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**BUREAU FOR DEMOCRACY, CONFLICT, AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE (DCHA)
OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (OFDA)**

Niger – Food Insecurity

Fact Sheet #1, Fiscal Year (FY) 2010

March 16, 2010

BACKGROUND AND KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- Since September 2009, residents of agro-pastoral and pastoral zones throughout Niger have experienced increasing food insecurity as a result of failed harvests—caused by short seasonal rains—and a second consecutive year of poor pasture conditions for livestock due to prolonged drought. The late start, early conclusion, and frequent interruption of the seasonal rains also resulted in the failure of cash crops.
- According to the USAID-funded Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), the September harvests failed completely in 20 to 30 percent of agricultural villages in the pastoral and agro-pastoral zones of Diffa Region and Tanout, Mirriah, and Gouré departments, Zinder Region. Other affected regions include Maradi, Tahoua, and Tillabéri, according to Government of Niger (GoN) and relief agency assessments.
- In December 2009, the GoN conducted an assessment of food stocks in nearly 10,000 households. The assessment did not review household ability to purchase cereals. Based on the assessment findings, the GoN reported in January 2010 that the 2.7 million residents of Niger’s pastoral and agro-pastoral zones faced severe food insecurity—defined as having less than 10 days’ worth of food in the household—and requested international assistance. On March 10, GoN Prime Minister Mahamadou Danda, head of the transitional government that took office on February 23, appealed for \$123 million in international assistance to respond to food security needs.
- In addition to the 2.7 million severely food-insecure individuals, 5.1 million people face moderate food insecurity, according to the December 2009 GoN study, bringing the potential total affected population to 7.8 million people—more than 50 percent of Niger’s population. Relief agencies are planning for treatment of at least 200,000 severely malnourished children under five years of age in 2010.
- FEWS NET reports that insufficient access to food due to reduced crop production and extremely low household purchasing power is likely to continue to affect household food security. Assessments indicate sufficient food availability due to trade inflows from surrounding nations, although prices remain high, limiting households’ ability to purchase food despite sufficient availability. According to the GoN, food prices are currently approximately 20 percent higher than average.

NUMBERS AT A GLANCE		SOURCE
Severely Food-Insecure Population	2.7 million	GoN – December 2009
Estimated Severely Malnourished Children	At least 200,000	UNICEF ¹ – February 2010
Potential Total Affected Population	7.8 million	GoN – December 2009
Decrease in 2009 Cereal Crop Yield Compared to 2008 Harvest	1.38 million metric tons (MT)	GoN – November 2009

FY 2010 HUMANITARIAN FUNDING PROVIDED TO DATE FOR FOOD INSECURITY

USAID/OFDA Assistance to Niger²	\$4,650,000
USAID/FFP³ Assistance to Niger	\$44,228,300
Total USAID Humanitarian Assistance to Niger	\$48,878,300

CURRENT SITUATION

- In November 2009, the GoN Ministry of Agricultural Development estimated a reduction in cereal production of more than 1.38 million MT in 2009 compared to the 2008 harvest, or a decrease of approximately 28 percent. On March 8, 2010, following additional assessments, the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

¹ U.N. Children’s Fund (UNICEF)

² This number does not include FY 2010 USAID/OFDA funding of \$500,000 in response to the effects of severe flooding in Agadez city. Combined USAID/OFDA funding to Niger in FY 2010 to date for food insecurity and flooding is more than \$5.1 million.

³ USAID’s Office of Food for Peace (USAID/FFP)

reported a cereal production decrease of 31 percent in 2009 compared to the 2008 harvest. FEWS NET estimates that the 2009/2010 total cereal production will likely be the lowest in the past 20 years.

- According to FEWS NET, the current hunger season, which in many affected areas started in January rather than the typical April or May, is likely to last until July for pastoralists and until September for households that rely on agriculture.
- As a result of poor agricultural production and decreased earnings from livestock sales, FEWS NET reports that approximately 30 percent of households in affected villages have migrated to urban centers and areas of flood-recessional cropping in search of work in recent months, a higher number and earlier start date to seasonal migration. However, the increase in labor supply has resulted in a 30 percent decline in average daily wages in urban areas, leading to increased vulnerability of both migrating and urban populations.
- On February 20, FEWS NET reported favorable prospects for significant grain imports to Niger in 2010 due to a strong maize harvest in neighboring Burkina Faso, Nigeria, and Benin; low demand in Benin and Nigeria; and the low value of the Nigerian currency. In December 2009, more than 80 percent of grains marketed in Niger were imported, with increased imports reported in January, according to FEWS NET. As a result, food prices in Niger are unlikely to increase significantly in 2010, although food prices remain higher than average, limiting populations' access to food due to low purchasing power. On February 10, FEWS NET noted particular concern regarding livestock-to-cereal terms of trade, which decreased by between 20 and 30 percent in January, further damaging pastoralist livelihoods.

Livelihoods

- On March 1, FEWS NET reported that the higher-than-usual inflow of laborers from pastoral and agro-pastoral areas to Niamey, the capital, resulted in wages falling to approximately half of pre-September 2009 levels. On February 10, FEWS NET reported that between September and December 2009, daily and monthly salaries dropped by an average of 25 percent in Niamey, urban centers, and flood-recessional cropping areas in Diffa, Maradi, and Zinder regions due to significant migration of people from drought-affected areas in search of labor opportunities.
- In response to the effect of the drought on livelihoods, USAID/OFDA has provided \$1.2 million to implementing partner Save the Children/UK (SC/UK) for economic recovery and livelihoods programs in Tessaoua Department, Maradi Region, a department with one of the largest food deficits in Niger. From March to August 2010, SC/UK plans to provide cash transfers to improve the purchasing power of nearly 25,000 food-insecure people, representing approximately 20 percent of rural populations in Tessaoua Department's four drought-affected communes. Cash transfers will help beneficiaries avoid adopting negative coping mechanisms, such as reducing food intake, migrating from villages, taking loans, or selling livestock. In addition, improved livelihoods will allow families to cultivate their own plots during the planting season from April to August, rather than working on other people's land, and will help to limit potential malnutrition.

Nutrition

- According to USAID/OFDA-funded UNICEF nutritional surveys, the most recent information available, global acute malnutrition rates were already above the emergency threshold of 15 percent in Diffa and Zinder regions in May and June 2009, prior to the failed harvests. On February 20, FEWS NET reported that nationwide admission of malnourished children to nutrition centers increased by 60 percent in January 2010 compared to January 2009. During January and February 2010, UNICEF reported the admission of nearly 24,000 severely malnourished children to nutrition centers. According to FEWS NET, the Nutrition Cluster and UNICEF plan to treat at least 200,000 severely malnourished children under five years of age in 2010.
- In response to increased malnutrition rates as a result of the drought, USAID/OFDA is providing more than \$3.4 million to implementing partners Helen Keller International (HKI) and UNICEF for programs to prevent malnutrition among children under five years of age, including community management of acute malnutrition (CMAM) and procurement of ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF).
- USAID/OFDA support of more than \$1.3 million to HKI in FY 2010 builds on USAID/OFDA support for HKI programs since FY 2006 for the prevention and treatment of malnutrition in Niger and elsewhere in the Sahel. As of August 2009, HKI had established CMAM services at 4 hospitals, 140 health facilities, and 49 village sites in Diffa, Mainesoroa, and N'guigmi departments, Diffa Region, and in Dogondoutchi Department, Dosso Region, with USAID/OFDA support. USAID/OFDA funding in response to current food insecurity will strengthen and improve institutional capacity for CMAM—including screening, data collection and analysis, and treatment—and malnutrition prevention programs in the four departments where HKI already works, as well as in Zinder city in Mirriah Department, Zinder Region.
- USAID/OFDA is providing \$2.1 million to UNICEF for malnutrition management and prevention programs to benefit approximately 30,000 children under five years of age throughout Niger. Activities include procurement of RUTF and medicine for malnutrition treatment, nutrition and feeding education programs, and blanket feeding programs in Diffa and Zinder regions in cooperation with the U.N. World Food Program (WFP).

USAID HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

- On January 14, 2010, U.S. Ambassador Bernadette M. Allen declared a disaster due to the effects of food insecurity in Niger. In response, USAID/OFDA has provided more than \$4.6 million to support response activities, including interventions in nutrition and economic recovery and market systems.
- To date in FY 2010, USAID/FFP has provided more than 35,700 MT of emergency food assistance, valued at more than \$44.2 million, to benefit disaster-affected populations through implementing partners Counterpart International (CPI), WFP, and a consortium of Catholic Relief Services (CRS), CARE, and HKI.
- USAID/OFDA and USAID/FFP staff have conducted multiple trips to assess conditions in drought-affected areas and meet with relief agency partners, and USAID/OFDA staff continue to monitor the situation in conjunction with the U.S. Embassy in Niamey, USAID/FFP, and other partners to determine humanitarian needs. On March 10, USAID/OFDA's Principal Regional Advisor for West Africa and USAID/OFDA staff from Washington, D.C., arrived in Niamey for meetings with humanitarian partners. In addition, USAID/OFDA and USAID/FFP staff traveled to Tessaoua Department, Maradi Region, on March 15 to discuss the current situation with villagers. Villagers reported more significant food security than in 2005, noted that many men and youth had left villages to work in cities, and described travelling to other villages to ask for food.
- USAID/OFDA funding in FY 2010 in response to food insecurity in Niger complements other USAID/OFDA funding in recent years. In FY 2009, USAID/OFDA provided more than \$9.1 million in response to the global food price crisis in Niger. USAID/OFDA provided support to implementing partners Mercy Corps, SC/UK, the Cooperative League of the USA, UNICEF, and WFP for agriculture and food security, nutrition, and economy and market systems programs targeting more than 1.1 million beneficiaries.
- In addition, USAID/OFDA provided funding in both FY 2009 and FY 2010 in response to severe flooding on September 2, 2009, in Agadez city and three nearby communes in Tchirozerine Department, Agadez Region, which affected approximately 79,000 people. In FY 2010, USAID/OFDA provided \$500,000 to Mercy Corps for cash-for-work activities and voucher programs, benefiting 1,150 flood-affected individuals directly and approximately 40,000 people indirectly. In FY 2009, USAID/OFDA provided \$50,000 for cash-for-work activities to rehabilitate basic water and sanitation infrastructure and conduct water, sanitation, and hygiene activities in Agadez city. Mercy Corps reports that program beneficiaries are using 96 percent of cash earned to purchase food.

USAID HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO NIGER FOR FOOD INSECURITY

<i>Implementing Partner</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Amount</i>
USAID/OFDA ASSISTANCE¹			
HKI	Nutrition	Diffa, Maine-soroa, and N'guigmi Departments, Diffa Region; Mirriah Department, Zinder Region; Dogondoutchi Department, Dosso Region	\$1,350,000
SC/UK	Economic Recovery and Market Systems	Tessaoua District, Maradi Region	\$1,200,000
UNICEF	Nutrition	Affected Areas	\$2,100,000
TOTAL USAID/OFDA			\$4,650,000
USAID/FFP ASSISTANCE²			
CPI	2,310 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Emergency Food Assistance	Affected Areas	\$2,808,200
CRS, CARE, HKI	8,060 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Emergency Food Assistance	Affected Areas	\$8,526,800
WFP	25,340 MT of P.L. 480 Title II Emergency Food Assistance	Affected Areas	\$32,893,300
TOTAL USAID/FFP			\$44,228,300
TOTAL USAID HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO NIGER FOR FOOD INSECURITY IN FY 2010			\$48,878,300

¹ USAID/OFDA funding represents anticipated or actual obligated amounts as of March 16, 2010. Total USAID/OFDA funding to Niger in FY 2010 for food insecurity does not include \$500,000 in response to the effects of severe flooding in Agadez city. Combined USAID/OFDA funding to Niger in FY 2010 to date for food insecurity and flooding is more than \$5.1 million.

² Estimated value of food assistance.

PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. Information on organizations responding to the humanitarian situation in Niger may be available at www.reliefweb.int.
- USAID encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed (often in the affected region); reduce the burden on scarce resources (such as transportation routes, staff time, and warehouse space); can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietary, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at:
 - USAID: www.usaid.gov – Keyword: Donations
 - The Center for International Disaster Information: www.cidi.org or (703) 276-1914
 - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at www.reliefweb.int