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# Bridge

## Technical Approach Working Paper

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# I. Program rationale and USG strategic priorities

## Background

Bridge represents an innovative project idea that explicitly and intentionally aims activities at the nexus of countering violent extremism and resilience. It also directly aligns with the current U.S. National Security Strategy focus on reducing violent extremist threats in Africa.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the Bridge approach aligns to the National Security Strategy priority imperative to partner with governments, civil society, and regional organizations to end enduring violent conflicts. A reduction to these security threats will help countries in the Sahel develop their capacity as U.S. strategic economic partners and may also reduce the spread of insecurity and illegal migration to the U.S.

Bridge developed from USAID's recognition that many development challenges serve as 'push' factors potentially driving the most vulnerable towards extremist groups that offer fulfillment of critical unmet needs (e.g. income, justice, identity, purpose, etc.).<sup>2</sup> In an effort to better understand the myriad influences affecting stability and development in the Sahel, USAID, in collaboration with the U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) and the Department of State, undertook a table-top analytical exercise called "The Development Game." This led to USAID West Africa Regional Mission's Regional Peace and Governance Office (RPGO) and USAID Senegal's Sahel Regional Office (SRO)<sup>3</sup> creating a joint strategy and shared results framework for addressing the identified drivers of violent extremism in the Sahel with traditional, shorter-term counter violent extremism (CVE) programming as well as an explicit emphasis on addressing key development/resilience factors. This collaborative strategy was further adapted and broadened over time and constitutes the strategic framework for both Bridge as well as RPGO's NEW-CVE project. Bridge also contributes to the Sahel Development Partnership (SDP), an agency-wide strategic, coordinated, and holistic approach to building resilience and confronting violent extremist ideology and focused on specific regions of Niger and Burkina Faso. Bridge also extends this approach to other areas of responsibility to include northern Tahoua and Diffa in Niger, and areas of both Chad and Mauritania.

## Project Purpose

Goal Statement: Vulnerability to Violent Extremism Reduced in the Sahel

- *Development Objective 1:* Legitimacy of violent extremist organizations and ideology weakened<sup>4</sup>
- *Development Objective 2:* Government legitimacy enhanced

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> These push factors typically do not operate independently, but rather are most salient when matched with local grievances that produce political and social alienation.

<sup>3</sup> SRO is the USAID regional operating unit with overall management, support, and oversight responsibilities for USAID activities and teams in Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Niger, The Gambia, and Chad. These countries also benefit from USAID activities managed by USAID/West Africa based in Accra, activities managed by central funds from Washington, DC, and from bilaterally managed activities.

<sup>4</sup> This is the Project Purpose of the NEW-CVE Project.

- *Development Objective 3: Economic opportunities enhanced in targeted regions*

Project Purpose Statement: *USAID seeks to address the grievances that are the main drivers of violent extremist recruitment in the Sahel, which often stem from development issues: poor governance, lack of economic opportunity, and perceived exclusion from the benefits and services provided and facilitated by governments in the region.*

The objectives have been divided between USAID/WA/RPGO and USAID/Senegal/SRO. RPGO efforts address DO1 of the results framework through the NEW-CVE Project; SRO is responsible for addressing DO2 and DO3 and is entitled “Bridge”.

The current planned funding under the Bridge is for activities in Niger, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Chad.

Relative geographic areas of insecurity in the Sahel are broadly defined by RPGO and SRO as “hot”, “warm,” and “cool” or “buffer.” *Hot* areas are insecure geographies already plagued by violent extremism where USAID programs the majority of traditional CVE programming, such as the NEW-CVE project.<sup>5</sup> *Warm* areas are those that are adjacent to the hot areas where the security enabling environment allows for flexible and dynamic longer-term programming that addresses core, localized drivers of violent extremism. This is where a large share of Bridge activities will focus. *Cool* or *buffer* areas are where resilience programming addresses chronic vulnerability and underlying poverty over the longer term. This is largely where SRO’s resilience project, Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced II, will program.

This “area” concept helps to enhance clarity of communication and suggests sequencing and transition trajectories, but it is critical to recognize that these geographic areas actually represent a patchwork of different geographies that lie on a continuum of insecurity. Threats are not omnipresent, pockets of stability exist - typically, but not always, in more settled places - and threat levels can sometimes change quite rapidly. Consequently, some program elements may be productively employed, even in areas which may not seem “ready,” and some elements may not be used when an area may otherwise appear to be in a more stable location. Applied to the Bridge areas, this observation should help to avoid being tied strictly to predetermined activities in particular geographies; the local context and operating environment will inform activity choice and design and will improve opportunities for success.

## Context

The Sahel has long been plagued by a plethora of challenges, including poverty, rapid population growth, low human capital, weak institutions, government failure through endemic corruption and low capacity, underdevelopment, declining soil fertility, desertification, rising temperatures, large scale droughts and erratic rainfall due to climate change, diminishing returns on traditional climate-dependent livelihoods, and growing competition and conflict over scarce natural resources. Due to the global rise of violent extremism (VE) and VE spillover from the destabilization of Libya, Syria, and Iraq, violent extremist organizations (VEOs) and trafficked weapons have infiltrated the most marginalized areas of the Sahel, exploiting long and porous borders and a lack of state presence. This spread of violent extremism in the Sahel has exacerbated expressed or latent structural problems and vulnerabilities in the Sahelian landscape, thus rolling back most development gains due to rising insecurity and conflict. Further exacerbating this problem set is the response of the national governments, which largely consists of military intervention.

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<sup>5</sup> The project purpose of NEW-CVE is to weaken the legitimacy and ideology of Violent Extremist Organizations through lines of effort reflecting three sub-purposes: West African capacity to counter violent extremism strengthened, Moderate voices amplified, and Community cohesion increased.

Heavy-handed counter-terrorism operations by security forces have been a source of moral outrage driving many to seek retribution by joining VEOs. These operations have also severely impacted local economies due to restrictions on motorcycle travel, strict curfews, and the closure of markets in some areas (e.g. in the Tillaberi region of Niger). Closely linked to this is the disruptive impact of population movements as people leave their homes out of fear of both VEOs and security force reprisals.

Current and emergent trends that accompany the growth of violent extremism across the Sahel are critical to a broader understanding of the VE context today, such as:

1. **Increasing spread, diversification, and localization of violent extremist groups:** Political violence (particularly violent extremism) has grown dramatically across the Sahel since 2006.<sup>6</sup> VEOs are continuously growing their ranks through the active recruitment of vulnerable Sahelians, particularly youth, and have moved into countries with historically strong resistance to these groups (e.g. Burkina Faso). Along with the increasing numbers of youth in VE groups, there has been a growing diversification of types of VE groups, with differing political/religious ideologies, leadership, demographic makeup, and strategies. Terrorist groups continuously move around, learn, and adapt as they seek to displace security and government presence. They dynamically morph into new groups and splinter into separate groups, leading to an overall diversification of VE actors and a growing complexity of relationships between them. Evidence also exists of localized recruitment and leadership by Sahelians themselves (in contrast to Maghrebians).<sup>7</sup>
2. **Growing anti-establishment sentiment and incivility:** Incivility<sup>8</sup> is on the rise throughout the Sahel (notably in parts of Burkina Faso and central Mali), where youth have decreasing respect for societal norms and the rule of law, and where delinquency is observed to be increasing. This is a new phenomenon and reflects an expression of youth disenchantment with the state and society. Marginalized populations have long experienced frustration with the state over corruption, marginalization, human rights violations, lack of services, the inability of the state to provide basic human security, massive unemployment and underemployment, and a lack of access to justice. Many, particularly youth, have become disillusioned with the state (and some with modernization more generally) and feel alienated from their own society. This has contributed to the rise of criminality, gangs, delinquency, drugs, prostitution, and violent extremism.
3. **Growing criminal/VE nexus:** Employment and economic opportunities have not kept pace with the growing youth bulge in the Sahel, so many frustrated and desperate youth are turning to criminal behaviors for money, including joining VE groups for opportunistic reasons. VE groups and criminal networks have developed a symbiotic relationship over time as they both rely on profits from illicit activities. Local populations, at times, make the distinction between the two groups based on the perceived reason for their behaviors. For example, where criminal bandits may steal a cell phone for economic reasons, VE groups may commit the same theft to prevent local populations from contacting authorities in advance of an attack. New CVE research that leverages lessons from criminology and social psychology shows links between the criminal mindset, that is, a set of attitudes and inclinations

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel Wagner, "Africa's rising political violence," Huffingtonpost.com, January 2015, [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/daniel-wagner/africas-rising-political-\\_b\\_6485644.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/daniel-wagner/africas-rising-political-_b_6485644.html).

<sup>7</sup> *Violent Extremism in the Sahel: The Birth of a Third Generation of Terrorism?* Abdelhak Bassou (2018) OCP Policy Brief. <http://www.ocppc.ma/publications/violent-extremism-sahel-birth-third-generation-terrorism>

<sup>8</sup> Laure Nana, "Incivisme au Burkina : Un mal qui remet en cause l'éducation," Infowakat.net, May 2018, <https://infowakat.net/incivisme-au-burkina-un-mal-qui-remet-en-cause-leducation/>. Margherita D'Ascanio; "Generating respect for the law in Africa," ICRC.org, August 2016, <http://blogs.icrc.org/law-and-policy/2016/08/31/generating-respect-law-in-africa/>

that influence and determine how s/he understands and responds to the world, which could lead to susceptibility to recruitment into violent extremism.<sup>9</sup>

4. **Increasing intra- and inter-communal violence:** There is growing conflict among herders and between herders and farmers in the Sahel over increasingly scarce land and water resources. Previous research has shown that conflict breeds conflict and that insecurity and instability attract VE groups that often hijack localized conflict and grievances to advance their own agenda.<sup>10</sup> Sometimes these conflicts, such as between Touareg and Fulani herders, increase inter-communal polarization. National and foreign government actors (e.g. the French) are also financing and arming localized ethnic militias and mercenaries in proxy efforts to fight VE groups which is giving rise to new inter- and intra-communal conflicts and tensions.<sup>11</sup> Autonomous local groups are also increasing mobilization, often ostensibly in community self-defense, and further adding to the constellation of actors using force independent of the rule-of-law.
5. **Rise of non-state actors to fill the void of the absent state:** Politics in the Sahel have been marked by patterns of clientelism since independence. This has generally weakened states and eroded their ability to provide basic services to their people. Further, this personalization of state power and resources is inherently corrupt, creating societies marked by neglect-driven grievances. In the absence of the state, marginalized communities have been left with no choice but to create their own localized mechanisms of security, justice, and service provision. Local vigilante groups<sup>12</sup> or ethnic militias often act as proxies to state security in marginalized zones. Local populations often rely on traditional alternative dispute resolution mechanisms as accessing formal legal aid is virtually impossible. Communities unable to replace essential state functions may opt to align with VE groups that can offer them. Thus, VE groups often effectively replace the state in these marginalized geographies. This was notable in northern Mali in 2012-2013 and in other vulnerable communities across the Sahel.<sup>13</sup>

## II. Lessons learned from CVE

In a rapidly evolving field with dynamic actors and contexts, effective CVE program design is contingent on employing the knowledge and lessons from past and current programming, as well as broader CVE research. Bridge builds on evidence from past and ongoing USAID CVE activities in West Africa and the Sahel, including earlier projects under the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership,<sup>14</sup> lessons learned from current resilience activities, and analysis in Niger and Burkina Faso. The underpinnings of Bridge draw from the CVE and development literature and relevant CVE practitioners, research institutions, and

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<sup>9</sup> Borum, R. (2014). Psychological vulnerabilities and propensities for involvement in violent extremism. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, 32 (3), 286-305.

<sup>10</sup> Gassebner, M., & Luechinger, S. (2011). Lock, stock, and barrel: a comprehensive assessment of the determinants of terror. *Public Choice*, 149, 235-261.

<sup>11</sup> *The Niger-Mali Border: Subordinating Military Action to a Political Strategy*. June 2018. International Crisis Group.

<sup>12</sup> Bram Posthumus, "'We're here to stay': Vigilante policing spreading across Burkina Faso," Africanarguments.org, January 2018, <http://africanarguments.org/2018/01/26/were-here-to-stay-vigilante-policing-spreading-across-burkina-faso/> and <http://www.southworld.net/burkina-faso-the-koglleogos-rough-justice/>.

<sup>13</sup> Theroux-Benoni, L. (2016). *Mali's young 'jihadists' – fueled by faith or circumstance?* Dakar, Senegal: Institute of Security Studies.

<sup>14</sup> The Department of State: "Established in 2005, the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership as "a multifaceted, multi-year strategy implemented jointly by the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the Department of Defense to assist partners in West and North Africa increase their immediate and long-term capabilities to address terrorist threats and prevent the spread of violent extremism."

government officials in Chad, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, and Niger. (see complete references and list of stakeholder meetings held in annex 8)

## Conceptual backdrop

Bridge relies on the *push-pull-process* factors<sup>15</sup> model (visual model in Annex 2) of VE drivers, in which CVE interventions focus on addressing a variety of political, economic, or sociological drivers that either “push” or “pull” individuals towards extremism.

*Push factors* represent the grievances, strains, and frustrations of an individual because of chronic unmet needs, both material (e.g. unemployment, lack of justice, insecurity) and non-material (e.g. lack of identity, belonging, purpose or power). USAID’s publication, *Development Response to Violent Extremism* states that “[these] factors are important in creating the conditions that favor the rise or spread in appeal of violent extremism or insurgency.”<sup>16</sup>

*Pull factors* represent anything within an individual’s environment that offers potential satisfaction of those unmet needs, material or non-material. Pull factors can be classified as negative or positive depending on their influence over the outcome of an individual’s behavior, i.e. pro-social or anti-social. *Negative pull factors* represent all environmental influences that attract an individual towards VE or other anti-social, criminal behaviors. *Positive pull factors* represent all environmental influences that attract an individual towards normative, prosocial behaviors. Again, USAID defines these as factors “[that] are necessary for push factors to have a direct influence on individual -level radicalization and recruitment. Pull factors are associated with the personal rewards which membership in a group or movement, and participation in its activities, may confer.”<sup>17</sup>

*Process factors* represent the internal capacities and agency that individuals use to “process” information and make sense of their world and decide a path forward. Process factors, like pull factors, are classified as negative or positive based on how they influence an individual’s susceptibility to negative pull.

## Structural drivers of VE in the Sahel

The most common grievances in the Sahel that are driving individuals to join VE groups can be divided into three broad categories: **lack of economic opportunity, weak governance, and underlying psycho-social challenges.**

*Lack of economic opportunity and poor governance (push factors)*

Under economic push factors, the core grievances in the Sahel are unemployment and underemployment, diminishing returns on climate-dependent livelihoods, and increasing natural resource scarcity due to climate change, desertification, and population growth. Under weak governance-related push factors, some illustrative core grievances are lack of human security, unfair distribution of resources, marginalization, growing conflict over scarce natural resources, little access to justice, low respect for human rights by the state, lack of essential services, endemic corruption, and lack of voice and inclusion in decision-making, particularly for youth and women. Regarding psycho-social push factors (i.e. non-material unmet needs) in the Sahel, some examples include: rising anomie and identity uncertainty, rising legal

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<sup>15</sup> USAID (2011). *The Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency*. September 2011. USAID Policy, [https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/Pdacs400.pdf](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pdacs400.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

cynicism/weakened social bonds (leading to growth of incivility and criminal mindset), lack of hope and sense of agency, growing distrust and weakened social cohesion, and weak sense of belonging, purpose and meaning. These push factors are particularly heightened in the most remote and marginalized geographies of the Sahel where state investment and presence are low or virtually non-existent.

*State and society are failing to meet most basic citizen needs (lack of positive pull factors)*

The dominant takeaway here is that marginalized geographies of the Sahel have a dearth of *positive pull*. Often the only positive pull that exists in these zones is rooted in the human and social resiliencies derived from the culture, traditional values, and the influences of positive family members, friends, and mentors. These resiliencies offer some solace for the many unmet non-material needs identified, particularly among youth. There is a dearth of economic opportunities for youth; most perceive the government as corrupt and useless and many have lost hope in their society and are uncertain about their own future. Thus, with little positive pull outside of a few local resiliencies, many youths are susceptible to the negative pull offered by VE groups, criminal groups, prostitution, and other forms of delinquency. VE groups entice vulnerable youth by offering potential satisfaction of many of their unmet needs, both material and non-material, through negative pull.

The grievances associated with growing up in contexts where multidimensional poverty is high and far deeper than national averages, with the lived reality of unemployment and underemployment, render ‘economic factors’ a major source of frustration identified by those who joined violent extremist groups. This is a key dimension of individuals’ vulnerability to narratives that invite them to channel such grievances and associated desperation into the cause of extremism.<sup>18</sup>

Most youth in the Sahel that join VE groups do so for opportunistic rather than ideological reasons. The minority of youth who join for ideological reasons often have grievances against encroaching modernity, Western culture, man-made law and global Islamist grievances such as the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. *The most commonly cited reason for Sahelian youth joining VE groups is monetary incentive.*<sup>19</sup> Other incentives include the offer of material possessions (e.g. motorcycles), a chance to be able to afford marriage, support for family, non-material satisfaction relating to revenge against an unjust state, and the gaining of identity, purpose, belonging, empowerment, and a sense of meaning.

*Underlying psycho-social challenges of Sahelian youth (negative process factors)*

Cross-cutting research from CVE, social psychology, and criminology has identified individual level cognitive-emotional factors (i.e. process factors) that affect an individual’s susceptibility to negative pull offered by VEOs.<sup>20</sup> These capacities include five broad categories of “life skills”: 1) self-regulatory skills, 2) critical and complex thinking skills, 3) positivity and hopefulness, 4) moral development, prosocial values, and empathy, and 5) self-efficacy and growth mindset. These life skills are also known as “transferable skills”<sup>21</sup> since they reflect capacities that can help an individual in any aspect or phase of their life. Many of these skills are also considered as “soft skills” which enhance one’s success in finding a job, sustaining long-term employment and excelling in the workforce.

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<sup>18</sup> Journey to Extremism (2017) UNDP <http://journey-to-extremism.undp.org/content/downloads/UNDP-JourneyToExtremism-report-2017-english.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> See Enders & Hoover (2012) and (2016), Ojielo & Yahya et al. (2017).

<sup>20</sup> *Exploring the connections between poverty, lack of economic opportunity, and violent extremism in sub-Saharan Africa*. November 2017. USAID Center for Resilience.

<sup>21</sup> Transferable skills, or soft skills, include qualities or abilities that help you at work, but aren't technical to your vocation. Often, these skills help you stand out from peers in interviews and promotions when everyone has similar technical abilities. These skills are cross-cutting across all technical sectors and enhance an individual’s probability of making positive life decisions more generally.



Positive process factors among Sahelian youth are quite low as reflected in poor educational outcomes and rising delinquency. This is largely because of weak education systems and the weakening of traditional pro-social values.<sup>22</sup> Generally, the pedagogical methods utilized in public schools in the Sahel are rote and based on memorization and a banking model (i.e. accumulate facts and present them back to the teacher) and do not encourage student engagement and critical and creative thinking. Schools, if they exist, often suffer from teacher absenteeism, and children only go to school for an average of 1 to 3 years across the Sahel.<sup>23</sup> Significant investments in the education sector are needed for high quality, holistic education that in turn plays a central role in an individual's ability to succeed in the workforce and to make positive life decisions.

Quality education is holistic and prepares youth to make good life decisions. Holistic education includes formal, non-formal, and informal influences. Family, including parents and especially mothers, are primary in terms of instilling many of the most critical life skills mentioned above. Family, friends, and mentors can be a potential positive or negative influence on youth, depending on the nature of the influencer. Research indicates that families in the Sahel that are being increasingly stretched thin by multiple stressors, such as climate change, rising food prices, conflict, and poverty, have difficulty providing the positive psycho-social support they normally would, leaving youth to figure out life on their own, increasingly through the confusing influences of the internet and social media.<sup>24</sup>

For all the reasons mentioned, youth do not receive sufficient support and guidance to enable the critical thinking needed to make ethical, empathetic, and reasoned decisions. It is critical to teach them these skills so that they have the tools they need to develop into responsible citizens and conscientious workers. Therefore, reinforcing these life skills and other transferable skills will be critical.

### III. Relationship to host country and other donor programs

Bridge's project goals and development objectives fall squarely within each of the four governments' (Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, and Mauritania) development goals, and the project's development objectives will actively work to enhance the capacity of each government to achieve their goals of improving governance and enhancing economic opportunities. USAID is aware of the multitude of actors at the national and regional level (Sahel-wide) doing complementary and similar work on countering violent extremism, improving governance, and enhancing economic opportunities. Bridge will actively collaborate and coordinate with these entities in order to, where possible, add value, fill gaps, and scale up activities, and potentially bring them to new geographic areas in order to increase impact. This close coordination and cooperation will also allow Bridge to avoid costly and inefficient duplication of effort.

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<sup>22</sup> Bonnell, J. (2011). Teaching approaches that help to build resilience to extremism among young people. *UK Department of Education*; Rose, M. (2015). Immunizing the Mind. *British Council*.; de Bruin, W. B. et al. (2015). Individual Differences in Adult Decision-Making Competence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 92(5), 938-956.; USAID/WA Vulnerability and Resilience Assessment Initiative (VRAI)

<sup>23</sup> The average length of school enrolment for children in Chad is 1.5 years. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Sahel%20Info%20Sheet%20Jan%202016.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> The "family stress model" developed by Conger, McLoyd, Wallace, et al., shows how poverty and economic pressure affects the quality of interparental relationships, which in turn impacts child outcomes. Longitudinal evidence shows that poverty or economic pressure impacts on parents' mental health, which can cause interparental conflict and difficulties with parenting. These then negatively impact on child outcomes and their future life chances, including externalizing and internalizing problems, academic and physical health difficulties, and social and interpersonal relationship problems.

The project will work to layer, integrate, and sequence new and existing Bridge programming with other USAID-funded projects working on reducing vulnerability to recruitment by VEOs, good governance, increased economic opportunities, and humanitarian assistance in the same and neighboring geographic areas. This is particularly critical for activities programmed and managed by USAID/WA's Regional Peace and Governance Office (RPGO) and by other USAID offices as part of DO1 of the shared results framework. These activities are:

- Voices for Peace (V4P), which produces community radio programming on issues related to violent extremism, governance, and civic education;
- Partnerships for Peace (P4P), a capacity-building and networking effort that supports regional institutions, national governments, and civil society organizations to more effectively counter violent extremism in the Sahel region;
- PELA (Peace through Evaluation, Learning and Adapting), the analytical and research services activity;
- an Annual Program Statement (APS), which will pilot and test context-driven community cohesion methods particularly focused on Chad; and
- Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) interventions, which address root drivers of youth recruitment and empower local communities to deny the influence of VEOs.

Other existing activities in the region that are relevant for sequencing, layering, and coordination are:

- USAID/SRO's new activity in Burkina Faso, with the working title *Dialogue pour le Sahel*, which will build the capacity of local governments and community actors in that country's Sahel region to resolve conflict;
- Participatory, Responsive Governance – Principal Activity (PRG-PA), an activity in Niger that is improving participatory planning and citizen action to improve service delivery;
- USAID Sahel Human Voice in Governance (SHIGA) - works to promote accountability for government effectiveness through building demand-side coalitions in Niger;
- Burkina Faso Human Rights and Access to Justice activity, which builds capacity of state and non-state human rights institutions and strengthens the justice sector;
- USAID Yalwa - USAID Yalwa activity strengthens the capacities of farmers, producer organizations, agribusinesses and rural households in the Maradi, Tillabéri and Zinder regions of Niger to meet the growing demand for affordable, safe and nutritious food;.
- USAID Yidgiri - USAID Yidgiri's goal is to strengthen market systems to sustainably improve household incomes and nutritional status within target populations within and outside the Centre Nord, Est, and Sahel Regions in Burkina Faso;.
- KEO MT4D - Mobile Technology for Development is a Global Development Alliance designed to bring enhanced economic opportunity to low income families in Burkina Faso and Niger through the innovative use of smartphone technology via low-cost leasing and ownership of smartphones, training and public awareness content, and highly accurate local weather and market forecasts.
- Food for Peace (FFP) Development Food Security Activities (DFSA), which provide life-saving emergency food assistance and help build the resilience of chronically food insecure populations;
- OFDA programming, which provide life-saving humanitarian assistance; and
- Power Africa efforts, which work to develop the energy sector, including on and off-grid solar power.

New programming will need to be considered in conjunction with Bridge for layering, integrating, and sequencing. These activities are primarily part of the next generation of resilience efforts: PRG Government Accountability and Policy Reform (PRG-GAP) will work in Niger only and will promote effective

democratic governance by strengthening checks and balances; RISE II<sup>25</sup> activities may also be extended to work in the more stable areas where Bridge will also be working. In order to be successful, programming that strengthens governance and expands economic opportunity would therefore need to be tightly coordinated.

USAID will make efforts to layer, integrate, and sequence relevant programming from these various USAID activities to fill local needs identified around service provision, justice, and livelihoods. Finally, USAID and its partners will advocate for better-tailored government service provision based on community-identified needs and will coordinate closely with government entities and donors to ensure that USAID's programming is complementary, and that activities are reinforcing and non-duplicative.

## **Regional level actors**

The two most effective bodies at the regional level are the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the G5 Sahel. ECOWAS formally adopted a CVE strategy in 2013 which consists of three pillars: Prevent, Pursue, and Reconstruct. Bridge's programming falls squarely in the Prevent pillar, putting the program in line with ECOWAS' CVE strategy. USAID staff and Bridge implementing partners will present the program to ECOWAS CVE leadership and ECOWAS staff managing programs focusing on governance and economic development and will seek to coordinate efforts and share programmatic successes and lessons-learned.

The second regional body with which the program will coordinate is the G5 Sahel. Established in 2014, the G5 Sahel coordinates strategies and policies for both security and development in the five member countries: Chad, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. Its structure provides an institutional framework for coordination and monitoring of regional cooperation around relevant agendas, strategies, policies, and programming. The work of the G5 Sahel is organized into several pillars, with the Security and Development pillar, which embraces security issues (including counterterrorism), governance, and resilience, being the most relevant to Bridge. USAID's Partnerships for Peace activity is providing ongoing technical assistance to the G5 Sahel so its member state institutions can better understand and more effectively react to violent extremism, at both the regional level and the national level with a lessons-learned approach.

One further partner that could be considered is the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC). Established in May 1964 by the four countries that border Lake Chad: Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria, and Chad, the mandate of the LCBC is to sustainably and equitably manage Lake Chad and other shared water resources of the Lake Chad Basin, to preserve the ecosystems of the Lake Chad Conventional Basin, and to promote regional integration, peace, and security across the Basin. Recently, in close collaboration with the African Union Commission and GiZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit), the LCBC developed a new regional strategy for stabilization, recovery, and resilience.

## **National Actors**

### **Burkina Faso**

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<sup>25</sup> RISE 2 Goal: Chronically vulnerable populations in Burkina Faso and Niger, supported by resilient systems, effectively manage shocks and stresses and pursue sustainable pathways out of poverty

The Bridge project fits within the Government of Burkina Faso's (GoBF) National Economic and Social Development Plan (PNDES) which focuses on three pillars: economic governance, human capital development, and structural transformation of the economic and private sector development. In December 2016, donors pledged \$28.6 B to fund the PNDES.

The GoBF further established the Emergency Program for the Sahel (PUS) in 2017 to boost economic development and stem the growth of violent extremism in the country's Sahel region, comprising four northern provinces. The PUS's three objectives are: (1) improve access to basic social services and the resilience of populations, especially young people and women; (2) enhance the security of populations and their property; (3) improve administrative and local governance. To accomplish those larger goals, the PUS is working to improve agriculture and farming, improve transportation infrastructure, and provide youth and women with jobs in agriculture and cattle-raising, artisan activities, commerce, and the production of milk products such as yogurt and cheese. Many of the government's ministries are involved in the realization of the PUS's activities, which have included trainings for security forces in human rights, the building of infrastructure such as schools, and encouraging dialogue between the population and government. When implementing interventions in this region of Burkina Faso, the Bridge project should coordinate its activities with the PUS, the most relevant representative of the GoBF in the Sahel region, and strongly consider building the capacity of its staff. Bridge will likely collaborate with the second National Rural Sector Program (PNSR II) 2016-2020, a \$6.3 billion program with the objective of "ensuring food and nutritional security through the sustainable development of the agro-silvo-pastoral sectors, fisheries and wildlife, with a view to making them productive and resilient by 2020."<sup>26</sup>

## **Niger**

The Bridge project fits firmly within the Government of Niger's (GoN) strategic plans. The GoN's overarching strategic framework is the "Vision Niger 2035," which aims for "A united, democratic and modern, peaceful country, prosperous and proud of its cultural values, underpinned by sustainable development, ethical, equitable and balanced, in a cohesive and united Africa." Niger's Economic and Social Development Plan (PDES) 2017-2021 aims to improve governance, peace, and security and promote the transparency and efficiency of public institutions in order to improve public service delivery. PDES plans to involve donors in its institutional mechanism for implementation and monitoring and evaluation, supporting the development and implementation of sectoral and local planning benchmarks, as well as building institutional and operational capacity.

Like the PUS in Burkina Faso, the GoN has its own institution to confront the security and governance challenges in the parts of the country experiencing violent extremism, particularly the Tillabéri region. The High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace (HACP) was created in 1994 to deal with armed rebellions in the Agadez region and has been maintained as a body to manage conflict and promote peace and stability. Because this body has official remit for carrying out GoN policy on peace in Niger, it will be particularly important for the project to align programming in Niger with the HACP. In fact, USAID/WA's P4P is supporting a new secretariat in the HACP to coordinate donor, government, and civil society activities related to community security, social cohesion, and countering violent extremism. Bridge will support activities consistent with HACP plans.

In 2017 the GoN created a National Center for Strategic Studies (CNESS) within the President's cabinet. Its objectives include conducting prospective studies and assessments on security and strategic issues.

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.commodafrica.com/29-03-2018-au-burkina-faso-le-pnsr-ii-dun-cout-de-eu-55-milliards-presente-en-conseil-des-ministres>

USAID/WA's P4P is currently supporting a CNESS assessment of the impact of security measures on VE-affected regions and communities and is also funding Niger's CVE strategy development led by CNESS.

In addition to key line ministries, other critical GoN actors include the High Authority for Modernization of the State (HCME), Ministry of Justice, and Ministry of Interior. HCME is partnering with donors to develop mobile services and other innovative approaches to respond to citizen needs in rural and conflict zones. The Ministry of Justice is prioritizing access to justice and citizen knowledge of rights in conflict zones while the Ministry of Interior is responsible for decentralization and directs regionally and locally appointed officials.

## **Mauritania**

Despite its large land mass, Mauritania is the least populated of any of the four countries (and in the Sahel region) with an estimated population of only 4.54 million people. It also receives the least amount of development funding.<sup>27</sup> One of the most concerning VEO threats in Mauritania comes from its eastern border with Mali. Mauritania also hosts over 55,000 Malian refugees in the Mbera refugee camp, established in 2012.

The World Bank has invested \$370 million in aid to Mauritania, much of it going to job creation, the provision of technical assistance, and analytical work. The WB supports a regional program, Sahel Women's Economic Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEED), focused on youth empowerment and gender equality. The Bank is currently finalizing a \$30 million program for youth empowerment that covers the four strategic regions of Mauritania. Oxfam has worked to help the country develop a sustainability plan in the face of climate change. Save the Children and Action Contre la Faim have advocated for and are currently among the largest NGOs implementing food security, nutrition and protection programs. The European Union has had significant investments supporting prevention of violent extremism and youth employment including: the recently completed project on conflict prevention and intercultural dialogue as well as the current SAFIR initiative. ECHO, The Spanish Cooperation agency, Germany, Japan, and the U.S., with the UN are principal donors of Humanitarian Activities providing relief funding during recurrent droughts and to support the Mbera refugee camp.

## **Chad**

The Chadian Government has put forward a bold vision, entitled "The 2030 Vision: The Chad We Want", with the goal of making the country an emerging regional power by 2030, anchored on diversified sources of growth; sustainable, creative value-added jobs; and ensuring that every Chadian has adequate access to basic social services, decent housing, and adequate training. The country developed a first five-year development plan which focuses on the following pillars: (1) strengthening national unity; (2) strengthening good governance and the rule of law; (3) developing a strong and competitive economy and; (4) improving the quality of life of the Chadian population. The Bridge project fits within this strategic plan. Funding for Chad under the Bridge project is being programmed in the Lac region, which has suffered the double impact of VEO attacks and the negative economic impact resulting from the prolonged state of emergency.

Donor funding is committed in the areas of governance and economic inclusion, with a geographic focus in the Lake Chad area. The development problems, however, are nationwide. The United Nations

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<sup>27</sup> [www.aidflows.org](http://www.aidflows.org)

Development Program (UNDP) and the European Union are funding several projects in the Lake Chad area focusing on governance, stabilization, and skills training. France has recently announced funding that will contribute to job creation, and the World Bank is developing irrigation projects that will provide livelihoods assistance. Swiss Cooperation and the United Kingdom are also funding projects to prevent and counter violent extremism. Japan has funded livelihood assistance and, through the UNDP, the development of a national policy to prevent violent extremism.

## IV. Project Description and Technical Approach

### Operational Principles

Often the approach to programming can be just as critical to impact as what is done technically. This was one of the major lessons gleaned by SAREL<sup>28</sup> across the various RISE partners – “how” USAID does development (i.e. operating principles) can be just as important as “what” (i.e. technical interventions) USAID does. These principles should be central to how Bridge partners operate and should not remain dormant or under-prioritized. As in RISE II, potential implementing partners will be held to these principles through integrating them into the evaluation criteria for proposals.

1. **Leverage a systems approach:** Since the Sahel is a complex, multi-dimensional, and fluid operating environment, it will be critical to analyze and plan all interventions to understand the various components of the systems in which they will work, as well as how they interact, affect each other, and produce effects. Programming should always seek to approach elements in the system that can create positive catalytic effects that sustain and expand naturally after the life of the project.
2. **Strengthen and work through local systems:** Development practitioners are often outsiders that cannot fully appreciate the context and systems in which development problems exist, lacking the depth of knowledge about barriers to and opportunities for success that are second nature to local actors. Therefore, Bridge will apply a participatory approach to activity design during planning and throughout the life of the project to ensure the relevance and sustainability of the activities. Activities under Bridge will also remain open to modifying their approach based on lessons learned throughout implementation. Locally led programming is more context-relevant, tailored, and sustainable and empowers local stakeholders on their journey to self-reliance. The project will also work to reinforce and improve existing platforms and institutions rather than creating new ones.
3. **Maintain a flexible, iterative approach that embraces CLA:** Bridge must remain flexible and be ready to adapt to changes on the ground due to the volatile and dynamic nature of the operating environment, particularly in areas that show signs of potentially shifting rapidly. This will require the robust integration of USAID’s collaboration, learning, and adapting (CLA) principles throughout planning and implementation, and activity-level contingency planning to prepare for rapid deterioration of the operating environment.
4. **Promote institutional entrepreneurship:** In order for ineffective institutions to evolve, change, and develop, they must bring in fresh perspectives. The concept is to stimulate change from within by incorporating outliers at the periphery with new ideas that can enhance institutional functionality.

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<sup>28</sup> The Sahel Resilience Learning activity

Among other ways, this can happen by bringing youth, women, and other non-traditional partners into institutions and allowing them to participate in institutional processes.<sup>29</sup>

5. **Leverage public-private partnerships where possible:** Many private sector firms want to pursue social responsibility and could be development partners. The private sector brings resources, skills, and capacities to the table that can augment the impact of USAID interventions when strategically aligned.
6. **Harness innovation:** Innovation can come in different forms, including critical technological innovations, and new creative approaches for piloting and testing activity effectiveness. Bridge should innovate and learn from new models where possible. Bridge should also encourage and seek out positive deviance and innovation from the communities themselves as community problem-solving will be key to self-reliance.

## Bridge Project Goal and Expected Outcomes

The overarching shared goal of the Bridge Project is: **Vulnerability to violent extremism reduced in the Sahel.** Bridge activities will complement those of USAID/WA's NEW-CVE project by taking a development approach to addressing vulnerability to VE. While activities will not focus on what is traditionally understood to be "CVE" interventions, because the objectives contribute to higher-level CVE goals by addressing underlying development-based drivers of VE, the project and activities thereunder are considered to be CVE. USAID will measure impacts on the Bridge beneficiaries to determine how the project is contributing to the overall goal. The illustrative indicators below are for the five-year Bridge project:

### Short term (2-year time period)

- Number of youth at risk of violence trained in social or leadership skills through USG assisted programs (standard indicator)
- # of youth trained with workforce relevant skills
- % of population who feel they understand their legal rights
- # of people benefitting from cash for work opportunities
- # of people who have received livelihood support with USG assistance
- # of people who have gained access to formal legal services with USG assistance.
- Percentage of female participants in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources (assets, credit, income or employment)
- Percentage of participants in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources who are youth
- # of new firms operating
- Amount of new financing extended to youth or businesses hiring youth
- # of full-time job equivalent positions created as a result of USG programs

### Long term (5-year time period)

- Depth of poverty (shared with RISE II)
- Perceived reduction in tensions within and across communities (shared with NEW-CVE)
- Number of incidents related to intra- and inter-communal tensions
- Percentage of people who report satisfaction with government services at the local level

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<sup>29</sup> The *Overseas Development Institute* and others have outlined a methodology titled "problem driven iterative adaptation" as one way to achieve these results. This is also an area of overlap with RISE II's governance approach. <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8409.pdf>

- Perception of relative economic opportunity (ex. % of youth who feel employment opportunities are improving)
- Percentage of youth who feel that violence is sometimes necessary to bring about desired changes
- Number of full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs created with USG assistance (EG 3.9)

Whenever possible, all indicators should be disaggregated by gender and age (to identify youth), and country. These indicators along with others will be reviewed during activity design to identify the best measures for capturing project results.

Furthermore, assessment of the project and underlying activities should use qualitative assessment approaches and tools in order to capture systemic change and facilitate understanding of how outcomes are linked to inputs given the challenges of implementation in a complex operating environment. Examples of tools in this vein are Most Significant Change and Outcome Harvesting.

## Theories of Change (TOC)

### Development Objective 1: Legitimacy of Violent Extremist Organizations and Ideology Weakened

The Bridge Project is focused on two development objectives under the results framework it shares with USAID West Africa in Accra, Ghana. Both DO2 and DO3 are necessary but not sufficient to reach the goal of *vulnerability to violent extremism reduced in the Sahel*. NEW-CVE's work supporting DO1 complements Bridge, creating a more holistic impact. See the entire results framework on page 18.

### Development Objective 2 (DO2): Government Legitimacy Enhanced

#### Rationale

Government responses to VE threats, either heavy-handed security operations that result in human rights violations, or a lack of response altogether, often further exacerbate local grievances. States not addressing fundamental citizen governance needs including respecting basic rights and local conflict management, constitute core grievances that can lead to both active and passive support for VEOs in the Sahel. This often leads to citizen alienation from their government and is an underlying driver of vulnerability to recruitment into VEOs. When youth become disillusioned with the state, they will be more open to alternatives, including those offered by VEOs. Therefore, it is critical to improve government responsiveness to citizens in the Sahel.

#### Development Hypothesis

IF citizens and their government effectively dialogue through media, civil society, and platforms for direct engagement, and

IF state institutions are more responsive to the needs of citizens, and

IF conflict is mitigated through the provision of functional traditional and formal mechanisms of justice, and IF citizens are more aware of their rights, and

IF state organs demonstrate respect and support for human rights,

THEN government legitimacy will be enhanced in the eyes of citizens.

#### DO2 Assumptions

- The partner governments show political will: shift resources to priority needs, commit to increased transparency, allow human rights organizations to operate,
- Other donors and USG agencies are working with the military on human rights,



- Department of State encourages respect for the rule of law through diplomatic engagement with host governments

## DO-level and IR-level theories of change

### *DO2-level*

Citizen alienation and perceived lack of agency has been shown to lead to grievances through parallel means, including by joining VEOs. When youth become disenchanting with the state, stemming from poor or inequitable service delivery, political marginalization, or lack of access to justice, among other wrongs, it can lead to legal cynicism, anti-establishment sentiments, and the flouting of societal laws, rules and norms leading to a rise in criminality, incivility, and violent extremism—essentially what we are seeing across the Sahel today. This objective seeks to strengthen the credibility and capability of state bodies in the eyes of citizens in order to reduce discontent and frustration within groups vulnerable to recruitment by VEOs. This can be achieved by improving communication and collaboration between citizens via policy formulation and accountability loops; greater provision of key targeted services, including justice sector services, that help marginalized populations access legal redress and conflict resolution; and greater respect for human rights by the state.

### *Intermediate result (IR-level)*

IR 2.1 Citizen-Government Dialogue Strengthened: Lack of voice and the resulting frustrations around agency are core grievances that can lead people to seek alternative forms of governance and justice outside the state, including VEOs. Therefore, this IR focuses on giving people a voice by improving communication between citizens and representatives of state institutions, including the security sector, at the local, regional, and national level. This could take the form of direct interactions or through third parties such as the media. The underlying logic here is that, to the extent that people feel the government is increasingly listening to them (individually and in the aggregate), sharing information with them and taking their needs and desires into consideration when formulating policy, they will feel that they have a greater voice and control over their destiny. Bridge will consider practical activities such as participatory planning and budget support that link IR2.1 and IR2.2 to strengthen local systems. Bridge must incorporate collaborative approaches that leverage governance resources from other USAID activities. Activities may also include civic education elements that strengthen citizen values and reduce the likelihood that closer citizen engagement with corrupt or politicized systems increases core grievances.

IR 2.2 Government Response to Priority Needs Increased/Improved: Studies have found that the state's inability to provide basic human security was a key driver of youth being recruited into extremist groups in northern Mali. Thus, IR2.2 focuses on the extent to which the government responds to the identified needs of citizens. Whereas IR2.1 speaks to the quality and quantity of the state's engagement with citizens, this IR speaks to the level to which authorities follow through on the dialogue, including promulgating fair and inclusive public policy and delivering services. Communities need strengthened strategic linkages to state and other actors that can provide necessary services. Creative ways to connect marginalized populations to needed services will be explored under this IR.

IR 2.3 Access to Justice for All Improved: All citizens should be able to access the formal justice system for adjudication of disputes. Citizens must view it as unbiased and reasonably efficient. Also, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, which are used by the vast majority in rural areas, should be strengthened as a key means of solving conflict over land, natural resources, or opportunity. This can mitigate anti-establishment sentiments and the lure of VEOs as a way to acquire justice, vindication or vengeance, or access to desired resources. Citizens will learn about and better understand their legal rights and civic responsibilities through awareness raising communications tools and the enhanced availability and

utilization of legal services. Access to formal legal services, particularly through paralegals and mobile legal services, will enable citizens to have advocates with legal expertise to act on their behalf.

IR 2.4 Government Support for Human Rights demonstrated: Many youths who join VEOs in the Sahel cite human rights abuses of a family member, friend, or themselves by military forces during counter-terrorism operations as the main reason why they joined. In order to garner the respect and trust of citizens in conflict/VE prone areas and mitigate disillusionment that might lead to vulnerability to VE recruitment, the state must in principle and practice adhere to international human rights standards. This includes proactively addressing human rights violations and respecting citizens' right to due process. Achieving this result will require both public sector policy reforms and citizens actively holding the state accountable. Bridge will accomplish this by enhancing the capacity of local rights organizations to monitor, investigate, and publicize investigations of human rights violations.

Bridge must also make citizens in these conflict/VE prone areas aware of their human rights. While it is critical that the civilian state institutions respect human rights, it is not enough. The military and other security sector institutions, as the most visible representatives of the state in the Sahel, must also internalize and respect human rights norms and respect the rights of all marginalized groups (e.g. Fulani), particularly during counter-terrorism operations. NEW-CVE and the Department of Defense's Office of Security Cooperation (OSC) are both working in this space and provide areas for learning and modelling, as well as an opportunity for collaboration.

### **Development Objective 3 (DO3): Economic Opportunities Enhanced in Target Regions**

#### Rationale

Unemployment and underemployment are a huge challenge across the Sahel that the international donor community and governments acknowledge. In addition to a dearth of employment opportunities, conflict and instability have disrupted many livelihoods in vulnerable zones. Youth in those geographies cite a lack of economic opportunities and the offer of financial incentives as the most common reasons that youth join violent extremist groups. In order to mitigate this risk, youth must be able to begin earning an income in both the short-term and the longer term. It is critical that Bridge help vulnerable youth to develop the human capital required to be prepared for expanded economic opportunities (those beyond farming and/or herding) through the development of both technical skills as demanded by the market, and transferable skills that provide a foundation for healthy and successful work life. Technical skills allow access and preparation for specific jobs; transferable skills support finding and retaining work and succeeding in the workforce and life more generally. The emphasis on transferable skills development will promote sustainability more than vocational training alone and will help youth to avoid frustrations that can result from unmet expectations. Interventions that build aspirations will also encourage parents to invest in youth education and will assist in developing a mindset oriented to productive employment.

#### Development Hypothesis

IF at-risk communities have immediate economic support, and  
IF economic resilience is increased in affected communities, and  
IF there is increased job creation and investment, and  
IF the youth have stronger transferable skills (e.g. life skills, functional literacy, and business skills)  
THEN economic opportunities will be enhanced in target regions.

#### DO3 Assumptions

- Improved security to attract investment and business development
- financial institutions are willing to make loans more accessible at more flexible conditions
- employed youth are seen as models to younger generations

## DO-level and IR-level theories of change

### *DO3-level TOC*

Insecurity has a deleterious effect on local economies and often disrupts traditional livelihoods and trade routes. Under these desperate circumstances, some youth may seek financial incentives offered by violent extremist groups. DO3 seeks to facilitate the growth of economic opportunities in targeted regions in the “warm” zones identified under Bridge’s zone of intervention. This activity seeks to address the lack of economic opportunities faced by youth and women in the Sahel through the provision of short-term, medium-term, and longer-term economic opportunities, combined with relevant training in and financing for opportunities that could benefit the area but do not currently exist due to the lack of human capacity. Short-term income generating opportunities will be strategically chosen to facilitate and link to longer-term opportunities. For example, a short-term opportunity could be rehabilitating land that will then be used by women for vegetable gardening. Bridge will also teach DO3 beneficiaries transferable skills to ensure that they not only find and retain economic opportunities in the future, but that they will have the skills to make ethical, reasoned decisions and life choices.

### *Intermediate result (IR-level) TOCs*

IR 3.1 Immediate Economic Stabilization: Most people living in marginalized areas of the Sahel are already living in extreme poverty and vulnerability. When that vulnerability is compounded by violent conflict and insecurity, the economic situation becomes desperate and perverse incentives can drive people deeply into the illicit economy and in turn into support for VEOs. These vulnerable communities must be targeted for immediate, short-term, and medium-term income-generating opportunities and/or support to reestablish livelihoods that were negatively impacted by insecurity or extreme security restrictions instituted by security forces. Bridge will consider deploying mobile services to target beneficiaries that are difficult to reach for security reasons or otherwise. Bridge will also consider the needs of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees, either by including them in short-term livelihood opportunities, or by coordinating with humanitarian assistance activities that serve IDPs and refugees.

IR 3.2 Increased Economic Resilience in Affected Communities: In areas conducive for the programming, Bridge will provide economic resilience-building activities. In this setting, USAID defines these as activities that diversify the economy beyond traditional farming and herding. Economic resilience can potentially work in more traditional sectors to strengthen traditional smallholder production and value-addition from crops, aquaculture, and animals. These represent low climate-risk opportunities and appropriate options for rural women. However, many Sahelian youth see traditional climate-dependent livelihoods (i.e. farming and pastoralism) in the dry-lands as poverty traps, and exposure to the world through the internet and social media has extended their dreams and aspirations far beyond the farm. Therefore, livelihood opportunities for youth need to lean more toward off-farm and even non-farm.<sup>30</sup> Since savings are critical to an individual’s resilience and their ability to invest in more productive assets, Bridge will support savings strategies, including village savings and loan associations (for women and men) and mobile money options. Saving schemes and loans can help stimulate the local rural economies and should be explored as part of this intermediate result. However, as rural debt is on the rise in the Sahel, it is critical that partners make every effort to *do no harm* when designing and implementing interventions to address these issues.

IR 3.3 Increased Job Creation and Investment: The project should implement catalytic approaches to job creation and strategic investments that can spawn job opportunities for all segments of the population.

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<sup>30</sup> Off-farm are income generating activities that farmers do during off-season. Non-farm refers to all non-agriculture and non-pastoral activities. These non-farm livelihoods are also referred to as low-climate risk livelihoods and include: blacksmithing, carpentry, sewing, moto repair, brick-laying, IT work, etc. These activities are indirectly connected to the agriculture sector.

Given the low human capital and a dearth of resources in rural areas, Bridge should draw on the evidence base to identify and target populations in geostrategically selected secondary cities or towns to grow “hubs of opportunity.” Often, human capital is higher in secondary cities and towns that serve as critical crossroads of opportunity attracting nearby villagers to their markets. Migrants often seek their first opportunities in secondary cities rather than taking the costly and often distant journey to capital cities. Additionally, many migrants are seasonal, travelling to secondary cities during the off-season and then returning to their villages during the planting season. Importantly, migrants also send remittances back to their families in the villages, thus strengthening rural-urban economic linkages and resilience. Bridge will design public-private partnerships to support job creation and will consider co-investing with the USAID Trade Hub in its West Africa Regional Mission, which has similar goals in the region.

IR3.4 Strengthened Transferable Skills (cross-cutting with DO2): Emerging research has demonstrated that personal initiative training is much more effective for micro-entrepreneurs than standard business training<sup>31</sup>. This psychology-based entrepreneurship training, which focuses on teaching the habits of successful entrepreneurs, such as proactivity and an orientation towards the future, has been shown to increase firm profits by up to 30%, compared to no significant impacts from traditional business skills training, such as record-keeping and marketing. The Bridge project will focus on leveraging psychological influences when building the entrepreneurship capacity of youth and other beneficiaries. The project will also seek to provide soft/transferable skills training to youth. Many of these transferable skills can also reduce youth susceptibility to the negative pull of VE and trainings would focus on critical thinking skills in identified vulnerable youth at high-risk of recruitment to VEOs (i.e. street vendors, migrants, delinquents). A lack of strong critical thinking skills often leads to poor life decisions. Research has shown a significant positive correlation with strong critical thinking skills and positive life decisions away from anti-social behaviors and decisions that can have negative consequences upon an individual’s life and the life of others.<sup>32</sup> Critical thinking skills can help to prevent vulnerable youth from making bad choices (i.e. drugs, crime, and extremism) by understanding and thinking logically through the consequences of their potential decisions, particularly over the longer term. Critical thinking can also reduce gullibility and susceptibility to simplistic black and white thinking, conspiracy theories, hasty generalizations and rhetoric with identifiable logical fallacies.<sup>33</sup> These critical thinking skills would be integral to the broader psychology-based entrepreneur training focusing on transferable skills.

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<sup>31</sup><http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/635311516194319062/Personal-initiative-training-leads-to-remarkable-growth-of-women-owned-small-businesses-in-Togo>.

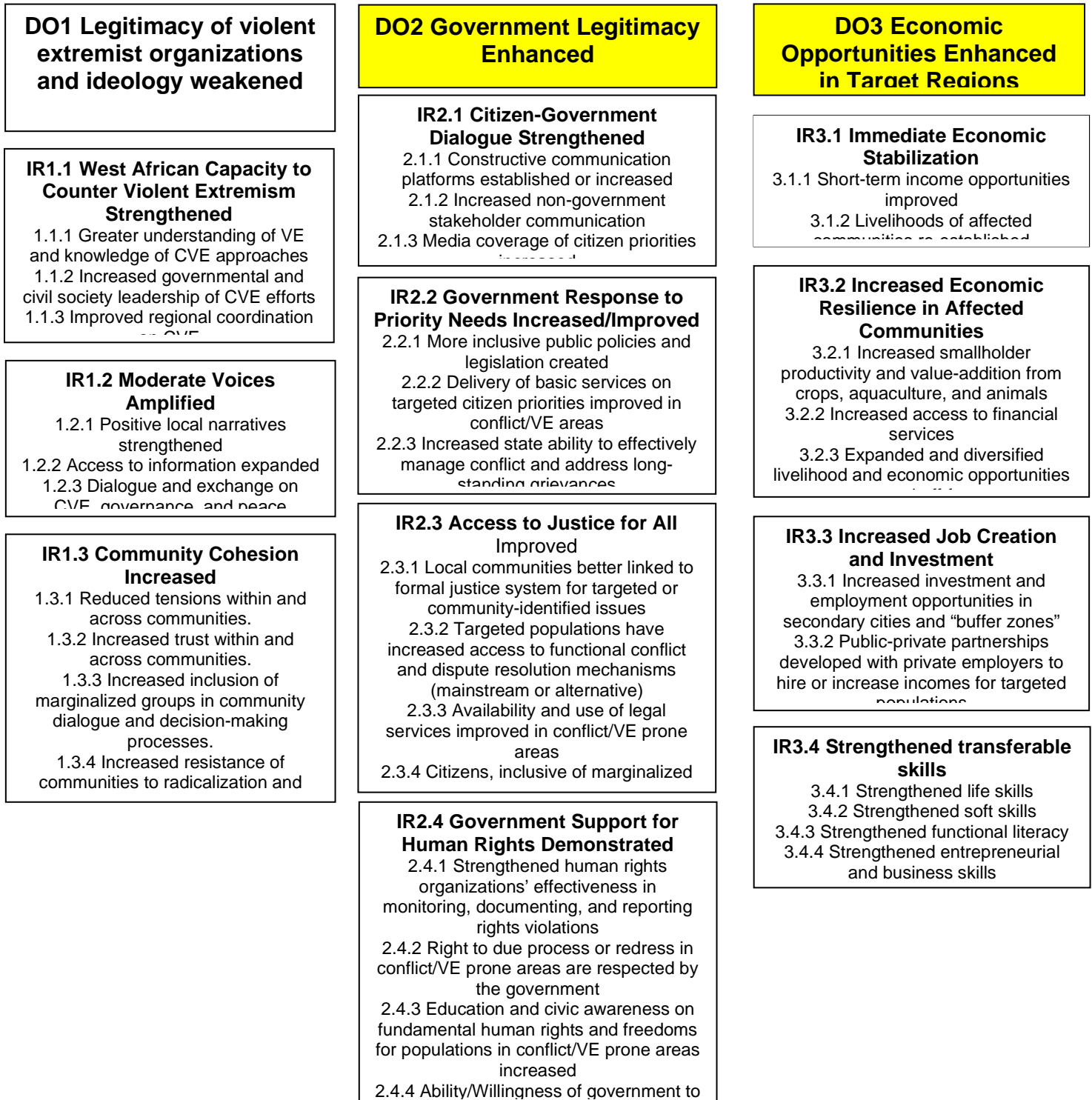
<sup>32</sup> de Bruin, W. B. et al. (2015). Individual Differences in Adult Decision-Making Competence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 92(5), 938-956; Franco, A. & da Silva Almeida, L. (2015). Real-World Outcomes and Critical Thinking: Differential Analysis by Academic Major and Gender. *Paideia*, 25(61), 173-181.

<sup>33</sup> Rose, M. (2015). Immunizing the Mind. *British Council*; Bonnell, J. (2011). Teaching approaches that help to build resilience to extremism among young people. *UK Department of Education*; Abu Dhabi Memorandum on Good Practices for Education and Countering Violent Extremism (2014). Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF).

# Results Framework

## Bridge & NEW-CVE Shared Results Framework

Goal: Vulnerability to Violent Extremism Reduced in the Sahel (*Bridge DOs in Yellow*)



## Geographic Zone of Intervention

While, overall, Bridge activities will be largely programmed in so-called “warm” areas (geographies which are adjacent to “hot” areas and where the security environment will allow flexible, dynamic, longer-term programming) of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mauritania, and Niger, targeting of programming under this project will not be strictly confined to “warm” areas. Identified focus areas have varying levels of security, which can degrade or improve over time. In addition, some current activities that contribute to IRs and Objectives of Bridge are already operating in areas considered to be “hot.” Given both the dynamic nature of the VE threat in the Sahel and the non-contiguous nature of the geography, Bridge partners will need to define criteria for targeting specific localities based on the security and broad level of need/CVE vulnerability. Bridge activities will promote geographic focus and aggressive coordination and layering with other USAID and donor interventions. This is consistent with one of the core lessons from RISE: that spreading interventions thinly across a vast geographic area is difficult and costly to program and will have limited measurable impact.<sup>34</sup>

Because the RISE II project has the flexibility to shift or expand programming into some areas shared by the Bridge Project, collaborative opportunities to layer, integrate, and sequence should be sought in the event this occurs.

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<sup>34</sup> This lesson came from qualitative key informant interviews done by SAREL in 2018 with key REGIS-ER and AG staff as part of SAREL’s research into key CLA lessons learned over the life of RISE I.