

“Enhancing food security and nutrition for greater resilience in Africa- The role of Social protection” Niger case

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1. Background

In West Africa, there is a growing interest in social protection. All countries in the region have social protection policies, strategies and/or programs to deal with the challenges of poverty. Indeed, a significant number of people in West Africa live on less than US\$1.25 a day, and therefore in extreme poverty despite the progress made in reducing the number of undernourished people. Today, agricultural policies and modes of intervention, often largely implemented in a sectoral way, have difficulty in responding to all the cross-cutting and largely multi-sectoral challenges of the fight against poverty, hunger and malnutrition. and in recent years growing insecurity, particularly in the Sahel, which continues to negatively impact the food and nutritional security of populations and their livelihoods.

2. Overview of the social protection context in Niger

The context of Niger, a Sahelian-Saharan country, faced with multiple and multifaceted challenges, perfectly illustrates the adverse context of the Sahelian populations. shock and fragility factors are multiplying and diversifying. The recurrence of droughts and floods affects production and the livelihoods of populations. At the same time Insecurity perpetrated by armed groups along the borders with Nigeria, Mali and Burkina Faso, and to a lesser extent in the north along the border with Libya continues to exacerbate the humanitarian crisis, causing the forced displacement of thousands of people exposing some 2.3 million vulnerable people and serious protection problems recorded.

This adverse context, aggravated by COVID 19, has a negative impact on the impact of the efforts made by the government and its partners, and despite a 10-point reduction in poverty affects more than 9 million people, mainly in rural areas with 95% poor households in Niger who live in rural areas. Their access to means of production and basic services is limited. Demographic pressure and the effects of climate change are aggravating the trends.

The implementation of the strategy of the 3N Initiative for Food and Nutritional Security and Sustainable Agricultural Development appears to be an appropriate response to meet the challenge of vulnerability to food and nutritional insecurity. This strategy integrates both: i) structuring investments in food systems, particularly in the area of water control, increased production, promotion of value chains, and restoration of environment and, ii) measures to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable households through interventions that target them directly, based on the principles of social protection.

3. Some reforms and interventions to protect groups vulnerable to food and nutritional insecurity

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The creation of an environment facilitating and regulating access to the most vulnerable has been a major reform. It includes:

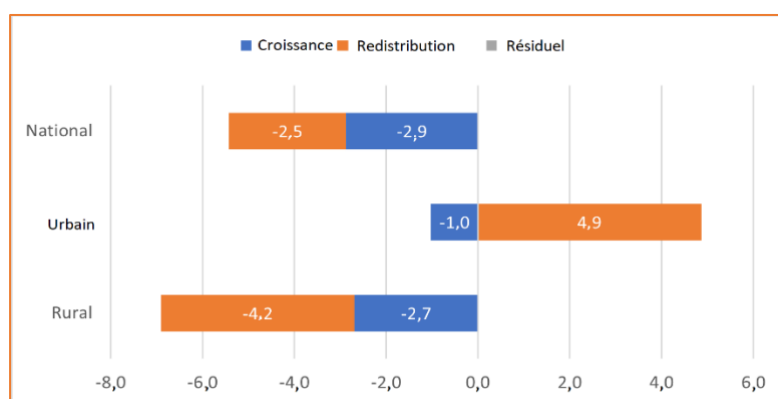
- Alignment of the National Social Protection Policy and the 3N Initiative.
- Taking into account Social Protection as a Component of the National Nutritional Security Policy through its Axis 5.
- Creation of a Social Safety Nets Unit responsible for promoting and coordinating regular, predictable and multi-annual monetary transfer initiatives intended for the poorest rural households within the National Food Crisis Prevention and Management System.

These actions facilitated, among other things, the implementation of:

- A resilience program supported by WFP. This combines direct support in kind or in cash to vulnerable households, and interventions such as strengthening access to nutrition and education services, community development that restores natural resources and strengthens the productive base or the support for value chains;
- An “Adaptive Social Nets” project financed by the World Bank, which accompanies multi-year cash transfers to households, with awareness-raising on the prevention of malnutrition and support for productive and income-generating activities. This project now includes a “shock-responsive” component and also benefits from technical and financial contributions from WFP and UNICEF.

4. Some results⁴

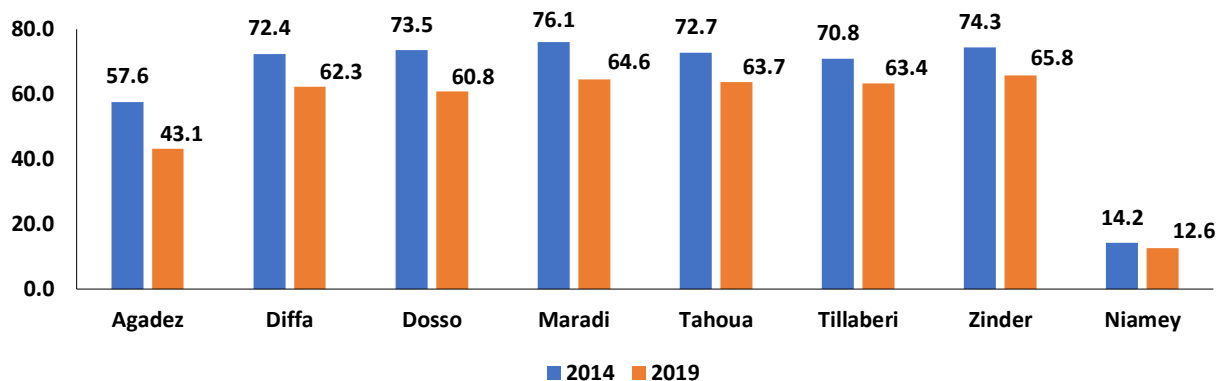
Studies have recently shown the tangible results of this type of intervention on household food security and income, and their ability to cope with shocks.



Thus between 2014 and 2018/19, poverty decreased by 5.4 percentage points, of which 2.9 percentage points came from growth and 2.5 percentage points from redistribution.

Figure 2 : Evolution of non-monetary poverty

⁴ Evolution de la pauvreté au Niger de 2014 à 2018/2019 en milieu rural, INS 2021I

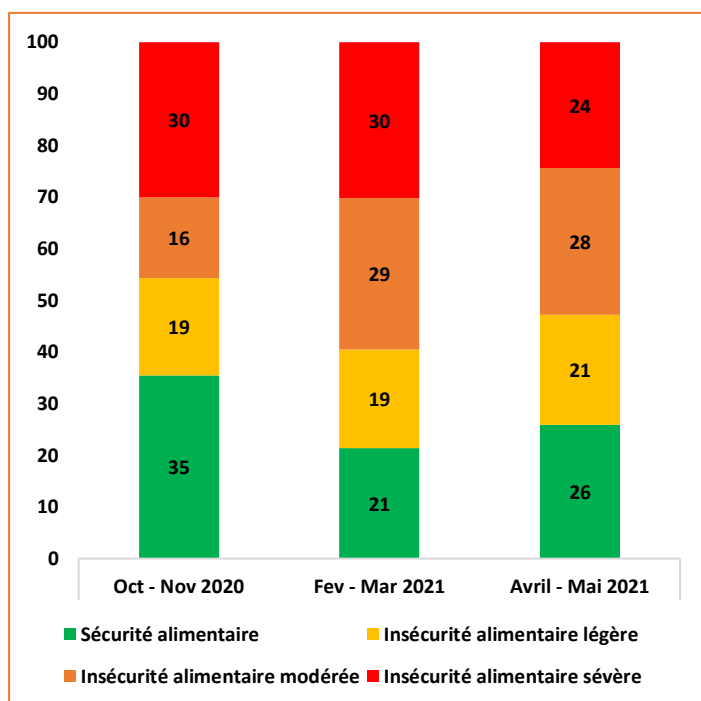


Non-monetary poverty is assessed through the proportion of people living in a situation of multiple deprivation. This proportion has dropped considerably, from 70% to 60%;

Progress can be seen in all regions of the country. However, progress in terms of access to basic services and advances in human development remain limited for the poor and access to piped water has improved for the poorest but remains limited in the regions of Tahoua, Maradi and Zinder.

Figure 3 : Food insecurity (household percentage)

The Covid-19 pandemic and the economic slowdown had a negative effects on progress in poverty reduction;



It is estimated to have led to a 1.6 percentage point increase in poverty corresponding to 270,000 new poor

However, with the ongoing economic recovery and the implementation of the 2021-2025 Action Plan of the 3N initiative, the country should make further gains in terms of poverty reduction in 2022.

5. Conclusion:

Food and nutrition security, despite the growing unpredictability in the world, depends on the collective ability of state and non-state actors to create an environment that promotes

not only a more equitable distribution of the benefits obtained, reduced pressure on natural resources and increased resilience to increasingly frequent and serious threats and crises, but also strong social inclusion. Social protection plays a fundamental role in helping households better manage risks and shocks. It strengthens peace and social cohesion as well as the right to food enshrined in the constitution of the Republic of Niger. The 3N Initiative is an important lever for accelerating the implementation of social protection systems.