



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

# NIGER

## COUNTRY PROFILE

NOVEMBER, 2013



PHOTO CREDIT: CLUSA

*A moringa farmer seated among other women from the village. Vitamin-packed moringa is one way USAID is building resilience in communities in the drought-prone Sahel.*

### OVERVIEW

Niger, an emerging democracy landlocked in the increasingly unstable Sahel region, consistently ranks at or near the bottom of the United Nations Human Development Index of all countries. Despite increased economic growth catalyzed by an expanding extractive industry sector (including uranium, gold, and petroleum reserves), poor infrastructure, extremely low education levels, and multiple concurrent natural disasters due to the country's vulnerability to climate change have limited broad-based development. Economic progress is further restricted by an explosive demographic trend that essentially doubles the population every twenty years – one of the highest fertility rates in the world. These challenges, coupled with multiple armed political-religious conflict on the Nigerian and Malian borders and an active Al-Qaeda presence in northern Niger, risk reversing the important strides made in the past few years in Niger.

In areas where communities are suffering from the effects of poor harvests, extreme poverty, high food prices, a locust threat, and conflict spilling over from Mali, USAID is committing to designing and implementing new programs and coordinate them with existing US Government assistance investments. Programs will scale up adaptations already underway and leverage programs being implemented by other actors to enhance resilience against future shocks in some of Niger's most vulnerable communities. Additional investments are targeting improved health and education, and strengthening the country's democratic institutions while promoting peace and stability. In fiscal year 2012, USAID investments in Niger were located in all eight regions of the country through a range of implementing partners and programs.

### PROGRAMS

#### AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

The vast majority of Nigeriens rely on subsistence agriculture and the region's frequent droughts lead to poor harvests and regular food shortages. Even in good times, forty percent of Nigerien children under 5 years old are malnourished.

To make communities more resilient to food insecurity, we work to improve agricultural, livestock and resource management practices and ensure inclusive economic growth. In communities most affected by natural disasters and climate shocks, USAID provides food and other assistance to the most vulnerable, including pregnant and nursing mothers and young children while working to address the root causes of malnutrition.

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#### NIGER SNAPSHOT

Date of independence: 1960  
Population: 16.9 million (2013)  
GDP per person: \$800 (2012)

Source: CIA World Factbook

#### USAID IN NIGER

<http://www.usaid.gov/niger>



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As renewed engagement with Niger expands, USAID is working with governmental, regional and international partners to help introduce new approaches to overcome cyclical challenges in a more comprehensive way. This includes combining humanitarian and development expertise and working across sectors and across borders as part of the new resilience agenda in the Sahel.

With a special focus on communities suffering from the effects of poor harvests, extreme poverty, high food prices, locust threats, and cross-regional conflict, new USAID programming to span 5 years will scale up adaptations already underway and identify alternative livelihoods, linking with other national and international programs to strengthen resilience against future shocks. In addition, new USAID Development Credit Authority partnerships with Ecobank and micro lending institutions seek to manage lending risk and increase availability of credit to small-scale agricultural and commercial entrepreneurs, aiming to spur broad-based economic growth.

### **HEALTH**

USAID improves the health and nutrition status of the most vulnerable Nigeriens through interventions focused on reducing food insecurity and malnutrition; increasing access to and use of quality family planning services, including related surgical services; the eradication of polio; and strengthening health systems and health related legislation.

### **EDUCATION**

With a population that is 70% illiterate and only 42.6% of girls completing primary school, Niger has recently adopted an ambitious national education program to increase educational access, quality and retention. USAID is contributing to these objectives together with support of the Millennium Challenge Corporation with programming fostering reading culture and early grade reading in local languages; an improved school environment, especially for girls; increased parental engagement, and strengthening community linkages with education administration. Additional support for impact evaluation of these activities aims to aid the Ministry of Education in making data-based policy and program decisions moving forward.

### **DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GOVERNANCE**

Since Niger's recent return to democratic rule in 2010, the Government of Niger has taken steps to fight the corruption and lack of transparency that continue to hold back effective governance. USAID is supporting this effort by helping Nigerien legislators effectively manage the country's natural resources, encouraging cooperation on national resource management between the legislature and civil society organizations, and supporting transparency and citizen participation.

#### **USAID IN NIGER**

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## COUNTRY PROFILE CONTINUED

### **WORKING IN CRISES AND CONFLICT**

Niger faces security threats from internal and external extremist groups, and continues to play an important role in Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Partnership programming that USAID implements throughout the Sahel. USAID is working to decrease the influence of such extremist groups with programs in Niger and three other West African countries. We help governments and local partners undermine extremist messages and create partnerships with populations that might be vulnerable to extremist influence.

With a special emphasis on young people, USAID programming creates economic opportunities and increases legitimate civic and political participation by developing legal economic opportunities; supporting moderate media messages, engaging marginalized communities, conducting peace-building efforts, and supporting increased citizen participation in local governance.

USAID is also providing emergency humanitarian assistance to Niger for agricultural, livelihood, food security, and health and nutrition interventions. These interventions are designed to support populations' recovery from food insecurity while reinforcing their capacity to cope with future emergencies. An estimated 3 million Nigeriens are food-insecure and over 40% of children under five years of age are chronically malnourished.

### **USAID/NIGER FIELD OFFICE AND SUPPORT STRUCTURES**

USAID/Niger, a limited presence field office of USAID based in Niamey, comprises a USAID Representative and a team of dedicated local and international development specialists who oversee humanitarian and development activities in Niger. The implementation of USAID foreign assistance programs takes place in coordination with the Regional Office for the Sahel in Dakar, Senegal as well as the USAID/West Africa Regional Mission in Accra, Ghana and USAID's Food for Peace (FFP) office and the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA).

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On behalf of the American people, the U.S. government has provided humanitarian assistance and economic development to those in need since the Marshall Plan.