



WFP EVALUATION



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES
CHANGING LIVES

IMPACT OF INTEGRATED RESILIENCE PROGRAMMING IN NIGER

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is committed to building resilience in vulnerable communities. Niger's rural population faces many climate-related shocks, particularly droughts, which are expected to increase in frequency and intensity due to climate change. Around 80% of the population also depends on subsistence agriculture, which is highly sensitive to changes in rainfall.

In Niger, WFP provides multi-year support through a tailored package of interventions, delivered in partnership with others. This integrated approach includes food assistance for assets (FFA), lean season support (LSS), smallholder agricultural market support, nutrition, health, and education programmes. FFA is the entry point for the programme, providing immediate food relief through cash transfers in exchange for work on projects such as restoring land and improving water access.

To understand the impact of this comprehensive programme, WFP Niger requested support from the Office of Evaluation to conduct an impact evaluation in partnership with the World Bank's Development Impact Evaluation (DIME) department and with generous support from BMZ Germany.

The evaluation, carried out between 2021 and 2023, focused on how well households and communities are able to absorb, recover, adapt, and transform their food security in the face of shocks and stressors. The findings highlight positive changes after the first two years, and longer-term impacts can be explored by conducting future follow-up surveys.

KEY EVIDENCE

Two years after the resilience programme started, the evaluation found increases in food security and subjective well-being. Households intensified their participation in agriculture, by increasing land area cultivated, and production of agricultural staple crops. Impacts were greatest for the poorest households.

Results from the high-frequency data suggest that impacts were seasonal and therefore varied at different times of the year. The programme improved food security after harvest, but not during the lean season – that is, in the months between the main planting and harvest periods. This is consistent with the finding that participants increased their agriculture production, and thereby their food stocks when additional food was newly available.

The evaluation also suggests that further programmatic adjustments could enhance households' ability to manage ongoing stressors, such as lean seasons. Programme adjustments could further strengthen households' ability to deal with shocks, including by ensuring food security remains consistently higher throughout the entire year.

Finally, this evaluation captures impacts after the first two years of programme implementation. A longer timeframe would be needed to assess whether these impacts will sustain, increase, or diminish over time. One assumption behind the WFP resilience programme in the Sahel is that a multi-year engagement is needed to achieve sustained effects, given that one of the pathways to better food security and resilience is ecosystem change, which may take longer than two years to materialize. Follow-up surveys after four or five years from the start of the programme could capture longer-term impacts on resilience.

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WFP/Arete/Moussa Garba

KEY FINDINGS

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| <p>1 The impact evaluation found that food security improved after two years</p> |  <p>The Food Consumption Score (FCS) increased by 1.5 points, meaning households could consume fruits or vegetables 1.5 more days per week (a moderate effect). Moreover, programme participants reported to be 13.6% less likely to be food insecure. However, there was no change in dietary diversity.</p> |
| <p>2 Improvements in food security appeared to be seasonal</p> |  <p>Impacts were greatest post-harvest and disappeared during the lean season. This pattern aligns with the finding that increased agricultural production primarily drives impacts. Longer-term impacts on food security would require future surveys.</p> |
| <p>3 Poorer households, eligible for both FFA and LSS, showed greater food security improvements</p> |  <p>This suggests that either the cash transfers to households or the assets created through FFA, had a greater impact on food security.</p> |
| <p>4 Villages closer to FFA sites/assets showed more significant food security improvements</p> |  <p>For households in these primary villages, the FCS improved by 2.6 points suggesting that proximity to FFA sites/assets has an important impact. This is consistent with assets (not just cash transfers) contributing to increased agricultural production. There is no clear difference in impacts between female-headed and male-headed households.</p> |
| <p>5 The impact evaluation found a statistically significant increase in agriculture production after two years</p> |  <p>This finding helps explain why impacts on food security are greatest in the post-harvest period, when more food is available. A relatively small decrease in non-staple crop sales suggests that households may have needed less cash to cover their basic needs. However, the agricultural production increase did not improve food security throughout the full year.</p> |
| <p>6 The impact evaluation found improvements in households' ability to cope with shocks</p> |  <p>The programme helped households cope with rainfall shortages and a drought in 2021. During the drought, food security deteriorated more slowly in programme villages than in comparison villages. Similar patterns emerged immediately post-harvest in 2022 when drought shocks were not as acute indicating that impacts are also seasonal.</p> |
| <p>7 The impact evaluation found improvement in subjective well-being and social support</p> |  <p>Households participating in the programme reported higher life satisfaction, a better outlook about the future and fewer symptoms of depression. The programme also improved households' perceived social status in the community and social support, including their ability to mobilize financial support, which links to resilience capacities.</p> |
| <p>8 The impact evaluation did not find many changes in off-farm livelihood activities</p> |  <p>While livestock ownership increased, the number of livestock owned did not, and there were no changes in off-farm income-generating activities.</p> |
| <p>9 The impact evaluation did not find significant improvement in subjective resilience or coping strategies after two years</p> |  <p>These are broadly consistent with food security improving only at certain intervals and not more generally throughout the year. It is also consistent with the fact that changes in livelihoods are concentrated in agriculture, with limited off-farm diversification or increases in households' financial capacities.</p> |

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

This impact evaluation of WFP's resilience programme in Niger revealed promising improvements in food security, livelihoods, and resilience capacities after only two years, while also highlighting areas for potential programme enhancements. Although the programme demonstrated positive impacts, the evaluation revealed that the magnitude of these effects varied, suggesting opportunities for achieving broader and more sustained benefits. The evaluation pinpoints key consideration for future programme implementation and opportunities for future learning.

1 RECONSIDER HOW TO SUPPORT VILLAGES FURTHER AWAY FROM FFA SITES THAT BENEFITED LESS FROM IMPROVED FOOD SECURITY.

Villages close to FFA sites and assets saw the most improvements in food security. A direct way to enhance impacts is prioritizing households in villages where sites are located, rather than attempting to spread benefits by also covering households in further-away villages. Better targeting and prioritization of villages very close to FFA sites could increase impacts on food security by 70% (from 1.5 to 2.6 FCS points on average). One way to implement this is to ensure that each village participating in the programme is close to an FFA site.

2 IMPROVE THE PROGRAMME MONITORING SYSTEM TO MORE PRECISELY TRACK WHICH HOUSEHOLDS PARTICIPATE IN WHICH PROGRAMME COMPONENT, HOW MUCH THEY RECEIVE FROM TRANSFERS, AND WHEN.

Stronger monitoring systems can support a more consistent implementation of programme components. To improve monitoring, it is helpful to (i) create a comprehensive household registry with unique identifiers to implement targeting, (ii) document participation in programme components, and (iii) keep receipts of transfers over time. This could also support better tracking of programme costs per household.

3 ENSURE MORE ROBUST AND CONSISTENT IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAMME COMPONENTS.

Administrative data shows variation in how well programme components were integrated over time. Unintegrated programme components and incomplete implementation may dilute impacts.

4 RE-EXAMINE SOME OF THE CONTENT OF THE RESILIENCE PROGRAMME PACKAGE, INCLUDING WHETHER SOME COMPONENTS ARE NECESSARY TO MEET SPECIFIC RESILIENCE OBJECTIVES, AND WHETHER INNOVATIONS COULD ACHIEVE LARGER, FASTER IMPACTS AT LOWER COSTS.

Findings and broader evidence suggest that programmatic adjustments could enhance the ability of households to manage ongoing stressors, such as lean seasons, and ensure more consistent impacts throughout the year. Testing and refining programme components (for example, savings, support to off-farm livelihoods, and alternative assets) could maximize programme effectiveness.

5 CONSIDER LONG-TERM FOLLOW-UP BY RESURVEYING SAMPLE HOUSEHOLDS AFTER FOUR TO FIVE YEARS WHILE MAINTAINING CONSISTENT PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION.

This would enable measuring longer-term impacts and ecosystem effects.

WFP/Emelcom



ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

The WFP programme in Niger aimed to strengthen the resilience of smallholder farmers and vulnerable populations by helping to transform food systems and strengthen livelihoods, community structures and social cohesion. It included five main components as part of the integrated resilience package:

- **FOOD-ASSISTANCE FOR ASSETS:** Poorest households were eligible to receive conditional cash transfers of approximately US\$43 per month (26,000 CFA) for 2-3 months a year for working on community assets.
- **LEAN SEASON SUPPORT (LSS):** Some households received additional unconditional cash/food assistance averaging US\$52 per month (30,400 CFA) to offset peak hunger and malnutrition during the lean season from June to August.
- **NUTRITION SUPPORT:** Lactating women and children aged 6-23 months received nutritional supplements, health screenings and educational campaigns. Boys and girls received nutritious school meals, take-home rations, and scholarships for adolescent girls.
- **SMALLHOLDER AGRICULTURAL MARKET SUPPORT (SAMS):** Smallholder farmers were supported through the development of value chains, storage facilities, food processing and market access.
- **SCHOOL MEALS** intended to increase access to education and school retention rates through nutritious school meals, take-home rations, and scholarships to adolescent girls. Complementary activities included school gardens, school herds and the installation of grain mills to reduce the burden of chores on women and girls.

AIM OF THE EVALUATION

PRIMARY EVALUATION QUESTION: What was the impact of the integrated WFP resilience package on the resilience of recipient households and communities?

The priority was to document households' ability to maintain and improve food security and well-being in the face of shocks.

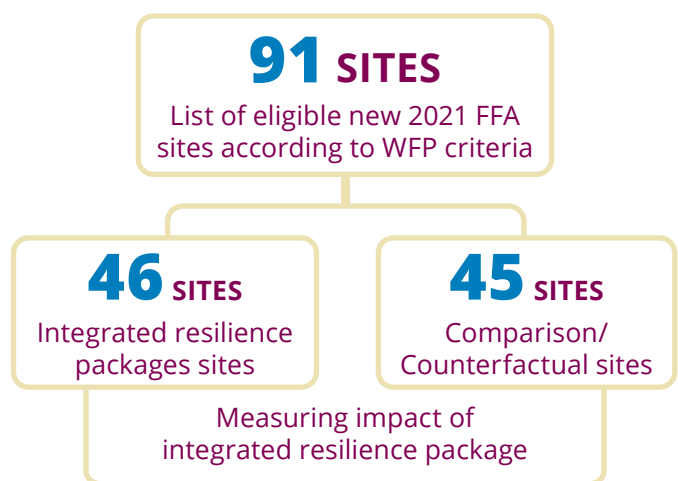
The impact evaluation also assessed how the effectiveness of the WFP resilience package varied by households' eligibility to receive both FFA and LSS support (i.e., their initial poverty or food security levels within targeted communities), as well as by distance to FFA sites (i.e. whether they were in a village closer to the site or further away).

EVALUATION DESIGN

To identify the causal impacts of the resilience programme, the impact evaluation used a clustered RCT design. The 91 eligible FFA sites in Diffa, Dosso, and Tahoua regions were randomly assigned to either the Programme Group (46 sites) or the Comparison Group (45 sites).

To measure impacts, the evaluation combined detailed baseline and endline survey data, covering broad household capacities, with high-frequency data, measuring food security and well-being dynamics. High-frequency data was used to analyse impacts over time, including across seasons and during exposure to shocks.

The impact evaluation upheld United Nations Evaluation Group ethical standards and complied with local laws. It received ethical approval by an Association for Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programmes (AAHRPP) fully accredited Institutional Review Board (IRB) and from local institutions in Niger (based at the Health Ministry of Niger).



CLIMATE AND RESILIENCE IMPACT EVALUATION WINDOW

This impact evaluation is the first completed in the Climate and Resilience Impact Evaluation Window, which was created to develop portfolios of impact evaluations conducted across countries, using similar designs, to make findings generalizable. This Impact Evaluation is also part of a broader evidence generation initiative in the Sahel region known as Impact Evaluation for Resilience Learning in the Sahel, which focused on the 2018 Sahel Integrated Resilience Programme that was launched in partnership with the governments of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger.

WFP EVALUATION in partnership with



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