurity, as these tensions were creating deep resentments within communities, which VEOs could leverage. Positive outcomes of local service delivery also held despite the deteriorating security context. Therefore, even in situations with an unstable security situation, programming can still have a positive and enduring effect. However, there are limits to the extent these outcomes can hold if the security context continues to erode at the pace it did up to BFRP closeout.

SECTION 6

THE WAY FORWARD

Engagement with communities in the Nord, Sahel, Est, and Centre-Est regions has yielded key insights into Burkina Faso's forward-looking contextual environment. Discussions with BFRP partners at closeout identified areas to support development approaches for the country going forward. A recurrent concern was the Burkinabè government's ability to ensure security in the face of growing VE. Confidence in the country's FDS was decreasing as the number of attacks multiplied, especially after the Inata attack in November 2021. Sources with intimate FDS knowledge cited a lack of coordination and conflict between the gendarmerie, the police, and the army, especially with regards to allocation of resources, contributing to decreased effectiveness. Since the January 2022 change in power, there have been concerted efforts to improve the leadership and communication between the branches of the state security apparatus.

KEY PROGRAMMING SUGGESTIONS

1. Engage local authorities and civil society organizations to reinforce ties between FDS, VDPs, and communities they are to protect
2. Amplify religious leaders' voices to counter the proliferation of gender-based violence
3. Support national government frameworks for communities to reintegrate former extremists
4. Build on local efforts to mitigate and resolve conflict linked to land use by farmers and herders
5. Expand youth engagement through the education sector and IGAs
6. Enable service delivery to communities hosting IDPs
7. Address acute food insecurity and build agricultural production capacity

The disjointed manner with which the VDP are managed was another area of concern. This lack of coordination across municipalities, who are responsible for managing the VDPs, contributed to conflicts between FDS and VDP and resulted in an erosion of confidence in the populations they serve. Support programs to improve relations between security forces, VDPs, and the general population would help improve trust between the three groups. Local authorities such as mayors are well placed to bring the different entities into constructive dialogue about improved stability. They can be a vibrant nexus between civil society and government and foster the creation of networks focused on resolving critical issues and help advocate for initiatives at the national level. Assistance to civil society organizations to implement dialogue mechanisms between citizens and authorities is even more important now as the government is being restructured down to the municipal level with the February 1, 2022 decree announcing the installation of new *délégation spéciales*. These new local governing structures can prove to be windows of opportunity to engage authorities in resolving conflicts especially between the population and VDPs.

There has been a considerable recent rise in gender-based violence as reported at the end of 2021. VEOs are terrorizing communities with the use of forced marriages, rape, and other acts violating the rights and safety of women. Ministry officials at BFRP's closeout workshop suggested that religious leaders must be supported to send stronger messages to these groups about how such practices are wrong and are counter to religious teachings. The international community can work with community organizations to bring religious leaders together to prepare messaging to the population, through popular radio programming, collectively denouncing these practices.

Another complex and frequently raised issue is that of the reintegration of youth into communities when they want to leave extremist groups. Local authorities have tried to foster dialogues with these groups in attempts to reintegrate former fighters, but their attempts were unsuccessful without a framework from the central government. A program in coordination with national government for support to local authorities to reintegrate former extremists would be helpful in rebuilding communities and providing an exit path for VEO recruits. Leaders within the new interim government have expressed the need to address the issue of reintegrating youth but no formal mechanism has yet been put in place. International development programs providing training in CVE for local leaders to better understand the drivers behind VEO recruitment would help them with decision-making regarding future reintegration efforts.

Land tenure rights continues to be a source of conflict between farmers and herders throughout Burkina Faso. Regaining access to land is often used as a recruitment tool by VEOs where marginalized populations are promised land in exchange for their allegiance. Donor assistance packages to Burkinabè civil society organizations specializing in improving the relationship between farmers and herders can reinforce and expand the work they are already doing in bringing these two groups together to resolve conflict.

VEOs continue to recruit disenfranchised youth without economic prospects. To reduce the vulnerability of youth, donor support to the education sector is key. With schools closing and others overflowing with internally displaced students, access to education is severely reduced. Additional equipment and space to welcome displaced students is in great demand. Donor programs to fund school bench production and classroom expansion would help alleviate some systemic pressure associated with displacement. Psycho-social support for educators in areas experiencing violence and displacement was also a welcome intervention.

Income generating activities, such as sewing, weaving, carpentry, plumbing, and electrical repair, have proven to crowd out recruitment incentives from VEOs and offer economically viable alternatives for vulnerable youth. BFRP worked with local organizations, many of which were women's associations, in developing quick-to-implement economic solutions which were proven effective in generating income for beneficiaries. These activities had second-order social cohesion benefits when IDPs were included, as beneficiaries built supportive bonds when implementing shared economic activities.

IDP flows towards larger towns with an FDS presence will continue to rise. The government will need to increase basic services to these IDPs. Not only was pressure for basic services increasing in urban areas, but as rural farmers flee insecure agricultural areas, crop production will be

increasingly insufficient to feed the general population. This will lead to major food shortages and exacerbate acute food insecurity. The Famine Early Warning Systems Network is forecasting that large areas of the Sahel, Nord, Centre-Nord, and Est regions will go from stressed to crisis status between February and May 2022, citing reduced water source replenishment and lack of access to production areas due to insecurity. Food programs, such as the United Nations World Food Program, should prepare additional food deliveries to affected areas. Donor programs targeting organizations in the agriculture sector with the goal of increasing production through the provision of inputs and equipment should also be considered, but insecurity needs to be addressed before farmers will feel safe returning to their fields.

In summary, the most pressing issue is the deteriorating security context. This must first be addressed by supporting Burkinabè efforts to improve community security. Local government can play an important role in coordinating these efforts as it is already the interface between the population and national government. At the same time, programs that help communities cope with the effects of the security crisis are of utmost importance. Improved access to education, health services, food security, and viable economic activities will help curb the principal factors pushing vulnerable youth to extremism while alleviating pressures on fragile socio-political systems caused by internal displacement and insecurity.