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Niger: Drought Early Action Protocol summary

 International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

EAP approved **July 2021**

Population to be assisted **28,000 people**

EAP timeframe **5 Years**

EAP number **EAP2021NE02**

Budget: **349,989 Swiss francs**

Early action timeframe **2 Months**

The IFRC Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) has approved a total allocation of CHF 350,000 from its Forecast based Action (FbA) mechanism for the Niger Red Cross Society. The approved amount consists of an immediate allocation of CHF 27,228 for readiness and pre-positioning and CHF 322,761 automatically allocated to implement early actions once the defined triggers are met.

The FbA by the DREF is a Forecast-based Financing funding mechanism managed by the DREF. Allocations for the FbA by the DREF are made from a separate financial component of the DREF (MDR00004) and do not affect the reserves of the DREF appeal code MDR00001. Unearmarked contributions to the FbA by the DREF are encouraged to guarantee enough funding is available for the Early Action Protocols being developed.

SUMMARY OF THE EARLY ACTION PROTOCOL

Located in the heart of West Africa, Niger is a landlocked country with a surface area of 1,267,000 km², two-thirds of which is located in the Saharan zone. It is bordered to the North by Algeria and Libya, to the East by Chad, to the South by Nigeria and Benin and to the West by Burkina Faso and Mali. This border configuration makes the preservation of peace and security a challenge for Niger, given the residual insecurity in the North (Agadez) and the recent crises in neighbouring countries such as Mali, Libya, Nigeria and Burkina Faso. The landlocked nature of the country leads to high transport costs and problems in supplying markets and selling local production, which has an impact on the cost of living, which remains relatively high. This contributes to the precariousness of the living conditions of its population, estimated at 23,424,433 inhabitants (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019), in a context where food self-sufficiency is far from being a reality.

Niger is crossed by the Niger River, which is its only permanent watercourse over a length of 550 km. Niger is a Sahelian country with a tropical arid climate, characterized by a short-wet season of three to four months, giving rise to rainfall in the southern third of the country, varying between 200 mm and 850 mm from north to south (more than 600 mm on only 1% of the territory), and a dry season of eight to nine months over the whole of the country, which is otherwise desert on 67% of its surface. The maximum daily temperature can reach 45° in March and April. According to the summary of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) report for December 2016, released on 21 July 2017, Niger is among the 34 countries in the world with a very high risk of natural disasters.

Niger regularly faces extreme climate variability: drought in 2010, and exceptional rainfall in 2012 and 2020. The 2010 drought stands out for its magnitude, affecting almost 7,900,000 people. The areas most affected by this climatic hazard appear to be the region of Zinder, followed by Maradi and Agadez.

In this context, climate risks are further amplified by factors such as the effects of climate change, household poverty, silting of water points, weak information and warning mechanisms, weak regional disaster management structures, etc. The two main climatic hazards affecting the country are therefore droughts and floods. The emergencies caused by these two hazards have also contributed significantly to raising awareness of the need to invest in hazard prevention.

In 2020, Niger Red Cross had their EAP for Floods approved. Now Niger Red Cross moved on to develop an EAP for drought, an important hazard in terms of the number of people affected due to the agricultural and pastoral nature of Niger.

For the development of this EAP, five thematic workshops were held, with the participation of all stakeholders in the field of agro-climatic forecasting and risk management. The participation of all stakeholders in these various workshops (Launch and presentation of the FbF concept; Consultation of stakeholders at the regional-Zinder level; Identification of indicators and thresholds; Elaboration of triggers and definition of early actions; Validation of the triggering strategy by local stakeholders) and the simulation was very active.

This EAP was developed in collaboration with five categories of stakeholders. These include:

- *Government of Niger*, both line ministries and technical services
- *Regional Institutions*, such as African Centre for Meteorological Applications for Development (ACMAD), FEWSNET
- *International NGOs*, including Save the Children
- *UN Agencies* (FAO, WFP, OCHA)
- *The Red Cross Red Crescent Movement*: IFRC (Niger cluster Delegation), Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, Livelihoods Resource Centre, NLRC's 510, French Red Cross, Belgium Red Cross, and Danish Red Cross.

Analysis for this EAP included droughts for the last fifty years across the whole of Niger, particular attention was given to the Zinder region for several reasons: The Zinder region is among the most drought-affected areas; it was the region of choice for the Niger Red Cross to conduct this pilot project; the seasonal forecasts for Zinder are reliable, unlike the rest of the country; and it is more likely that recent impacts will correspond to current realities and the adaptive capacities of communities (due to technological progress, development and infrastructure).

It is important to distinguish drought from aridity, which implies low rainfall or scarcity of available natural water. Indeed, an arid region may experience drought episodes. Lack of rainfall will be a permanent feature of the climate of the arid zone. These are generally areas where rainfall is scarce, and temperatures are high. Drought will therefore be a punctual phenomenon over an area. In Niger, this is the case and the country experiences more hydrological and agricultural droughts.

While an association between low rainfall, poor yields and subsequent price increases can be robustly demonstrated, it is more difficult to find the signature of individual wet years on key indicators of drought impacts. One of the main reasons for this is the predominance of long-term trends towards improved economic and health outcomes.

Thus, a comprehensive review has profiled some of the main impacts of droughts:

- Low soil yields and reduced arable land leading to lower production and thus risks of food and nutrition insecurity and lower farmer incomes,
- Drying up of water points, causing a decrease in fisheries products and leading to risks of food and nutrition insecurity and lower incomes for fishermen,
- Loss of livestock, due to lack of grazing and drying up of watering points leading to risks of food and nutrition insecurity and reduced income for pastoralists,
- Rising prices of food products caused by the lack or insufficiency of products available on the market,
- The displacement of populations for several months until the situation returns to normal,
- An increase in temporary migration, with household members moving to other parts of Niger or across borders, into sometimes dangerous industries or areas with high levels of insecurity,
- Social and environmental conflicts due to land management and access to natural resources (water, grazing, etc.).

The output of the FbF process, is an EAP which aims to anticipate a slow onset drought, using a two-phase trigger approach, the first trigger gives a three-month lead time, between April to June, with the second trigger having a five-month lead time from November to March. The early actions in this EAP aim to address food security issues for agro-pastoralists in the Zinder region. While this EAP currently focuses on just one region, there are places to extend the coverage to other areas and the scale up is planned between April 2021 and March 2023 as further research and analysis are completed.

The operational strategy – How the EAP will be implemented

1) Who will implement the EAP – The National Society

Niger Red Cross Society (NRCS) has representation in all 8 regional capitals including Tillaberi, Dosso and Niamey. The National Society has a staff of approximately 100 people and approximately 10,000 community-based volunteers across the country, including over 1,500 members of the NDRT and CDRT teams. More than 300 have been trained in the FbF mechanism and can be deployed wherever needed to implement early actions.

The NRCS has successfully managed food security and nutritional operations in recent years (including 2005, 2008, 2011-2012, 2015). In addition to these operations, ongoing food security and nutrition programmes are developed with the support of Partner National Societies as well as external partners.

It should also be noted that Niger was the first country in West Africa and the Sahel to implement a Cash transfer program. The NRCS carried out cash transfer programmes from 2007 to 2017 with the support of the IFRC and other partners. Hence, several National Societies' staff and volunteers have extensive experience in managing cash transfers programmes. The NRCS has National Disaster Response Team (NDRT) and volunteers trained in cash transfer programming as well as Food Security and Nutrition Officers who participated in the Food security, Nutrition and Livelihood RDRT training that took place in 2017 in Bamako, Mali. The training programme focused on the implementation of Food security programmes with the use of updated tools such as Cash Transfer programme, Mega V, ODK, Kobo. In addition, the participants have benefitted from a training on the Community Engagement and Accountability in the implementation of field level programmes.

To ensure a successful implementation of this approach, the National Society under the leadership of the Disaster Management Unit, will organized capacity building training for the community volunteers. The IFRC will provide technical support during the implementation of readiness activities, as well as during the activation of the early action activities. This will be done through close follow up and recommendations for better results. The ICRC will support through technical advice on security issues related to implementing the early action activities.

2) How will the EAP be activated - The Trigger

This Early Action Protocol proposes triggers in 2 successive phases: The first trigger is in April, with an online season forecast (SEAS5) provided by the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF), with a response time of 3 months. If this forecast shows a 40% (or higher) probability that precipitation will be in the lowest tercile ("below normal"), the conditions for the first trigger will be met and will launch the first round of early action activities.

The second trigger in November, anticipates a future food crisis based on the food insecurity assessment observed by the Cadre Harmonisé/IPCI of IPC 3 or more for the following year's lean season and the assessment of production conditions in addition to the assessment of the previous rainy season (GEOGLAM) early warning crop monitor (of below 50), with a lead time of five months.

The first trigger in April is based on the weather forecast and the stop mechanism for this EAP, can only be done based on assessment post the rainy season as a result, the distribution of seeds, would be irreversible once started.

The same is true for the second trigger in November, for which confirmation of the identified indicator (Result of Food Insecurity in Current Situation of the Harmonized Framework / IPC) would not be available until March - April of the following year, which is the period when the actions will have already been implemented.

Nonetheless, it is important to stress that having a 2-stage trigger system provides a natural shutdown mechanism. Indeed, if the second trigger threshold is not reached, the second set of actions will not be activated. In this specific case, a communication will be made to the community in order to sensitize it on the reasons why the second series of actions (Support to Cereal Banks, distribution of vouchers) will not take place.

3) How will the EAP reduce the impact on the population – The early actions

Trigger one actions:

The first trigger in April, anticipates a poor rainfall to come, and induces early actions in May preceding the rainy season. The trigger one early action activities include:

Seed distribution (Millet and cowpea)

Millet seed from farmer selection has been prioritized. These are seeds adapted to drought and purchased locally. Cowpeas are short-cycle seeds from agronomic research.

The target for this action is 1,000 vulnerable households, who will each benefit from 10kg of millet and 10kg of cowpea for 1 hectare.

The selection of beneficiaries for the seeds will be done in a participatory and inclusive approach with full community empowerment. Targeting will be done using the Household Economy Analysis (HEA) approach. This is done during a village assembly where households are classified into 4 socio-economic groups (affluent, middle income, poor, very poor); according to the community's own determination criteria as described in table 8 at the end of the document. It is the same community that assigns to a particular household the category to which it belongs according to pre-established criteria, by reviewing the names of community members, and in a village assembly.

Post distribution assessment

In order to measure the impact of the distributions (millet and cowpea) on the agricultural season, a post-distribution evaluation will be carried out together with agriculture and the Niger Red Cross, at the end of September just after the harvest. This activity will confirm the relevance of the seed distribution action and also provide information on a likely food crisis the following year depending on the behavior of the agricultural season.

Trigger two actions:

The second trigger in November, anticipates a future food crisis and will trigger the second set of early action activities for the coming five months.

Replenishment of Cereal Banks' reserves:

The aim is to support functional cereal banks in the localities identified for intervention to increase the volume of their cereal reserves. These reserves will then be sold at a 50% subsidized price.

This action will enable 4,000 households to have access to cereals from November until the next harvest, at a reduced price and in sufficient quantity to meet their needs.

A Cereal Bank (CB) is a community-based scheme that primarily serves a social purpose. Its purpose is to solve the food problems faced by an organized community during a given period. The period considered is the lean season in the crop calendar. Depending on the results of the previous season, it can extend over one to three months. The purpose of the cereal bank is therefore to provide the community with a stock of cereals to cover its food needs for at least one month. To ensure this function, the cereal bank is the seat of a certain number of operations: collection, storage, conservation and transfer of cereals. Management is done by the community itself through a management committee formed around each CB. The purchase of cereals for the banks' stock is done when prices are low and there is an opportunity. The stocks are then sold during the lean season.

For this EAP will subsidize half of the Cereal Bank reserves. Subsidies will be made at half the market price. A total of 4,000 households will be targeted with 252 tons of cereals; this corresponds to 200g per person per day (according to the SPHERE standards) calculated at 7 people per household (average size of a household in Niger) for 3 months. The following equation is then used: $50\% \times (200\text{g} \times 7 \text{ people} \times 90 \text{ days}) = 63,000 \text{ g}$. In conclusion, 4,000 households will receive 63 kg of cereals from the Cereal Banks for a duration of 3 months.

Cash Transfer (in vouchers)

For 1,000 of the most vulnerable households, enabling them to access subsidized cereals. This action will enable the most vulnerable to obtain cereals (from cereal banks) and to preserve their own reserves and/or to build up reserves before prices rise too much or the availability of cereals becomes impossible.

This action will also be carried out over three months (January - February - March), accounting for half of the monthly basket of the Niger household (16,250 FCFA). The 50% represents the unsubsidized part of the Cereal Banks, which amounts to 100% coverage for these 1,000 most vulnerable households, as they are already among the 4,000 beneficiaries of the 50% Cereal Bank subsidy. The vouchers will enable them to pay the unsubsidized 50% of the Cereal Banks.

Intervention Sectors

Overall objective:

The address the food security issues in advance of the impacts of drought for up to 4,000 vulnerable agro-pastoralists households (28,000 people) in Zinder region of Niger.

Priority Sectors



Livelihoods and basic needs

People targeted: 28,000

Male: 14,000

Female: 14,000

Requirements (CHF) 313,942

Population to be assisted: 4,000 households in targeted localities in crisis for all activities (including 1,000 for the distribution of improved seeds and for the conditional cash transfer). The selection of beneficiaries will be made on the basis of socio-economic vulnerability criteria (HEA criteria) which will be retained in a consensual manner with the different social layers including community leaders in general assembly. Priority will be given to the most vulnerable households lacking the capacity to ensure a minimum of food security.

Intervention standards / benchmarks: All activities will be carried out according to the minimum standards in terms of food safety. Niger Red Cross volunteers will be trained on these standards in order to apply them.

P&B Output Code	Livelihoods Outcome 1: Communities, especially in areas affected by disasters and crises, restore and strengthen their livelihoods	% of surveyed households reporting that they have enough food to meet their survival threshold (Target: 4,000 HH)													
	Livelihoods Output 1.1: Household livelihoods security is enhanced through food production and income generating activities	Number of households receiving seeds (Target: 1,000 households)													
	Activities planned	Timeframe (month)													
	Readiness activities	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	
AP009	Development of agreements with agriculture	X													
AP009	Preparation and recording of radio messages	X													
AP009	Drafting of contracts with community radio stations	X													
AP009	Development of survey questionnaires	X													
AP009	Printing coupons (vouchers)	X													
	Pre-positioning activities	Timeframe (month)													
AP009	Deposit of broadcast audio materials with community radio stations		X												
	Early action activities	Timeframe (month)													
AP009	Meeting with state actors / local authorities of Zinder and identification / confirmation of the area of intervention		X												
AP009	Broadcasting of radio messages			X											
AP009	Identification of seed producers		X												
AP009	Selection of seed suppliers to distribute		X												
AP009	Purchase and repackaging of seeds			X											
AP009	Briefing of volunteers on their role, targeting and distribution techniques			X											
AP009	Targeting of the 1,000 families benefiting from the seeds			X											
AP009	Sensitization of seed beneficiaries			X											
AP009	Seed distribution			X											
AP009	Satisfaction survey				X										
AP009	Post-harvest evaluation of seeds					X									
AP009	Lessons Learned Workshop							X							

P&B Output Code	Livelihoods output 2.1: Food and nutrition needs of the most vulnerable people targeted are met in advance of crisis	Number of households that receive cash and voucher assistance Number of households that receive support via the Cereal Banks													
		Timeframe (month)													
Activities planned		Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	
	Readiness activities														
AP009	Printing coupons (vouchers)								X						
AP009	Development of survey questionnaires								X						
	Pre-positioning activities														
	Early action activities														
AP009	Meeting with state actors / local authorities of Zinder and identification / confirmation of the area of intervention									X					
AP009	Broadcasting of radio messages										X				
AP009	Confirmation of the Grain Banks receiving support										X				
AP009	Signature of contracts with the selected grain banks										X				
AP009	Briefing of volunteers on their role, targeting and distribution techniques										X				
AP009	Targeting of 1000 families benefiting from conditional cash transfers										X				
AP009	Support for Cereal Banks										X	X	X		
AP009	Sensitization of beneficiaries of conditional cash (voucher)										X				
AP009	Conditional cash distribution (voucher)										X	X	X		
AP009	Post distribution evaluation										X	X	X		
AP009	Lessons Learned Workshop													X	
AP009	Assessment of the impacts of actions													X	
AP009	Assessment of food and nutritional security needs for a DREF												X		

Strategies for Implementation

Requirements (CHF): 36,047

P&B Output Code	SFI Outcome 1: S1.1: National Society capacity building and organizational development objectives are facilitated to ensure that National Societies have the necessary legal, ethical and financial foundations, systems and structures, competences and capacities to plan and perform													
	SFI Output 1.1.4: National Societies have effective and motivated volunteers who are protected	# Volunteers safely deployed for early actions (Target: 100)												
	Activities planned	Timeframe (years)												
	Readiness activities	1	2	3	4	5								
AP042	Voluntary Insurance (100 volunteers * 5 years)	X	X	X	X	X								
AP042	Vehicle depreciation (one vehicle)	X	X	X	X	X								
AP042	Annual costs of the National Society	X	X	X	X	X								
	Pre-positioning activities	Timeframe (years)												
	N/a													
	Early action activities	Timeframe (months)												
AP042	Vehicle rental	X	X	X	X	X								
AP042	Communication costs (internet and telephone)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
AP042	Driver PF DM Zinder (Salary (total cost) * 4 months for trigger 2										X	X	X	
AP042	PF DM Zinder salary (Salary (total cost) * 4 months) for trigger 2										X	X	X	
P&B Output Code	SFI Outcome 3.1: The IFRC secretariat, together with National Societies uses their unique position to influence decisions at local, national and international levels that affect the most vulnerable.													
	Output S3.1.2: IFRC produces high-quality research and evaluation that informs advocacy, resource mobilization and programming.	# Monitoring missions successfully undertaken (target: 8)												
	Activities planned	Timeframe (months)												
	Early actions	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
AP049	IFRC support (8 missions)	X		X		X		X		X		X	X	

Budget

To implement the Early Action Protocol (EAP) 349,989 CHF have been allocated split between readiness*, pre-positioning of stock and early action costs as per below summary by area of intervention.

Budget by Area of Intervention

Area of Intervention		READINESS	PRE- POSITION STOCK	EARLY ACTION	EAP Budget CHF
AOF1	Disaster Risk Reduction				0
AOF2	Shelter				0
AOF3	Livelihoods and Basic Needs	10,439		303,503	313,942
AOF4	Health				0
AOF5	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene				0
AOF6	Inclusion, Gender and Protection				0
AOF7	Migration				0
SFI1	Strengthen NS Capacities Ensure effective int'l disaster	16,789		12,059	28,848
SFI2	mgmt. Influence others as leading			7,199	7,199
SFI3	strategic partners				0
SFI4	Ensure a strong IFRC				0
TOTAL		27,228	0	322,761	349,989

**The activities for readiness and pre-positioning of stock will be captured in the IFRC Country Operational Plan (COP), reporting on annual basis. In case of an Early Action trigger, the annual readiness funding allocation is terminated with a 12-month notice, allowing the National Society to conclude its 3rd party financial and legal commitments and liabilities under the Early Action Protocol.*

Contact information

Reference documents



Click here for:

- Full EAP

For further information, specifically related to this Early Action Protocol please contact:

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How we work

All IFRC assistance seeks to adhere to the **Code of Conduct** for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Disaster Relief and the **Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response (Sphere)** in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable. The IFRC's vision is to inspire, **encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities** by National Societies, with a view to **preventing and alleviating human suffering**, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.

The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:



Save lives,
protect livelihoods,
and strengthen recovery
from disaster and crises.



Enable **healthy**
and **safe** living.



Promote social inclusion
and a culture of
non-violence and **peace**.