

## **Livelihoods and Capacity-building Programme, Niger**

*Enhancing food security, improving livelihoods and strengthening community resilience*



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- *Cover Photo: Madame Moussa in the community garden in Mazoubi village, part of the Irish RC/Belgian RC Resilience-building project in 7 villages in Kieche, Niger (Feb 2016)*

## **1. PROGRAMME SUMMARY**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Irish Red Cross activities in 2015 remained focussed in the Belbedj and Tanout divisions in the Zinder region. This followed the findings of a Status Report (December 2014) of all interventions since 2008, with a view to preparing a phase-out plan in the 2016-2017 period. The 18 month Belgian Government funded (DGD) project which began in October 2013, was completed in March 2015. External evaluations of the Irish Red Cross (IRC) Programme (2008-2014) and the project supported by the DGD were carried out in March. An external audit of the latter project was completed in June. Despite a very uncertain funding situation in the first half of the year, discussions initiated with the Niger Red Cross (NRC) with a view to expanding interventions into a new department led to the development and submission of a second proposal to the DGD through the Belgian Red Cross (BRC). The 24 month proposal was approved in October and commenced on November 1st. Activities will cover 15 communities in the two councils of Gouré and Kellé in the Gouré division. In July, Irish Aid confirmed commitment to fund the 2015 programme. This welcome news meant that a draft phase-out plan, by year end, was suspended. It also meant that the critical recruitment of a Finance and Administration delegate went ahead.

The three-year Community Resilience project, managed by the NRC and targeting seven communities of the Kiéché Council in the Doutchi division (Dosso Region, South-West) entered its second year of implementation. This project is co-funded by Irish Red Cross. As part of the collaboration between the IRC and BRC, the latter continued funding the post of Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (PMER) Delegate. As funding opportunities grew towards the end of the year, discussions between the partners led to the recruitment of an additional delegate to support the NRC specific projects in Kiéché and to dedicate the PMER delegate fully to projects in the Zinder region under the supervision of the Country Representative. Various grants (Land Rover (second year), Irish Courts, Electric Aid and a private bequest) were allocated to the Irish Red Cross and supported the consolidation of activities in the operating area. In November IRC was invited, by the Ministry of Finance (Niger), to submit a proposal for a Europe Aid funded initiative on Climate Change Resilience, specifically targeting the Zinder region. The proposal will be submitted in January 2016.

This report captures the major highlights of 2015. Further details can be found in the annexed indicator tracking table.

## **1.2 Implementing Partner(s):**

This year, the Niger Red Cross remained the main implementing partner for the Irish Red Cross alongside representatives of the local administrative and agricultural departments in Belbedji and Tanout divisions of Zinder region. The main funding partners were Irish Aid and the Belgian DGD.

1.3 Programme Start Date and Duration: January 1st to December 31st 2015

## **1.4 General program context:**

Niger is a landlocked country located within the Sahel region of West Africa. It covers an area of 1,267,000 km<sup>2</sup> (making it the largest country in Western Africa). The annual population growth is 3.9% and life expectancy at birth is 58 years (UNDP 2013). 83% of the population resides in rural areas. Niger is one of the poorest countries in the world, figuring 188th out of 188 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI, UNDP 2015). An estimated 48.2% of the population lives below the poverty line. More than 75% of girls are married by the age of 18 years; the fertility rate is 7.6% and the level of literacy remains extremely low at 28.2%. Niger has suffered three large-scale food crises in the past ten years. This cycle, when combined with vulnerability and poverty, has significantly reduced community resilience. According to the United Nations close to four million people were food insecure in 2015. In the Zinder region, situated in the Sahelo-Sahara zone, frequent droughts occur and access to water is one of the major challenges. Other challenges include deforestation, soil erosion, and desertification which contribute to poor crop production and low forestry cover, and have a knock-on effect on the food and nutritional security of the most vulnerable, specifically women and children. Epidemics of cholera and measles are frequent.

Early marriage and childbirth contribute to an increasing maternal death rate. According to the UN humanitarian profile for Zinder (March 2015), 890,000 of the total population (3,539,764) of the region, were food insecure in 2014. There are multiple factors which contribute to this: 1) A reduction in the basic means of production (poor seeds, lack of healthy animals of reproductive age, soil degradation, lack of fields lying fallow and a very low level of fertiliser use; 2) Limited economic opportunities leading to an exodus of manual labour; 3) Chronic droughts which have occurred more frequently in recent years, an increased exposure to climate change and encroaching desert; 4) Intense flooding which damages crops; 5) Frequent pest invasion; 6) high population growth, which increases pressure on limited resources, and leads to conflict between agriculturalists and animal breeders, to gain access to land and water; 7) Increasing outbreaks of malaria and water-borne diseases during the rainy season due to a lack of awareness of preventive measures.

## **1.5 Program Goal:**

To contribute to improved long-term food security and community resilience in vulnerable communities in Tanout and Belbéji Departments, Zinder, through the strengthening of livelihoods and community-based coping mechanisms.

1.6 Target Group, Approximate Number of Beneficiaries and programme components:

Our targets are the most vulnerable communities in Tanout and Belbedji divisions through a programme addressing livelihoods including water, sanitation and capacity building. Based on the recommendations of the 2014 Status Report, the focus was to consolidate interventions in the 75 villages where IRC has operated since 2008, before preparing a phase-out plan. The aim was to fill gaps in order to ensure long term sustainability. Details of activities and results can be found in Section 3 below. A total of 12,858 beneficiaries from 25 communities were reached during this year by our interventions. The two main programmes components were:

- a) A livelihood (LH) / Watsan-integrated component contributed to an improved long-term food security in vulnerable communities in Niger through the strengthening of community-based coping mechanisms.
- b) A capacity building (CB) component implemented with the NRCS to support and strengthen their organisational capacity to enable it to achieve its mission.

## **2. SECURITY AND SOCIO-POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT**

The security situation in the south-east of Niger remains a major concern. More than 75 attacks and other related incidents were carried out by Boko Haram – some by sleeper cells - in the border areas of Diffa during the year. A State of Emergency was declared in the region in January 2015. This remains in force and has seriously curtailed economic activities. In addition to more than 100,000 Nigériens and Nigerians fleeing into Diffa from Nigeria, to escape Boko Haram, multiple villages in the region itself have been evacuated, creating a humanitarian crisis. In January, following the Charlie Hebdo events in Paris, the Zinder and Niamey regions experienced unprecedented situations when churches, businesses, schools and residences belonging to the Christian population were destroyed during two days of violence, resulting in at least 20 deaths. Calm was restored after the intervention of religious leaders. Due to its porous borders, Niger, and the Agadez region in particular, continues to be a major trafficking route for arms, humans, drugs, and various other contraband. In mid-2014, Operation Barkhane, a regional operation involving armed forces from Chad, Mali and Niger, facilitated by France, established a base in Madama, in the extreme north of Niger. Continued surveillance operations, in 2015, have resulted in the interception of several caches of arms and contraband en route from Libya to Mali. During 2015, under an agreement between the Algerian and Niger governments, more than 5,000 Nigériens, the majority from the Zinder region, were repatriated from Algeria. Many of these are young unemployed youth, who are at risk of becoming involved in criminality.

Relative political stability prevailed in Niger during 2015. Presidential, legislative and municipal elections were scheduled for February 2016. The incumbent President will seek a second mandate. One of his major opponents, a former Prime Minister and Speaker of Parliament - who lived in self-imposed exile in France - returned to Niger in November. He was arrested on arrival and has been incarcerated ever since. It was not clear at the end of the year whether he would be in a position to contest the elections. In mid-December the President announced that the authorities had foiled a Coup d'état attempt. Several high ranking military officials were arrested. This was met with scepticism by the opposition and increased political tension a few weeks before the election campaigns were due to commence.

## **3. PROGRAM RESULTS: ACHIEVEMENTS**

### **3.1 Water and sanitation**

Objectives: Increase sustainable access to, and use of, sources of safe water through water system construction, maintenance and effective water management. Enhance practice of safe hygiene and sanitation. Contribute to a reduction in disease burden in target communities.

Results:

Completion of the Belgian Government funded grant in March 2015 with the reception and handing over to the community of 08 community latrines, two Health centre latrines and 03 boreholes. The table below details the beneficiaries for each activity:

Activity	Beneficiaries	Households
Boreholes	3,884	666
Community Latrines	1,946	356
Health Centre Latrines	1,731	296

1. Completion and reception of a mini water system (with 2 drinking troughs for animals, one storage tank of 30 cubic meters capacity, one Perkins generator) in Tchimattan under the Land Rover funding, reaching 5,000 beneficiaries directly and indirectly.
2. Rehabilitation of the well in Mataboutou, revamping of Management Committee and sensitization of community on the hygiene and sanitation reaching 2,421 beneficiaries in five communities.
3. Completion of the Geotechnical study on the site of the construction of the second mini water system in Oubandawaki. This activity targets 1,750 beneficiaries in five villages in the first phase.

3,380 beneficiaries were reached by PHAST activities.



- Women fetching water for their crops, Mazoubi, Kieche (part of the Irish RC/Belgian RC Kieche project)



- Awa fetches potable water for her home, Garin Beidou, Kieche (Irish RC/Belgian RC resilience-building project)

### 3.2 Livelihoods

#### Objectives

- Increase livestock holdings among vulnerable households through increased participation in the *Habbanaé* programme.
- Ensure maintenance and functioning of cereal banks and management committees.
- Reduce labour burden and exposure to smoke among women and girls through higher efficiency wood stoves, and tree planting for fuel wood.



- *Photo: Women in Bongo village after reception of fuel-efficient stoves, Zinder region*

### **Outputs**

- By the end of 2015, 1,470 animals from Belgian government funds and 450 from Irish Aid funds were distributed; 88% of *Habbanae* animal holders were accessing para-veterinary services; and 7,433 animals were treated.
- Purchase and distribution of 40 tons of cereals and 20 palettes to 33 communities. Refresher training of management committees.
- Purchase and distribution of 979 improved stoves for 979 families (5,755 persons) in 15 communities in Belbedji and Tanout departments.

### **3.3 Capacity Building**

#### **Objective**

Strengthen the capacity of the Niger Red Cross Society and local communities to undertake activities to reduce vulnerability to food insecurity, build sustainable livelihoods, and prepare for and respond to emergencies.

#### **Outputs**

The construction of the NRC branch office in Belbedji and the rehabilitation of the branch office in Tanout were completed.

A four-day training was conducted in 03 sessions for 50 NRC volunteers in February 2015 as follows:

1. Department of Takiéta: 17 volunteers
2. Department of Damagaram Takaya: 15 volunteers
3. Department de Dungass: 18 volunteers

The main topic of this training was community-based first aid in line with the new guidelines developed by the Red Cross of Monaco in collaboration with the NRC and all its partners including the ICRC, the IFRC, and the ministry of public health.

In addition to this the NRC staff from regional and divisional level were involved in all project implementation and follow-up activities to ensure ownership and sustainability. NRC visibility was also increased as they now occupy and use the new office constructed in Belbedji and the one rehabilitated in Tanout.

Other support has been given during special events such as International Red Cross Day. Transportation and accommodation was also provided to the NRC President for his field supervision visits, resulting in greater visibility of the NRC.

#### 4. PROGRESS FROM PREVIOUS YEARS INTERVENTIONS:

Due to continuous supervision and follow-up visits, we were able to collect and update data on 2014 interventions. This data confirmed some of the progress towards our expected goals. By December 2015:

- 60% of households are now involved in animal breeding (585 household) thanks to the distribution and subsequent rotations;
- 31% increase in livestock within the 15 communities who benefitted from the *Habbanae* project (487 animal births registered by December 2015);
- 85% of people interviewed in 9 of the 15 communities master animal health related problems and can address them;
- 85% of farmers used the available Para-veterinary services;
- 70% of projects management committee members are women;
- 30% increase in diversification of food consumption in households thanks to drip irrigation activities.



- Livestock prior to distribution, Irish RC Habbanae, project, Zinder



- A small market development, as a result of the water Tchimattan, Zinder (project funded by Land-Rover)

#### 5. LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

As consolidation activities continued in the 75 villages it became apparent that some Management Committees were holding substantial amounts of cash which is a security risk. As part of the phase-

out strategy we are examining ways of linking communities to existing micro-finance offices in the area which have outreach initiatives. There could be a challenge in the case of some communities which are very remote and difficult to access.

- The implication of government partners in supervision and follow up is a very positive aspect that reinforces ownership, technical support and sustainability.
- It became apparent that experience could be shared between programme teams in Zinder and Douchi (Kiéché), as they carry out similar activities in different contexts. In 2016 exchange visits are planned to discuss good practices and difficulties encountered.
- The education level in all communities is very low. As IRC has carried out a significant number of interventions, the need to include an education component in support of capacity building of the management committees has become apparent. We plan to carry out an analysis of the situation with inspectors/directors of schools and parents. We will encourage parents to send their children to school and will seek funding to equip existing schools with educational materials.
- There is a need to retain a longer term perspective including continuous monitoring of previous programme activities.

## **6. UPDATE ON THE RESILIENCE-BUILDING PROJECT IN KIECHE:**

The Belgian funded resilience project (co-funded by Irish Red Cross), targeting seven communities of the council of Kiéché was at its second year of implementation in 2015. Niger Red Cross is operationally responsible for the activities and the Belgian Red Cross and Irish Red Cross partners provide technical advice and support. By December, all the investments and capacity building activities were completed. The main achievements include:

- The construction and equipping of 4 cereal banks (plus management committees training by technical services on stock management, basic book keeping and accounting)
- Support to the two health centres of the zone of intervention (Construction of the wall fencing the health centre in Kiéché, construction of a hangar in the health centre of Bakin Tapki and equipping both health centres with a set of drugs and one delivery table each)
- Various staff and volunteer trainings carried out (results based management, nutrition, hygiene and sanitation)
- Distribution of 170 sheep to vulnerable women for fattening, distribution of 630 goats for animal breeding
- Distribution of improved seeds and land recuperation
- Construction and rehabilitation of 6 wells with pullys.

## **CHALLENGES**

- In spite of all our interventions since 2008, lack of education is preventing communities from moving out of poverty.
- The distances of communities from savings facilities means that they are not able to make maximum use of funds generated (saving, micro-financing etc.).

- Internal Migration is growing in the area of intervention. Returning migrants, who have been absent from their villages and/or families for some time, have difficulty re-integrating. This can lead to family conflicts. There is also a significant security threat that unemployed youth will be attracted to extremist groups. Integration of activities that encourage youth to stay within their community is critical. This will be explored under the European Trust Fund if the Red Cross Movement is invited to participate in country level Calls for Proposals during 2016.
- The NRC has limited logistical and financial capacity to take over the monitoring of activities after Irish Red Cross activities are phased out. It will be important to identify revenue generating activities. This will require a change of organisational mind-set by the NRC and a clearer definition of their role at the community level.

## **7. CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD:**

Based on lessons learned and recommendations from the external evaluation, the Irish Red Cross expects to further improve upon the program in 2016 and move towards longer term planning and monitoring of the overall impact of our interventions. We will seek further funding to continue the activities such as adult literacy in all communities. We also expect to fill the gaps in former communities where we have intervened since 2008. In the meantime the IRC intends to introduce new activities (in education, environmental protection and rights) based on continuous assessment, ongoing discussion with communities/government services and supervision visits. Emphasis will also be placed on monitoring and evaluation of our activities especially in database management, reporting and case study development.

The 2016 activities will be focussed on follow up, as well as preparation of a phase-out plan from the Tanout and Belbedji areas and scaling up to new communities in Gouré division. We also hope to be selected for the Europe Aid three-year climatic resilience program for which the IRC will submit a full proposal, in January 2016.

Irish Red Cross will continue to participate in the various existing platforms of collaboration in Niger. Our partnership with the Belgian Red Cross will continue, and we reaffirm our commitment to capacity-building of the Niger Red Cross.