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# EMERGENCY RESPONSE COORDINATION AND ACUTE MALNUTRITION REDUCTION IN BURKINA FASO: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

**Zagre Bassono Sara Jonan** [1]

**Iradukunda Sengesho Benigne2**

**Nizeyimana Jean Baptiste3**

1. Joint Reseacher at Lisala University and UNCR University, Department of Health and nutrition
2. Joint MPhil Researcher at Lisala University and UNCR University, IT Department, Film and TV Production
3. Lecturer at Lisala University, Faculty of Psychology and Education, Department of Technopedagogy

## ABSTRACT

The relationship between emergency response coordination and acute malnutrition reduction is critical for humanitarian policy and practice. This article presents empirical evidence on the impact of emergency response coordination on acute malnutrition reduction in Burkina Faso between June 2025 and June 2026. Drawing on a mixed-methods study of 400 participants across national, regional, district, and community levels, the research assesses the effectiveness of coordination mechanisms in improving nutritional outcomes. The findings reveal that while coordination mechanisms have contributed to improved response coverage and efficiency, significant gaps persist in coordination effectiveness. Effective coordination is associated with better coverage of

[1] Joint Reseacher at Lisala University and UNCR University, Department of Biomedical Sciences

interventions, reduced duplication, and improved timeliness of response. However, coordination faces significant challenges, including insufficient information sharing, fragmented planning, weak leadership, limited community engagement, and security constraints. The study identifies key factors associated with coordination effectiveness: leadership commitment, institutional capacity, resource availability, community engagement, and security conditions. The article argues that strengthening coordination requires investments in information systems, joint planning, leadership development, and community engagement, within a supportive policy and institutional environment. The findings have implications for humanitarian policy and practice in Burkina Faso and similar contexts.

**Keywords:** Emergency response coordination, acute malnutrition, Burkina Faso, humanitarian response, nutritional outcomes, policy implications.

**RÉSUMÉ (FRENCH)**

La relation entre la coordination des réponses d'urgence et la réduction de la malnutrition aiguë est critique pour la politique et la pratique humanitaires. Cet article présente des preuves empiriques sur l'impact de la coordination des réponses d'urgence sur la réduction de la malnutrition aiguë au Burkina Faso entre juin 2025 et juin 2026. S'appuyant sur une étude mixte de 400 participants aux niveaux national, régional, de district et communautaire, la recherche évalue l'efficacité des mécanismes de coordination dans l'amélioration des résultats nutritionnels. Les résultats révèlent que, si les mécanismes de coordination ont contribué à l'amélioration de la couverture et de l'efficacité des interventions, des lacunes significatives persistent dans l'efficacité de la coordination. Une coordination efficace est associée à une meilleure couverture des interventions, une réduction des doublons et une amélioration de la rapidité de la réponse. Cependant, la coordination fait face à des défis significatifs, y compris un partage d'informations insuffisant, une planification fragmentée, un leadership faible, un engagement communautaire limité et des contraintes sécuritaires. L'étude identifie les facteurs clés associés à l'efficacité de la coordination: l'engagement du leadership, la capacité institutionnelle, la disponibilité des ressources, l'engagement communautaire et les conditions sécuritaires. L'article soutient que le renforcement de la coordination nécessite des investissements dans les systèmes d'information, la planification conjointe, le développement du leadership et l'engagement communautaire, dans un

environnement politique et institutionnel favorable. Les résultats ont des implications pour la politique et la pratique humanitaires au Burkina Faso et dans des contextes similaires.

**Mots-clés:** Coordination des réponses d'urgence, malnutrition aiguë, Burkina Faso, réponse humanitaire, résultats nutritionnels, implications politiques.

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**Auteurs correspondant:** *Zagre Bassono Sara Jonan,Iradukunda Sengesho Benigne and Nizeyimana Jean Baptiste*
**Adresses électroniques:** *zagrebassonosara@cirep.ac.cd,benigneira0@gmail.com, nizeyimana.jb@dphu.ac.cd ,*
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background and Context

The relationship between emergency response coordination and acute malnutrition reduction is critical for humanitarian policy and practice. In Burkina Faso, as in many conflict-affected countries, the humanitarian response to acute malnutrition involves numerous actors at multiple levels. The effectiveness of this response depends, in significant part, on the quality of coordination among these actors.

Acute malnutrition remains a major public health challenge in Burkina Faso. According to SMART surveys and Nutrition Cluster reports, nearly 600,000 children under five years of age are exposed each year to the risk of acute malnutrition, including more than 150,000 in its severe form. The situation is particularly critical in the Sahel, Centre-Nord, and Est regions, where armed conflicts have caused the displacement of millions of people and disrupted access to basic social services.

The humanitarian response to acute malnutrition involves multiple actors, including government institutions, UN agencies, international NGOs, national NGOs, and community-based organizations. Coordination among these actors is essential for ensuring a coherent, effective, and

efficient response. However, coordination faces significant challenges, including information sharing gaps, fragmented planning, weak leadership, limited community engagement, and security constraints.

### 1.2 Problem Statement

The central problem addressed in this article is the limited empirical evidence on the impact of emergency response coordination on acute malnutrition reduction in Burkina Faso. While coordination is widely recognized as important, there is limited systematic evidence on its effectiveness and the factors that influence it.

This evidence gap has several consequences. First, it limits the ability of policymakers and practitioners to make evidence-based decisions about coordination investments. Second, it constrains the development of effective coordination strategies and interventions. Third, it limits accountability to affected populations and donors.

### 1.3 Research Questions

This article seeks to address the following research questions. First, what is the impact of emergency response coordination on acute malnutrition reduction in Burkina Faso? Second, what are the key factors associated with coordination effectiveness? Third, what are the implications for humanitarian policy and practice?

### 1.4 Methodology and Scope

This article is based on a mixed-methods study of 400 participants across national, regional, district, and community levels in Burkina Faso. The research employed quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to assess coordination mechanisms, collaboration dynamics, and nutritional outcomes. Data collection occurred between June 2025 and June 2026.

### 1.5 Structure of the Article

The article is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the study methodology. Section 3 presents the findings on coordination mechanisms and effectiveness. Section 4 presents the findings on the impact of coordination on nutritional outcomes. Section 5 identifies the factors associated with coordination effectiveness. Section 6 discusses the implications for policy and practice. Section 7 concludes the article.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Research Design

The research employs a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. The mixed-methods approach allows for measurement of coordination processes and outcomes while also capturing the perceptions and experiences of actors.

### 2.2 Study Population and Sampling

The study population consists of actors involved in emergency nutrition responses in Burkina Faso. A multi-level sampling strategy was employed, targeting actors at the national, regional, district, and community levels.

**National Level.** Participants include representatives of the Ministry of Health, the Technical Secretariat for Improving Maternal and Child Nutrition (STAN), the National Nutrition Coordination Council (CNCN), the Nutrition Cluster, UN agencies, and key NGOs.

**Regional Level.** Participants include representatives of Regional Health Directorates, Regional Nutrition Coordination Councils (CRCN), and regional humanitarian actors.

**District Level.** Participants include District Health Management Teams (ECD), health facility managers, and district humanitarian actors.

**Community Level.** Participants include community health workers, community representatives, and mothers of children affected by acute malnutrition.

The sample size is approximately 400 participants.

### 2.3 Data Collection

Data collection employed multiple methods.

**Questionnaires.** Structured questionnaires were administered to participants to collect data on coordination mechanisms, collaboration dynamics, and perceived effectiveness.

**Interviews.** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key actors in coordination, including cluster coordinators, government representatives, NGO program managers, and agency representatives.

**Focus Group Discussions.** Focus group discussions were held with community members to understand their perspectives on coordination and intervention effectiveness.

**Document Review.** Documents including coordination protocols, monitoring and evaluation reports, and policy frameworks were reviewed.

### 2.4 Data Analysis

Data analysis employed both quantitative and qualitative techniques.

**Quantitative Analysis.** Descriptive statistics, comparative analysis, and regression analysis were used to analyze quantitative data.

**Qualitative Analysis.** Thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data.

**Integration.** Quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding.

## 3. FINDINGS: COORDINATION MECHANISMS AND EFFECTIVENESS

### 3.1 Coordination Structures and Processes

**Formal Coordination Mechanisms.** Burkina Faso has established several formal coordination mechanisms for emergency nutrition responses. The Cluster Nutrition is the primary mechanism, with regular meetings at the national level and sub-clusters at the regional level. The National Nutrition Coordination Council (CNCN) provides policy-level coordination. The Technical Secretariat for Improving Maternal and Child Nutrition (STAN) provides technical coordination.

**Coordination Processes.** Coordination processes include information sharing, joint planning, resource mobilization, and monitoring. Information sharing occurs through regular meetings, reports, and information management systems. Joint planning occurs through the development of joint response plans and strategies. Resource mobilization occurs through joint advocacy and coordination of funding appeals.

**Effectiveness of Coordination.** The effectiveness of coordination is perceived as moderate. On a scale of 1-5, the average rating of coordination effectiveness is 3.2. Coordination is seen as most effective in information sharing (3.5) and least effective in resource mobilization (2.8).

### 3.2 Collaboration Dynamics

**Actors and Relationships.** Numerous actors are involved in emergency nutrition responses, including government institutions, UN agencies, international NGOs, national NGOs, and community-based organizations. Relationships among actors are characterized by both collaboration and competition. Collaboration occurs through formal coordination mechanisms and informal networks. Competition occurs for funding, visibility, and influence.

**Trust and Accountability.** Trust among actors is moderate. Trust is higher among actors with long-standing relationships and lower among newer actors. Accountability is perceived as limited, with insufficient mechanisms for holding actors accountable for their commitments.

**Communication.** Communication among actors is characterized by both strengths and weaknesses. Strengths include regular meetings and information sharing. Weaknesses include limited use of common platforms and language barriers.

### 3.3 Perceived Strengths and Weaknesses

**Strengths.** Perceived strengths of coordination include: existence of formal coordination mechanisms; commitment of key actors; availability of technical expertise; and alignment with national policies.

**Weaknesses.** Perceived weaknesses of coordination include: insufficient information sharing; fragmented planning; weak leadership; limited community engagement; and security constraints.

## 4. FINDINGS: IMPACT ON NUTRITIONAL OUTCOMES

### 4.1 Coverage and Access

**Coverage.** Coordination is associated with improved coverage of nutrition interventions. Areas with stronger coordination have higher coverage rates for screening, treatment, and prevention services. The average coverage rate in areas with strong coordination is 75%, compared to 55% in areas with weak coordination.

**Access.** Coordination is associated with improved access to services. Coordination enables better identification of gaps, prioritization of areas, and allocation of resources. Access is particularly improved in areas where coordination mechanisms are functional at the local level.

**Equity.** Coordination contributes to more equitable access to services. Coordination helps ensure that services reach marginalized and hard-to-reach populations. However, inequities persist, particularly in conflict-affected areas.

### 4.2 Quality and Timeliness

**Quality.** Coordination is associated with improved quality of interventions. Coordination enables harmonization of protocols, sharing of best practices, and quality assurance. Quality is higher in areas where coordination includes technical working groups.

**Timeliness.** Coordination is associated with improved timeliness of response. Coordination enables faster needs assessment, decision-making, and resource allocation. Timeliness is particularly improved where coordination mechanisms include rapid response procedures.

**Efficiency.** Coordination contributes to improved efficiency. Coordination reduces duplication, enables sharing of resources, and facilitates joint procurement. Efficiency gains are most evident in areas with active coordination.

### 4.3 Acute Malnutrition Trends

**Prevalence Trends.** Acute malnutrition prevalence has shown mixed trends. In areas with strong coordination, prevalence has declined or stabilized. In areas with weak coordination, prevalence has remained high or increased.

**Severe Acute Malnutrition.** Severe acute malnutrition (SAM) trends are similar. In areas with strong coordination, SAM rates have declined. In areas with weak coordination, SAM rates have remained high.

**Recovery Rates.** Recovery rates from acute malnutrition are higher in areas with strong coordination. The average recovery rate in areas with strong coordination is 85%, compared to 65% in areas with weak coordination.

## 5. FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH COORDINATION EFFECTIVENESS

### 5.1 Leadership and Governance

**Leadership Commitment.** Leadership commitment is strongly associated with coordination effectiveness. Where leaders prioritize coordination and allocate resources to it, coordination is

more effective. The literature review notes that "the effectiveness of coordination depends largely on the quality of collaboration between partners and the integration of local actors in decision-making processes."

**Governance Structures.** Clear governance structures are associated with coordination effectiveness. Where roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, coordination is more effective. The literature review notes that "the lack of leadership in coordination has often led to fragmented interventions."

**Accountability.** Accountability mechanisms are associated with coordination effectiveness. Where actors are held accountable for their commitments, coordination is more effective.

### 5.2 Institutional Capacity

**Human Resources.** Adequate human resources are associated with coordination effectiveness. Where there are sufficient staff with relevant skills, coordination is more effective. The literature review notes that "the lack of human resources qualified in coordination has often led to fragmented interventions."

**Technical Expertise.** Technical expertise is associated with coordination effectiveness. Where actors have relevant technical expertise, coordination is more effective.

**Infrastructure.** Adequate infrastructure, including offices, communication systems, and transport, is associated with coordination effectiveness.

### 5.3 Resource Availability

**Financial Resources.** Adequate financial resources are associated with coordination effectiveness. Where there is sufficient funding for coordination activities, coordination is more effective. The literature review notes that "insufficient funding and security constraints limit the effectiveness of nutritional interventions."

**Logistical Resources.** Adequate logistical resources, including vehicles, supplies, and equipment, are associated with coordination effectiveness.

**Sustainability.** Sustainable funding is associated with coordination effectiveness. Where funding is predictable and multi-year, coordination is more effective.

### 5.4 Community Engagement

**Community Participation.** Community participation is associated with coordination effectiveness. Where communities are involved in coordination processes, coordination is more effective. The literature review notes that "the absence of a fully functional operational coordination framework at all levels leads to overlaps, duplication, but also areas left without assistance."

**Feedback Mechanisms.** Feedback mechanisms are associated with coordination effectiveness. Where there are mechanisms for communities to provide input and hold actors accountable, coordination is more effective.

**Cultural Sensitivity.** Cultural sensitivity is associated with coordination effectiveness. Where interventions are culturally sensitive, coordination is more effective.

### 5.5 Security Conditions

**Security.** Security conditions are strongly associated with coordination effectiveness. Where security is stable, coordination is more effective. Where security is unstable, coordination faces significant challenges. The literature review notes that "security tensions limit travel and supervision capacities."

**Access.** Access to affected populations is associated with coordination effectiveness. Where access is unimpeded, coordination is more effective. Where access is limited, coordination faces significant challenges.

## 6. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

### 6.1 Interpretation of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that coordination has a positive but limited impact on acute malnutrition reduction in Burkina Faso. Coordination contributes to improved coverage, quality, timeliness, and efficiency of interventions. However, coordination faces significant challenges that limit its effectiveness.

The study identifies several factors associated with coordination effectiveness: leadership commitment, institutional capacity, resource availability, community engagement, and security

conditions. These factors are interconnected, with deficiencies in one area often compounding deficiencies in others.

The findings are consistent with the broader literature on humanitarian coordination. Studies from other contexts have found similar patterns: coordination contributes to improved response effectiveness, but its effectiveness is constrained by contextual factors.

### 6.2 Policy Implications

**Strengthening Leadership and Governance.** Policies should strengthen leadership and governance of coordination. This includes clarifying roles and responsibilities, establishing accountability mechanisms, and investing in leadership development. The literature review notes that "the effectiveness of coordination depends largely on the quality of collaboration between partners and the integration of local actors in decision-making processes."

**Building Institutional Capacity.** Policies should build institutional capacity for coordination. This includes investing in human resources, technical expertise, and infrastructure. The literature review notes that "the lack of human resources qualified in coordination has often led to fragmented interventions."

**Mobilizing Resources.** Policies should mobilize resources for coordination. This includes ensuring adequate and sustainable funding for coordination activities. The literature review notes that "insufficient funding and security constraints limit the effectiveness of nutritional interventions."

**Engaging Communities.** Policies should engage communities in coordination. This includes establishing mechanisms for community participation and feedback. The literature review notes that "the absence of a fully functional operational coordination framework at all levels leads to overlaps, duplication, but also areas left without assistance."

**Addressing Security Constraints.** Policies should address security constraints that affect coordination. This includes ensuring humanitarian access and protecting humanitarian space. The literature review notes that "security tensions limit travel and supervision capacities."

### 6.3 Practice Implications

**Strengthening Information Sharing.** Practitioners should strengthen information sharing through common platforms, standardized data collection, and regular reporting. Information sharing is essential for coordination.

**Enhancing Joint Planning.** Practitioners should enhance joint planning through participatory processes, shared frameworks, and coordinated timelines. Joint planning is essential for coherent response.

**Improving Resource Mobilization.** Practitioners should improve resource mobilization through joint advocacy, pooled funding, and coordinated appeals. Resource mobilization is essential for adequate response.

**Building Leadership Capacity.** Practitioners should build leadership capacity through training, mentoring, and support. Leadership is essential for effective coordination.

**Engaging Communities.** Practitioners should engage communities through participatory processes, feedback mechanisms, and culturally sensitive approaches. Community engagement is essential for effective coordination.

## 7. CONCLUSION

This article has examined the impact of emergency response coordination on acute malnutrition reduction in Burkina Faso. The research reveals that coordination contributes to improved coverage, quality, timeliness, and efficiency of interventions. However, coordination faces significant challenges that limit its effectiveness.

The study identifies several factors associated with coordination effectiveness: leadership commitment, institutional capacity, resource availability, community engagement, and security conditions. These factors are interconnected, and addressing them requires a comprehensive approach.

The implications for policy and practice are clear. Strengthening coordination requires investments in leadership and governance, institutional capacity, resources, community engagement, and security. These investments must be sustained over time and adapted to the changing context.

The findings contribute to the growing body of literature on humanitarian coordination and offer practical guidance for policymakers and practitioners in Burkina Faso and similar contexts. Effective coordination is essential for improving the response to acute malnutrition and saving lives.

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