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**Standard Project Report 2017**

World Food Programme in Niger, Republic of (NE)



**World Food Programme**

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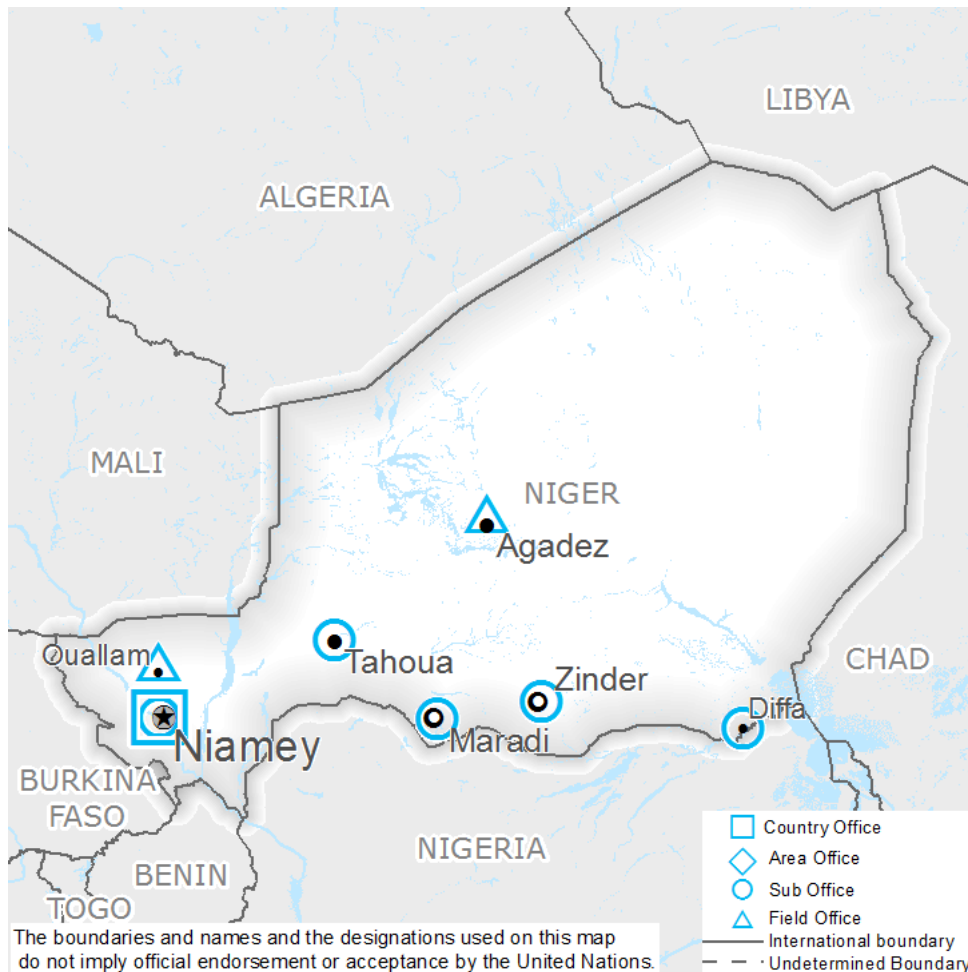
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# Country Context and WFP Objectives



## Achievements at Country Level

In 2017, WFP started the new PRRO 200961 which replaced and built on the previous PRRO 200583. Capitalising on the progress made over the past three years, the project aims at bringing the most vulnerable people out of poverty by creating assets that will last and help to build their resilience to shocks and self-reliance while giving attention to gender and social safety nets.

The improvement of agricultural productivity contributed to raising the income of beneficiaries and reducing food assistance needs. Great attention was given to community-based participatory planning and a programmatic consultation to update the Integrated Context Analysis (ICA) in Niger. Strategic goals for 2018 will focus on the phasing down of WFP interventions on the food assistance component and will concentrate more on technical assistance through partnerships, and handover to government and development structures.

WFP provided technical and financial assistance in the development of the National Action Plan for Local Purchases. Ownership of the programme was facilitated by providing capacity development trainings in collaboration with the Government in all the regions of Niger for the various actors (technical agents, smallholders, technical services).

In 2017, WFP launched multi-year Fortification of Processed Food Products (FOPAT) project to improve the quality and availability of processed nutritious foods for everyday consumption. The project aims at: (i) reducing post-harvest losses and improving quality management; (ii) supporting local capacity for processing nutritious foods; (iii) developing quality control capabilities; and (iv) creating a certification system and a label. The FOPAT project is a continuation of WFP's local procurement and aims at consolidating previous achievements in this field.

In 2017, the Government of Niger under WFP guidance, started the Zero Hunger Strategic Review, which will be the basis of WFP Country Strategic Plan (CSP) in Niger. Based on current processes, analyses and policies, this strategic review aims to define a consensual roadmap for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2.

Regarding the Lake Chad Basin emergency response, in 2017 WFP continued to support vulnerable refugees, internally displaced persons, returnees and host population. As part of the response to the emergency in the Diffa region, a follow-up of population movements was carried out through satellite imagery, allowing an instant follow-up of households and providing information for evaluations to define future actions. Asset creation activities were increased in more secure areas. This included: restoring degraded lands with the half-moon technique (230.9 ha), construction of zai's (1,157 ha), dune fixation (265 ha) and planting of trees (70,500). WFP carried out trainings that helped to provide the necessary techniques of land and water restoration and key family practices.

## Country Context and Response of the Government

Niger is a land-locked, low-income and food-deficit country in the Sahel, with an estimated population of 18 million. It ranks 187 out of 188 countries on the 2016 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index. Its average annual population growth of 4 percent is one of the highest rates in the world [1].

In 2017, it is estimated that 1.4 million people are affected by food insecurity and 1.7 million are in need of nutrition assistance [2]. Many Nigerien families, who are yet to recover from previous crises, are unable to cover their basic food needs. Despite significant efforts to reduce poverty and improve production, whose growth rate has increased from 2.1 percent in 2010 to 12 percent in 2015, 48.9 percent of the Nigerien population, mainly from rural areas, live in poverty [3]. Four severe climate related food and nutrition crises since 2000 have exacerbated the vulnerability of poor households with low adaptive capacity. Besides malnutrition, epidemics and floods, other factors contribute to the weakening of resilience of the Nigerien people. These include: the increasing absorption of public resources over the last two years by the crisis affecting the Diffa region, the demographic growth rate, land degradation and climate change.

Nutrition rates are affected by chronic food insecurity linked to limited access to health and sanitation services, low education levels – especially among girls and women – and inadequate social protection systems. Direct causes of malnutrition include inadequate breastfeeding and infant and young child feeding practices, diarrhoea, malaria, respiratory infections and measles, early motherhood, and poor maternal health and childcare practices [4]. As per latest evaluation results on the national nutritional situation, the rate of global acute malnutrition (GAM) for children aged 6-59 months is at 10.3 percent, with a moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) rate of 8.4 percent and severe acute malnutrition (SAM) rate of 1.9 percent [5]. The GAM rate for child-bearing aged women is estimated at 15.5 percent (Multiple-Indicator Demographic and Health Survey, 2012).

According to the UNDP Human Development Report, Niger's education index is ranked last (187 out of 187 countries). The national literacy rate is at 19.1 percent, with large gender disparities: only 11 percent of women are literate compared with 27.3 percent of men [6]. The average years of schooling are 1.5 years whilst only 5.2 percent of the population has reached and/or attended secondary education. This drops to 2.4 percent for girls who have a clear disadvantage compared to boys (7.8 percent). The school life expectancy (primary to tertiary education) is 5 years (6 years for men, 5 years for women) [7]. Families' ability to cover food needs and better cope with shocks is directly connected to improving school enrolment and retention, particularly for girls. If the family is food secure, they can afford to keep their children in school and do not need children to drop out to help provide for the household.

Gender inequality in Niger is high, ranking 157 out of 188 on the 2015 UNDP Gender Inequality Index. Persistent gender disparities continue to challenge development, especially in literacy, mortality, morbidity, access to assets, gender-based violence and early marriage. Women, especially in rural areas, are overloaded with domestic chores and are particularly affected by food insecurity, with 24.5 percent of households headed by women affected by food insecurity against 11.9 percent of those headed by men.

The country is highly exposed to climate change, facing irregular rainfall, increase in average temperature, desertification and frequent climate shocks. With 80 percent of the population working in the climate-sensitive rural sector, climate change has a negative impact on lives and livelihoods, which – given the low adaptive capacity in Niger – is expected to worsen unless resilience-building activities are implemented. Furthermore, the rainfall recorded in 2017 during the months of June and July caused severe flooding in several parts of the country, affecting thousands of people and causing losses in human and animal lives [8].

Insecurity in neighbouring countries, namely the northeast Nigeria and Mali, continues to drive widespread population displacement. Refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are constrained to co-habit due to depleted resources, increasing food insecurity and loss of livelihoods. The Diffa region hosts 252,300

displaced people, composed of 108,470 refugees, 129,015 IDPs and 14,820 returnees [9]. They reside in the camps of Sayam Forage and Kaléwa (closed in June 2017), and in out-of-camp sites, in close contact with the host population. Security situation in the Diffa region remains volatile, whereas first attacks were experienced in 2015, and for which the Government of Niger declared a state of emergency in the region that remains in place until today. Along the western border, Malian refugees have been arriving in Niger since 2012, in particular in the regions of Tillabéry and Tahoua. Currently, 57,400 Malian refugees are living in the southwest areas of Niger, mostly in camps and a hosting site with constant but modest new arrivals that continue to require humanitarian assistance [10].

Due to the strong Naira depreciation in 2016, purchasing power of Nigerian traders has diminished which resulted in a drop in demand of Nigerien livestock and their prices. With increasing millet prices and poor pasture condition for cattle in Niger, terms of trade for pastoralists are heavily affected.

Some of the principal government bodies in place to achieve political and sectorial objectives, in line with WFP strategic vision are: *Dispositif National de Prévention et de Gestion des Crises Alimentaires* (DNP-GCA), acting as the national disaster management authority, and *Cellule de Coordination du Système d'Alerte Précoce et de Prévention des Catastrophes* (CC-SAP), in charge of early warning system and food security and nutrition monitoring; *Cellule Crises Alimentaires et de Gestion des Catastrophes* (CCA), coordinating food humanitarian response; and *Système d'Information sur les Marchés Agricoles* (SIMA) for monitoring markets. The *Haut-Commissaire à l'Initiative les Nigériens nourrissent les Nigériens* (HC3N, Nigeriens Feed Nigeriens) provides the framework and the platform for the Government's renewed political commitment to long-term food security and nutrition supported by donors, and international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs). As part of the integrated package of activities for resilience building and for scaling up the community-based participatory planning (CBPP) roll-out, WFP supported 15 CBPP nationally during the initial phase of the Memorandum of Understanding signed with the HC3N.

The Government adopted a Nutrition Security Policy in 2016 and finalised its action plan in 2017, supporting more strategic and targeted actions to tackle nutrition related challenges.

The National School Feeding strategy framed school meals as an important component of the integrated approach to build safety nets that help to ensure that every child – even those from the poorest households – has access to education, health and nutrition. The National Local Purchases strategy promotes the purchase of cereals from smallholders for the national food stock, and is strategically connected to both the nutrition and education strategies, in order to promote local production and consumption of nutritious foods.

[1] World Statistics Pocket Book, United Nations Statistics Division, July 2016.

[2] Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) Niger, November 2017.

[3] United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) Midline Review 2014–2018.

[4] National Nutrition Evaluation on the basis of Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (SMART) methodology, August 2016.

[5] Ibid.

[6] The World Fact Book, Central Intelligence Agency, 2015.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Joint Vulnerability Assessment of Food Insecure Households in Niger, January 2016.

[9] Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) Niger, December 2017.

[10] Directorate of State for Migration and Refugees (DREC), October 2017.

## WFP Objectives and Strategic Coordination

In Niger, WFP portfolio includes: (i) resilience building activities through PRRO; (ii) emergency assistance in the Diffa region through regional EMOP; and (iii) provision of the air services to the humanitarian community in the country through Special Operation, United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS).

Within the framework of the PRRO, and building on lessons learnt from previous projects, WFP continues to respond to the needs of poor women, men, girls and boys through an integrated and geographically concentrated safety net approach that applies participatory seasonal programming and combines protective, preventive and promotional actions.

Developed in consultation with the Government and partners to ensure national ownership, and in line with the 2030 Agenda, with specific focus on Sustainable Development Goal 2, the PRRO aims at: (i) protecting those most at risk

from seasonal shocks and providing minimal food and nutrition security guarantees through unconditional social safety nets; (ii) improving nutrition through prevention, treatment and nutrition-sensitive activities; and (iii) building the productive, natural and financial capital of the poor by supporting asset creation and local purchase.

Through improved partnerships, WFP supports government efforts to build national knowledge and ensure an evidence base for decision-making. Capacity development progressively ensures effective leadership and ownership by the Government and communities in preparation for future handover.

Annual joint vulnerability assessments, led by the Government, are carried out with the technical and financial support of the European Union, WFP, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS). In 2017, WFP has contributed to reinforcing the capacity of the early warning system through the Agriculture Market Information System resulting in the modernisation and centralisation of data collection through the use of mobile phones. Since 2012, WFP continues to liaise with the Save the Children International, Oxfam, and the Cultural and Humanitarian Association to promote the Household Economy Approach to identify vulnerable households based on the community specific determinants and outcome analysis on vulnerability as well as the targeting process with the *Dispositif National de Prévention et de Gestion des Crises Alimentaires* (DNP-GCA), *Cellule de Coordination du Système d'Alerte Précoce et de Prévention des Catastrophes* (CC-SAP), *Cadre Harmonisé* and the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC). WFP contributes to the Unified Social Register working group regularly and shares lessons through the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), FAO and UNICEF.

Over the past years, resilience-building programmes continue to be implemented with national authorities at central, regional and municipal levels; other partners (United Nations [UN], NGOs, institutions with academic and technical expertise) have addressed issues in different domains to support the efforts of Nigerien Government to achieve zero hunger such as the Government's *Plan de Développement Economique et Social* (PDES) 2017–2021, and the *Haut-Commissaire à l'Initiative les Nigériens nourrissent les Nigériens* (HC3N) initiative and its 2016–2020 action plan.

Past experience has shown how crucial partnerships strengthening coordination are for the implementation of both emergency and resilience activities. WFP seeks to strengthen partnerships with not only government counterparts, but also UN agencies, namely the Rome-based Agencies, UNICEF, United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA) as well as NGOs such as Alliance, Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced (RISE) and the German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation (GIZ).

A resilience technical working group strengthens UN coherence on the implementation of the joint HC3N-UN *Commune de Convergence* approach, in which different humanitarian and development partners converge their efforts to guide resilience interventions. The joint programme aiming at Rural Women Economic Empowerment (RWEE) implemented with FAO, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) allows inclusive interventions prioritising gender and women's empowerment.

WFP's integrated approach aims at bridging the humanitarian-development divide by combating poverty and helping poor people to reintegrate into the socio-economic system. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2014–2018 and the Humanitarian Response Plan guide partners' interventions. WFP contributes to facilitating the coordination of activities and actors through the cluster/working group approach. WFP and FAO co-lead the Food Security Cluster and WFP is an active member of the nutrition and education thematic working groups.

In 2017, under the coordination of the Government, WFP conducted data collection and analysis for the study, Fill the Nutrient Gap. Also, the Cost of Hunger in Africa Niger study was launched with the HC3N spearheading and coordinating activities such as training of the National Implementation Team and data collection.

The Ministry of Education partnered with WFP, the World Bank and the French Agency for Development (AFD) on the *Projet d'Appui à une Education de Qualité* (PAEQ), to improve quality of education and school meals.

WFP continues to play a key role in supporting the coordination of the lean season response. In 2017, coordination meetings were held with all actors throughout the response, including non-WFP partners, to avoid duplication, ensure good coverage of different zones and guarantee quality of the programme through timely sharing of distribution monitoring and food basket monitoring outcomes. Coordination with the different government actors remains a particular focus. A productive collaboration continued between WFP and the European Union supported Cash Alliance. The first combined post-distribution monitoring took place during the lean season of 2015, and further alignment of strategy and harmonisation of tools were carried out in 2016 and 2017.

In view of the gradual handover of a cost-effective and scalable resilience building programme to the Government, national capacity strengthening is one of the key pillars of WFP programmes. Technical assistance is provided to

government institutions at a centralised and decentralised level through trainings, joint field monitoring and support to policy and strategy development.

To ensure complete ownership of the approach on behalf of the Government, WFP is developing a partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and the Ministry of Environment as part of WFP's phase out and progression strategies, highlighting the leadership role of the Government, and ensuring an adequate follow up of technical/operational aspects of activities. This will ensure the quality of assets created and build upon past experiences at community/communal/regional/national levels.

In addition, to create sustainable safety nets at the local level, WFP is contributing to reinforce the capacities of the government technical services, by providing operational and strategic support for efficient and effective functioning of asset creation activities. Promotion of seasonal livelihood programming and community-based participatory planning was adopted by the Nigerien Government in October 2017 as programming and planning tools, contributing to the coordination of activities implemented by different actors in the targeted areas.

Strategic refugee and displaced response interventions are discussed with the main government counterpart, *Commission Nationale d'Eligibilité au Statut de Réfugié* (CNE) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). WFP and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) coordinate to avoid duplication of assistance through sharing and coordinating food needs of refugees and returnees in the Diffa region. In response to the evolving needs of Malian refugees, in 2016–2017, WFP in collaboration with UNHCR carried out a joint targeting exercise. This was in view of a joint strategy to be put in place in January 2018 that will shift towards targeted and conditional food assistance.

UNHAS Niger was established to provide a link across the vast country from the capital Niamey to the northern and southeastern parts. Several crises continue to have a major impact on the humanitarian situation in the country and the service has been essential to the humanitarian system to respond effectively. UNHAS maintains strong links with Civil Aviation Authorities and other relevant local and regional authorities such as the *Agence pour la Sécurité de la Navigation Aérienne en Afrique et à Madagascar* (ASECNA). To ensure synergy, UNHAS invited Civil Aviation's inspectors to the regular monthly safety meetings starting September 2017 and security training in December 2017.

# Country Resources and Results

## Resources for Results

PRRO 200961 was funded at 67 percent of the USD 139 million budgeted for 2017. Notwithstanding these difficulties, WFP was able to provide assistance to the people most in need and not lose the commitment or gains achieved throughout the previous years of implementation of self-reliance and resilience building activities.

The targeted areas of intervention under the PRRO concentrated on municipalities prioritised by the Government, the United Nations and other actors. WFP continued to carry out activities in the 37 municipalities identified by WFP in the previous PRRO, including the 35 *Communes de Convergences* (C2C). These were considered most vulnerable to shocks and, in a context of limited resources, WFP integrated approach and geographical focus aligned with the Government's strategy to converge resources and efforts and maximise results. This allowed to secure an integrated and multi-sectoral approach, concentrating resources and interventions, to ensure better integration of activities, with a higher impact on self-reliance and resilience.

On the one hand, fundraising concentrated on mobilizing resources for emergency operations: (i) the emergency response in the Diffa region, part of the Lake Chad Basin regional response. This benefited from various pledges made by donors during the "Oslo Humanitarian Conference for Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region" held at the beginning of 2017. Through budget revision 9, WFP Niger reduced the number of targeted beneficiaries in line with latest needs assessments; (ii) the onset of the pastoral crisis, financed through the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) funding, allowing to provide assistance to an additional 35,250 vulnerable people and 20,280 children affected by the pastoral crisis; and (iii) crisis due to the price increase of staple foods, which benefited from donor contributions, to provide assistance to an additional 150,000 people and 12,000 children aged 6-23 months affected by the staple food prices increase.

On the other hand, WFP adopted various strategies to fund the activities of the PRRO, particularly nutrition and school meals. For nutrition activities, an appeal was launched with the Government to raise awareness on the critical funding situation and the need for donors to sustain the activities of WFP for the prevention and treatment of malnutrition. The appeal contributed to raising awareness and funding and allowed WFP to maintain assistance to at least the most vulnerable children aged 6-23 months, pregnant and lactating women and adolescent girls. For school meals, WFP collaborated with the Government to raise awareness regarding the need to continue funding education and school meals activities, both nationally and internationally. Alongside these actions, regular bilateral meetings were held with key long term and new donors to mobilize funds for the integrated approach at whole along with funding for specific single activities. Furthermore, an all donor meeting was held in November to promote communication with donors on strategic directions and operational updates, along with information on the funding situation. Strategies with other United Nations agencies were presented to donors jointly to converge efforts for complementary activities. Along with gender elements streamlined in projects presented to major donors, private donors were approached to fund projects of women smallholder farmers.

Notwithstanding funding constraints, WFP prioritised its activities to assure assistance was provided to the most vulnerable populations. Difficulties to allocate sufficient funding to certain activities was at times tied to earmarking of funds. This is becoming more and more a reality that WFP deals with, as donors increasingly allocate funds to specific activities rather than projects at whole.

However, the available flexible donor contributions, through multilateral contributions as well as an effective use of the WFP internal advance financing mechanism, facilitated timely purchase and delivery of food and cash. Prioritising joint projects under the C2C approach, in addition to other projects with strategic partners (amongst others the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund and the German Technical Cooperation), optimised the use of resources to cover the integrated resilience package.

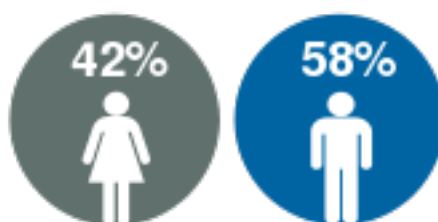
The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) special operation allowed WFP to respond to challenges posed by vast distances, a lack of safe and reliable air service as well as poor road conditions in Niger and was fully funded throughout the year. Through a budget revision, UNHAS was extended until December 2018.



## Annual Country Beneficiaries



Beneficiaries	Male	Female	Total
Children (under 5 years)	144,645	142,218	286,863
Children (5-18 years)	445,289	143,344	588,633
Adults (18 years plus)	475,901	476,121	952,022
<b>Total number of beneficiaries in 2017</b>	<b>1,065,835</b>	<b>761,683</b>	<b>1,827,518</b>



## Annual Food Distribution in Country (mt)

Project Type	Cereals	Oil	Pulses	Mix	Other	Total
Regional EMOP	21,112	2,122	7,075	4,326	304	34,938
Single Country PRRO	18,158	2,171	5,751	10,957	272	37,309
<b>Total Food Distributed in 2017</b>	<b>39,270</b>	<b>4,293</b>	<b>12,826</b>	<b>15,283</b>	<b>576</b>	<b>72,247</b>



## Cash Based Transfer and Commodity Voucher Distribution (USD)

Project Type	Cash	Value Voucher	Commodity Voucher
Regional EMOP	1,903,074	-	-
Single Country PRRO	5,783,641	1,327,283	1,085,040
<b>Total Distributed in 2017</b>	<b>7,686,715</b>	<b>1,327,283</b>	<b>1,085,040</b>

## Supply Chain

WFP local purchases aim at stimulating the local economy and supporting local smallholder farmers, while also enabling WFP Niger to reduce lead time compared to international procurement. This helped to strengthen a convergence of efforts to stimulate local economy, agricultural investment and ultimately self-reliance and resilience of local population. Women also benefited from these local purchases, whereas women smallholder farmers, who

took part in the joint Rural Women Economic Empowerment project, showed an increase in their income and activities.

WFP provided technical support to farmers' organizations in collaboration with other agencies, namely the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The objective was to ensure inclusion of the poorest farmers and their access to the institutional market. WFP used the Global Commodity Management Facility (GCMF) to buy food from smallholder farmers as well as from commercial suppliers. WFP aims to continue on this path and further enhance capacity development of smallholder farmers, farmers' organizations and government counterparts to promote local purchase initiatives in Niger. Internationally and regionally procured food arrived in land-locked Niger through the ports of Cotonou (Benin) and Lomé (Togo). Transport from port was exclusively handled by forwarding agents sub-contracting commercial transporters. Dispatch to final distribution points was handled by a combination of cooperating partners, commercial transporters and the WFP fleet, consisting of one truck per region. WFP experienced that due to congestion of ports or long road times, food could arrive late. In these occasions, WFP resorted to dispatches from internal warehouses, to counter the effects of the delay.

A large part of warehouse capacity consists of mobile storage units (Wiik halls and Rubb halls), which however proved to adapt poorly to the heat and violent winds in the country. To improve storage conditions, WFP is progressively replacing mobile tents with more robust aluminium mobile storage units (Flospan). In 2017, five Flospan tents were set up, marking an important addition to improve storage capacity and conditions for the conservation of specialised nutritious foods. The added capacity on land allowed WFP to reduce commercial rented warehouses, translating to monthly savings of about USD 12,000 that allowed WFP to recuperate its investments and decrease running costs.

On the other hand, WFP built five concrete warehouses in four extended delivery points, which helped to improve the storage conditions of specialised nutritious foods, which should not have been stored in the mobile warehouses.

In 2017, deliveries were made directly to the health centres instead of the sanitary districts, which increased the workload, requiring to deliver small quantities across long distances. In response, two transport systems were set up in order to accommodate the different requirements for small volume and high-volume transport. A zone system was applied for the low volume transport and long-term contracts with a single transporter was avoided. The price paid per mt went up, reflecting the real cost of this type of transport and making it affordable for transporters. For high-volume transport, WFP was able to achieve more competitive prices, due to the exclusion of small volumes. Savings in high-volume transport exceeded by far the increase in the price paid for low volumes. In terms of value for money, WFP was able to increase service levels and realize USD 200,000 yearly savings considering 2017 volumes.



## Annual Food Purchases for the Country (mt)

Commodity	Local	Regional/International	Total
Beans	1,694	1,200	2,894
Iodised Salt	267	400	667
Sorghum/Millet	321	-	321
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,283</b>	<b>1,600</b>	<b>3,882</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>58.8%</b>	<b>41.2%</b>	

## Annual Global Commodity Management Facility Purchases Received in Country (mt)

Commodity	Total
Beans	1,510

Commodity	Total
Corn Soya Blend	3,972
Ready To Use Supplementary Food	1,446
Rice	1,850
Sorghum/Millet	11,831
Vegetable Oil	1,825
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,433</b>

## Implementation of Evaluation Recommendations and Lessons Learned

The current PRRO in Niger has the advantage of building on the experience of its preceding projects, assuring continuity and the consolidation of assets created. It applies lessons learned and recommendations from research, studies and a 2015 external evaluation. The latter recognised the added value of innovations such as the *Communes de Convergences* (C2C), targeting strategy and the three-pronged approach (3PA), which continued to be the basis for interventions in 2017.

Various assessments, including lessons learned exercise and an external evaluation, called on WFP to reinforce knowledge management, communication and partnerships, and to define an exit strategy reinforced by capacity development supported by appropriate resources. The 2015 evaluation recommended to strengthen the resilience measurement system. WFP leveraged existing capacities, expertise and experience in safety net programming and disaster risk management and response to better bridge humanitarian and development assistance by creating programmatic, thematic and geographical synergies, combining social safety nets during the lean season with long-term resilience building interventions. As demonstrated by WFP studies on household progression, 52 percent of the very poor households changed socio-economic groups in 2017. The study showed that 86 percent of households surveyed feel able to maintain their status should assistance be put on hold. The sentinel site survey carried out in November by the National Institute for Statistics showed that 93 percent of households trained on agricultural techniques replicated them in their own fields.

The PRRO positioned WFP's interventions inside a framework of nationally owned safety nets, taking Niger closer to a fully Government-owned long-term hunger solution. Beyond the concrete assistance delivered to the poor, WFP sees an opportunity to develop sustainable and cost-effective models that can be transferred to the Government and scaled up nationally. In 2017, WFP laid the ground for a progression (or exit) strategy, by which it will start phasing out of well performing sites and transferring social safety net activities to the Government and other partners present in the area. Resources permitting, new very vulnerable sites will also be integrated into the response plan.

In line with the recommendations received regarding the importance of synergies with other actors at the local level, strategic partnerships with the Rome-based Agencies (RBAs), United Nations (UN) agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) continued to hold a central role. They contributed to improving the quality of food assistance-for-assets (FFA) activities, and enabled WFP to increase efficiency and effectiveness of its operations. WFP reinforced partnerships with research and academic institutions such as the University of Niamey to strengthen technical capacities of partners and students. Within this context, *Réseau National des Chambres d'Agriculture* (RECA) conducted a technical evaluation on asset creation sites to identify gaps, challenges and best practices, and *Laboratoire d'Etudes et de Recherche sur les Dynamiques Sociales et le Développement Local* (LASDEL) led a study on the impact of WFP's work on migration and social cohesion. This study highlighted that land recovery activities promoted multiple forms of village solidarity and community safety net systems. Furthermore, it showed that WFP's interventions contribute to putting into perspective local perceptions of migration: for many of the very poor farmers participating in WFP activities, migration is no longer the only route to success.

WFP relied on community participatory 3PA tools, to develop the government counterparts and communities' sense of leadership and ownership. With the positive response received, WFP strives to integrate these tools into national processes of community resilience building in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the German Technical Cooperation.

WFP continues to capitalise on past experiences and partnerships to reach its objectives at a national level. Knowledge management capacities were strengthened with development of knowledge products and capacity

development of staff. The partnership with the RBAs put a special attention on knowledge management of FFA activities through training workshops and the development of different best practice notes. Under the regional initiative on Gender and Markets in West Africa, WFP carried out a study in the Tahoua and Zinder regions on the Transfer of Empowerment of Women from Markets to Households and Communities. In the study's recommendation, results highlighted that women's empowerment is a matter of changing gender relations, which requires implementing a context-sensitive approach. It also suggested to support processes that help overcome the economic and cultural challenges in the medium or long term, the risk otherwise being that marginalised women increase.

# Partnering with Universities to Strengthen National Capacities

In 2017, the development of knowledge oriented partnerships was a key step in strengthening the Government, WFP and cooperating partners' capacity and enhancing the evidence base.

WFP reinforced partnerships with research and academic institutions to:

- improve technical capacities of the (i) Agriculture Faculty of Niamey University to strengthen technical capacities of partners and students, and (ii) *Réseau National des Chambres d'Agriculture* (RECA) to conduct technical evaluations on asset creation sites and identify gaps, challenges and best practices; and

- promote qualitative analysis through *Laboratoire d'Etudes et de Recherche sur les Dynamiques Sociales et le Développement Local* (LASDEL) to lead socio-antropological analysis of the impact of WFP's work.

In particular, the country office has further enhanced its ongoing partnership with the University of Niamey in relation to food assistance-for-assets (FFA) programmes to:

**1. Strengthen evidence building on the impacts of FFA activities through internship opportunities.** Students were provided with the opportunity to undertake internships on the ground to conduct research on the impact of FFA activities exploring different thematic areas.

**2. Develop a university module on the three-pronged approach (3PA) tools to be included in 2018 curricula.** Given the interest on the 3PA by the Government and its willingness to scale up the tools, it was agreed to develop a university module on the 3PA tools to be able to have a pool of "3PA experts" in the coming years.

**3. Strengthen capacities in soil and water conservation and forestry techniques.** The university has supported the roll-out of technical trainings to WFP, cooperating partners and government technical services staff to strengthen their capacities on soil and water conservation, and forestry and agroforestry techniques.

In 2018, WFP plans to capitalise on this experience and expand partnerships with universities at the regional level.

# Project Results

## Activities and Operational Partnerships

In 2017, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) continued to effectively meet the needs of its users with the introduction of a large capacity aircraft. Its fleet consisted of two aircraft, a 19-seater Beechcraft and a 37-seater Dash8-100, operating out of Niamey with the ability to respond to air travel needs in the field. UNHAS remained the only key humanitarian air service provider, enabling 132 organizations to reach seven destinations in Niger on a regular basis: from its main hub in Niamey to Agadez, Diffa, Maradi, Tahoua and Zinder. Flights to Dirkou were added starting November 2017.

Since the state of emergency was declared in the Diffa region in 2015, UNHAS has enhanced its flexibility to support off-schedule flight requests in line with the operational imperatives of the aid organizations on the ground. The new aircraft along with the introduction of a flexible flight schedule allowed to transport more passengers to the seven destinations within the country. Furthermore, UNHAS responded to 100 percent of the requests for evacuations and conducted nine medical evacuations.

In 2017, many humanitarian organizations, for example those part of the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM), increased their activity in the Diffa region, due to increasing unstable security conditions that provoked population movements. This increased their need to travel rapidly to the Diffa region to assess the situation and respond to urgent humanitarian needs. Upon request, special off-schedule flights were organized to carry out missions for the set-up of effective and efficient project implementation. This same extraordinary mechanisms were put in place for the Niamey-Agadez-Dirkou axis to respond to the needs of the influx of migrants in these areas.

At the request of several members during the October Users Group meeting, including the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), French Red Cross, *Médecins sans frontières* (MSF) Spain, International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and *Médecins du Monde* (MdM), Dirkou started to be served regularly (once a month) since November 2017. This was tied to the increased need of humanitarian assistance due to an increased influx of migrants in the area. In 2018, flights to this destination will increase to two flights per week to meet the needs of humanitarian organizations.

Nine special flights were conducted on partial or full cost recovery basis. These flights were requested by government counterparts, donor representatives and the Humanitarian Coordinator, for monitoring missions, transport of medical supplies and field visits to the Diffa region, to evaluate the growing displacement of populations affected by the violence in northern Nigeria, as well as other project sites within the country such as Agadez, Maradi, Tahoua and Zinder.

In 2017, the UNHAS Steering Committee under the joint leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator and WFP played an important role in the management of the humanitarian air service. Two Users Group meetings and a Steering Committee were held to set up a user-friendly flight schedule and to implement a needs assessment for the integration of new user demands.

Similarly to previous years, members of the Steering Committee included: (i) the representatives and country directors of United Nations agencies – Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and WFP; (ii) donor representatives, including the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), Sweden, Spain and the Swiss Cooperation; and (iii) non-governmental organizations (NGOs) represented by Concern International, MSF and the Save the Children United Kingdom.

## Results

In 2017, a fully funded WFP-managed United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) special operation allowed WFP to respond to challenges posed by vast distances, a lack of safe and reliable air service as well as poor road conditions in Niger, which made travel to affected populations very difficult.

In 2017, UNHAS Niger was deemed one of the most effective and efficient operations. It provided an effective service of 92.7 percent on average with an operational cost of USD 0.53 per passenger per km compared with USD 0.65 in 2016.

In order to better respond to the usability trends in the Diffa region, after increasing flight frequency and adding an additional set of crew, available performance reports from the Performance Monitoring Tool (PMT) revealed the

urgent need for augmentation of aircraft capacity to meet the increasing need by aid organizations to access the region. Based on this, the 19-seater Beechcraft was substituted with a 37-seater Dash8-100. The aircraft chartering process was initiated after presentation of the findings and solutions to the User Group and Steering Committee meetings.

With the aim of constantly improving the service provided, two satisfaction surveys were conducted.

The aim of the first survey, that targeted UNHAS passengers, was to evaluate if the procedures corresponded to passengers' needs and if they met the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards, namely: availability of online booking and booking at the UNHAS office; efficiency of the registration personnel; comfort of flights; courtesy and professionalism of UNHAS staff; and safety and security of flights. For the second survey, the target was heads of United Nations (UN) agencies and of humanitarian organizations, with the objective of identifying whether UNHAS flight programme met the needs of users, the times were reasonable, and the programme was sufficiently flexible and adapted to emergency needs.

These two surveys showed a great satisfaction of the passengers and heads of missions and UN agencies. Users were satisfied with the proposed flight schedule and its flexibility. It was also highlighted that all necessary evacuations were carried out successfully. Regarding possible improvements for customer service, a dedicated email address for users communications and requests was created, and a customer service focal point will be designated in 2018.

Throughout the year, UNHAS provided safe, efficient and cost-effective passenger and cargo air transport services from its main hub in Niamey to five regions in Niger (Agadez, Diffa, Maradi, Tahoua and Zinder), and was used by 112 humanitarian organizations – comprising non-governmental organizations (NGOs), UN agencies, donors, the diplomatic community and the Government – and 12,650 passengers, representing an increase of 12.5 percent compared with 2016.

In 2017, Special Operation 200792 achieved its objective and ensured prompt access to beneficiaries in remote and inaccessible areas. UNHAS Niger was responsive to user's requests and increased the frequency of flights in order to meet the increased demand by the humanitarian community. Furthermore, the fleet composition maintained service reliability and enabled more flexibility through the deployment of additional crew members.

## Performance Monitoring

The overall operation was measured through the Performance Management Tool (PMT) including the reliability of the fleet for in-country operations. With the PMT, trends were found and the level of performance established in order to identify strategic and operational areas for improvement.

Based on the close monitoring of the fleet performance and utilization through the PMT, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) was able to add one more aircraft that allowed to increase the number of passengers. This boosted the operations efficiency and increased the quality of the service provided to users.

Flight schedules and operational fleet were adjusted when required through feedback from users at Users Group Committee (UGC) and Steering Committee (SC) meetings, surveys, as well as day-to-day monitoring of operational statistics to ensure that user demands were met. Operational constraints such as allowable flight duty period, maintenance programming, airstrip conditions and weather conditions were also taken into consideration during aircraft tasking.

The UGC was composed of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations (UN) agencies and donor representatives, and was the forum that addresses users' interests. Holding an administrative role, the UGC provided feedback to the Chief Air Transport Officer to help ensure a high quality service. UNHAS Niger UGC meetings are held on a quarterly basis.

The SC, co-chaired by the Humanitarian Coordinator, is composed of representatives of the main UN user organizations, NGO representatives and donors, with the objective of providing overall strategic guidance on UNHAS operations, funding and transport priorities.

In 2017, needs assessments were conducted throughout the year to ensure that user demands were met and that the operation was efficient and effective. One provision of access satisfaction survey and one customer satisfaction survey were carried out to ensure that user requests were met, along with their level of satisfaction and the level of access on UNHAS flights. Recommendations included an increased sitting capacity. During the 20 December 2017 meeting, the SC acknowledged that UNHAS provided a good service in 2017.

In addition, WFP Aviation has dedicated offices that monitor and ensure compliance to safety and security standards as well as quality of the operations. The Aviation Safety, Aviation Security and the Quality Assurance

units based at the headquarters provide normative guidance and periodic evaluation missions to the field offices including Niger, as part of the monitoring activities. Similarly, UNHAS Niger provides interim and final reports to the donors on the activities, and this forms part of its monitoring and assessment of the operational performance.

## Story Worth Telling

One of the exceptional functions of the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) is the provision of emergency evacuations and, as one UNHAS staff said, “This falls within WFP UNHAS mission of saving lives.” To this extent, during the year, nine medical evacuations (MEDEVACs) were carried out.

In particular, one critical case was an urgent MEDEVAC of an international non-governmental organization (NGO) staff from a small city 80 km from Zinder. The staff member, suffering from a life threatening allergic reaction, needed to be urgently administered adequate medical attention available only in the capital, Niamey. After travelling by road to Zinder, the MEDEVAC was coordinated rapidly and efficiently by UNHAS to Niamey. Once landed, the staff was promptly directed to an ambulance and brought to the hospital where the staff received the necessary medical care.

To testify the gratitude for the service provided, the email sent to UNHAS Niger stated: “This evacuation would have never been possible without the prompt reaction and sound will that UNHAS demonstrated while responding to the urgent request.”

In order to provide the best assistance possible to the most vulnerable populations, UNHAS helps to ensure not only that the humanitarian community can reach their destinations, but also that staff safety, health and well-being remain a priority.



# Figures and Indicators

## Data Notes

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United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) passenger boards the flight for Maradi.

## Project Indicators

### Output Indicators

Output	Unit	Planned	Actual	% Actual vs. Planned
<b>SO1: Special Operation (Air Ops)</b>				
Average no. of passengers transported monthly by air	individual	700	1,054	150.6%
Average weight of light cargo transported monthly	Mt	4	3	71.1%
Number of agencies and organizations using humanitarian air services	agency/organization	110	112	101.8%
Number of locations served	site	6	7	116.7%
Number of needs assessments carried out	assessment	6	5	83.3%
Percentage of passenger bookings served	%	100	99	99.0%
Percentage response to medical and security evacuation	%	100	100	100.0%