Supporting rural women empowerment to bridge the gender gap

In light of the huge gender gap, RBA work together with UNWomen and Government to improve empowerment of rural women. FAO’s Dimitra listener’s clubs constitute an entry point for the activities in the villages. IFAD provides livelihood support, WFP carries out local purchase from female smallholders and UNWomen provides multifunctional platform as well as capacity development and gender analysis. Social mobilisation, gender sensitive participatory communication and the engagement of men constitute important components of this programme. Several innovations have been introduced to support women’s empowerment, including use of vouchers for the local purchase which provides market opportunities for institutional purchases to female smallholder farmers.

Next steps and perspectives
For an effective and efficient achievement of “the Zero Hunger” goal, RBAs Niger will further work together on:
- Strengthening the capacity of capitalisation of practices of RBA collaboration and modelisation to support a scale up of efficient and cost effective models;
- Enhancing the capacities of government counterparts and technical services in the view of gradual transition and progressive handover;
- Putting further efforts on geographical concentration;
- Reinforcing the partnership with other agencies with different comparative advantage, especially in specialised areas not covered by RBAs.

RBA collaboration making a difference for those furthest behind:... coupled with productive asset creation of WFP, FAO trained us on strip cropping and supported enhanced seeds, and IFAD supported further for the productive use of the rehabilitated site and provided trainings on the assisted natural regeneration (ANR) and Zai technics which consequently contribute to growth of production... without WFP’s local purchase crooked merchants would buy the products at a giveaway price and to corroborate, IFAD constructed storehouses for agricultural inputs and pastoral seeds...
Ali Kada from Dargué

Context

Food and nutrition insecurity in Niger stems from poverty, environmental degradation, cyclical stocks and gender inequity and inequality. The ecological fragility has a significant negative impact on livelihoods as the economy is strongly reliant on climate sensitive sectors such as agriculture. In light of this situation, the Government has put resilience building and gender equality at the core of its development agenda, with key policies and initiatives, amongst which the national Nigeriens nourish Nigeriens initiative (3NI) and the National Multi-sectoral Nutrition Security Policy (2016) that recognise the importance of a multi-sectoral integrated multi actors’ approach, the centrality of nationally-owned programmes to ensure long-term solutions to end chronic vulnerability.

Overview of the Rome Based Agency (RBA) collaboration

In Niger, FAO, IFAD and WFP are working together to support government to achieve the Zero Hunger objective. The partnership draws a special focus on leaving no one behind and reaching those furthest behind first whilst ensuring interlinkage with the other SDGs. The RBA partnership also falls within the framework of the development objectives of the 2014-2018 United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) of Niger, with a special attention on the Joint United Nations – Government “Communes de Convergence” (C2C) approach. This approach aims to create programmatic, thematic and geographical synergies to improve the resilience of vulnerable communities in 35 priority communes, by bridging the efforts of humanitarian and development partners, and grounding this multisectoral support in country-owned and community-driven responses. The joint strategy is also aligned on the Joint RBA Conceptual Framework “Strengthening Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition”, and supports the national development plan and the country's 3N initiative as well as the disaster risk reduction and the national social protection policy.

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Key components of the RBAS collaboration in Niger

Drawing on each agency’s specific mandate and expertise, collaboration follows a four-pillar framework: policy advice, operation, advocacy and administrative contribution.

Joint work on policy advice and capacity development

The RBAS consortium ensures a coordinated and strategic support to national capacity building at different levels. First working on strengthening coordination through a joint leadership on the food security cluster, but also a support to the Multi-sectoral steering committee (CMPS) of the 3N Initiative, promoting multi-stakeholder policy dialogue on agriculture and food security. Key catalytic policy and capacity building support has been provided on information analysis and management (food security, vulnerability, etc.), on prevention and management of disasters and food crisis, early warning systems, vulnerability analysis both at the national and local level as well as on the local strategy and operations of local purchase from smallholder farmers and the integrated strategy for school feeding.

Jointly managing operations in the field

An investment has been made to strengthen the joint operational framework of RBAS in the field. For example, in the area of agricultural development, at the sites where WFP carries out land regeneration activities through Food Assistance For Assets (FFA), FAO and IFAD complement them by providing enhanced seeds and technical advice and trainings on improved practices to boost agricultural and pastoral production. FAO also complements this activity by land productivity enhancement, distribution of livestock and development of small scale irrigation as well as reinforce of livelihood in general.

IFAD interventions include construction of infrastructure, such as roads, small dams, irrigation systems, seed selling stands, which contribute to creating an enabling environment for agricultural development in the long-term. Under the initiative of local purchase from smallholders, WFP purchases agricultural products for its operations (mainly for the school meal programme, but also other food assistance) from smallholders to whom FAO provides trainings on agricultural technical and management. IFAD’s value chain support facilitates this initiative. These collaborations in agricultural development contribute to improve and diversify agricultural production, thus improving nutrition.

This field level operational coordination is strengthened by the engagement of RBAs in different joint programmes and projects working on resilience, rural women empowerment, local purchases and differentiation between food security and nutrition. The joint engagement in global initiatives like the REACH and SUN movement complements this.

Communicating and sharing knowledge together

The RBAS consortium in Niger has developed a joint strategy for knowledge management and communication in 2016, with different ongoing capitalisation exercises and trainings.

Administrative collaboration

RBA try to reduce the administrative burden and increase operational efficiency and effectiveness. For example, IFAD and FAO work with the same implementing partners as WFP in some common areas of intervention. The agencies also try to share premises, like at Niamey, Zinder or Diffa.

Fostering innovation to achieve the Zero Hunger target

Achieving the Zero Hunger challenge will require to innovate. Within this framework, the RBAS work at piloting new models which could be scaled up nationally if successful.

Defining joint geographical and operational targeting approaches with the Government

Under the C2C approach, RBAs in Niger try to bring their support in the same vulnerable areas and to the same beneficiaries. The integrated package of activities of three agencies to the same beneficiaries enables to be more effective and efficient, and helps to build more sustainable livelihoods for those furthest behind, as highlighted by the National Chamber of Agriculture Network (RECA) on agricultural production increases and by Laboratory of Studies and Research on Dynamic Society and Development (LASEDEL) on beneficiaries’ recognition of the positive aspect of complementarity of RBAS.

Piloting integrated high impact models

RBAs implement an innovative “watershed approach” based on a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of the territory and the “interactions” between the agro-ecological units composing the territory namely the plateau, the slopes and the lowlands. It includes land rehabilitation and better natural resource management with a diverse set of soil and water conservation measures for each territory. The watershed approach not only improves the livelihoods of the most vulnerable population, but helps slow down rainwater runoff, increase water infiltration, reduce erosion, fight the gullies, and mitigate the erosion of the pond. With the USAID/ Food For Peace, further infrastructural works, namely weirs construction, are implemented which allows to mobilize water for the irrigation agriculture, fishery and water availability for the population, thus contributing to diversification of income resources and reducing women’s chores.

Local purchases from smallholder farmers: an entry point for sustained results

RBAs support the government to promote local purchase from smallholder farmers including improving the value chain system. FAO works on developing technical capacity of smallholder farmers’ organizations, WFP purchases agricultural products from these smallholder farmers’ organizations for food assistance of its programme and supports them in the value chain. IFAD’s complementary activities contribute to develop a value chain for smallholder farmers to facilitate the access to the market in the long term. The success of this joint initiative has led to a progressive transfer, with the technical validation of a national policy for local purchase and the initiation of local purchases for national food reserves.

Photo: WFP/Kasia Olanski

Semi-circular bunds in farmland at the Karkara site