



# Subsidy

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Cover Photo: Nigerian protesters in Ile-Ife, Osun State during the removal of subsidy protests in Nigeria

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# Editorial

## The New Way

Often, one can read any feeling into West Africa: you may choose hope or despair or indifference, depending on what one's desires are. The newsletter format and the contents of this first edition in that format can elicit that eerie feeling in a reader, whether residing in Ouagadougou or seated in New York benumbed by international media coverage portrayal of this region.

Unrests in Nigeria over the government's New Year message of removal of subsidy on petrol, leading to gruesome shooting and killing of protesters would fall into the latter depressing category news. It is however a serious narrative about Africa's future. Governments argue that subsidies, especially fuel subsidy, is mortgaging future development for current consumption. The people's argument is that their lives and livelihoods are so difficult the removing subsidy might compromise their having a future. In addition to the arguments is the insecurity generated by the social conflict it generates. With millions protesting in the streets, Nigeria was described by former US ambassador John Campbell as being "on the brink", a descriptor that couldn't be a misnomer.

But in that extreme stroke of paradox, our region presents brighter stories that can eloquently tell another narrative on where the region is headed. All across the West Africa, mobile phone application developers are springing up to bring about the revolutionary concepts that will change the face of commerce and economic activities by easing up payment options for goods and services as well as easing the process of making remittances to loved ones and other poor people in the cities' slums. Mobile apps are the engine of the 'mobile money' craze that most telecoms companies and banks tout as the next big thing in their operations as they transform from the core business model of providing call services to becoming the backbone of the solution to an age-old problem in which banking is considered an elite idea. Now, as near a hundred and fifty million West Africans own mobile phones, a marked change in how they embrace formal banking institutions is about to happen. This edition talks about that.

We also serve the shining story of what the sun is doing for women's livelihoods in Mali through solar power technologies, and the reason why Ghana and Nigeria's reactions to fuel subsidy removal were so markedly different, indicating that public trust in government will remain a critical factor in economic growth and development in the region.

In this new format for West Africa Insight, we are taking on multiple themes in every edition from now on, representing the variegation of issues and interests engaging the region at every point in time, and which bear great opportunities for our future. The newsletter's editorial team holds the view that West Africa is going to be better served by this entertaining and rich tapestry of subjects. Of course, more than ever before, we shall be expecting feedbacks from you, our readers from every part of world where you read us: westafricainsight@gmail.com or info@westafricainsight.org2 are our contacts.

--Odoh Diego Okenyodo

# Fuel Subsidy: Building Hardship On Citizens-Government Trust?

Attempting an explanation for what is in Ghanaians that compels relative 'silence' over fuel subsidy removal on which Nigerians rage will not only make a good research in social science, but it will also interest close watchers of recent events in West Africa. Like several African countries such as Cameroun, Chad, Guinea, Kenya and Nigeria, Ghana adjusted the pump price of petrol on 28 December, 2011 three days before Nigeria attempted and 'temporarily' retreated on deregulation of the downstream sector of the oil industry. This policy decision in Ghana translated into a 30% increase in the pump price of petrol now selling for One Ghana Cedis, Seventy-Five Pesewas (GhC1.75) and diesel for One Ghana Cedis, Seventy-Seven Pesewas (GhC1.77).

Speaking through the CEO of its price regulatory agency, the National Petroleum Authority, Mr. Alex Mould, the government argued that "the effect of the rise in crude oil prices this year and the 5.7% depreciation of Ghana's currency (Cedi) meant increase in Cedi and petroleum products since January." Ghana spent US\$276 million (i.e. GhC450 million) on fuel subsidy in 2011, and the



government believes removal of subsidy will impact positively on the country's economy the same reason advanced by the Nigerian government.

Before the recent upward adjustment in of petroleum products prices, Ghana had started a deregulation policy that was truncated in the wake of unprecedented rise in international oil price between 2006 and 2008. Indeed, it was in an attempt to mitigate anticipated socio-economic impact of the burst that the Ghanaian government re-introduced subsidy in the sale of kerosene, diesel, petrol and gas. In particular, higher prices on petrol (GhC1.18) and diesel (GhC1.16) were meant to cross-subsidise kerosene and cooking gas commonly used in homes. Besides aiming at cushioning anticipated hardship on ordinary Ghanaians, this cross-

subsidy was to help protect environmental impact of deforestation by reducing citizens' dependence on wood-fuel as a source of domestic energy use.

The above arrangement is what the 28 December 2011 fuel subsidy removal in Ghana has altered, prompting what some have referred to as inconsistency in government policy. A counter argument is that the Ghanaian government's decision is aimed at responding to the increasing commercial use of gas, adding that the government cannot abandon economic realities behind price adjustment in favour of political considerations.

Perhaps, what has become very instructive in the history of fuel subsidy

removal in Ghana is how it coincided with Ghana's entry into the league of oil producers to herald the notion of no cheap oil, to use Mohammed Amin Adam's expression. It is with this in mind that it has become difficult for ordinary Ghanaians, and enlightened ones too, to understand why it is necessary to leave 'petropolitics' for true economic realities, while others have used Ghana's unpleasant experience with the comatose Tema Oil Refinery and the resulting near crash of Ghana Commercial Bank to argue that inflationary impact of pump price hikes are less undermining to economic development than the cost of fuel subsidy.

Notwithstanding this, the Alliance for Accountable Governance (AFAG) has succeeded with a public protest dubbed Ahokyere (hardship) to express public displeasure of the harsh economic conditions precipitated by the hike in petroleum products prices with members of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) actively participating. Explanations are being sought on: the rationale behind pump price increase at a time when international oil price is far less than what it was at the last increment; the crude oil hedging that was supposed to serve as insurance against future oil price hike; the estimated US\$1.2 million oil revenue accrual for 2011; and the plans to boost local refining capacity to deal with transportation cost associ-

ated with oil price build up. As frontal as AFAG appears in its demands, many Ghanaians have simply acquiesced to the call to balance economics with political realities. To that extent, a hired pro-National Democratic Congress (NDC) government group has also staged a counter protest, while organised labour under the Trade Union Congress (TUC) claimed it was still consulting, after which an end of January ultimatum was issued to the government to revert to old prices of petrol and diesel or risk a general strike and public protests.

Many have argued that the decision by the John Attah-Mills government to move on fuel was risky, given that 2012 is an election year. Others are of the view that the government will be able to transcend the challenges that this poses, given government's promise to improve on existing social safety nets (called 'palliatives' in Nigeria) such as mass transportation system, capitation grant for education, national health insurance scheme, all to mitigate the excruciating pains precipitated by government's action. Of particular interest here is that while Ghanaians believe and trust their governments and leaders, Nigerians do not share the same for theirs, thus raising fundamental questions about significant break down of trust between the government and the governed. With far less corruption and more visible signs of good governance in Ghana, there is every reason for citizens to see reasons with their leaders and be prepared to make whatever sacrifices requested of them by the government.

According to Afrobarometer's latest survey, "Eight in ten Ghanaians (80 percent) report being fairly or very satisfied with the way democracy works in Ghana." The cross-national survey research project, conducted collaboratively by social scientists from 20 African countries however revealed that just 42% held the view that Nigeria was "a democracy with only minor problems" and 56% thought that Nigeria will remain a democratic country in the future. Read against the backdrop of this study, the reaction to fuel subsidy removal is thus instructive. Former US Ambassador John Campbell avers that "Only genuine reform of Nigeria's political economy can pull it back from the brink." So while President Goodluck Jonathan was able to subdue protests by partly reinstating the fuel subsidy, coupled with a certain amount of oppression and alleged payoffs to labour leaders, Ghanaians led by the Trade Union Congress (TUC) finally agreed to a 20 per cent reduction in petroleum prices effectively marking a reversal of government policy on fuel subsidy removal. Does unrest lie in wait for Ghana as it is when Nigeria embarks on its next round of increment in April 2012?

-- **Dauda Garuba is Nigeria Programme Coordinator for Revenue Watch Institute (RWI).**

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# Solar Power in Mali: A miracle for women



Less than one percent of rural communes in Mali have electricity. But in Sirakorola, the administrative centre of a commune located 120 kilometers outside the capital city of Bamako, solar power is synonymous with economic boom.

"Ever since we had the solar panels installed, women haven't been buying charcoal or kerosene for their household chores. We water our plants with the solar pump and our market gardens have become much more profitable," says Nana Sangaré.

Sangaré, the mother of seven children, is deputy mayor and the chairwoman of

a Sirakorola women's association. Her responsibilities range from market gardening and making food-grade ice to supervising her village's health center and its two schools.

## Highlights

- Less than one percent of rural communes in Mali have electricity.

- UNDP's project affects more than 30,000 people, primarily women and youth, and aims to make renewable energy accessible to all.

- Mali ranks 175th out of 187 countries on UNDP's human development index for 2011.

"Before this project, we didn't have any income at all. Now I

earn 3000 CFA Francs daily (around \$6), which allows me to provide for my children's needs," Sangaré explains.

More than 30,000 people living in the commune's 55 villages benefit directly from the Malian National Program for Renewable Energy for the Advancement of Women (PENRAF), a project started by the Malian government in 2003.

UNDP provides financial support and manages all contributions to the project through an annual programme that emphasizes the use of a local work force. Artisan blacksmiths have been trained to make solar

dryers, cookers and water heaters, and young volunteers have learned to install and maintain solar panels.

The Women and Youth Association manages the solar drying facilities, food-grade ice production, milk packaging, and the charging of solar batteries. They keep 30% of the income from sales and services. The remaining 70% is given to the mayor's office and earmarked for the replacement and maintenance of the solar panels.

"If we have a mechanical

breakdown," says Sangaré, "we don't need to go to all the way to Bamako to find a technician anymore. In fact, we have our own spare parts stores. We are really proud of our village," she adds.

At the health center, solar lighting has replaced kerosene lamps and flashlights that were previously used for check-ups or delivering babies. A water heater now provides constant hot water for patients and a solar-powered refrigerator stores vaccines and medications at the proper temperature. Since 2007, the health center has been filled with

patients.

"Solar power has given rise to an economic boom in our commune," says Souleymane Coulibaly, the Mayor of Sirakorola. "The use of solar power has greatly improved the quality of life for the population, especially women."

[http://www.beta.undp.org/undp/en/home/ourwork/environmentandenergy/successstories/l\\_energie\\_solair\\_eaumaliunmiraclepourlesfemmes.html#](http://www.beta.undp.org/undp/en/home/ourwork/environmentandenergy/successstories/l_energie_solair_eaumaliunmiraclepourlesfemmes.html#)

## Subsidy and Poverty Reduction



**I**n 2009, while the removal of subsidy on fertilizer led to a 40% decline in its use in Nigeria and

Ghana, there was a 25-29% decline in Senegal. There are arguments that the removal of subsidy has negative effects on

the realisation of MDG Goal 1, which aims to cut poverty by half by the year 2015. In the long run, the real test will be

the outcomes of the much promised economic policies of governments in the region. Will they fail to produce a job-creating recovery in addressing the challenges posed by rising unemployment and the deepening of poverty? Presently, while Nigeria is among the countries with the highest pump price of fuel, the country is said to rank the lowest in the minimum wage ranking among OPEC countries.

In the face of rising poverty and governments' focus on subsidy removal or deregulation, the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Mallam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi drew attention to the fact that the link between major growth drivers, particularly agriculture and manufacturing, continue to be weak, while the cost of the expected infrastructural needs of the economy are daunting (2). Against the backdrop of the prevailing economic tensions as a result of the removal of subsidy, pressure on consumers is likely to compound the pain associated with high raw materials costs and adverse strain on exchange rate. The erratic rainfall has continued to threaten the livelihood of millions of people in the region and worsened food shortages, under conditions whereby people struggle for survival. For instance, the removal of fuel subsidy in Nigeria jacked up the prices of petrol and transport fares by about 100%. It was so dramatic that people who travelled for the Christmas

and New Year got stranded.

Removal of subsidy in the region, has added to the relative fragmentation of price formation for fuel in Nigeria and Ghana, as well as cotton in Burkina Faso and Mali. Consequentially, this has hit the poor hardest in agriculture, energy, industry and social services provisioning, as well as undermined production on a large scale. Yet, the OECD countries, especially the United States and the European Union, still maintain some of the biggest levels of subsidies in the world through the EU policy on Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the United States Agricultural Assistance Programme (Onimode, 2000:147).

Beyond oil, cotton is another principal source of revenue for governments of Burkina Faso, Mali and Benin. Despite the comparative advantage that these countries enjoy, Burkina Faso and Mali are currently the poorest countries in the world. 10% of the population in these countries suffers from malnutrition, with an approximated one in three children underweight, and life expectancy at about 50 years (3). This condition is largely attributable to the suffering of cotton farmers who lose in the world market due to lower prices for exports of cotton and loss of world market share. For instance, while subsidies are removed on fuel and cotton in the region, cotton farmers in the United States enjoy subsidy from government. According to an OXFAM report, US cotton farmers receive more in subsidies that the entire GDP of Burkina Faso where more than two million people depend on cotton production for survival.

The report contended further that US cotton farmers also receive three times more in subsidies than the entire USAID budget for Africa's 500 million people (OXFAM, 2002).

Notwithstanding these arguments, there is a sense in which the infrastructural deficits in the country, under a condition of dwindling revenue profile can better be addressed through access to funds by governments at all levels, rather than the prevailing condition of the enrichment of a few group at the expense of millions of other people. For the poor in the region, the dominant features of this conjuncture is the continuing collapse of commodity trade, the rising cost of basic human needs and widening inequalities. All these make the reconstruction of the state and politics in West Africa a compelling imperative, in terms of addressing legitimacy crises on the part of the state, public accountability and corruption, which are all parts of the ideals of the much needed developmental state.

Once the link between key drivers of growth such as agriculture and manufacturing are established and strengthened, economic growth can only translate into employment generation opportunities in the region with emphasis placed on production rather than consumption. This is coming at a time when the prospects for economic growth have

over the years suffered as a result of deepening challenges associated with child and maternal mortality, illiteracy, and access to water.

Looking beyond the removal of subsidy, government's search for alternative sources of revenue need to be underscored and appreciated in the context of bridging the gulf that exist between production and consumption. For the average poor, while they are not entirely opposed to subsidy removal, the pathway for a secured future lies on governments' emphasis on [re]building refineries, tackling corruption as well as cutting cost on government's expenditure. In a sense,

strengthening the link that exists between the major drivers of growth in the area of agriculture and manufacturing must be overhauled, within an overall goal of diversifying the sources of revenue that has become characteristic economies that rely almost solely on one principal source of revenue.

**-Chris Kwaja**

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3. Mallam Sanusi Lamido Sanusi, the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria made this assertion as a guest lecturer at the annual Sir Patrick Gillam Lecture Series at the London School of Economics and Political Science, Monday, 23rd January, 2012.
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## Nigerian horticultural project wins Orange's African Social Venture Prize

**A** Nigerian Horticultural project named Horticulture Remote Irrigation System which puts mobile technology in the hands of horticulturists, farmers and cooperatives for remote crop irrigation, allowing them to improve productivity while preserving water resources emerged winner in the Orange-sponsored African social ventures prize. The winners were declared in Cape Town, South Africa on Wednesday. Following the Nigerian project was AgaSha Business Network, which won the second prize.

The Ugandan start-up

project uses the Internet to help small and medium African companies grow. Through its online business community, it facilitates interaction among economic players to boost market opportunities for small and medium businesses in Africa and abroad.

Third place went to Kachile, a start-up in Côte d'Ivoire which offers an e-commerce platform to "professionalise" cottage industries, which are well developed in Africa but lack visibility and market access.

In addition to funding of up to 25,000 Euros, Orange will provide support to the three projects for six months from its local subsidiaries and the strategic expertise of its venture capital subsidiary,

Innovacom. The three winners will receive financial assistance along with management and technical support from Orange specialists.

Source: African Science Issue no 589 27th January 2012

[Http://www.balancingact-africa.com/news/en/issue-no-589/telecoms/nigerian-horticultur/en](http://www.balancingact-africa.com/news/en/issue-no-589/telecoms/nigerian-horticultur/en)

# Mobile Apps Development Opens New Vistas

The advancement of technology globally has led to large numbers of persons using mobile phones purposes other than just making and receiving calls. The World Economic Forum says about 74% of populace living in poverty all through the globe has access to mobile phones. Mobile phone users are on the increase in West Africa. Ghana has 19 million lively mobile phone users. Nigeria has surpassed South Africa to become the continent's leading mobile market by above 90 million subscribers. According to the Mobile World analyst, Niger Republic has approximately 14.4 million mobile phone users, which signifies a resident's infiltration height of 23%. Senegal is also a growing mobile market in the region, with abundance of opportunity for expansion. This is a fertile grown for provision of innovative services via this ubiquitous tool, a realization that is attracting a blossoming craft of building mobile applications (or 'apps').

A Standard Bank Group report has it that mobile subscriptions in Africa by 2015 will hit 800 million consumers. This shows prospect for big businesses and mobile apps developers. Mobile applications have made mobile banking possi-



ble, with the starting of the Central Bank of Nigeria's (CBN) new cashless economy scheme, with which Nigeria announces its readiness take on the continent's rising mobile payments market. Going by industry forecasters, 20 million Nigerians are expected to be attracted into the formal banking scheme using mobile money over the next three years. At present, some commercial banks in the country have introduced mobile banking apps that allow transfers of funds across various bank platforms. United Bank of Africa (UBA) deploys the uMobile application for its mobile banking, whereas Intercontinental Bank of Nigeria installs the iMobile app.

The AITEC Banking and Mobile Money conference will next

month take Accra to the global top professionals on mobile banking. In November 2011, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) had revealed that 40 million mobile money users are presently found in Africa. Research firm Ovum anticipates this number to increase to 1.2 billion by 2015. Kenya is presently the leading player in Africa's mobile payment markets with over 20 million users. According to new data from World Wide Worx, 37 percent of South Africa's cell phone users also use mobile banking services.

Besides apps for mobile banking, apps facilitate increased penetration of pay

TV subscription. DSTV Mobile, a service offered by Multichoice, permits subscribers of mobile networks in South Africa, Nigeria and Ghana to view TV broadcast on mobile phones.

Promoters of mobile apps have woken to prop up its potentials. Mobile Web Ghana, a group of Ghanaian mobile entrepreneurs seeking entrepreneurs, engage in mobile phone technology to create applications that render valuable service to home societies and generate successful trades. Training to this effect begins on the 15th March 2012 and will hold for three weeks. Technology and business experts across the globe will be assembled. In a related development Mobile Web Ghana rewards two local mobile applications developers. Presently under creation, AppBridge which emerged as brainchild of the Young Global Leaders a World Economic Forum (WEF) community is an online stand to promote gifted software developers to connect with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community organizations to create

**Continued from page 4**

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applications that will deal with poverty. Mobile apps prospects in Nigeria is in its infancy whereas mobile application and web development have many prospects and less is being done in the oil exporting country. MobilityNigeria pays ten thousand naira (about US\$65) for any developer willing to share their mobile apps with the public for free, if that app is chosen as most qualified by MobilityNigeria's team. The company's founders say they do this to inspire improvement in the Nigerian mobile app development, to promote developers who invest in stirring out immense mobile application for free for the advantage of many. Also, recently Samsung West Africa (SEWA) launched Samsung Developers competition, Nigeria's first ever mobile applications improvement challenge and this was to aid Nigeria take its place as a technology monster able to create mobile applications that are significant and functional in the Nigerian context. Mobile apps seem to be the obvious business to invest in at the moment.

Foreign investors are likely to seize this opportunity to invest in mobile application development and sales in the region.

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# Monthly News and Current Affairs

Compiled by Oluchi Agbanyim



## Mali and EXIM Bank of India Sign Line of Credit

Mali is looking for Indian investments in mining, traditional and renewable power generation, transport, agriculture, fisheries and food processing. President Toure said Mali will give concessions to Indian companies interested in the mining sector.

India has provided several lines of credit to a swathe of infrastructure projects in Mali. These include 15 million dollars for rural electrification, 12 million dollars for agro-machinery and tractor assembly plant, 11 million dollars in three tranches for electricity transmission and distribution projects from Cote D'Ivoire to Mali, 20.62 million dollars for acquiring railway coaches and locomotives from India and 15 million dollars for development of agro-industries.

[Http://indiacurrentaffairs.org/mali-signs-second-line-of-credit-with-exim-bank-of-india](http://indiacurrentaffairs.org/mali-signs-second-line-of-credit-with-exim-bank-of-india)



## Niger hit by severe food shortages

The Early Warning System, which monitors and forecasts [food security needs](#), has identified three major areas as reporting deficits: Tillabéry in the west; Agadez in the north; and Diffa in the east; with respective shortfalls of 164,146 tons, 123,576 tons, and 68,115 tons. It projected the 2011-2012 "winter" gross cereal production for millet, sorghum, rice, wheat and fonio (one of West Africa's most ancient cereals) at 3.8 million tons - 27 percent down on 2010-2011. Grain production last season was about 5.3 million tons. Able-bodied and young people prefer to live the villages for cities and abroad thereby making situation worse in villages. Cheick Boureima Abdou Daoud, a citizen of Niger, donated 3,000 tons of cereal to the relief effort. "I want to kick-start action so that other citizens of Niger, who can afford it, can also help those in need," he said. The present government unlike others is admitting the food crisis and in August 2011, it asked for 100 billion francs CFA (about US\$198 million) in donor aid.

[Http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportId=94713](http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?ReportId=94713)



## Senegal at the verge of destabilisation

Violent protests have sparked off in Senegal over a courts ruling that allows 85 year old incumbent president Abdoulaye Wade to run as president for a third term. Amnesty International has warned the "potential for destabilization is huge", and urged political leaders to make sure their supporters did not resort to violence, AFP reported.

A policeman has been reported dead as youths took to the street setting fire and throwing stones at the police while the police responded with tear gas. Wade has faced criticism over corruption, financial scandals and nepotism, with many accusing him of trying to position his son Karim Wade, 44, as his successor. He has also been accused with fiddling with the constitution. French foreign ministry spokesman Romain Nadal on Thursday: "It is up to everyone to prove their responsibility. The future of Senegal is at stake in these elections."

[Http://www.onislam.net/english/news/africa/455570-protests-rip-senegal-after-poll-ruling.html](http://www.onislam.net/english/news/africa/455570-protests-rip-senegal-after-poll-ruling.html)

## “Food Crisis in West Africa: Action Needed”

**Rob Bailey is a Senior Research Fellow, Energy, Environment and Development Programme. This interview, first published in December 2011, sounds a note of warning that is relevant to developments in West Africa. Excerpts.**



**There are loud and clear early warnings of another food crisis in the Sahel next year. Will there be enough early action to see it off?**

East Africa's food crisis continues and a second is now unfolding to the West, in the Sahel, that should start hitting the headlines in spring next year.

Why spring 2012? The answer lies in the remarkably predictable onset of food crisis, starting with an event such as drought or pest infestation, then a poor harvest leading to a grain shortfall. After this, remaining food stocks are run-down, and people turn to short-term coping strategies. For those in rural areas, this includes selling-off weakened livestock; as poor quality animals flood the market, their price plummets whilst the cost of food continues to rise, shifting the terms of trade against the rural poor. At this point, people migrate to cities in

search of food or employment, depressing wages and competing for food in urban areas too.

The crisis peaks when food stocks are fully depleted and all there is to do is wait for the next harvest or hope for assistance. In the Sahel, this 'hunger gap' usually runs from April to August. Right now, countries in the region are facing significant grain shortfalls following poor harvests due to erratic rains and pest attacks. Niger saw the cereal harvest down more than a quarter on the previous year, and now faces a shortfall of 500,000 tons, worse than in the run-ups to the 2005 and 2010 crises. The gathering crisis is also being exacerbated by a collapse in remittances from the Nigerian Diaspora in Libya, and increasing food demand as many of them return home.

### Recognising the Problem

In October, Niger's President appealed for international assistance, and this week the European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response expressed fear that the response may come too late. The importance of early action cannot be understated. It allows humanitarian agencies to build capacity and undertake interventions designed to prevent vulnerable people reaching crisis point, rather than trying to reach them when they are starving and logistical capacity is low.

There are two important points here. First, the President of Niger apparently had no qualms about standing up in front of his country, acknowledging the crisis they faced, and appealing for outside assistance. This is to be welcomed. A key barrier to translating early warnings into early action in other

crises has been the reluctance of affected governments to recognise the problem and request assistance. Second, an important donor is acknowledging the donor community's history of failure in responding to early warnings in a timely fashion, the other main problem.

### Early Action Steps for Governments and Agencies

These are encouraging signs, but on their own are not enough to precipitate the early action needed to avert the looming crisis. Millions of people now face hunger in Niger, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Burkina Faso. These governments have a responsibility to do what they can to avert crisis: ensure access to humanitarian agencies, undertake domestic efforts to reach the most vulnerable, acknowledge the problem and appeal for assistance.

Humanitarian agencies must make the case to donors for a large-scale early mobilization of funds. They must demonstrate how early interventions will save more lives and lower the cost of the response, and they must provide no-regret and least regret options that donors can fund knowing they will bring benefits no matter how the crisis unfolds. All the donors must do is act now.

<http://www.chathamhouse.org/media/comment/view/180471>