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**SPR Reading Guidance**

## Provision of Humanitarian Air Services in Niger

### Standard Project Report 2018

World Food Programme in Niger, Republic of (NE)



World Food  
Programme



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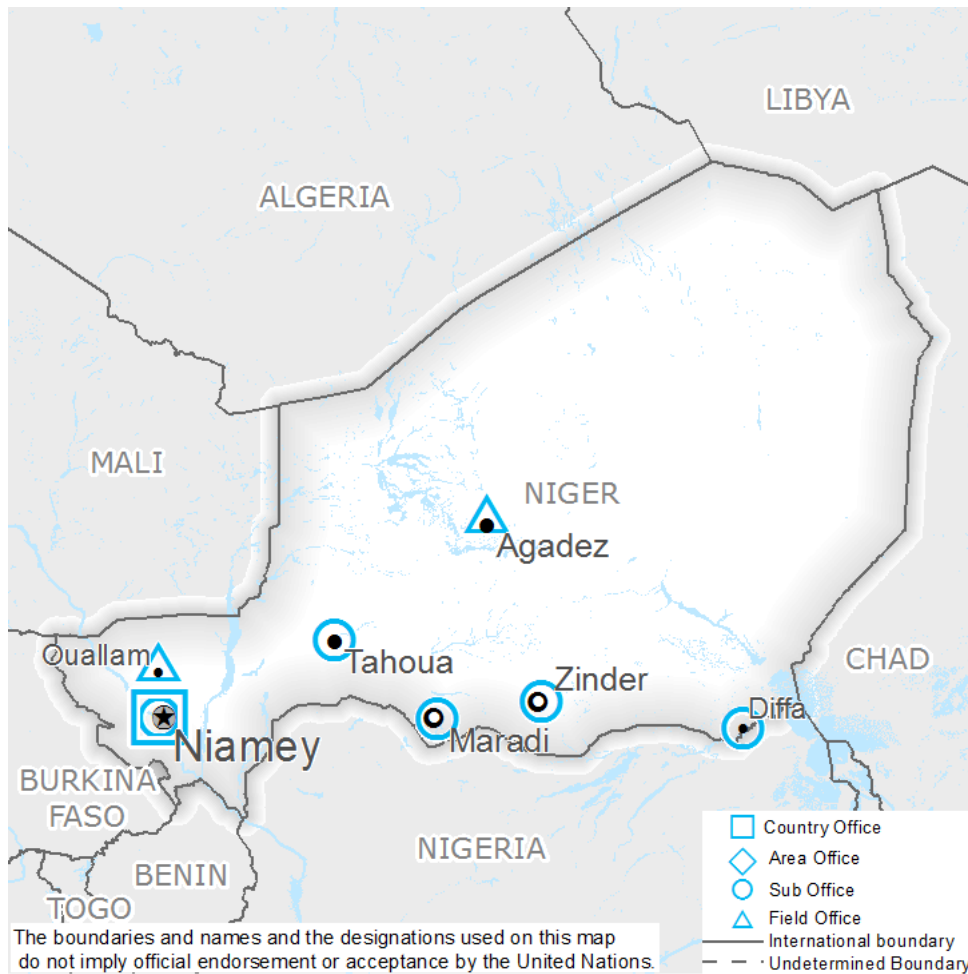
At the service of the humanitarian community in Niger

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# Country Context and WFP Objectives



## Achievements at Country Level

In 2018, in response to high food security needs in Niger during the lean season - June to September - WFP launched a high level emergency response (Level 3) as part of a regional Sahel Shock Response. for a period of six months. In collaboration with the Government, WFP reached 775,000 people (82 percent of planned) through food and nutrition assistance. The post-action exercise conducted by the Government welcomed WFP's coordination efforts from the national to regional level, which enabled a comprehensive and coherent response.

WFP further supported the emergency response to respond to the various needs and situations of crisis-affected families. The border areas with Mali and Burkina Faso, as well as with Nigeria, were confronted with insecurity and displacement of hundreds of thousands of families. WFP strengthened the coordination with partners and ensured timely and life-saving responses to the affected population. As part of the rapid response mechanism (RRM), almost 38,000 women and girls and 36,000 men and boys in the three regions were reached with WFP food and nutrition assistance.

The humanitarian-development nexus remained a key component of WFP programmes in crisis-affected areas. The most vulnerable Malian refugees staying in camps in the Tahoua and Tillabéri region participated in conditional food assistance for assets (FFA) activities, providing an opportunity to enhance their resilience to shocks. The FFA activities in Diffa region were further strengthened and, well-established, and allowed for the inclusion of vulnerable people who were previously assisted through the RRM mechanism.

Since August 2018, WFP embarked upon a major scale-up of resilience activities, to support the government's resilience scale-up plan. Reaching 280,000 new beneficiaries in 20 municipalities in Maradi, Tahoua and Zinder

regions, the scale-up represented an expansion of WFP's multi-actor, multi-sector integrated package approach, investing in livelihoods, nutrition, education, government capacity strengthening activities and enhancing nutrition-sensitive approaches into programming. WFP and the Government's collaboration on the resilience approach was community-focused, evidence-based, and focused on strengthening synergies and complementarities with partners.

The roll-out of the three-pronged approach and working with the Government to institutionalize these tools, with a total of 35 community-based participatory planning's, carried out with communities, government and partners, and the update of the integrated context analysis (ICA) in Niger. WFP ensured that the planning and implementation of activities involved men, women and boys and girls, through its sensitive approach.

WFP continued phasing down of interventions in well performed sites where WFP had been implementing resilience activities since 2014, with a progressive reduction in food assistance and increased focus on technical assistance through partnerships, and future handover to government and development structures.

WFP also developed strong relations with Government stakeholders, local partners, United Nations Agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as Universities and research institutions. Technical and financial inputs were provided to carry out the government-owned Zero Hunger Strategic Review (ZHSW), which will serve as a basis for WFP's country strategic plan (CSP) 2020-2024. Two comprehensive studies - "Fill the Nutrient Gap" and "The Cost of Hunger in Africa" - to analyse the nutrition situation and its socio-economic impact, provide the possibilities to further strengthen policy-making and programming, as well as humanitarian and development action, towards reaching the objective of Zero Hunger in Niger.

## Country Context and Response of the Government

Niger remains the country with the highest number of food insecure people in the Sahel. Chronic vulnerabilities and inability to cope with shocks persist for many households across Niger. On average, between 2014 and 2018, around 1.5 million people each year were classified in Crisis (Phase 3) or above by the Cadre Harmonisé; year-on-year, at least 660,000 people were food insecure. In addition, the preliminary results of the Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) Chronic food security analysis indicated that close to 7 million people were chronically food insecure in Niger. The main causes were poverty, demographic pressure, economic and climate shocks, chronic food insecurity, persistent gender inequalities, limited national budgets and capacities especially at decentralized level for food security, nutrition and education.

Food consumption in Niger was based on staple foods and was not diversified and in some regions, including Diffa, Maradi and Zinder, between 40 and 60 percent of households were unable to afford a nutritious diet [2]. The Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (SMART) 2018 survey demonstrated an increase in the prevalence of the global acute malnutrition rates (GAM) since 2016 from 10.3 percent to 15 percent among children aged 6-59 months. There were high levels of both acute and chronic malnutrition, exceeding the World Health Organization (WHO) critical threshold [3]: 47.8 percent of children aged 6-59 months were stunted, and 14.4 percent were acutely malnourished.

Four out of five Nigeriens work in the agricultural sector [4] and yet national food production was often insufficient to cover the needs of the population. With most cultivated land devoted to rain-fed crops, the variability in year-to-year rainfall was a great risk factor. Poor harvests quickly aggravated food insecurity levels as Nigerien subsistence farmers bridged an annual lean season from June to September. Livestock production [5], was the main income generation of many semi-nomadic pastoralists and was also strongly affected by adverse climate conditions.

Niger ranked last on place 189 on the 2018 Humanitarian Development Index (HDI). The country's annual population growth rate of 3.88 percent is the highest in Africa. In the last 18 years, the population has doubled [6] and it was estimated that today, every second Nigerien was younger than 14 years [7]. Education levels, albeit improving, were still among the lowest worldwide, and adults above 25 years received only two years of schooling on average (1.5 years for women and at 2.6 years for men). Expected years of schooling are 4.7 years for women and girls and six years for men and boys. Niger has a literacy rate of 15.5 percent [8].

Women's participation in the labour market was lower in comparison to women who worked on the land, as it was rare to have the right to ownership as it was usually the head of the family. Consequently, households headed by women had a higher risk of food insecurity as they typically work less arable land. Many of the girls enrolled in school dropped out because of early marriages, domestic work and pregnancy - the adolescent birth rate was the highest worldwide.

Insecurity in the region affected the population living in border areas, particularly Diffa, Tahoua and Tillabéri regions. All three regions had seen the declaration of the state of emergency in affected areas. The Diffa region, bordering Nigeria's Borno State, hosted around 250,000 displaced people, including 119,000 Nigerian refugees, 105,000

internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 26,000 returnees - 53 percent were women and some 57 percent under the age of 18. The border areas with Mali and Burkina Faso of the Tillabéri and Tahoua regions were also affected by insecurity. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2018 stated that the area accommodated more than 55,000 Malian refugees, of which 55 percent were women and 63 percent under the age of 18, had seen internal displacement of more than 50,000 people. Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in the context of structural (inter-familial or infrastructural) changes, a deterioration of socio-economic conditions and precarious living conditions, was a concern. Approximately 60 percent of cases affected women and girls, through early marriages (76.3 percent before the age of 18), or economic violence (deprivation to the right of education), or other forms of physical, psychological or sexual violence.

Food security has always played a significant role for Niger. The Government managed a national food reserve which, local purchases and sales were at a reduced price and targeted free distributions [9]. A national food security fund was activated for additional purchases in times of crises. After the Sahel food crisis in 2011, the new Government adopted an integrated multi-sector strategy, *Les Nigériens Nourissent les Nigériens* (Initiative 3N). The strategy aimed at overcoming the frequent national food and fodder deficit by increasing agricultural production and improving market access to strengthen resilience of vulnerable populations to adverse shocks and reduce malnutrition. A dedicated government agency, the *Haut Commissariat à l'Initiative 3N* aimed at the implementation of this strategy, and collaborated with respective line ministries, the Ministry of Health, Agriculture and Livestock, Education, or the National System for the Prevention and Management of Crises, for its implementation.

The Government was committed to achieving universal primary school education, already compulsory for all primary schoolchildren. The strategy was mainly centred on increasing the offer and accessibility by building schools and hiring additional teachers but also through the demand by putting in place school canteens. The Government recently agreed on improving girls' education by progressively building boarding schools for girls from poor families and alphabetisation centres to allow a reintegration into the education system.

Some of the principal government bodies for the preparedness and response to crises were: *Dispositif National de Prévention et de Gestion des Crises Alimentaires (DNPGCA)*, 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 (EWS) 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.

[1] « Plan d'action 2016-2020 », High authority of initiative 3N, presidency of Niger.

[2] Fill the Nutrient Gap Analysis 2018.

[3] World Health Organization (WHO) threshold for classification as a serious public health emergency is 15 per cent for stunting.

[4] Share of total population that is employed in agriculture: 75.6 percent. Source: ILOSTAT database.

[5] Livestock estimated to be 36 million heads distributed among 87 percent of the population.

[6] Source: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, World Population Review, 2015 Review.

[7] Young Age (0-14) Dependency Ratio (Per 100 People Ages 15-64): 106.2 in 2017. Source: UNDP, HDI, 2018 Statistical Update.

[8] United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Human Development Index 2018

[9] In 2017, the national food reserve purchased over 100,000 tons of cereals to sell 75,000 tons at a reduced price and distribute 25,000 tons for free. Source: "Office des Produits Vivriers du Niger".

## WFP Objectives and Strategic Coordination

WFP in Niger, together with the Government, continued efforts towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 - Zero Hunger by 2030. To ensure all vulnerable people had access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food throughout the entire year. At the same time, aimed at creating strong partnerships with all actors involved, including the Nigerien Government (SDG 17). WFP's operations also aimed towards the achievement of SDG 5 - Gender Equality, in line with WFP's Gender Policy and Gender Action Plan.

To achieve these objectives, WFP provided technical input and support for the Government's Zero Hunger Strategic Review (ZHSR) which identified gaps in the national food security and nutrition response and identified priority actions needed to achieve the goals set out above by 2030. Based on this review, WFP will adopt a country strategic plan (CSP) for the years 2020-2024.



In 2018, WFP's interventions in Niger continued to be structured around the Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO), a Regional emergency operation (EMOP), launched to respond to increased insecurity in northern Nigeria by assisting affected people throughout the Lake Chad Basin, and a special operation for the United Nations Humanitarian Air Services (UNHAS) in Niger.

The PRRO (200961), formulated for the years 2017-2019, aimed to protect the people at greatest risk of shocks and guaranteed minimal food and nutrition security through safety nets. At the same time, set to improve nutrition through prevention and treatment of malnutrition, and nutrition-sensitive activities. The same populations received diverse support from multiple integrated activities, adapted to the seasonal calendar and in convergence with partners. Lastly, enhanced the productive, natural and financial capital of poor and food insecure men and women by supporting asset creation and carrying out local purchases from smallholder farmers.

WFP supported poor and food insecure households with food assistance in the seven regions Agadez, Diffa, Dosso, Maradi, Tahoua, Tillabéri, and Zinder. As in 2017, due to the lack of funding nutrition interventions continued to be limited to children aged 6-23 months and pregnant women. WFP continued to carry out activities in the 37 municipalities identified by WFP, including the 35 *Communes de Convergences* - a building block of WFP's integrated resilience approach. Malian refugees in the Northern Tillabéri and Tahoua regions were supported via food vouchers. In 2018, WFP worked on scaling up resilience-building activities by extending activities to additional 20 communes.

The regional EMOP (200777) was launched in 2015 in response to increased insecurity caused by Boko Haram in the Borno State of Nigeria. Through this operation, WFP provided life-saving support to households in Nigeria as well as in Niger and Chad. In Niger, the operation focused on the Diffa region. Refugees registered in the camps of Sayam Forage received unconditional cash assistance, switching to in-kind food assistance during the lean season (June-September 2018). Outside of camps, refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs), returnees and host communities received either unconditional or conditional in-kind or cash assistance, depending on the season, the degree of vulnerability and local conditions. In stabilized areas, WFP aimed to transition assistance to the first and second wave of displaced (2015/16) from emergency to recovery by providing conditional food assistance and, if conditions allowed it, conditional cash assistance outside the lean season. To prevent malnutrition, any type of food assistance was coupled with prevention of acute malnutrition activities for children aged 6-23 months, behavioural change communication and screening of children. In addition, WFP provided emergency school feeding to pre-school and primary school children whose regular schools were closed and who are being taught in emergency schools.

WFP's operations were coordinated with the government and other United Nations agencies as specified by the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2014–2018 and the annual Humanitarian Response Plans. The United Nations Country Team in Niger was composed of the heads of eleven resident agencies and was part of a standing committee with the Government and technical and financial partners to steer operations towards effective implementation of Niger's Development Plan 2017-2021 [1].

WFP contributed to facilitating the coordination of activities and actors through the cluster/working group approach. WFP co-lead the Food Security Cluster (FSC) together with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and lead the resilience working group that coordinated interventions in 35 prioritized communities [2]. WFP was also a member of the nutrition and education working groups. In 2018, especially throughout the lean season response, coordination meetings were held with all actors, including with non-United Nations partners, to avoid duplication, ensure good coverage of different zones and guarantee the quality of the programme.

To assess food insecurity, WFP, along with other United Nations agencies, the European Union and the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) provided technical and financial support to government-led joint vulnerability assessments and early warning systems. WFP liaised with other actors to promote the Household Economy Approach and the Cadre Harmonisé [3] to harmonize the targeting process.

The WFP-managed United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (Special Operation 200792) aimed to provide safe, effective and efficient access to beneficiaries and project sites for NGOs, United Nations agencies, donor organizations and diplomatic missions; to transport light cargo such as medical supplies, high energy foods, and information and communication technology equipment and provide timely medical and security evacuations for the humanitarian community in Niger.

[1] « Plan de Développement Economique et Social 2017-2021: Un Niger renaissant pour un peuple prospère. »

[2] As specified by UNDAF 2014-2018.

[3] West African version of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC).

# Country Resources and Results

## Resources for Results

In 2018, WFP's operations in Niger were funded at 54 percent. A reduction in funding levels could be observed in comparison to previous years. WFP's Special Operation 200792 had the highest funding level (at 77 percent), followed by the Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO) 200961 (53 percent) and the regional emergency operation (EMOP) 200777 Niger component (52 percent). This trend was in line with overall funding levels for Niger, where the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2018 was funded at 52 percent of the required budget.

To avert funding challenges, WFP regularly exchanged with donor partners, including through two all-donor meetings on strategic directions and operational updates. WFP also implemented several joint projects with other agencies, including United Nations agencies, as well as other actors, which not only enhanced coherence and complementarity of activities in the field, but also enabled to converge funding efforts.

WFP benefited from continued support by long-standing donors. Multi-year agreements that had been concluded to implement WFP's integrated resilience package and some special projects. These six agreements provided predictable funding, thereby guaranteed continuous and reliable implementation of activities, which was a condition for the achievement of resilience outcomes. In addition, WFP benefited from a multi-year allocation for a joint project with Rome-Based Agencies, UN Women and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that contributed to the economic empowerment of rural women. About five percent of overall contributions were multilateral funding, which allowed for internal decisions on how to allocate funding. Many contributions were earmarked by donors to specific activities.

Faced with critical funding gaps for some activities, WFP readjusted and reduced assistance to areas with the greatest needs. In 2018, as in previous years, the nutrition programme was the one most affected by limited resources. Already in 2016, WFP was forced to stop participation of pregnant and lactating women (PLW) and children aged 24-59 months in nutrition treatment programmes. At the beginning of 2018, it was decided to focus nutrition treatment of PLW and children aged 6-23 months in the Diffa Region, while this activity was interrupted for the rest of Niger. Only from June, treatment activities were carried out in Maradi, Zinder, Tahoua and Tillabéri regions, four of the most affected regions in the country.

School feeding activities foreseen under the PRRO were also affected by significant reductions since the beginning of the year. WFP adjusted the programming to areas with the most acute needs and where funding allowed a continuation of activities. Emergency school feeding activities in Diffa under the EMOP continued to benefit from an earmarked contribution and were implemented as planned.

Pre-lean season resilience-building activities were also affected, with a reduction of the number of working days per month for food or cash for asset activities, possibly negatively affected the continuity of asset-creation and preparedness ahead of the lean season.

Ahead of the 2018 lean season, as part of a coordinated approach in the Sahel, WFP prepared the scale-up of interventions in Niger in support of the Government Response Plan (*Plan de Soutien*) foreseeing 1.6 million people in need of food and nutrition assistance during the lean season. Several internal mechanisms allowed for the bridging of funding gaps or late arrival of funding, such as advance financing mechanisms, internal borrowing of commodities from EMOP to PRRO, and the prepositioning of food stocks at WFP's global commodity management facility (GCMF) which allowed to reduce lead times. In addition, the pre-emptive activation of the Level 3 emergency, besides attracting increased international attention, provided several practical benefits, ranging from increased support from WFP's Headquarter and West African regional office, accelerated recruitment processes and simplified purchasing mechanisms.

The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) Special Operation allowed WFP to respond to challenges posed by vast distances and insecurity in border areas, a lack of safe and reliable air service as well as poor road conditions in Niger. Continuous efforts to enhance effectiveness and efficiency resulted in increased capacity using two 37-seater aircraft. Further, the flight schedule was developed to enhance efficiency through improved route configuration, while it should also be noted that the major destinations have some of the lowest cost per passenger kilometre.

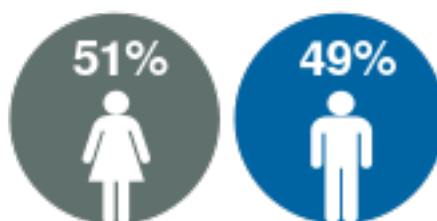
In 2018, WFP Niger's Country Team was reinforced, the number of staff increased from 267 to 291 employees. In terms of geographical presence, WFP in Niamey, as well as the Maradi Sub-Office were most reinforced. Roughly one in four employees were female which a notable gender ratio given the difficult national context.

Some investments were made in 2018, to augment WFP's office infrastructure. In Niamey, WFP expanded into a second office location, allowing for increased office space for all staff as well as the installation of a fitness room for staff health and wellness. In Diffa region, WFP operated two guest houses, one in Diffa and another one in N'guigmi, where several upgrades were made to improve staff wellness.



## Annual Country Beneficiaries

Beneficiaries	Male	Female	Total
Children (under 5 years)	202,413	200,947	403,360
Children (5-18 years)	290,419	259,617	550,036
Adults (18 years plus)	231,749	281,619	513,368
<b>Total number of beneficiaries in 2018</b>	<b>724,581</b>	<b>742,183</b>	<b>1,466,764</b>




## Annual Food Distribution in Country (mt)

Project Type	Cereals	Oil	Pulses	Mix	Other	Total
Regional EMOP	15,919	1,528	5,027	3,828	273	26,574
Single Country PRRO	19,162	1,825	3,820	8,696	193	33,696
<b>Total Food Distributed in 2018</b>	<b>35,081</b>	<b>3,352</b>	<b>8,847</b>	<b>12,523</b>	<b>467</b>	<b>60,271</b>



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



Project Type	Cash	Value Voucher	Commodity Voucher
Regional EMOP	3,198,342	-	-
Single Country PRRO	7,207,170	512,736	-
<b>Total Distributed in 2018</b>	<b>10,405,512</b>	<b>512,736</b>	<b>-</b>

## Supply Chain

Niger is a landlocked country with the closest sea ports over 800 km away from the borders. WFP relied mostly on the port of Cotonou in Benin and of Lomé in Togo to bring internationally or regionally procured food into Niger. The latter served as main port for all food purchased by the global commodity management facility (GCMF) which is WFP's internal pre-financing facility by which food is prepositioned along certain regional logistical corridors to reduce delivery lead times. A small logistics unit was based in Lomé and co-financed by WFP, this unit carried out administrative procedures of the importing process.

The overland transport from the ports into the country was exclusively handled by sub-contracted commercial transport companies. In 2018, WFP contracted a Nigerien transporting company, which significantly reduced lead times, compared to previous years, facilitating administrative and logistics procedures. A different overland transport route, crossing Mali and Burkina Faso, was taken to transport salt from Senegal.

Commodities were procured in bulk and re-packaged by cooperating partners ahead of the distributions. Dispatched to final distribution points, included refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps, health centres and schools, was handled by a combination of cooperating partners, commercial transporters and WFP's own fleet. The latter consisted of one truck per sub-office and a cargo van. In 2018, ahead of the opening of humanitarian corridors into the Malian border, WFP positioned all their trucks into Ayérou as the starting point of the corridor. Reliance on WFP's own fleet for this time-critical intervention guaranteed deliveries were undertaken in the few open corridor days.

WFP is aiming to shift to local procurement to stimulate the local economy, agricultural investment and ultimately self-reliance and resilience of the local population. In 2018, all local purchases, consisting millet, sorghum, beans and nutrient supplements, were carried out using the GCMF. WFP also undertook purchases from smallholder farmers. Since 2017, 3,088 mt were purchased from 57 farmer unions (30 percent of the farmers unions members were women). To ensure continued and improved local purchases, WFP Niger introduced a pilot initiative, introducing a new pricing mechanism, referring to the commodity's market price at the time of the delivery and not to a price fixed at contract signature. This new contractual arrangement should limit the number of smallholder farmers' defaults in 2019.

Smallholder farmer's organizations received technical support in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (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. Women smallholder farmers were particularly encouraged to participate in the local procurement programme via a project (Rural Women Economic Empowerment Project) carried out in cooperation with IFAD, FAO and UN Women.

For direct cash transfers, WFP cooperated with five microfinance institutions in Tahoua, Maradi, Zinder and Diffa regions which pre-financed the operations. Malian Refugees in Mangaizé received e-vouchers, which were recharged every month using WFP's digital platform for beneficiary and transfer management (SCOPE). Refugees used e-vouchers with seven accredited suppliers who deliver to the camp's food fair.

To strengthen the government's capacity for food storages, WFP co-managed extended delivery points in all regions, including their warehouses. A WFP storekeeper was based in all warehouses. At peak times, WFP rented additional storage from government-owned warehouses.



## Annual Food Purchases for the Country (mt)

Commodity	Local	Regional/International	Total
Iodised Salt	-	465	465
<b>Total</b>	-	<b>465</b>	<b>465</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	-	<b>100.0%</b>	

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

Commodity	Total
Beans	3,783
Corn Soya Blend	6,015
LNS	959
Ready To Use Supplementary Food	64
Sorghum/Millet	16,677
Split Peas	402
Vegetable Oil	466
<b>Total</b>	<b>28,366</b>

## Implementation of Evaluation Recommendations and Lessons Learned

A mid-term internal evaluation of the Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (PRRO 200961) was carried out in April 2018 with a final report published in August 2018. The evaluators interviewed 500 people, of which 350 were beneficiaries of WFP assistance, and visited 16 sites where WFP activities were implemented.

Recommendations were made with regards to the strengthening of monitoring of nutrition indicators moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) indicators of children, the impact of the school feeding programme, of asset-building activities, all with regards to the better showcase programme outcomes and the addressing of funding shortfalls. As such, WFP agreed and ensured increased MAM screening and monitoring in villages and treatment centres; and enforce monitoring of school canteens that received WFP assistance on attendance and performance rate. Strengthened monitoring with regards to food assistance for asset (FFA) activities, concerned the sustainability of positive developments following the implementation of these activities. It was further suggested to support more formalized knowledge exchange with government actors who were implementing similar activities. As parts of WFP's resilience scale-up these recommendations were addressed, through the regular collection and follow-up on project achievements, as well as the signature of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with three key line Ministries, Agriculture, Environment and Education. Beyond 2019, the evaluation recommended, activities should continue to support communities recovering from conflicts (Malian refugees, and population in Diffa), and areas with genuine potential for agro-pastoral development and including a consideration of the presence of partners who can take over after WFP interventions. Due to relatively low quantities of local purchases, a recommendation was made to better adapt contracting procedures to cooperatives with limited marketing capacities. WFP will experiment with food supply agreements to increase interest of selling to WFP.

Another evaluation was published by WFP's evaluation office, dedicated to WFP nutrition programmes in the Sahel, for which assessments were carried out by external consultants in Niger, Chad, Mali and Sudan. In Niger, a sample of 1,900 children was assessed in March 2014 and September 2016. Between these dates, WFP reduced the number of communes targeted through FFA activities, while at the same time introducing nutrition-specific programmes for the prevention and treatment of malnutrition. A comparison of households demonstrated that the positive impact on children was stronger in households that also participated in FFA activities (MAM reduced by 15.5 percent). While children of households receiving no assistance at all displayed a stronger evolution of MAM indicators than children that participated in nutrition-specific programmes. As a result, the evaluators gathered that

the counter-intuitive result was evident by intra-household decision-making.

Given the strong impact of FFA activities, it was recommended to further expand FFA programming and to merge, whenever possible, with the provision of MAM treatment or prevention programmes. In 2019 – and beyond – WFP will continue to work towards the mainstreaming of nutrition-sensitive aspects in its programme, to ensure complementarity and achieve scalable impact on the nutrition levels of children and pregnant and lactating women (PLW). The Fill the Nutrient Gap analysis [1] highlighted the advantage of combining interventions to reduce the cost of the diet at the household level. Through the combination of three interventions such as nutrition supplementation for children aged 6-23 months and pregnant and lactating women and girls (PLWGs); school feeding for primary schoolchildren and cash transfers for the household.

In 2017, the Fill the Nutrient Gap presentation demonstrated the linkages between FFA activities and women's empowerment [1], both men and women beneficiaries perceived an improvement of women's empowerment and nutritional status, among others, WFP's integrated interventions.

Results demonstrated that reduced seasonal migration by men reduced the workload on women and hardship during their absence. Though FFA activities also allowed women to avoid seasonal migration not only because they provide income, but also because they are associated with school feeding activities.

Another 2018 study on the effects of community-based participatory planning (CBPP) was carried out by *Référence des Etudes de Marché* (REM) Africa and demonstrated that the planning tools contributed to women's empowerment in Niger. The study concluded that women living in villages where CBPPs were carried out had increased access to media, social services, natural resources, and an overall higher political participation.

[1] WFP, Fill the Nutrient Gap presentation, 2018.

[2] WFP, "The potential of Food Assistance for Assets (FFA) to empower women and improve women's nutrition, 2017: a five-country study" <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000023821/download/>.

# 50 Years: WFP Addressing Key Moments with the Nigerien Government

In 2018, WFP marked their 50 years anniversary in Niger. Since then, WFP's activities and collaboration with the Nigerien Government, have evolved over time, jointly responding to key moments in history that have impacted the food security situation in the country.

In 1968, the year marking the beginning of the Great Sahel Drought (1968-1974), the government of Hamani Diori, Niger's first president after independence, signed a basic agreement with WFP. The population of Niger at that time was estimated to be around 4 million to 4.5 million people.

By the agreement, the new United Nations agency, created only seven years earlier on request of United States President Eisenhower to see if food assistance could be organized in a multilateral way, committed itself to delivering food at no charge in form of a grant to the closest port or frontier station and destined for use in emergency relief or development projects, implemented by the Government.

On 14 April 1969, Adeke Boerma, the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), approved WFP's first emergency relief project in Niger. The assistance of 2,250 mt of sorghum enough to feed 125,000 people for three months, was budgeted at just below USD 300,000. Shortly after this, on 7 July 1969, the first development project was approved to establish a milk industry. The plan foresaw the delivery of milk powder to factory in Niamey to produce 5,000 litres of milk. The assistance was initially meant to be phased out as locally produced milk to increasingly replace foreign milk powder after five years.

In 1970, the *Office des Produits Viviers du Niger* (OPVN) was created to stabilize national cereal prices, to organize cereal imports and exports and to receive and manage food assistance. In 1973, the Permanent Interstates Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), was launched.

By 1973/74, the multi-year drought led to a famine. Estimated that Niger lost half of its animal livestock. Emergency food assistance in the Sahel area provided by WFP quickly rose. In 1974, Seyni Kountché's Government put a priority to preventing the recurrent food deficits and a focus was put on the development of irrigation systems to reduce dependency on rainfall. Therefore, declassified 70,000 ha of the Tamou reserve in the South to allow for drought-affected people from the North in Zarmaganda to resettle into regions with more arable land.

A decade into power, then governing an estimated population of 6.8 million, the Kountché's Government had to deal with a severe drought. In 1983/84, the harvesting season was among the worst in history. The Government estimated the food deficit to be around 500,000 mt. In addition to the climate-induced shocks, Nigeria shut their borders to Niger in a move to carry out economic and fiscal reforms. At the same time, expelled 300,000 Nigeriens. International food assistance to Niger rose sharply to almost 300,000 mt in 1985. The Sahel region received 18 percent of global food assistance in 1985 and further strengthening the following harvesting season.

In response to the economic crisis, the Government opted for public support for the relaunch of export crops, such as cotton, peanuts and peas (Niébé) and a liberalization of the cereal market. Following decisions taken in a structural adjustment programme, marketing and international trade restrictions for the private sector were lifted in 1987 for millet, sorghum and maize.

In 1998, with the assistance of international donors, the Nigerien Government designed the *Dispositif National de Prévention et de Gestion des Crises Alimentaires (DNP-GCA)*, composed of different information, coordination and management units, to further improve the information on food insecurity among the population and strengthen the coordination the activities of various actors.

In 2004/05, another food crisis spread throughout Niger. After the harvesting season of 2004, WFP initially planned an emergency assistance of 6,500 mt. In the first semester of 2005, the magnitude of the emergency became more evident. In July, WFP decided to drop plans foreseeing assistance through the national food banks and to intervene by means of a large-scale of unconditional food distribution, assisting 2.5 million beneficiaries throughout the last two months of the lean season (August-September). At the same time, WFP reinitiated the malnutrition programme for infants and pregnant and lactating women (PLW) in Niger.

In 2008, the lack of insecurity and flight connections between Niger's main cities, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) began operating in the country. A Dornier with a capacity of 34 seats connected Niamey with Maradi, Zinder, Tahoua and Agadez.

The Government of Issoufou Mahamadou, elected 2011, launched the initiative *Les Nigériens Nourrissent Les Nigériens* with a dedicated High Commissioner under the cabinet of the presidency placing activities to overcome the recurrent food deficits and of eradicating hunger in Niger.

In December 2018, WFP and representatives of the Government of Niger celebrated 50 years of cooperation in the field of food security. On that occasion, a renewed cooperation agreement was officially signed, aiming at reaching the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 to achieve zero hunger by 2030.



# Project Results

## Activities and Operational Partnerships

Supporting WFP Strategic Objective 1 – Save Lives and Protect Livelihoods in Emergencies – the project had the following objectives:

1. To provide a safe, effective and efficient access to beneficiaries and project implementation sites for non-governmental organizations (NGOs), United Nations agencies, donor organizations and diplomatic missions in Niger;
2. To transport life-saving cargo including medical supplies and high-energy foods; and
3. To perform medical evacuations/relocations of humanitarian staff.

The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) fleet consisted of a 37-seater Dash 8 aircraft and a 19-seater Beechcraft 1900D until May. Due to increased demand, a fleet revision was implemented with the substitution of the 19-seater aircraft with another 37-seater Dash-8 in June. For fuel provision, UNHAS continued procuring services from international vendors operating with fuel tanks at the airports of Niamey, Zinder, Agadez and Diffa.

From Niamey, six destinations in Niger were served on a regular basis: Agadez, Diffa, Dirkou, Maradi, Tahoua and Zinder. Dirkou was added as a regular destination in November 2017 but the trip frequency quickly reduced to only twice per month in 2018.

Special flights were conducted on partial or full-cost recovery basis upon request from government counterparts, donor representatives or the Humanitarian Coordinator to transport large teams that monitored missions and field visits. In order to proceed with medical evacuations, two stretchers can be installed in each aircraft for patients who need to be horizontally stabilized.

In November 2018, UNHAS contracted a MI8 helicopter with its crew to be based at Niamey airport for a duration of two months. The first UNHAS helicopter operation in Niger was initiated on request of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and funded by the United Nations's Central Emergency Relief Fund (UNCERF) to access people in need of humanitarian assistance at the Malian border. The helicopter, which arrived in Niamey in early December, planned to transport passengers and cargo to three different sites (Inatès, Ikarfane and Saraye).

The UNHAS Steering Committee under the joint leadership of the Humanitarian Coordinator and WFP played an important role in the management of UNHAS. Similar to previous years, members of the Steering Committee included: (i) 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), 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) NGOs represented by Concern International, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and the Save the Children United Kingdom.

In addition, four users group meetings were organized to receive feedback from the whole humanitarian community in the country, to set up user-friendly flight schedules and to discuss the integration of new user requests.

## Results

In 2018, the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) operated aircrafts that flew 2,097 hours (175 hours per month on average). Due to multiple requests made for special flights by the humanitarian community, the number of flights and hours flown peaked in March with a total of 131 flights undertaken and 209 hours flown.

A total of 13,398 passengers and 38.6 mt of light cargo were transported throughout the year. Occupancy rates were above 50 percent in January and steadily increasing to almost 70 percent in May. The second 37-seater replaced the 19-seater in June and occupancy rates dropped slightly but rose to 70 percent again in November.

For 2018, the number of total flights surpassed initial targets by some seven percent – 444 flights were conducted. In the case of the suspension of flights, caused by as adverse weather conditions or technical defects, UNHAS worked to ensure these were rescheduled once the situation improved. An efficient system allowed for as little as 22 flights cancelled throughout the year, which is a mere five percent. The main reasons were the before-mentioned, as well as illness or air safety.

Diffa was the main destination for 2018, with almost 40 percent of trips made to reach or return from Diffa, followed by Agadez (20 percent) and Maradi (17 percent). Only about 5 percent of all bookings could not be served due to cancellations of regular flights, emergency flights, a low number of passengers and bad weather.

In addition to the regular flight schedule, UNHAS carried out 14 special flights (two of which involved both aircrafts). Most flights were requested by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Organization of International Migration (OIM) with destination to Agadez. WFP, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund and (UNFPA), the World Bank, *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) and the Catholic Relief Services to Agadez, Doukou, Diffa and Maradi.

A total of 11 emergency medical evacuations were carried out upon request of five organisations. Medical evacuations to Niamey were made from Diffa (seven times), Agadez (two times) and Maradi (two times). All requests for medical evacuations were fulfilled in a timely manner, achieving a 100 percent response rate. No request for evacuations in relation to difficult security situations were made.

The helicopter crew undertook reconnaissance flights with the United Nations Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS) in December to validate various helicopter landing areas in Tillabery region that had been identified by WFP ground missions in November. A weekly flight schedule for the identified sites (Inatès, Ikarfane and Saraye), starting mid-December, was shared with the UNHAS User Group but no flights were carried out until the end of the year due to a lack of demand.

Cost recovery efforts were discussed in Steering Committee meetings; the level of a cost-recovery of 30 percent on tickets was maintained in 2018. Due to regressive funding levels, this might change for 2019. On the total budget, UNHAS achieved a cost-recovery of 35.2 percent for its operation in 2018. Thanks to efficient handling of its flights, this is due to a positive occupancy rate, where a high number of passengers per flight allowed for more returns, as well as the increased capacity through the bigger plane as of June.

## Performance Monitoring

The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) continuously optimized its fleet management and flight schedules using the Performance Management Tool (PMT). The PMT was tracked weekly, monthly and annual data related to aircraft utilization, flown passengers, amount of bookings not served as well as operational costs per passenger and kilometer flown. The data was regularly published by WFP's Aviation Service biannual performance reviews, which covered all 15 countries with active UNHAS operations in 2018. The Mid-Year Review 2018 indicated that by June 2018 UNHAS in Niger served 122 different user organizations and had transported 6,491 passengers and 14.5 mt of light cargo.

Feedback from UNHAS users was received via multiple channels. The quarterly User Group Committee (UGC) convened four times in 2018. The UGC meetings not only serve to receive general feedback on UNHAS services but also received indications about how demands are likely to evolve in the future. In addition, UNHAS launched an online survey that evaluated passenger satisfaction (PSS) in October. Satisfaction rates (of 31 respondents) were above 90 percent for all categories. As well as, another survey analyzed satisfaction with the provision of access (PASS) among heads of user organizations.

Strategic orientation and advisory on funding is given by the biannual Steering Committee (SC), which in 2018, convened one time. Following the organ's approval to increase passenger transport capacities of the UNHAS fleet, the Beechcraft 1900 was replaced by a DHC Dash-8.

WFP's Aviation Service employs dedicated staff to monitor and ensure compliance with safety, security and quality standards. WFP's Aviation Security unit carried out an evaluation mission in October, recommending some adjustments of passenger and bag handling procedures. In December, at the initiative of the same unit, UNHAS Niger conducted a flight crash simulation exercise, which involved aircraft crew, UNHAS, WFP, as well as national airport authorities and security forces. A second evaluation mission was carried out by WFP's Aviation Quality Assurance unit in December to assess compliance with UNHAS standard operation procedures.

## At the service of the humanitarian community in Niger

Green military aircrafts were parked by the runway in Diffa airport in the early hours of a relatively mild but dusty day in January. The gathered aircrafts spoke of the armed conflict which erupted in Nigeria's Borno State almost ten years ago. The border to Nigeria is just 10 kilometers away.

Women and men with backpacks enter a white aircraft. Blue logos indicate that it is operated by the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) and that the passengers are humanitarian staff working for United Nations, non-governmental organisations, and government agencies, organizing assistance to the thousands of people who were forced to leave their homes over the course of the conflict.

The two pilots in the cockpit are preparing for take-off as they get a message over the radio. “We have an aid worker from Agadez and we urgently have to evacuate him to the hospital in Niamey today,” says the UNHAS officer based in Niamey. He explains that his situation is very critical. The pilots acknowledge receipt of the message and take off for Zinder, where a technical stop is scheduled to refuel the aircraft, allowing them to make the entire 1,100 km journey from Diffa to Niamey. After successful take-off, a discussion between pilots, airline staff and UNHAS officers begins to discuss how to respond to the new situation.

Figuring out a flight rotation is a difficult equation with many variables, such as distances between airports and between alternative airports, if the aircraft cannot land at the destination, fuel availability, wind speed, traffic in the air and on the ground. In Niger, airports are distant and fuel is limited and only available at some locations. Air traffic is low but unexpected situations like dust winds or heavy dust storms, such as Haboobs, or airport closures, for instance, can call for ad hoc changes of flight plans.

In a regular commercial airline, pilots would not be involved in this activity. Yet, operating and working for UNHAS is different. Once the passenger lists are finalized and closed, UNHAS officers and the airplane crew, work together to find the best possible rotation. Input from the aircraft crew is highly appreciated, as they have a lot of experience in Niger. With time, they found solutions that a computer programme would not have been found. For instance, they realised that the tank would never fill up completely because the parking apron at the Agadez airport is not even, tricking the fuel sensor to show a full tank load. Parking diagonally made the trick.

“Your leg between Zinder and Niamey is basically full, you’re already carrying 30 passengers for Niamey”, says the UNHAS officer. The aircraft crew immediately understands: To carry out the emergency medical evacuation, the crew has to install a stretcher for the patient, which means taking out four seat rows, effectively reducing the capacity to one patient and 29 passengers.

Airlines usually resort to handing out vouchers to volunteers who take the next flight, when a plane is overbooked. As a humanitarian worker, not getting on the plane may mean several additional days in remote or even dangerous areas.

The team discusses how to bring all passengers back to Niamey and carry out the medical evacuation. “I think I have it!” says the pilot. Although it is standard procedure to take out four seat rows, the stretcher may also fit in the space of just three rows. This would limit the space for the accompanying doctor, but it is not a critical deviation and would not block emergency exits. After landing in Zinder the pilot calls the base in Niamey to confirm that the plan is in accordance with flight safety regulations.

During the one hour flight to Zinder, the cockpit, the airline operators and UNHAS officers have found a solution that allows them to carry out the emergency evacuation without leaving any of the passengers behind. That day they will fly from Zinder to Agadez, install the stretcher and bring the patient to Niamey without leaving any of the original 30 passengers behind. This was another successful day for UNHAS and the humanitarian staff it serves in Niger.

# Figures and Indicators

## Data Notes

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UNHAS - Niger airplane waiting at Niamey airport to transport humanitarian staff to remote places in the field.

## Project Indicators

### Output Indicators

Output	Unit	Planned	Actual	% Actual vs. Planned
<b>SO1: Special Operation (Air Ops)</b>				
Average weight of light cargo transported monthly	Mt	3	3	100.0%
Number of agencies and organizations using humanitarian air services	agency/organization	122	122	100.0%
Number of locations served	site	6	6	100.0%
Number of needs assessments carried out	assessment	7	7	100.0%
Number of passengers transported	individual	1,000	1,117	111.7%
Percentage of passenger bookings served	%	100	100	100.0%
Percentage response to medical and security evacuation	%	100	100	100.0%