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Supporting Families and Creating Economic Opportunity in Mali

Sangha Project – Final Report

October 2025



Thank you for standing with families in Mali through exceptionally hard times.

Conflict, displacement, climate shocks, and rising prices have pushed more than 1.7 million people toward crisis-level food insecurity—hitting Sangha commune in the Bandiagara region especially hard during the lean season between harvests. With your leadership, CARE delivered urgent help and built the foundations for lasting stability and economic opportunity—so women, young people, and families can weather shocks and establish a more secure future for their communities.

Our approach recognized that there isn't a single fix. Families need immediate support to get through the lean season and practical pathways to save, earn, and meet basic needs. That is why we combined cash and food assistance, savings groups, youth employment through cash-for-work, dam and reservoir rehabilitation, and targeted support for women farmers—delivered in close coordination with local leaders and traders to ensure local ownership.



 28,806 people received cash assistance	 ~2,000 people received nutritional support	 5,900 people received food vouchers
 1,400 youth received cash-for-work	 1,888 VSLA members collectively saving more than \$16,550	 400 women received seeds and training

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

Here is a summary of what we accomplished together:

- **Protected thousands of families from crisis-level hunger.** We provided cash support to 4,801 households in the Sangha commune, allowing them to purchase food and essentials during the lean season. An additional 986 of the most at-risk families received food vouchers to ensure their stability.
- **Empowered women to build economic independence and community resilience.** We established 28 new community savings groups (Village Savings and Loan Associations), bringing the total to 70. Nearly 1,900 members—mostly women—are saving, borrowing, and investing in small businesses, creating stable incomes for their families.
- **Created economic opportunity for youth while restoring vital community infrastructure.** Through a cash-for-work program, more than 1,400 young people, 40% of whom were young women, earned incomes by rehabilitating seven community reservoirs. These reservoirs now provide reliable water for farming and household use across the region.
- **Boosted food security and income for women farmers.** We equipped over 400 women, who are the providers for their families, with drought-resistant seeds and training in crop storage. This enabled them to increase their yields, improve their families' nutrition, and generate more stable household income.
- **Strengthened the entire community ecosystem, from local markets to social cohesion.** By delivering vouchers that could be redeemed at local shops, the project revitalized village economies. Community-led work projects and savings groups helped build trust and unity among neighbors, making villages more resilient to future crises.



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AN ECOSYSTEM OF CHANGE

Our approach is grounded in a core principle: lasting change occurs when immediate needs are met, and communities have the agency to build their own futures. Your partnership brought this principle to life in Sangha, encouraging sustainable community-driven progress.



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Laying the Foundation: Meeting Urgent Needs

Lasting change begins with stability. Your support provided this critical foundation, allowing families to move beyond daily survival and begin planning for the future. By delivering aid with dignity and choice, we ensured families could meet their most pressing needs while strengthening local markets.

Cash Transfers

Cash assistance was chosen as the primary mechanism to meet basic needs because it is the most efficient, dignified, and adaptable form of aid in Mali. In areas like Sangha—where market systems remain functional despite insecurity—direct cash transfers enable families to decide for themselves what they need most, while stimulating local economies. The approach lowers delivery costs, increases speed and transparency, and aligns with CARE's

evidence showing that predictable, unrestricted cash not only stabilizes households but also lays the groundwork for recovery.

By safeguarding purchasing power during the lean season, cash assistance became the anchor of the wider program—allowing other components such as savings groups, youth employment, and women's agricultural support to take root.

We delivered cash to 4,801 of the most at-risk families—most headed by women—benefiting nearly 29,000 people. The transfers, delivered with in-person physical cash and secure electronic transfers via partner WAVE, allowed families to meet urgent needs. They also helped women join savings groups and revitalized village economies as cash circulated in local markets.

Food Transfers

Food vouchers were introduced as a complementary tool to improve nutrition and preserve family assets during the peak of the lean season, when cash alone could not guarantee food availability. In Sangha, voucher transfers ensured that families could access staple foods even as prices rose, and market supply fluctuated, while still reinforcing local economies by channeling funds through community traders rather than external supply chains. The approach balanced flexibility with targeted nutritional outcomes—giving families purchasing power, but within a controlled network of vetted vendors to ensure quality and fairness.

It also protected households from resorting to selling livestock or taking on debt, helping them maintain the foundation for recovery. Together with cash assistance, food vouchers provided an essential bridge between harvests and kept the broader market system functioning under stress.

“We are deeply grateful to the donors. Your support brought joy and dignity to our community.”

Natoin Poudiugo, 61, a mother of six from Diamini-nah, said the Sangha project’s food vouchers were unlike any previous aid. “Before, projects gave us food we didn’t always want or need. This time, we had the choice to buy what our families needed most,” she explained. Being able to shop locally lowered cereal prices, strengthened traders, and brought hope during the lean season.

From June to September 2025, the peak of the lean season, 986 families received three months of food vouchers. These could be redeemed at local shops for essentials like rice, oil, and millet.

This support not only reduced hunger but also allowed families to focus on farming and other initiatives instead of exhausting coping strategies.



Building the Future: Pathways to Lasting Opportunity and Resilience

With their basic needs met, families had a stable foundation on which to build long-term resilience. The project created interconnected pathways for women, farmers, and youth to develop skills, access resources, and take leadership roles in shaping a more secure future for their communities.

Community Savings Groups

CARE established savings groups (Village Savings and Loan Associations) to convert short-term support into lasting financial security. Once households had met their basic needs through cash and food assistance, these groups provided a locally owned platform for savings and credit—essential in areas where formal banking systems are absent or inaccessible. VSLAs enable members, especially women, to pool resources, make small loans, and invest in income-generating activities that strengthen both household finances and local markets.

Beyond financial access, they also foster collective decision-making and leadership, giving women greater influence in community life and a stronger voice in recovery planning. This model—proven across CARE’s programs globally—creates a durable safety net that endures long after external aid ends, reinforcing the self-reliance and cohesion at the heart of Sangha’s recovery.

Yenagou Dolo, a 63-year-old widow raising six grandchildren in Ogolda, once struggled to feed her family through small trading. Cash transfers from the project helped her cover essentials and expand her business, while VSLAs gave her and other women the chance to save and access small loans.

She says this support has been a lifeline.

The project formed 28 new groups, bringing the total to 70, with 1,888 members—the majority women. Members have collectively saved more than \$16,550 and are using loans to start businesses, pay for school fees, and purchase farming supplies.





Dam Rehabilitation & Cash-for-Work

Dam rehabilitation and the cash-for-work scheme addressed two intersecting challenges—unemployment among youth and the deterioration of vital water infrastructure. In Sangha, where erratic rainfall and damaged reservoirs limit agricultural production, restoring the Ankodjo dam and local catchments was essential to reviving the local farming economy and food security.

Engaging young people in this work provided immediate income and practical experience, while also strengthening their connection to community development. The cash-for-work model injected liquidity into the local economy and reduced the need for seasonal migration. Once completed, the rehabilitated and desilted reservoirs and dam now supply reliable water for gardening and livestock, extending the growing season and enabling women's groups and smallholder farmers to diversify crops and earn a stable income.

The project created jobs for 1,400 young people, who were paid for cleaning and desilting seven reservoirs. The full rehabilitation of the Ankodjo dam was completed in July 2025. These restored water sources are now vital for the community, enabling families to grow vegetables like onions, tomatoes, and cabbage for both food and to be sold at market.

Agriculture and Women Farmers

In Sangha, women often manage small plots that sustain their families but face limited access to quality seed, tools, and agricultural training. By providing drought-tolerant seed varieties, post-harvest storage techniques, and links to agricultural extension services, the program helped women increase yields and reduce losses in an increasingly unpredictable climate.

These gains translate directly into more stable household income and improved diets for children, while also strengthening women's economic position within their communities. Over time, this approach not only boosts production but shifts local norms—demonstrating that empowering women farmers is among the most effective ways to build resilience and reduce rural poverty.

Through this project, more than 400 women received drought-resistant seeds and training in modern crop storage methods. This support reduced their reliance on traders and improved household diets. The restored water sources from the dam rehabilitation feed the fields where these women plant their crops, linking infrastructure improvements directly to family nutrition and income.



Lessons Learned & Sustainability: Change that Lasts

With their basic needs met, families had a stable foundation on which to build long-term resilience. The project created interconnected pathways for women, farmers, and youth to develop skills, access resources, and take leadership roles in shaping a more secure future for their communities.

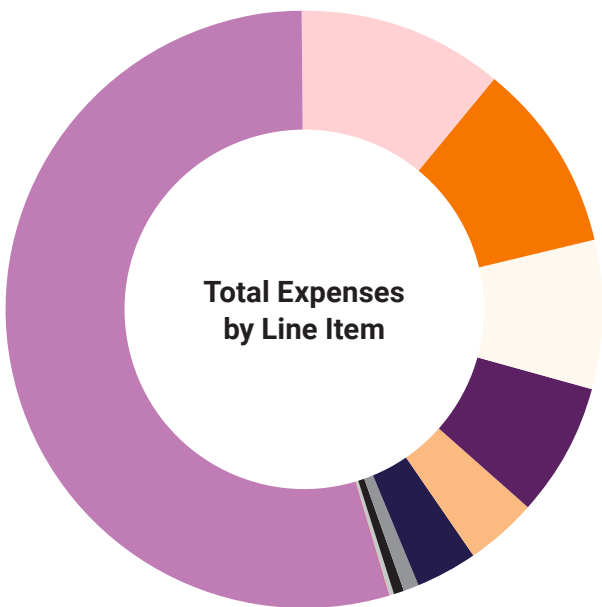
Your partnership helped demonstrate that flexible, transparent, and community-led approaches are essential for lasting impact. Your investment helped drive innovation in one of the world's most challenging regions, yielding powerful insights that are shaping CARE's work. Here's how we are applying these insights and ensuring the project's long-term impact:

- **An ecosystem approach with compounding returns.** We demonstrated that holistic models that combine immediate relief with long-term economic development can deliver outsize impact. By combining immediate cash and food with long-term initiatives like VSLAs, agricultural training, and infrastructure projects, we helped create stronger, more resilient communities. The stability from meeting basic needs provided the foundation for families to build lasting self-sufficiency.
- **Community ownership powers sustainability.** Local ownership is the engine of sustainable change. Women are critical drivers of recovery, leading the way as VSLA members and farmers. By establishing transparent feedback committees and working through village assemblies and local authorities, we built the trust and accountability necessary for long-term success.
- **Adaptation and innovation in complex environments.** We successfully navigated significant challenges, including seasonal flooding that delayed dam rehabilitation and security challenges that limited access to some areas. These experiences provide valuable lessons that strengthen our approach across Mali.
- **Strengthening social cohesion.** The project operated in an area of significant inter-ethnic tensions, which had been exacerbated by the jihadist conflict and had fractured community relations and trade. CARE's impartial and inclusive approach—using joint planning activities and ensuring equitable resource distribution—successfully brought previously divided communities together. This has been instrumental in easing tensions, rebuilding social ties, and reviving local commercial exchange, a critical factor for the project's success and lasting sustainability.
- **Planning for the long-term.** CARE is working with local authorities, producer groups, and government services to institutionalize the project's achievements so that its benefits continue for communities in Sangha. A planned follow-on phase will build on this success by:
 - » **Equipping farmers** to turn subsistence farming into thriving sources of income through improved crop production and marketing.
 - » **Developing women and youth** into entrepreneurs with the skills to start and grow small businesses.
 - » **Connecting local producers** with suppliers and buyers to build lasting market linkages that ensure progress continues.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

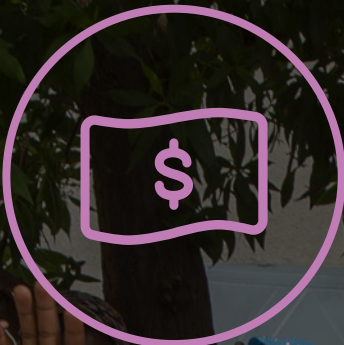
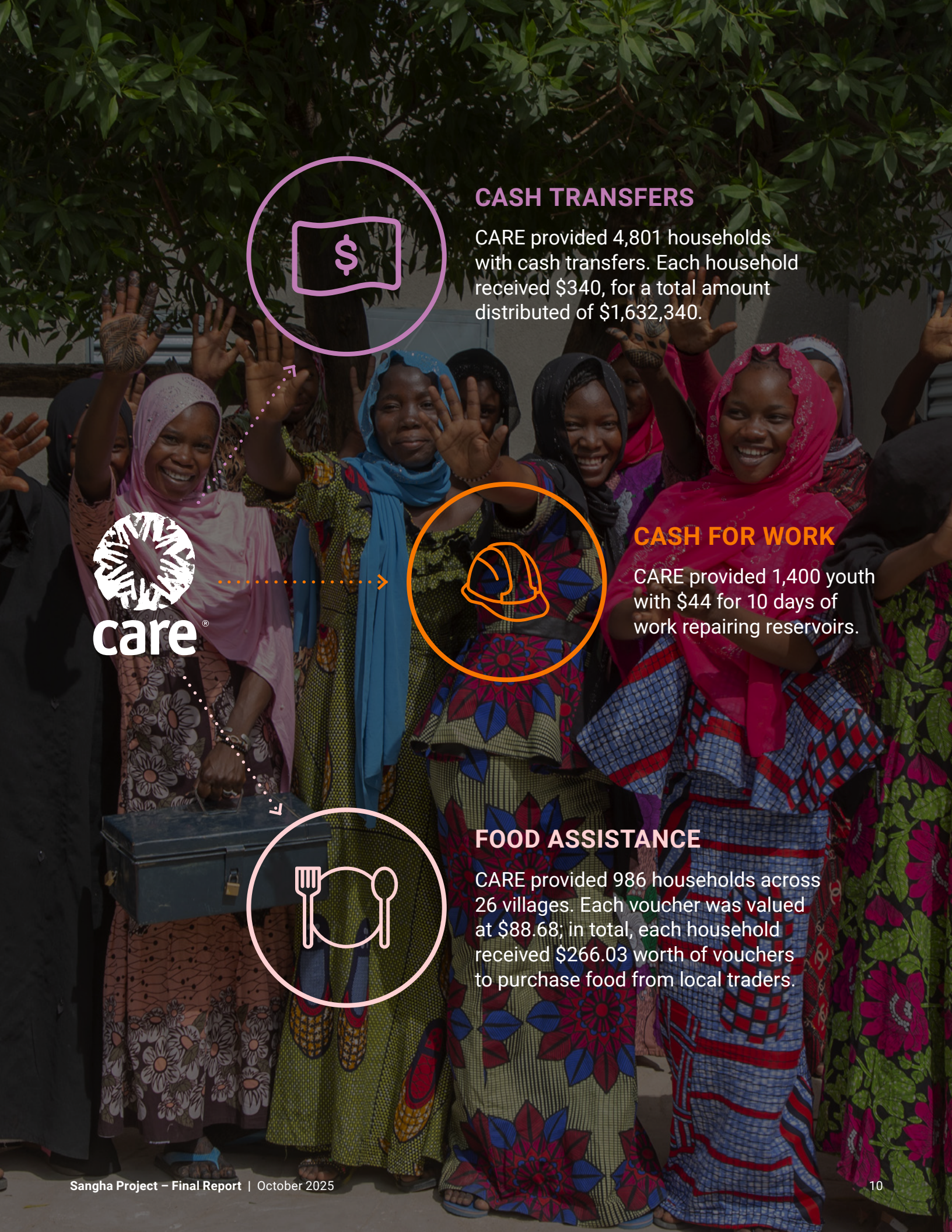
Expenditures to date against the project’s original budget are shown in the table below.

Line Item	Original Budget (USD)	Total Expenses (USD) May 1, 2024 – Sep 30, 2025	Balance (USD)	Spend Rate
Cash assistance	1,651,718	1,699,212	-47,493	103%
Indirect cost recovery	390,000	344,311	45,689	88%
Food assistance	318,677	318,677	-	100%
Local project office costs	229,422	244,787	-15,365	107%
Personnel	405,236	226,019	179,217	56%
Nutrition, facilitation, skills training support	123,657	123,657	-	100%
Dam desilting (rehabilitation)	258,704	98,687	160,016	38%
Logistical support costs	38,805	26,906	11,899	69%
Travel costs	15,920	16,409	-489	103%
Participant targeting for funds transfers	9,718	7,818	1,900	80%
Monitoring and evaluation	478	425	53	89%
Total	\$3,442,334	\$3,106,908	\$335,426*	90%



Total Funds Received	3,343,606
CARE Mali In-Kind Contribution	123,657
Total Contribution	3,467,263
Less: Expenses	3,106,908
Fund Balance as of Sep 30, 2025	360,356*

*Given that the amount received (\$3,343,606 from Sangha donors, in addition to \$123,657 of in-kind support from CARE Mali) exceeded the original budget (\$3,442,334), the actual balance is \$360,356, resulting from cost savings from the dam rehabilitation activities. This balance will be reallocated to provide food assistance to two additional villages.



CASH TRANSFERS

CARE provided 4,801 households with cash transfers. Each household received \$340, for a total amount distributed of \$1,632,340.



CASH FOR WORK

CARE provided 1,400 youth with \$44 for 10 days of work repairing reservoirs.



FOOD ASSISTANCE

CARE provided 986 households across 26 villages. Each voucher was valued at \$88.68; in total, each household received \$266.03 worth of vouchers to purchase food from local traders.



THANK YOU

Your visionary support helped transform a crisis response into a lasting foundation for community strength and economic development.

Together, we have shown that when families' immediate needs are met with dignity, they can build foundations for the future. The youth who restored the reservoirs now have an income and a stake in their community's future. The women leading savings groups are now engines of the local economy. The families who once feared hunger are now investing in farms and businesses that will sustain them for years to come.

These are the signs of a community regaining its strength and hope. On behalf of CARE and the families of Sangha, thank you for your extraordinary commitment. With your continued partnership, we can extend this successful model to empower more families across Mali.

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CARE works around the globe to save lives and defeat poverty.
We seek a world of hope and inclusion, where poverty has been
overcome and all people live with dignity and security.