



Photo by: Mirjam van den Berg/Oxfam Novib

# PEACE AND STABILITY - NIGER

## Support to peace and security through youth employment

For several decades Niger country has been facing recurrent armed conflicts and crises including insurrectionary type which negatively impacts its development by potentially threaten its security and stability.

To contribute to the stabilization of some regions in Niger, Oxfam initiated a project to increase access of populations, particularly youth and women to economic opportunities in targeted areas through the development of agro-forestry-pastoral potentialities, diversification of economic activities and strengthening mechanisms and tools for preventing and managing crises and social conflicts.

One major lesson learned in this project was the importance of community early warning systems. They can play a key role in the stability of an area by monitoring the occurrence of conflicts.

# BREAKING THE VICIOUS CIRCLE OF POVERTY

Since 1980, Niger has experienced major socio-economic difficulties with the considerable reduction of the price of uranium and the succession of agricultural deficits and situations of instability marked by the armed rebellion in the north, the military power change and inter-communities conflicts related to the control of access to natural resources and their governance. Actually, the country is more than ever facing phenomena that intensify and threaten its stability and social cohesion.

External threats, like Conflict in Libya and northern Mali and terrorist activities in northern Nigeria, risk to undermine the delicate balance and peace because these threats can be amplified by the inevitable frustrations of a generally difficult social situation, a democratic process still largely inclusive and the employment problem for youth and women, who are largely uneducated or with little level of education, who face a life with few prospects.

Internally, the deficits of agro pastoral production amplified by climatic conditions are increasingly becoming food, nutritional and pastoral recurrent crises (three major crises in less than a decade) that undermine more the livelihoods of communities and strike first the most vulnerable, including women and youth.

The types of agricultural and pastoral production ways are poorly suited, and pastors, in particular, are facing little access to pasture.

Conflicts between farmers and herders, who have always existed, can exacerbate in a situation of structural crisis. The degradation of water and soil resources contributes to the low productivity of agriculture and livestock and increasing the potential of conflict. At the same time, youth is not interested in agriculture or livestock and ignore possible alternatives in these sectors.

This corollary obstacle to development results in the deterioration of living conditions of the population in general and young women in particular.

Which can lead youth, by the lack of economic opportunities to adopt negative coping strategies for themselves and for the whole community as local and regional exodus in emergency situations especially, or as extreme banditry (armed robbery, robbery), and integrating armed groups (rebels, fundamentalists, drug traffickers ..) and traffickers.

Representing over 60% of the workforce, the Nigerien youth which experiencing a multidimensional crisis characterized by unemployment, under-employment, illiteracy, migration, violence, is the main target group for peace stabilization and the revival of the national economy; as well as women, though representing more than 50% of the population, they are systematically marginalized in all areas: access to productive resources, employment, health, education.

The official unemployment rate is about 16% and the most affected groups are women (25% against about 12% for men) and youth with more than 24% in the age group between 15-29 are unemployed.

In Niger, poverty is mainly rural and mostly women. Figures are illustrative: nearly 2 out of 3 Nigeriens are poor; more than 4 out of 5 poor's live in rural areas. But the figures also show growth of urban areas of extreme poverty and the last two government surveys on vulnerability to food insecurity from 2011 and 2012 show an increase of urban vulnerability.

That's why Oxfam initiated a project to create opportunities for youth and women, particularly in rural areas, by facilitating their access to economic resources and opportunities, and by interrupting the vicious cycle that contributes to chronic poverty and making them particularly vulnerable to conflict both actively and passively.

## THE PROJECT

The overall aim of the project was to contribute to peace consolidation and improvement of social and economic stability in the northern, northwest and southeast regions of Niger. More specifically, it aimed to

*"Increase access of populations, particularly youth and women to economic opportunities in targeted areas through the development of agro-forestry-pastoral potentialities, diversification of economic activities and strengthening mechanisms and tools for preventing and managing crises and social conflicts".*

The support that this initiative was giving to youth and women was both direct and indirect. Direct support was achieved through the Cash for Work (CFW) for the restoration of productive potentials, community infrastructure and sanitation in urban centers, but also through the professionalization of youth and women in the management of micro-agro-forestry-pastoral and non-farm businesses.

On the other hand the intervention also aimed at giving indirect support, through the development and consolidation of a framework for social dialogue on the prevention and management of conflicts, in order to reinforce and renew traditional resolution mechanisms which do not ensure equitable access for all involved people, young and women included, to natural resources and basic social services.

Finally, to contribute to reducing the risks related to exploitation of resources, the intervention included the completion of the establishment of early warning systems in all targeted communities as stated in the order No. 00206 / PM of 2 August 2012 on the creation, powers, organization and functioning of the CC / SAP / PC which confirms in Articles 6, 7 and 8, the decision of the country to continue implementing and coordinating the activities of these institution at the decentralized level (OSV, SCAP / RU).

From a strategic point of view, the implementation of this project was made on 2 principles of intervention:

- for the Agadez region, the OXFAM sub office in Agadez assured implementation directly;
- for Tahoua, Tillabery and Zinder regions Oxfam worked with its strategic and operational partners namely AREN (Tillabery and Zinder) and ADKOUL (Tahoua);
- The beneficiaries of this project are the youth and women from 18 municipalities: Agadez (1), Tahoua (5), Tillabery (5) and Zinder (7).

Amadou Oumarou CSI  
Chief Dan Mark 1, rural  
town of Sanam,  
Tillabery region. says:

"I am delighted with this achievement we have long awaited. Indeed the close of the center has allowed us to control our material and put order in the visits. Machines and Animals are held outside the center, a situation favorable to the quality of service"

Thus, the opportunity for beneficiaries in terms of access to income through CFW and IGA has been a considerable and significant contribution in strengthening the livelihoods of target populations. Indeed, it emerged from the discussions made with the administrative and traditional authorities and beneficiaries that actions have been very beneficial to people in 18 municipalities intervention in economic and social terms. The community's mechanism comes to reinforce the social aspect of the intervention.

## RESULTS

Through this project, Oxfam contributed to restoring a climate of lasting peace through the reduction of small criminality in the project area. Indeed, the various forums organized on peace and social stability, have raised awareness among all actors in the field of peace and social stability. The topics discussed, focused on security issues, internalization of texts regulating the movement of livestock and the right of access to pasture, the management and prevention of conflicts over access to shared resources for peaceful coexistence between transhumant and sedentary at the beginning and the end of the rainy season, as well as the challenges of social integration of young people. At the end of the holding of the forums, commitments have been made by municipal and community leaders to maintain a lasting peace even after the project.

The second added value in the lives of beneficiaries is the creation of job opportunity that has greatly improved the incomes and livelihoods of target communities. What has therefore promoted a significant economic recovery in the intervention area through funding from IGA and CFW.

The main activities realized were:

- The cash for work (as labor-based activities) for restoring the production potential, and the reconstruction of community infrastructures.
- And the funding of micro projects for income generating activities (IGA).
- These activities covered 10 050 youth and women including 6 426 women (64% of beneficiaries) out of 1 093 125 residents of the 18 municipalities. During these 2 activities around 808 938 965 FCFA has been spent which is around 80 491 FCFA average income by individual.

Safia Maman, town of Kufra, municipality of Abala, Tillabery region:

*"I was excluded from secondary school when I was in my third year. I had lost all hope for a second chance to get my certificate due to the lack of financial means. Today, the CFW activities conducted in our village with the support of AREN, allows me to pay for my private course and continue to study. I hope that this opportunity which was offered to me be the key to my success in life. "*



Land restoration village site Ilataghda, rural town of Kao after mechanical work - NGO Adkoul Tahoua



Land restoration village site Ilataghda, rural town of Kao revegetated © 2014 NGO Adkoul Tahoua

It also resulted in funding for 241 micro projects (high labor intensity) which consisted in achieving land restoration, rehabilitation/construction of community infrastructures or safety of towns and villages. These cash for work activities covered 6,821 people, including 3,678 women (53.92% women from the 18 towns of area of intervention). This temporary employment (75 working days) helped to provide economic income 618 480 800 FCFA for an average individual income of 90,673 FCFA.

In addition, funding for 676 IGAs micro projects from young people and women into the framework for their professionalism in the management of micro-enterprises agro-forestry-pastoral and non-farm, for a total amount of 190 458 165 FCFA to finance individual or common micro projects of 3.229 beneficiaries including 2.747 women (85.07%).

Zeinaba Issoufa  
gagawa promoter of  
small business, Zinder:

*"I could make a saving up (purchase animals) to manage the possible risk on my small business. I found something that makes me important in the society. Currently I have become an example for my friends who have no occupation. "*



Distribution IGAs beneficiaries of Agadez



Distribution IGAs women in Agadez

The project also led to strengthened mechanism on prevention and management of risks of conflicts and peace destabilization especially in pastoral and agro-pastoral areas through the 15 vulnerability monitoring observatories (VMO) and 70 community early warning systems and emergency response (EWS&ER).

The forums of stakeholders on the prevention and management of rural conflicts held in the various municipalities have mobilized exactly 465

participants, including 15% of women of various sensitivities (administrative, customary, youth representatives, women, local technical services of state and others structures in the area). These forums have helped guide the participants on the role of different actors of change in the promotion of peace and stability, the various national laws on the prevention and management conflict, and the conditions better operability and synergy of different existing frameworks for consultation.

The establishment and training of 15 municipal committees for analysis and approval IGAs and HIMO. These committees consisting on average of 8 members each (2 representatives of youth and women, 2 technical services representative, one representative of traditional chiefs, two representatives of the municipal council and 1 representative of the project) are chaired by the respective municipalities' mayors. Sessions analysis and micro project dossiers IGAs and HIMO selected by the municipal committees which were held under the supervision of the project team.

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