

# profile



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## Impact evaluation of the Food Security and Development Support Project in the Maradi Region in Niger

Maradi is among the most vulnerable regions of Niger, with a poverty rate of 87 per cent.<sup>1</sup> Its population is mainly rural (86 per cent) and relies heavily on rain-fed agriculture, which is subject to varying climatic conditions. The level of malnutrition in this region is very high compared to the rest of the country, with a severe chronic malnutrition rate of 54 per cent among children aged 0-59 months.<sup>2</sup>

The goal of the Food Security and Development Support Project in the Maradi Region (PASADEM) was to improve the food and nutritional security of 65,000 rural households through five economic development hubs (EDH). It combined support to agro-pastoral productivity, access to markets and food resilience for the most vulnerable households, whilst ensuring sustainability through the capacity building of peasant organizations and rural action groups.

In 2018-19, the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) assessed the project's impacts through a variety of methods. It analysed its effects on household agricultural

productivity, food security and net assets by using the difference-in-differences method and techniques based on propensity score matching. Interviews were carried out with 1,350 households, including 614 project beneficiaries and 736 control households. IOE also developed an innovative qualitative method based on participatory narrative surveys to estimate producers' bargaining power and women's empowerment and collected 560 stories on each subject.

### Main findings

The EDH approach was visionary and ambitious. However, an underestimation of costs and of the time needed to develop infrastructure prevented these hubs from reaching their full economic potential.

The Food Security and Resilience component of the project yielded the best results. PASADEM helped extend the period of food sufficiency by one month. The impacts of the cash-for-work activities, women-managed lean season grain stores and goat farming kits (table 1) are even more impressive, as they contributed to reducing the depreciation of the value of small ruminant herds.

1 National report on human development in Niger, 2016, INS.

2 Nutrition survey, 2016, INS.

**TABLE 1. Impact on the number of months of food sufficiency (difference-in-differences method)**

	PASADEM	CfW	WMGS	GFK	GFK(1) WMGS(2)	GFK(1) CfW(2)	WMGS(1) CfW(2)
Difference 2018-2013	2.353***	2.340***	2.349***	2.356***	2.365***	2.391***	2.335***
Beneficiary (1)a	0.974***	1.396***	1.103***	0.942***	1.063**	1.099***	0.627*
Beneficiary (2)b					1.205***	1.625***	1.329***
Beneficiary (1&2)c					0.863**	0.768*	1.429***
Beneficiary of other activities		0.731***	0.885***	0.982***	0.858***	0.660***	0.768***

Note: last three columns: processing = a) (1) without (2) b) (2) without (1) c) (1) and (2). CfW: Cash-for-work; WMGS: Women-managed grain stores; GFK: Goat farming kits. P-value: \* p<0.050; \*\* p<0.010; \*\*\* p<0.001.

Furthermore, the strong links between women's involvement in decision-making, their contribution to the household's food supply and their economic empowerment, shows the influence these activities have had on the empowerment of rural women.

Lack of access to inputs is the main obstacle to the development of reclaimed land and limits the positive impacts of agricultural extension. While many producers have learned new production techniques, lack of material and financial access to inputs limits their use on a large scale.

The construction of market centres has had a positive impact on producers' margins, as it decreased transaction costs for traders, increased transparency and the dissemination of information on prices, and created greater competition in market centres. However, the cyclical indebtedness of many households to local middlemen severely restricts their bargaining power and their access to market centres. Small-scale producers also have a hard time accessing these centres, because of long distances and the poor condition of rural roads.

Lastly, efforts at social mobilization, the strengthening of rural action groups and the large-scale promotion of sustainable land management have all contributed to the sustainability of the project results. The project did not do enough to reinforce the role played by peasant organizations in the delivery of production services

## Main recommendations

- **Recommendation 1.** As part of the EDH approach, significantly increase the relevance of actions aiming at improving the food and nutritional security of poor and vulnerable households, to guarantee that no one is left behind.
- **Recommendation 2.** Set up, manage and follow through at least one EDH in every region, in order to assess their efficiency and impact as development models.
- **Recommendation 3.** Further strengthen grassroots peasant organizations, in order to ensure the quality and sustainability of production and postproduction services aimed at producers.

(e.g. extension, supply of inputs) and postproduction services (e.g. storing, processing, transportation and marketing). However, regional bodies are now in place and are fully operational thanks to PASADEM and will be able to further strengthen their capacities with financial support from the Family Farming Development Programme in Maradi, Tahoua and Zinder Regions and other programmes.

To conclude, a greater transparency of markets, better information on prices and an increase in the number of buyers have served the economic development of the region, while poor access to inputs and the cycle of debt remain a problem for the most vulnerable. In this respect, actions aimed at improving food security or at strengthening the powers of representation of peasant organizations and their offer of services to farmers will need to be pursued in order to promote the economic development of the poorest.

## FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT PASADEM

Date of approval: **13/12/2011**  
 Inception date: **12/03/2012**  
 Date of completion: **31/03/2018**  
 Total cost: **US\$33.83 million**  
 IFAD contribution: **US\$21.99 million**  
 Government contribution: **US\$5.55 million**  
 Beneficiary contribution: **US\$1.16 million**  
 World Food Programme contribution: **US\$4.43 million**  
 Number of beneficiaries: **50,710 households**

Source: Project completion report, January 2019.

### Further information:

Niger, Impact Evaluation, Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD, Via Paolo di Dono, 00142 Rome, Italy | [www.ifad.org/evaluation](http://www.ifad.org/evaluation) | e-mail: [evaluation@ifad.org](mailto:evaluation@ifad.org) | [www.twitter.com/IFADeVal](https://twitter.com/IFADeVal) | [www.youtube.com/IFADevaluation](https://www.youtube.com/IFADevaluation)