



Office of the President of the Republic
Office of the Prime Minister
Permanent Secretariat of the PRSP

Participatory Poverty Assessment

Niger

Cabinet National D'Expertise en Sciences Sociales
CNESS-Bozari



Africa Region





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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD	i
ABSTRACT	iii
PREFACE	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	viii
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.....	ix
INTRODUCTION	
I. Background and Rationale for the Study.....	1
II. Objectives and Anticipated Results	2
III. Brief Overview of the Evaluation Methodology.....	3
IV. Topics of Investigation	4
CHAPTER I. IDENTIFYING POVERTY	
1.1 Perceptions and Judgments about Living Standards and Quality of Life	5
1.2 Poverty: Definitions, Conceptions and Manifestations.....	8
1.3 Mobility	10
1.4 Scope and Profile of Poverty	10
1.5 Determinants and Causes of Poverty.....	13
1.6 Poverty: Effects and Impacts	17
1.7 Attitudes and Reactions to Poverty, and Survival Strategies and Mechanisms.....	19
CHAPTER II. POVERTY AND INTERVENTIONS	
2.1 Summary Diagnostic of Interventions	23
2.2 Interventions and Poverty	23
2.3 Poverty, Mobility, Prostitution and AIDS.....	24

CHAPTER III. BASIC NEEDS AND SECTORAL PRIORITIES

3.1	Food security	27
3.2	Health	29
3.3	Agriculture	30
3.4	Livestock.....	31
3.5	Environment	32
3.6	Water Supply	33
3.7	Education.....	34
3.8	Employment and Training.....	35
3.9	Income-generating Activities (IGAs) and Micro-credit.....	36
3.10	Transport	36
3.11	Capacity-building	36

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I.	Generating Ongoing Dialogue	40
II.	Making Poverty Reduction a Vision and a Philosophy that Inspires Hope	41
III.	Improving the Mechanisms for Monitoring Poverty Reduction Efforts	41

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1	GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE AND TARGET GROUPS	45
ANNEX 2	IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDY.....	47
ANNEX 3	SAMPLE TARGET SITES AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS	48
ANNEX 4	INTERVIEW GUIDE	52

FOREWORD

In the Republic of Niger, a country that ranks 161 out of 162 countries listed in the UNDP's Human Development Report, poverty determines the lifeline of the average individual virtually before he or she is born. The income poverty figures (showing that the average individual subsists on less than US\$200 per year) tell only part of the story; it is the human face of poverty that compels urgent action on the part of the international community. Some examples: In Niger, 40 percent of children under 5 years old are malnourished. Statistically, a child born in Niger stands a better chance of dying before the age of 5 than of ever attending school. Adult illiteracy remains high at 84 percent and gross primary enrollment rates low at 42 percent. The burden of poverty and low social development falls disproportionately on women, whose access to land, credit, technology, and social services remains very limited, despite some recent progress.

How can an institution like the World Bank, whose mandate it is to reduce poverty in all its forms, contribute to reversing these trends? Past approaches, not just of the Bank's but of the broader donor community, have had limited impact. While there are many ways of improving the impact of donor assistance – including much fuller coordination of their approaches – a critical part of the formula is to achieve a better understanding of poverty and how it is perceived by the poor themselves. Too often in the past, donor programs have failed to address the realities of daily existence on the part of ordinary people, and in consequence have failed to win their interest in getting involved in programs of which they are supposed to be the beneficiaries. Understanding how people experience poverty at a personal level, how they explain its sources, and what they believe can be done

about it, is critical to designing approaches to development that can really work.

The Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) for Niger goes far in helping us achieve this understanding. Its unique approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods, but above all based on listening to people, has allowed the research team to shed new light on the nature of poverty in Niger. It tells us that development programs can succeed or fail, regardless of the quality of their technical preparation, when they do not address the existential realities of life for the poor. These include their personal beliefs about the nature of development problems; whether their social standing (or gender) allow them a voice in the design and implementation of projects, what kind of hope they possess for their own future and that of their children, their levels of trust in government and donor-financed programs, and the sense of powerlessness felt by the poor in an institutional structure that is perceived as favoring the rich. Understanding these beliefs, perceptions and feelings, can help guide us to interventions better adapted to the realities of poor people, improving their chances for success.

This PPA is already having an impact. It serves as the diagnostic basis for the depiction of poverty in Niger's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, which is serving to anchor coordinated donor interventions aiming to increase their overall impact in the fight against poverty, and it informs the Bank's recent Country Assistance Strategy for Niger 2003-2005. In concrete form, the PPA is helping the government of Niger and the Bank design the Community Action Program, designed specifically to increase the power and ability of people living in (mostly) rural communities to design and implement development projects according to needs that

they voice themselves. A separate study, following the same methodology with a focus on listening, is also informing the design of a significant multisectoral program to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS in Niger.

Listening to the poor at the design phase of development strategy and project formulation is necessary but not sufficient. For our inter-

ventions to have a real impact we must continue to listen, and not be afraid of what we may hear. This important document is therefore only a first step toward what must become a systematic process of listening, one that we believe has a chance of bringing about hope in people that – as this study demonstrates – all too often have too little.

Antoinette M. Sayeh
Country Director for Niger, Benin and Togo
The World Bank

ABSTRACT

This study is a Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA). It should be pointed out that the objective of this investigation is to provide persons working in this area with basic data on poverty that can be used to develop strategies and to carry out future activities.

This study is both qualitative and quantitative in nature, and was conducted on a representative population sample in sites in all regions of the country. There were a total of 49 sites, of which 19 were urban and/or peri-urban and the rest rural. Data collection was organized around topics of interest and was done with the help of interviewing guides and sheets on which participants' remarks were recorded. When all target groups are combined, a total of 3,950 persons were interviewed. This sampling is differentiated by type of interview format (i.e., individual interview (II) or focus group (FG)). Individual interviews (IIs) involved 1,181 people, while 1,787 people were interviewed via focus groups. In addition, 982 resource persons (e.g., local actors, administrative authorities, women's leaders, etc.) were also interviewed. Young people predominate in the sample of respondents, accounting for 67.2 percent, with adults making up 28.4 percent and the elderly only 3 percent. The gender breakdown of respondents, for all types of interviews combined, was 48.5 percent female and 51.5 percent male. Broken down by milieu, 54.5 percent of interviewees were from rural areas, and 47.5 percent were urban dwellers. All of the country's main ethnic groups were amply represented in the interviews. Discussions were free and open and dealt essentially with the standard of living, the diagnostic of poverty, the interrelationship between poverty and development interventions, and the sectoral needs of the communities.

Overall, the interviewees provided adequate feedback on the above-mentioned topics. The

analytical substance of the responses gathered is labeled as such. Past, present and future standards of living were judged in various ways by 86 percent of respondents in 'II' situations and by 79 percent of those approached via FGs. According to 76 percent of those persons interviewed individually, the standard of living was better in the past than it is today, because of the plentiful rainfall and abundant production potential and because, in the past, people had a certain amount of control over their living conditions. Also, many respondents acknowledged and mentioned several significant areas in which the quality of life is improving, e.g., the proliferation of infrastructures, new forms of political/administrative organization, and the reduction or elimination of certain endemic diseases, due to progress in health care.

About 35 percent of respondents in IIs, and 12 percent of opinion leaders and other local actors, are apparently uncertain as to what the future holds in terms of quality of life. Some remarked:

"...urgently-needed solutions to the chronic food shortage have still not been found ..."

"...development partners interventions have limited impact in most cases ..."

"...reforms that could help a lot of people to develop are slow in coming ..."

In sum, life in Niger fails to provide enough job opportunities, according to urban respondents, while rural respondents were more concerned with things such as the organization of the populace, food, people's respect for them, and the lack of trust between development workers and beneficiaries.

Overall, 59 percent of respondents saw living conditions as a sort of sieve that has allowed poverty to seep in. Poverty, which is closely

associated with quality of life, is perceived by beneficiaries and actors as a process of ongoing deterioration in living conditions. It exists along a continuum that begins with penury, then turns into an inability to act, and finally leads to dependency and destitution. In other words, the population does not view poverty as a static condition, but instead as a process. It is first an economic phenomenon that then takes on a social dimension, and in the end becomes a reality with psychological repercussions.

The effects and impacts of poverty include, among other things: precarious housing, malnutrition, poor sanitation conditions, and a lack of capital and property. More specifically, the victims of poverty are subject to social exclusion and marginalization such that poor people are not well represented within community structures and have difficulty garnering the benefits of the services offered. In short, poverty is a major obstacle that unarguably diminishes the level of utilization of health services, education, micro-credit, etc. Moreover, AIDS is a by-product of poverty, in a manner of speaking. In more precise terms, bad living conditions drive a large number of poor people to emigrate, to have multiple sex partners, and to take little interest in disease-prevention measures. The effects of poverty are felt:

- at the level of the individual (in the form of dependency, subservience, despair, avoidant behaviors, precarious housing and sanitation conditions, food insecurity and lack of capital, etc.);
- at the level of the family (in the form of decreased willingness/ability to assume responsibility, family dislocation, shame, etc.);
- at the level of the community (where they manifest themselves in social injustice, exclusion, marginalization, fragmentation, loss of the socio-cultural values of solidarity and mutual aid, under-representation in Grassroots Community Organizations (GCOs), etc.).

In terms of a profile of poverty, the people most affected by the deterioration in living conditions are women, young people and the elder-

ly. Poverty is more widespread and more severe in urban areas, since rural poverty provides a steady supply of people to fuel urban poverty. Thirty-eight (38) percent of the poor are engaged in marginal activities.

According to beneficiaries and based on the results of case studies, the following (non-exhaustive) list of determinants or causes, in order of importance, seem to lead to impoverishment:

- explosive population growth that is not accompanied by economic growth;
 - recurrent droughts that compromise the efforts of farmers in particular;
 - the deterioration of productive potential, which has a significant impact on production factors;
 - Inadequate investment, which reduces the scope of opportunity;
 - Physical remoteness.
-
- In addition, factors such as widowhood, divorce, lack of job opportunities, old age, outmigration, as well as certain beliefs and socio-cultural attitudes, exacerbate the vulnerability of a substantial segment of society.

The investigation revealed that there are a multitude of completed or ongoing interventions aimed at improving living conditions. Fewer interventions are carried out in the urban milieu than in the rural milieu. While development activities have definitely had various effects and impacts, these impacts have not been very significant where the poor are concerned.

A correlation between the areas in which initiatives have been completed or are underway, on the one hand, and the vast field of poverty on the other – i.e., causes and effects, survival mechanisms and strategies, etc. – seems to indicate that the range of operations recorded does not include enough activities targeting poverty. However, there are various areas in which projects and programs are strengthening survival mechanisms and strategies, e.g., IGAs, market gardening, etc.

In addition, 21 percent of completed or ongoing interventions are focused on the recurrent causes of poverty, whereas 16 percent are geared to its endemic causes.

The following factors diminish the effectiveness of development initiatives in poverty reduction:

- the extreme mobility of the populace;
- the fact that communities have little control over the initiatives;
- the cumbersome logistics of gaining access to proposed services;
- the fact that opportunities are too centralized;
- the under-representation of poor people in community entities; and
- the institutional framework within which development operations occur, which up to now has not done much to promote partnerships and/or contractual arrangements.

Prospects for the poor are still limited. The poor are indirectly affected by interventions, convened without really being involved, and are not well represented in GCOs. With that in mind, only concerted and harmonious actions,

along with capacity-building efforts, can help diminish poverty. In order to do this, initiatives are required that improve living conditions by making the poor a priority target. Also, efforts to boost the capacities of target groups must be continued and even stepped up. Finally, efforts must be made to see that development interventions actually reach the poor. Solutions must be found for problems related to the vertical organization of grassroots structures and of the funds generated by the various local development initiatives.

In this connection, the following points should be noted:

- Poverty reduction must become a defined objective;
- There must be a plan for genuine communication with all actors, both public and private;
- An efficient and effective system of poverty monitoring/evaluation must be put in place; and
- Partnerships and contractual arrangements must be promoted and developed, not only to better 'operationalize' the actions identified, but also to address the multisectoral dimension of poverty.

PREFACE

Poverty, as seen by the people of Niger, is severe, endemic to their country, and difficult to eradicate. This Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) was conducted by CNESS-Bozari, a private consulting firm located in Niamey, Niger under the leadership of its director, Mamane Bozari. Interviews were conducted with roughly 4,000 persons – slightly over half individually, the remainder in focus groups – during the months of December, 2001 and January, 2002. The purpose of this work was to systematically listen to the poor and other key stakeholders regarding poverty, as they experienced it, as they saw it being approached by government and others and as they thought it should be approached, so that their perspectives could serve as input to policy formation in the country. The work was supervised by the Social Development Department of the World Bank with the collaboration of the Country Economist for Niger, Jean-Luc Bernasconi, and the Bank’s Resident Representative, Geoffrey Berger under the auspices of the Prime Minister’s Office, in the person of Malla Ari. Results of this assessment have been incorporated into the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and have had an influence on macro-economic policy formation for the country of Niger.

With an average per capita GDP of \$260 Niger is one of the three poorest countries of the world. The outlook for improvement in this situation is bleak. Over three quarters (76%) of the persons interviewed individually said that their living conditions had been better in the past than at present. They attributed the decline in conditions to decreased rainfall, desertification, and, interestingly, a lessened control over their living conditions. Fully 83% of those interviewed had little or no hope of improving their living conditions. Still, over half of the sample stated that there had been improvements in a number of areas: public

administration, educational infrastructure and health, and, countering characterizations of passivity, two out of three persons sampled has dealt with his or her (the sample was divided roughly equally by gender) poverty by leaving their place of residence.

While the high rate of mobility of the people of Niger can be seen as a sign of hope in a willingness to change habitat, it can also be seen as a sign of despair in being forced to relinquish one’s home and community. Surely, this mobility – much of it from country to town or city – blurs the lines between rural and urban populations. The urban dwellers perceived far less attention to their needs on the part of government and others than did their compatriots in the countryside. Given the pervasive poverty and general lack of hope of the majority, mobility is most likely more a reflection of a perceived lack of opportunity for advancement in one’s place of residence than a clear, positive urge to continue one’s self-betterment process. The PPA depicts an impoverishment process undergone by many in the country which begins with material want, penury, descends to paralysis, and ends in dependency and utter destitution; seen thus, poverty begins as an economic condition, becomes social in nature as it worsens and ends up as a psychological state.

This PPA discusses all of the major sectors related to poverty reduction, four of which stand out:

Food security was seen by almost everyone (95%) as being the top priority for any attack on poverty. While rural people saw the solution in terms of enhancing agricultural productivity, via improved techniques and inputs, urban dwellers quite naturally saw the solution more in terms of increased employment. All were unanimous in saying that without access to

needed food all other development activity would mean little.

Health, the second sector in importance, was seen as both undergoing improvement but still inaccessible to many. Betterments were perceived particularly in the opening of new health centers with surgical units, increased outreach, more availability of drugs due to cost recovery, and enhanced participation in health activities. Many, however, especially community leaders, expressed the important caveat that most of the people of Niger do not have enough income to avail themselves of these improvements in the health sector.

Agriculture, the third priority sector, was seen as the riskiest economic activity by 80% of those interviewed one-on-one due to a decline in rainfed crop yields and the paucity of commercial outlets for market garden products. Nevertheless, close to three quarters of respondents voiced enthusiasm for the potential benefits coming out of measures including the Government's recent initiative, *Programme Speciale du President de la Republique*, aimed at flood recession agriculture, the creation of mini-dams and dikes.

Education, significantly, was seen as only the seventh priority for poverty reduction. The strongest felt needs in this area were, not surprisingly, for more schools, improved water points in schools, and classrooms. Yet, underlying much of the low priority for education was the concern that what children learn had

little relevance to getting people out of poverty. Many persons voiced the opinion that education "should be able to incorporate local realities", that the quality of teaching should improve, and that apprenticeship centers should be created.

The Office of the Prime Minister of the Government of Niger has disseminated this PPA widely and modified its economic development policies as a result of its findings. Beyond incorporating key findings from this assessment into the PRSP, the Prime Minister's office has instituted several changes directly as a result of this PPA: a) given the widespread appreciation for this systematic listening approach - and expressions of discontent at the absence of such attention previously - the Government is now strengthening its decentralization program to allow for an expanded dialogue with the people; b) food security has now become a major priority of Government policy directed at poverty reduction, which had previously been centered around health and education; c) increased attention on the part of Government will now be given to projects and programs in urban development reflecting the expressed neglect of such in the PPA. Finally, and in confirmation of the significance of this systematic listening and consultation for policy formation, the Prime Minister's Office has stated its intention to help sponsor and oversee the reiteration of this PPA at two-year intervals to assure that feedback comes from the people to help improve the efficacy of poverty reduction policies as they evolve.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAs	Administrative authorities	LAs	Local Actors
BA	Beneficiary Assessment	MWP	Modern water point
CN	City of Niamey	NGO	Non-governmental organization
CNESS	Cabinet National d'Expertise en Sciences Sociales	NRHD	National Report on Human Development
DSCN	Direction de la Statistique et des Comptes Nationaux (National Statistics Department)	OL	Opinion leader
EDF	European Development Fund	PCLCP	Framework Program to Combat Poverty (Programme cadre de lutte contre la pauvreté)
EIG	Economic interest group	PEP	Participatory Evaluation of Poverty
ERP	Economic Recovery Program	PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
FG	Focus group	STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
FP	Family planning	TGs	Target groups
GCO	Grassroots Community Organization	TOR	Terms of reference
GDP	Gross domestic product	UN	United Nations
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Countries	UNDP	United Nations Development Program
IGAs	Income-generating Activities	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
IHC	Integrated Health Center		
II	Individual interview (or individual interviewees)		



INTRODUCTION

I. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The West African nation of Niger occupies a land area of 1,267,000 km². The country's total population as of 2000 was estimated at 9,976,000 million inhabitants. In 1977, this population was growing at an average annual rate of 2.8 percent, which had risen to 3.2 percent by 1988. This means that Niger's population is doubling every 26 years. The population is 52 percent female and 48 percent male.

Average density is about 7.75 inhabitants per km², but this figure does not accurately reflect the great disparities between regions: in nomadic areas, for example, population density is barely 3 inhabitants per km². Young people make up over 70 percent of the population, half of which is under the age of 15. Niger's population is thus extremely young, which means that there is great development potential, but that there is at the same time a great need for investment in education, employment, etc.

Niger is also becoming increasingly urbanized. Indeed, the urban population, which was estimated in the 1960s at about 5 percent of the total population, had risen to 17 percent by 1998 and is expected to exceed 25 percent by the year 2020.

In addition to these rather limiting socio-demographic factors, Niger is one of the world's poorest countries, with a per capita GDP of less than US\$260 p.a. and a human development index of 0.311 in 1999, which puts it 172nd place among 174 countries. The extent of poverty is apparent in such indicators as life expectancy at birth, which stood at 48 years in 1999, below

the Africa-wide average of 52 years. The infant/child mortality rate and birth rate are among the world's highest, at 303 and 52.8 per 1000, respectively (sources: EDSN 1998).

Other indicators are also fairly discouraging. The rate of coverage of potable water requirements was 51 percent as of 2000, and 70 percent of that coverage went to urban populations, without counting the fact that many existing hydraulic infrastructures are non-functional. The gross literacy ratio is 19.19, compared to an average of 51 percent for Africa as a whole. The school enrollment ratio has increased significantly, from 27 percent in 1996 to 34 percent in 2000. This rate is higher in urban areas than in rural areas, and is very low in herding areas. Overall, boys are being schooled at a higher rate (19.33 percent) than girls (12.69 percent).

The health situation is still controversial, with nutritional and infectious diseases highly prevalent. In 2000, endemic malaria accounted for 37.38 percent of illness, diarrhea 7.69 percent, meningitis 7.36 percent, and pneumonia 13.69 percent. Although current levels of AIDS and STD prevalence are among the lowest in the sub-region (1.37 percent in 1992 and 3.4 percent in 1993, according to data from health agencies and statistical surveillance programs), they have made the public health picture more complex. However, these figures on prevalence should be regarded with caution, given the deficiencies of the epidemiological surveillance system.

In addition, the level of utilization of health services is low due to difficulties associated with the sociocultural context, physical accessibility and financial affordability, which have caused wide fluctuations in utilization rates:

e.g., 32 percent in 1994, versus 48 percent in 2000. The preceding implies that, while Niger's standard of living has certainly undergone some changes due to development activities in various socio-economic sectors, it is still plagued by various constraints that are objectively verifiable by means of the aforementioned indicators. These constraints include a slowdown in the growth of per capita GDP, which stood at 5.9 percent in 1987, and had barely changed by 1991-92, when it was 6.1 percent.

As for increasing impoverishment, the severity and scope of poverty in Niger has worsened over the past ten years. According to data derived from budget/consumption surveys conducted by the *Direction de la Statistique et des Comptes Nationaux* (DSCN) in 1992 and 1998, 63 percent of Niger's people are poor, 83 percent of those poor are in rural areas, and 34 percent of the population is living below the poverty line. Various human development reports (HDRs) also reveal, via the human poverty index, the extent of the poverty affecting Niger: the figure for 1997 was 64.31 percent, for 1998 66.73 percent, and in 1999 62.16 percent¹.

In order to meet these challenges, Niger embarked in 1986 upon a policy of stabilization followed by structural adjustment, but these initiatives failed to produce significant results due to the 1983-1993 economic slump caused by a sharp drop in the price of uranium, the recurrence of poor agro-sylvo-pastoral seasons, and deteriorating terms of trade, to cite only a few factors.

Niger recently (i.e., in 1996-1997) undertook efforts to stem the rising tide of poverty by redefining poverty reduction strategies and orientations with the help of its development partners. These efforts resulted in the preparation of an Economic Recovery Program (ERP).

The fight against poverty assumed a more concrete form at the Geneva Round Table of 1998, at which the Framework Program to Combat Poverty (*Programme cadre de lutte contre la pauvreté*, PCLCP) was adopted. It aims to reduce

poverty through greater investment efforts and the implementation of macro-economic and sectoral policies that can create conditions conducive to growth within the economic sphere of poor people.

The content and objectives of the aforementioned Program began to be implemented in the field in 1998, through several initiatives carried out by UNDP, the ADB and other donors. In 2000-2001, Niger re-focused its poverty reduction strategies and presented its development partners with an interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (*PRSP: Document de strategies intermédiaires de lutte contre la pauvreté*) followed by medium- and long-term Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers that are currently being finalized.

II. OBJECTIVES AND ANTICIPATED RESULTS

An unprecedented volume of basic data is required to refine the above-mentioned documents and to implement their recommendations. Therefore, a set of studies in various areas, including this Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA), were commissioned with the support of development partners. The PEP is the concrete expression and embodiment of the popular consultations that occurred throughout the process of developing the PRSP. This investigation offers a valuable opportunity for beneficiaries and actors to have their voices heard, so that they are not only used as points of reference, but also taken into account in the activities implemented.

General objectives of the study

The Government of Niger, through the permanent secretariat of the PRSP and the World Bank, embarked upon this evaluation in order to:

- obtain clear and precise information on improving living conditions;
- learn about the perceptions and opinions of intended beneficiaries of development programs and policies concerning activities being implemented at all levels;
- render future policy and development ini-

¹ PRSP, Niamey, January 2002, op.cit. page 11, para. 5

tiatives more efficient and effective;

- obtain the basic data needed to assess the implementation and monitoring of the PRSP.

Specific objectives of the study

This qualitative study is intended to further those goals by identifying the priority needs of the relevant populations, as well as accomplishments, problems and opportunities, so that the population's expectations and aspirations for the future can be more realistically taken into account.

The study is also intended to yield some insight into beneficiaries' and actors' opinions on the phenomenon of poverty and on the quality of services offered (e.g., their availability, utilization, etc.), as well as on recently-introduced changes and reforms in various socio-economic sectors. All of this is ultimately intended to help assess the actual impact of the various completed and/or ongoing interventions.

In addition, this research is aimed at gauging the level and degree of participation, on the part of communities and actors, in activities intended to improve living conditions, a determination which could undoubtedly help to redefine and/or re-focus the mechanisms and strategies employed.

In other words, this study is intended to:

- conduct an evaluation of poverty;
- inventory and analyze the population's judgments, perceptions and suggestions;
- determine essential priority needs;
- gauge the extent and impact of poverty reduction measures;
- identify the factors that encourage or limit the trend towards impoverishment;
- develop operational proposals and strategic themes for the execution, monitoring and evaluation of poverty reduction actions.

Anticipated results

As stated in the terms of reference, this assignment is expected to produce, upon its completion, a report containing the following:

- An inventory and analysis of groups of ben-

eficiaries and the essential priority needs of communities in the main socio-economic sectors, and a record of their expectations and suggestions;

- A description of the judgments, perceptions and perspectives of actors and beneficiaries concerning lifestyle, poverty and development interventions;
- An analysis of interventions and of service utilization, along with explanations of the determining factors;
- An identification and assessment of the main constituents of the institutional sector (i.e., decision-makers, current and potential partners, etc.);
- A description of the impact and scope of interventions;
- A description of the status of community participation, a definition of the roles of local institutional actors, and a list of the activities that can be entrusted to them;
- Proposals concerning the indicators and database to be used for monitoring and evaluating poverty;
- Strategic recommendations for poverty reduction efforts in Niger.

III. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The investigated method used in this is that of PPA evaluation on the basis of beneficiary surveys. This qualitative methodology attempts to place data in a descriptive and explanatory context. It utilizes the observations of participants, who are asked to evaluate a completed or ongoing development activity, or, in the words of its originator Lawrence Salmen:

"...it is an information-gathering approach that determines the value of an activity as perceived by its main users. It is a systematic inquiry into people's values and behaviors, ... for purposes of social or economic change...."

This survey method was recently developed by the World Bank in order to prepare or develop programs that respond to populations' needs. It has been used in over three hundred projects throughout the world, from 1983 up to the present. It was first applied in the area of hous-

ing and urban development and then gradually expanded to other sectors, such as agriculture, health and education. In 1991, this approach began to be deployed in the area of poverty reduction, where it is most often called PPA (*Enquête Participative sur la Pauvreté*, EPP).

It has been used to evaluate programs in about 60 countries. With its emphasis on listening to the poor, the PPA seeks to corroborate and clarify quantitative data through direct observation, and allows beneficiaries to freely express their opinions, values, convictions, feelings and emotions. From this standpoint, it differs from traditional methods in that it gives more weight to beneficiaries' opinions and perceptions.

The key techniques upon which this approach is based are the following:

- a review of documents;
- individual interviews in dialogue format;
- Focus groups, i.e., group discussions involving

six (6) to twelve (12) people with homogenous concerns and characteristics;

- Participant observation within target communities, in order to better understand the contextual framework and identify additional items required for analysis, beyond the opinions gathered.

IV. TOPICS OF INVESTIGATION

The PPA is always organized around themes, of which the most important for this study were the following:

- Quality of life/standard of living (present, past and future);
- essential priority needs, by sector;
- assessment of poverty reduction efforts;
- Channels and means by which needs are expressed;
- Concepts and manifestations of poverty;
- Poverty and AIDS.

CHAPTER 1



IDENTIFYING POVERTY

Poverty, which is fundamentally linked to quality of life and affects both rural and urban areas, is a multidimensional phenomenon and can assume various forms. People beset by poverty are living below the minimum threshold and have certain characteristics. Many factors create and encourage poverty, which in turn generates various effects and impacts.

In the country's seven regions and the Niamey Urban Area, where the poverty diagnostic was conducted, a number of elements emerge from the investigation.

■ 1.1 PERCEPTIONS AND JUDGMENTS ABOUT LIVING STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF LIFE

The notion of a "standard of living: past, present and future" was interpreted in diverse ways by the sample of 1,013 (86 percent) of respondents covered by Individual Interviews (IIs) and was discussed by 160 Focus Groups that accounted for 79 percent of respondents. In addition, 66 percent of opinion leaders and administrative authorities gave their opinions. Of the beneficiaries expressing an opinion, 61 percent were rural and 39 percent city dwellers. Seventy-six (76) percent of II respondents, 58 percent of FG respondents and 47 percent of opinion leaders and administrative authorities agreed that "...the standard of living in the past was better than the current one...". The reasons given in support of this view were the following: rain was abundant, the productive potential (i.e., land, water, vegetation) was adequate, but the main thing was the fact that in the past "...people had a certain control over their living conditions that they no longer have today ..."

Although these interviewees feel that living conditions were better in the past, two-thirds of them still acknowledge that the current situation is improving due to some of the factors mentioned in the table below.

Table 1.1 Areas of Progress Stated by IIs and FGs

Areas of progress	Frequency of mention	
	II	FG
Socio-cultural, political and administrative changes	80%	15%
Social and educational infrastructures	63%	71%
Interventions in the area of health	43%	30%
Clothing	20%	-
Training and outreach	20%	-
Other, e.g., electricity, miscellaneous wares	12%	-

It should be pointed out that this table shows significant disparities in the frequency of responses given by II respondents and FGs. This is because interviewees gave certain responses depending on whether they were being interviewed individually or in a group. For example, only respondents in individual interviews mentioned issues related to clothing, training/outreach and miscellaneous matters. On the other hand, socio-educational infrastructures and health-related interventions were extensively discussed in the FGs. This indicates that the IIs elicited information of a more personal nature, while the FGs drew out perspec-

tives that were shared. Some of the respondents' actual comments on the subject of significant progress in quality of life were as follows:

- **efforts made** to create and rehabilitate road infrastructures and to increase road traffic have brought different places closer to one another. This has therefore lessened the severity of famines, according to 43 percent of those queried in FGs. One person observed: "... *nowadays, with the paved roads and dirt tracks, famine is not as serious. Food can be instantly available, whereas one used to have to spend weeks traveling on an animal's back to get to the supply point while the famine raged ...*";
- **socio-cultural, political and administrative changes** have expanded individual liberties, according to the majority of opinion leaders, 80 percent of those questioned in IIs, and 15 percent of those in FGs. These respondents often emphasized that: "...*nowadays, people are no longer at the mercy of a single traditional power. New avenues of political and legal recourse have been created ...*";
- **communications equipment and infrastructures** have allowed unprecedented access to information through the mass-media, in the opinion of 63 percent of II respondents and 71 percent of those in FGs;
- **interventions in health care** have significantly reduced the frequency of certain human and livestock diseases, according to 49 percent of II respondents and one-third of those in FGs;
- **the standard of living** has improved, especially in terms of the availability of clothing, according to an average of 5 respondents per site, who consistently mentioned that: "...*people have more and more clothing, which was not the case a few years ago... when several people had to share a single wrap-around skirt, pair of trousers or shirt ...*".
- **training and outreach.** According to 50 percent of opinion leaders and one-fifth of II respondents "... *people are now more open-minded because of school, and are aware of a lot of things ...*";
- **several other new elements** have come along to improve the quality of life: electricity, mattress-

es, snack foods, various decorative articles, standpipes, modern construction materials (e.g., cement, corrugated metal), radio transmitters in the Integrated Health Centers (IHCs), according to about 100 interviewees, and particularly according to the women.

Despite these generally positive judgments about living conditions, about one interviewee in three felt that progress in quality of life is not benefiting most people, and most of those interviewees backed up this opinion by saying, in substance: "...*not everyone can get health care today, nor can they get access to this or that thing that improves quality of life ...*". In this sub-set of respondents, others attributed this state of affairs to the fact that "...*people now have less control over the physical, social and cultural environment ...*" Quite a few interviewees in the regions of Tahoua, Tillabery and Maradi agreed, saying: "...*we are caught up in a whirlwind that is preventing us from making any headway ...*"

Urban dwellers mainly mentioned the absence of opportunities, jobs and concrete assistance, whereas rural dwellers who expressed an opinion on this provided an exhaustive list. With a few variations, the following things were said to be basically lacking from the quality of life:

Trust between beneficiaries and the implementers of development activities: "...*projects and programs do not inspire our confidence (and vice-versa), because they rarely honor their commitments... many promises have not been kept ...*";

Food: "...*feeding oneself is currently a big problem ...*", "...*and the ability to feed oneself is one way of gauging affluence...*";

Respect: sixty respondents mentioned this, emphasizing that the lack of respect for the populace is reflected in behaviors displayed and in the fact that development activities are carried out with little consultation and involvement of the populace. It was also noted that initiatives are very often conducted exactly as planned, which leads to rigid and ill-suited approaches and strategies;

Organization of the population: this was mentioned by about fifty respondents, 70 percent of whom were women. They mentioned that the changes underway have not allowed rural popula-

tions, and especially producers, to organize themselves to present a united front and defend their interests vis-à-vis other groups or organizations.

Overall, with all respondent milieus combined, two main areas of progress in the quality of life were frequently mentioned:

- basic social infrastructures (schools, integrated health centers, youth centers, stadiums, etc.);
- the consultation of the population in identifying and implementing development initiatives.

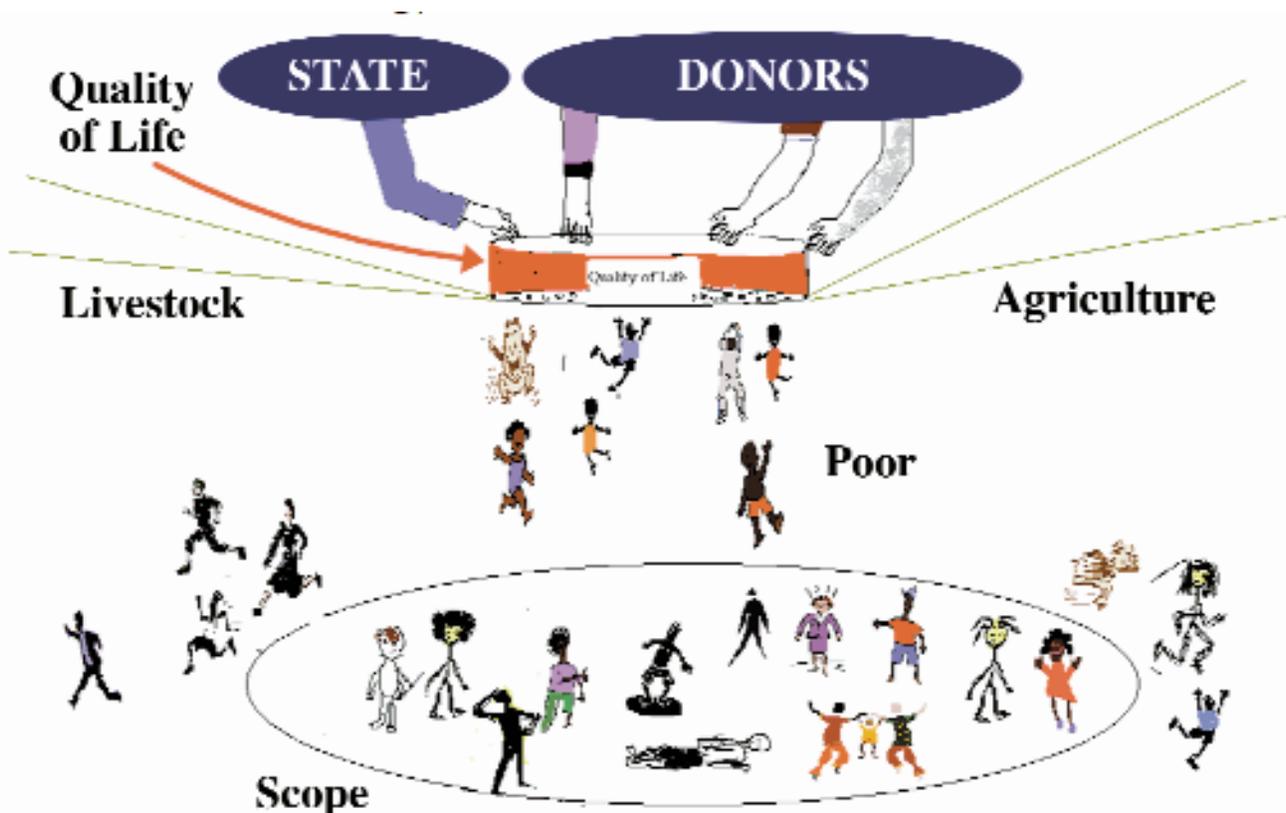
These judgments and perceptions seem to indicate that Niger's standard of living has undergone some positive changes over the past few years in the areas of health, education and communications, but that these improvements have not been lasting, due to endogenous and exogenous factors. The overall framework of life has remained like a sieve that has allowed the poor to fall through, according to 59 percent of II respondents and almost all of those in FGs. This idea was illustrated in the following way in Figure 1.1, with the help of some interviewees:

As this drawing illustrates, the quality of life in Niger is in an unstable equilibrium maintained by the State and its development partners. It is supported by an array of ropes representing the various socioeconomic sectors, most of which are either ready to break or have already done so. The often spontaneous changes of strategy and policy have shaken the sieve (i.e., the quality of life) hard, and have strained the ties (i.e., the various socio-economic sectors) holding everything together.

It goes without saying that the contents of the 'sieve' - i.e., Niger's human potential, resources, interventions and strategies - have been jostled together to produce a sort of fine powder, i.e., the poor, many of whom fall through the holes, as related by this schema.

It should be noted in passing that poor people who have fallen outside the 'sieve' are isolated from life's opportunities. If life continues to be organized in a way that allows the poor to fall through the holes, they will end up forming a large mass that can prevent the whole system

Figure 1.1 Status of Quality of Life and Poverty in Niger



from moving. And in order to function, the system must keep moving.

■ 1.2 POVERTY: DEFINITIONS, CONCEPTIONS AND MANIFESTATIONS

1.2.1 Definitions

In general, poverty is defined by communities and opinion leaders as a state that is the opposite of well-being – “Wadata” – , the latter being a state of equilibrium that permits the satisfaction of physical, social, economic and social/psychological needs.

Three main definitions of poverty are often given by the rural and urban populations. An average of 27 percent of II respondents and 21 percent of FG respondents maintained that:

“...poverty is a modern version of slavery, where people are increasingly reduced to working just to satisfy their basic food, clothing and housing needs ...”

“...poverty is a dilemma that spares no one: rich and poor are affected to various degrees ...”

“... poverty is penury ...it is a void... in short, it is a state of total destitution ...”

On the other hand, 65 percent of administrative authorities define poverty exclusively in terms of its material aspects or in terms of inadequate social, educational, hydraulic and road infrastructures, etc.

Overall, 93 percent of the 942 II respondents, rural and urban combined, gave definitions covering five dimensions (economic, social, psychological, physiological, and behavioral), as shown in the following table of responses and their relative frequencies. However, it should be pointed out that, with a few variations, certain poverty-related attributes were specific to certain milieus, genders or ethnic groups.

669 II respondents (71 percent) define poverty as shown in the following table (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2 Poverty Defined by 669 IIs

having nothing to eat	66%
having no land	42%
having nothing to do	40%
having no clothes	37%
having no livestock (mentioned more often by herders)	32%
having no husband or children (mentioned mostly by rural women)	21%
having no job (mentioned more often in urban areas than in rural ones)	12%
having no household equipment or home decor (mentioned specifically by rural as well as urban women)	6%
having no money (the response that came in last)	10%

632 II respondents (67 percent) associated poverty with issues shown in the table below.

Table 1.3 Issues Associated with Poverty by 632 IIs

an inability to make decisions	83%
an inability to take initiatives	77%
an inability to get food and clothing	61%
an inability to cover costs associated with ceremonies such as baptisms and marriages	27%
an inability to take advantage of opportunities that exist	23%
an inability to invest	19%

349 II respondents (37 percent) defined poverty in terms of marginalization as shown in the table below.

Table 1.4 Poverty Defined in Terms of Marginalization by 349 IIs

A poor person is alone and without support	93%
A poor person is like an orphan: he wears the pathetic expression of a motherless child.	81%
A poor person is someone to whom nothing matters	67%
A poor person is someone who is not consulted	59%

218 respondents (23 percent) added the idea of dependency to their definitions as shown in the table below.

Table 1.5 Dependency Defined by 218 IIs

A poor person is always asking other people for something	80%
A poor person is someone who must always work for others to survive	58%

179 respondents (19 percent) associated poverty with certain restrictions on rights and liberties as shown in the table below.

Table 1.6 Certain Restriction on Rights and Liberties Associated with Poverty by 170 IIs

A poor person has no right to speak	70%
A poor person is one who can never prevail in an argument	67%
A poor person is someone who cannot assert or defend himself	32%

1.2.2 Manifestations

In terms of its manifestations, poverty looks the same in urban areas as it does in rural ones. It occurs everywhere along a continuum that can be recapitulated as follows, according to 60 percent of those queried in the 160 adult/elderly focus groups:

- *Poverty begins with penury: something missing in the overall framework of life, and especially in the minimum requirements of life (lack of land, capital, livestock, resources, leisure, work, housing);*
- *It then evolves into an inability: i.e., an inability to produce or to meet basic needs;*
- *It then progresses towards dependency: i.e., dependency upon one's relatives and neighbors, and then results in marginalization and exclusion;*
- *It finally becomes deprivation: i.e., one is deprived of land, water, care, respect, a voice and any other opportunity.*

From these standpoints, poverty is not a situation in and of itself, but is instead a set of living conditions that are continually deteriorating, and that are below the minimum survival threshold.

In other words, poverty is a vicious circle, and in order to escape from it, one must proceed in steps, which proceed backwards from deprivation to dependency, then to powerlessness and penury. In short, there is no such thing as a poor person, but there are instead poor people. Figure 1.2 below was developed with the help of community resource persons and bears out this idea:

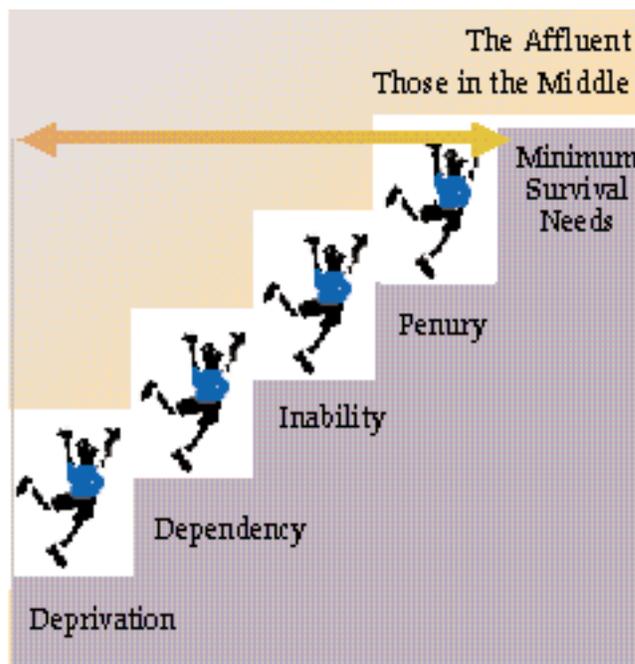


Figure 1.2 Levels of Poverty

Seen from this vantage point, poverty is first of all an economic problem that then assumes a social dimension, before becoming psychological and social in nature. This phenomenon is present in all societies or social groups, but its severity and scope vary from one milieu to another and from one time period to another, depending on the range of solutions and opportunities offered by the framework of life, which is constantly changing.



The range of definitions mentioned by the populace seems to indicate that poverty is one of the best known phenomena, probably because it is so common in the milieu. The range of responses concerning the dimensions

Figure 1.3 The Funnel of Poverty Definition

and attributes of poverty can be represented by a funnel, as shown in Figure 1.3.

One might be justified in concluding that everyone in Niger is poor, since the great majority of people ...*“lack something or are unable to do one thing or another, and are dependent upon one thing or another...”*

Given the current sluggish economic growth (1.9 percent growth in 1990-2000²) and the above-mentioned list of definitions, one can easily conclude that talking about poverty in Niger is essentially the same thing as talking about the country itself, especially since so many things are lacking in the quality of life. The other important observation to be drawn from the range of definition is that 100 percent of the items, attributes and indices make some kind of reference to the causes, effects and consequences of poverty. It is thus a given, in rural as well as in urban communities, that poverty is the result of a process. In addition, all the definitions provided by the populace are ultimately related to the general quality of life.

■ 1.3 MOBILITY

As mentioned above, poverty and mobility are closely interrelated. In rural areas, about two poor people out of three indicated that, in order to deal with a lack of food, clothing or income, they sought solutions elsewhere, outside of their place of residence. They either move, within their home region, to places that offer more opportunities or income, or to the country's larger towns, or to other countries.

Most candidates for outmigration are young adults. In certain regions such as Tillabery and Maradi, they are mostly women, both young and old. This mobility is much better known under the label of 'seasonal outmigration'. It varies in intensity depending on how bad the harvest is, and generally extends from October to June.

In urban areas, the poor live and move about exclusively in gathering places (e.g., bus stations, markets, residential areas, places where off-season crops are cultivated, industrial areas, stores, etc.) which are the preferred territory for seeking a daily pittance, especially for those who are seeking jobs or who have jobs.

Analysis indicates that the poor cannot be identified exclusively on the basis of their places of residence. The fact of situating them in space must be accompanied by an awareness of their mobility, if one is to come up with accurate information. The latter dimension – i.e., mobility – is crucial in reaching the poor.

The mobility of the poor underscores how difficult it is to reach them in their place of residence. It also complicates the task of establishing boundaries between rural and urban poverty. This means that, in Niger, urban poverty is fed to a great degree by rural poverty. Up to now, everything has been based on the assumption that the urban milieu (which is at the same time the neglected 'stepchild' in terms of interventions) is the one that can produce responses to the survival strategies and mechanisms of the poor. The rural milieu, which is the object of a greater number of development efforts, has not been able to generate a local response capable of reducing poverty.

■ 1.4 SCOPE AND PROFILE OF POVERTY

The profile and scope of poverty in rural as well as in urban areas were examined using the technique of participatory classification by order of prosperity, within the sample of II respondents, and by 'mapping' social conditions in the various survey sites. More specifically, the severity and extent of poverty by milieu (i.e., rural or urban) are determined by reconstructing the layers of the poverty continuum (cf. graph of the continuum), with the help of some beneficiary groups that estimated the size of various constituencies within their communities.

1.4.1 Scope: Some characteristics of persons affected within the sample, and their social categorization

From the operational standpoint, in order to estimate the severity of poverty within the population for which a participatory survey is being conducted, it was agreed that respondents in IIs would be asked, at the end of each interview, to indicate what stratum they felt they belonged to.

Results obtained from 997 II respondents break down as follows, into three main strata cited by the population:

² PSRP Niamey, January 2002, op. Cit. Page 37, para. 3

Table 1.7 Classification of the Sample of Respondents by Level of Prosperity

Level of prosperity	Number	(%)
Affluent	80	8%
Middle income	199	20%
Poor	658	66%
Other	60	6%
Total	997	100%

The table indicates that 8 percent identified themselves as well-off, 20 percent considered themselves to be in the middle, while 66 percent thought they were poor. The numbers recorded did not vary substantially by region. The “other” category, which received a fairly significant number (6 percent) of votes, consists essentially of minors (i.e., young people) who are referred to in local parlance as “*yan cikin ruwa taka nishi*” or, ‘those who are breathing in water’. They constitute a special category of dependent persons.

This type of conceptualization/categorization of the poor raises the whole problem of quantifying poverty solely on the basis of economic criteria – mainly income –, whereas the communities added social status to the equation. Young people, if they are not legally autonomous, are classified outside of the poor/middle/well-off categories, even if they are poor. In other words, the socioeconomic dimension of poverty is grasped in a more holistic manner in the context of household surveys. A total of 3,218 households, all milieus combined, were assigned to the various social maps established at the different survey sites. This exercise of classifying households by order of prosperity, which was done with the help of resource persons, revealed the following:

Table 1.8 Social Classification of Rural and Urban Households by Level of Prosperity

Urban	Rural
75% of households consider themselves poor	58% of households are poor
18% are middle income	34% are middle income
7% are well-off.	8% are well-off

It should be recalled that the criteria used for this classification by actors and beneficiaries were:

- the household’s ability to be self-sufficient in terms of food;
- the resources available to the household or family;
- the scope of its network of relationships;
- the investment capacity of household members;
- the social standing of family members.

Although the urban milieu has more poor households, it should be remembered that the survey was conducted largely in poor neighborhoods.

The results of both classifications by order of prosperity (i.e., those obtained from II respondents and those derived from the categorization of households) overlap considerably. In all milieus, about two-thirds of the population considers itself poor. At the household level, poverty seems to be more marked in urban areas (75 percent) than in rural ones (58 percent). Among the factors explaining this dichotomy are the fact that mutual aid and support remain a thriving practice in rural areas and the high cost of living in urban areas.

In sum, poverty has two dimensions, according to the opinions gathered. It spreads in terms of breadth and depth: the horizontal dimension reflects household and family size, or the number of persons affected. The vertical dimension has to do with the severity of the phenomenon of impoverishment in a given social milieu, which varies on a scale of sub-categories of persons affected.

1.4.2 Profile and typology of poverty

The 658 poor people queried (66 percent of the sample of respondents) displayed the following characteristics:

- Sixty-one percent are women and 23 percent are elderly. Within this sub-set, the poor are more numerous in urban areas (69 percent) than in rural areas (58 percent). In most cases, the self-identified poor people in the urban milieu are young. In terms of their day-to-day activities, the poor are agricultural workers, water sellers, and wood cutters. Nine percent claimed to be jobless, and nearly all of them were in urban areas.

- In terms of marital status, the poor are more often monogamous than polygamous: 68 percent versus 32 percent. Poor women in the sample engage in specific activities, depending on the milieu (rural or urban). In Ouallam, they sell sand, whereas in Niamey and its environs they are vendors of “boules” (i.e., balls made of onion greens) or maids. In the case of nomads, 70 percent of the poor (i.e., the males) are livestock drivers and the women pound grain or sell animal products (such as milk, butter and cheese). Among sedentary populations, the poor work as sharecroppers or domestics.
- These impoverished people have little or no representation in GCOs.
- Most live in dwellings built with makeshift materials. In residential compounds inventoried as “poor”, 79 percent of dwellings were built with makeshift materials, 15 percent of adobe and 6 percent of cement blocks, especially in urban areas. According to the count obtained: in one-third of the 3,218 compounds enumerated, the average number of persons ranged from 4 to 6, except for sites located in nomadic zones, where the average was barely 3 persons.

It appears from this profile that poverty affects women and the elderly more often. Widowhood and divorce increase vulnerability to poverty.

The poor work tirelessly in marginal activities, many of which are generated by development interventions, particularly in connection with hydraulic infrastructures, micro-finance, and micro-credit granted to equip farmers with carts.

According to opinions gathered from about one hundred key informants, four types of poverty co-exist and interact with each other. Analysis of the descriptions of the types of poverty is based solely on the content of the interviewees’ statements. The types of poverty are the following:

Crypto-poverty (or ‘feigned affluence’)

Crypto-poverty, in the opinion of the interviewees, is hidden poverty. This form of poverty is not very common and affects only a miniscule segment of

the population. According to interviewees, it afflicts salaried workers in general and the so-called affluent in particular, who attempt to maintain a certain lifestyle for which they often lack the means. According to other interviewees, this type of poverty also results from deviant behaviors — e.g., alcoholism, drug addiction, maintaining mistresses, gambling — that strain a person’s income. Aside from these opinions, this crypto-poverty is closely associated with economic behaviors on the part of consumers, which certain economic theorists describe this way: “Consumption is a function of the highest income received in the past. Since it is difficult to curb one’s consumption following a sudden drop in income, there is instead a phenomenon of ‘dissaving’” (i.e., the so-called ‘ratchet’ effect described by Keynes and Friedman, in which spending can ratchet forward, but not backward).

Recurrent or cyclical poverty

Recurrent or cyclical poverty, according to interviewees, is a cyclical phenomenon consisting of a general dwindling of income. When this type of poverty “...knocks on the door, all people, urban as well as rural, feel it, from civil servants to entrepreneurs to farmers ...”. This poverty is of a particular type because it is transitory. According to some interlocutors, it results from repeated poor harvests that compromise farmers’ incomes, with corresponding effects on their standard of living (e.g., an increase in food prices).

Endemic poverty

Also called day-to-day poverty, or “*Talaochin koul louyomin*” in Hausa, endemic poverty is the situation of a significant fringe population of men and women deprived of means of production (i.e., who are without land, livestock, capital, etc.).

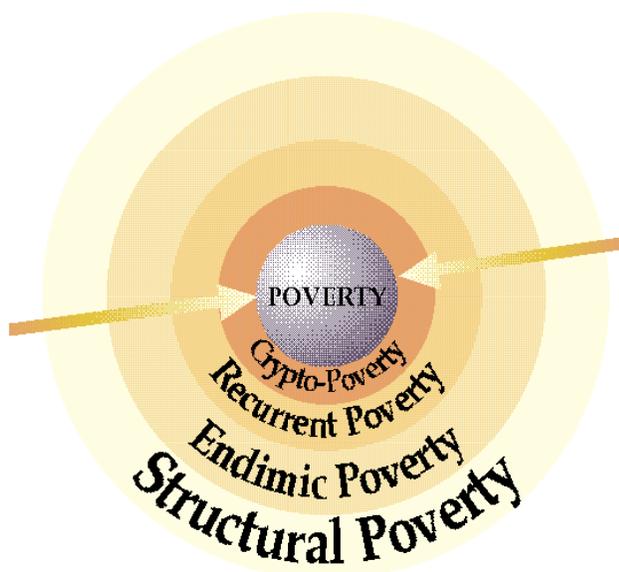
Structural poverty: “*Talaochin gomnat*” or poverty of the State

This last form of poverty is, as its name indicates, closely linked to the country’s socio-economic and political structure. According to those who mentioned it, structural poverty has to do with the overall framework of life, which has trouble providing poor people with services or opportunities. Other interviewees referred to the ever-changing economic environment, and to the continuous drop in the price of raw materials.

To illustrate their statements, they emphasized that structural poverty feeds into the other above-men-

tioned types of poverty, and vice-versa, as shown in Figure 1.4 below:

Figure 1.4 Four Types of Poverty Coexisted and Interacted



All these forms of poverty are intertwined and interact and influence each other.

1.5 DETERMINANTS AND CAUSES OF POVERTY

Discussions with implementers of development interventions and with the beneficiaries of those interventions (i.e., a sample of 903 II respondents and 111 FG respondents) concerning the determinants and causes of poverty helped to identify a range of factors, which are shown in Table 1.9 in descending order.

These various factors and causes were sorted into structural, cyclical and endemic categories.

1.5.1 Determinants associated with the way of life

Structural causes

Way of life: The social, cultural, economic or political environment has greatly contributed to increased impoverishment in Niger, according to 13 percent of 903 II respondents, 75 percent of opinion leaders. This opinion came up in 57 FGs, especially in those involving administrative authorities, managers of technical services, and community development agents. The international environ-

Table 1.9 Inventory of Causes and Determinants of Poverty

Causes and determinants mentioned	Frequency of mention			
	Rural milieu		Urban milieu	
	II	FG	II	FG
Population explosion	88%	77%	38%	96%
Periodic and recurrent droughts	81%	68%	42%	88%
Deterioration of productive potential	73%	56%	35%	56%
Insufficient investment	60%	37%	82%	33%
Physical remoteness	56%	89%	11%	87%
Factors contributing to vulnerability	38%	62%	72%	67%
Social conflicts	42%	18%	63%	55%
Socio-cultural deficiencies	33%	49%	37%	31%
The State's weak financing capability	27%	5%	66%	33%
Overall framework/quality of life	17%	45%	6%	30%
Total, II and FG respondents combined	601	66	302	45

ment, with the currency devaluation and the continuous deterioration in the terms of trade, was seen as an obstacle to the creation of job opportunities.

For others, especially some beneficiaries and development actors, the issue was political and institutional instability, i.e., the four republics, two transitional governments, two coups d'état, and two rebellions that Niger has experienced. This was the main problem that resulted in setbacks (e.g., ongoing programs put on hold, decrepit infrastructures, etc.) by temporarily interrupting the development cooperation and aid that account for over four-fifths of the funds in vital social sectors.

Thus, according to 27 percent of the sub-sample and 66 percent of urban dwellers, these political shocks greatly diminished the financial capacity of the State, which found itself unable to honor its international commitments or to provide counterpart financing for certain interventions, thus shutting off the population's prospects. According to some 12 percent of respondents, this "...goes to show that, in Niger, poverty is more a State phenome-

non than a community phenomenon...". Social turmoil, e.g., spontaneous strikes, armed rebellions, etc., were cited by about 60 II respondents as factors that immobilized the various socioeconomic sectors, and that sidetracked development for about five years (i.e., 1991-1996) in the herding areas (i.e., three-quarters of the national territory) due to the dangerous physical conditions that prevailed there.

Moreover, technicians and some retired persons insisted that this past decade has been characterized by an abandonment of the system of development planning. This, they say, has brought about a situation in which development is managed on a day-to-day basis. Development programs and interventions that used to be carried out within a planned framework have become more heavily 'sectoralized' and 'verticalized', thus reducing the synergy needed to spur a development dynamic. In this connection, about a hundred II respondents and 70 percent of opinion leaders conclude that development efforts have occurred without a vision or philosophy, even though a vision is still the only 'spearhead' that can provoke the kind of collective enthusiasm (or general mobilization) required for development.

1.5.2 Endemic causes

Population growth, continuous deterioration of productive potential, physical inaccessibility and socio-cultural deficiencies are the main endemic causes of poverty mentioned by beneficiaries and implementers of development interventions.

The population explosion

Population growth was cited by 88 percent of II respondents and 38 percent of FG respondents. This factor was less often mentioned by nomads than by sedentary populations. To back up this assertion, those who subscribed to this opinion often declared: "... *poverty is caused by the growing number of mouths to feed...*", further noting that: "...*this increase results in the subdivision of plots of land that are already infertile ...*". The result, others say, is that: "...*a single individual's plot no longer suffices...*".

Physical remoteness

The lack of roads, isolation and inaccessibility were cited by 55 percent of rural II respondents and by 11 percent of urban respondents. In the focus

groups, however, nearly all respondents agreed that this obstacle constantly gets in the way of opportunities and initiatives. This opinion predominated in rural areas, with frequencies varying depending on the region, with Diffa in first place, followed by Agadez and Tillabery. Respondents from these locales continually brought up the fact that the accessibility issue prevents villages from offering job opportunities. "...*inaccessibility drives up the price of basic staples in rural areas, because of the high cost of transport ...*". In addition, inaccessibility was perceived by other interviewees as a sizeable obstacle to the population's access to basic social services (e.g., schools, health centers, technical services, etc.).

Degradation of productive potential

Mentioned by rural and urban dwellers alike (over 50 percent of II and FG respondents), the degradation of productive potential: i.e., the shrinkage of water courses and bodies of water, the dwindling of grazing areas and the impoverishment of soils, is perceived to be spreading poverty within communities. Among those who expressed this opinion, some backed up their arguments with a wealth of examples, including the following:

- "*because of depleted soil, harvests have declined by over 90 percent*";
- "*due to the inadequate supply of water and hay, livestock has become a high-risk enterprise*".

Socio-cultural deficiencies and certain practices

According to a little over one-third of II and FG respondents from rural and urban milieus, poverty is also rooted in values, beliefs, and socio-cultural attitudes. Various responses were given on this subject, with considerable variation from one region to another. In all sites and milieus, women, young people and the elderly claimed that the weakening of the socio-cultural values of solidarity and mutual aid that used to help the poor, are now eroding and giving way to social fragmentation, which is a source of indigence. In other words, the absence of a climate of community consensus and solidarity has played a large role in blocking individual and collective initiatives, and this is something, respondents say, that hastens the impoverishment of the weakest.

Caste-based inequalities, which were cited more often in nomadic milieus and in the region of

Tillabery, continue to inhibit access to production factors for those who are at the bottom of the social ladder. Those who belong to caste-based societies are generally consulted very little, if at all, and are relatively uninvolved in community-level decisions.

In certain regions, responses confirmed that low-ranking people in caste-based societies had little voice. High-caste individuals had no qualms suggesting to some members of the research team that *"... they should stop interviewing those people because they are not supposed to say anything... since..."*. Among the Tuaregs, these people who live in servitude are relegated to caring for their masters and their masters' property.

The waste of food associated with ostentatious displays for traditional ceremonies is a phenomenon that handicaps many farmers, according to remarks made in about twenty FGs.

The practice of usury, more often mentioned in the regions of Maradi and Tahoua, increases the number of poor people, according to our interviewees. By granting loans at excessive interest rates, local traders pad their grain speculations and do not hesitate to lure the poor into repaying twice, or even three times, the amount at the end of the cropping season. This situation, according to some, draws the weakest into a vicious circle of indebtedness such that *"...even in the event of a series of good harvests, debtor farmers remain chronically in the red ..."*.

Certain attitudes and reactions to poverty – e.g. marginalization and fatalism – to which poor people subscribe or that they endure, render the situation more complex for the poor, according to 48 percent of traditional leaders and prominent citizens.

1.5.3 Cyclical causes

Low rainfall, drought, poor harvests, pest attacks (e.g., by locusts and parasites) and the shrinking pool of job opportunities, were cited by 81 percent of rural II respondents and 42 percent of urban respondents, with some variations on the theme. These various factors compromise the population's already difficult living conditions, according to the majority of respondents, who say: *"...droughts ..., ...are responsible for the destruction of the productive*

potential (i.e., water, land, livestock, etc.)...". Poor harvests, locusts, and crop parasites plunge farmers into destitution *"...since in such circumstances, they spend all their resources..."*, *"...how can one not be poor..."*. Others assert that: *"...at the end of each bad harvest ..."*; *"...we have to mortgage all the property we own ..."*.

1.5.4 Factors contributing to vulnerability

Various factors were enumerated by the sub-set of 348 rural respondents (38 percent) and by 72 percent of urban residents. Some case studies were conducted to research in greater depth some of the factors mentioned by respondents. The responses given all dealt with factors contributing to vulnerability. In order of importance, they are:

The increasingly vertical organization of programs and projects

The absence of a frame of reference for local development was cited most often at the community level.

The plethora of committees (with each having its own organizational structure) compromises the efforts of those committees at organizational development, due to, among other things, the fragmentation of actors, the tendency to hoard resources, the overlap between committees pursuing the same objectives, and the worsening of latent and potential conflicts, as this case study reveals.

Urban expansion and development policies

Urban expansion, as is the case everywhere, destroys the potential of the surrounding lands and populations. Indeed, each year, according to interviewees in Goudel (a traditional neighborhood of Niamey), the municipality withdraws hundred of hectares of fields from the inhabitants and then compensates them in the form of sites-and-services plots. In most cases, those who are compensated sell off the plots they have acquired, since they are unable to exploit them. With the money thus obtained, it is said that few manage to make profitable investments. Dispossessed of their lands and penniless, most residents of neighborhoods like Goudel are mired in abject poverty. They are cut off from the traditional production system and integrated, without resources, into an urban economic system. This confirms the observation that urban expansion, without coherent social welfare underpinnings, accelerates the impoverishment of

a significant segment of the population caught up in the sites-and-services arrangements.

Certain forms of urban development policy, especially those that involve grouping the poor in order to relocate them in temporary clusters, confine the poor to a space that could be termed a 'no man's land', with all that that implies in the way of increased incidence of poverty. The neighborhood of Koura-tégui in Niamey is an illustration of this, as shown in this case study. (see right column)

Incurable diseases

Incurable diseases such as AIDS, diabetes and cancer were mentioned by respondents in about forty FGs. These illnesses plunge the person directly affected, along with his/her family, into destitution. Respondents agreed that these illnesses drain household savings and can drive them into debt. In such circumstances, it is frequent, according to some, to see well-off families find themselves in a situation of privation. A case study on this confirmed these claims (see right column).

Low contribution of enterprises to poverty reduction

Administrative and traditional authorities, as well as 83 percent of interviewees in Arlit, maintained that impoverishment often gains ground when mining companies and private enterprises fail to provide enough assistance to target groups in the locales where they are based. For a long time, they say, these structures hardly lent any significant help to communities in their struggle for survival. One sub-prefect declared: *"...they all have funds for social welfare purposes, but they are inefficiently used for lack of a coherent framework for intervention ..."*.

The following results of the case study of Arlit help to explain this inaction (see next page).

Rural outmigration impoverishes women and the elderly

"Rural outmigration impoverishes women and the elderly" is an assertion made by at least 23 percent of aged persons in each rural site. These respondents say they are often abandoned and left on their own: *"...with the able-bodied workers gone from rural areas, we are without resources..."*. As for female respondents, they assert that their husband's stay outside the area makes their living conditions more complicated.

KOIRA-TÉGUI: WORSENING POVERTY

Koira-tégui is a low-income neighborhood on the edge of Niamey, on the road to Ouallam. This neighborhood is the result of the municipality's efforts, in 1985, to clean up Niamey by ridding the city of as many shanty-type dwellings as possible, since they are fire hazards. In order to do this, the municipality did a count of poor households throughout the city that possessed this type of dwelling.

Subsequently, the island of Koira-tégui was assigned to the beneficiaries, who built huts for shelters. The problem was not solved, but was instead simply displaced, since straw huts were replaced by other straw huts, except that now they were all grouped together and compartmentalized. This strategy, instead of being effective, grouped and confined the poor far from urban infrastructures. In this case, it can be said that urban expansion created a sort of "socially engineered" poverty, since the poor were grouped and left to themselves, far from opportunities for interaction with other social strata with medium to high incomes.

POVERTY AND ILLNESS

An independent and well-off women became afflicted with AIDS. The Lamordé Hospital did everything it could, but in vain. The woman then spent all her money on traditional treatments. Ironically, it was her eldest daughter, whom no one had dared to approach because of her pride and pompous manner, who had to prostitute herself to support her mother. This daughter leaves Kirkissoye every afternoon at around 4 p.m. to go into the city to prostitute herself and comes back at night with snacks, medicines, and other products to help her mother.

Story related in an individual interview by a head of household in Kirkissoye (Niamey)

ARLIT: CONTRAST AND GROWING IMPOVERISHMENT

Arlit Township, located 1,234 km from Niamey, is an industrial city created by the implantation of two mining companies (i.e., COMINAK and SOMAIR). In 1975-1976, drainage dikes and lands were specially developed to lure the surrounding populations, who settled in and began to engage in market gardening, the products of which were sold to mine workers.

In booming economic times, these populations derived some benefits. But when austerity measures led to staff reductions and voluntary departures, the water retention infrastructures deteriorated and most of the villas and mineworkers' compounds emptied out.

In order to compensate for this problem, much of the population resorted to such activities as small-scale commerce: the women became maids and domestics, and the young people invested in second hand vehicles and spare parts to pursue the tourist trade. The armed rebellion made the Algerian and Libyan borders more difficult, if not impossible, to cross.

This proved a sizeable handicap for the tourism scheme. The 'tourist chasers' then turned to other low-income and marginal activities (laundry work, reconditioning of tires, etc.). With the continuous dwindling of the waters, others, in order to survive, took up the weaving of mats and basketry, using the reeds that grew in the wastewater left over from mining processes. After an environmental impact study concluded that this water was polluted, the population was forbidden to have access to it.

With the departure of mid-level workers, survival strategies became fewer, and most of the population of Arlit found itself caught up in a process of nearly irreversible impoverishment.

In certain families, girls and divorced women became full-fledged heads of households who provided resources and assistance to other members by means of paid sexual encounters.

Other important factors contributing to vulnerability that were cited to various degrees, in rural areas as well as in urban areas, include:

- the embezzlement of public funds, which increases the State's poverty;
- the lack of children;
- divorce and widowhood;
- the progressive disengagement of the State from various socio-economic sectors (e.g., from health care, with the advent of cost recovery, and from education, with parents now having to pay for pupils' supplies, and the drastic drop in social welfare allocations);
- inappropriate tax and tariff policies.

■ 1.6 POVERTY: EFFECTS AND IMPACTS

Poverty, in the opinion of 750 II respondents and 78 FGs, has concrete repercussions for the affected persons as well as for their families and social environment. According to responses given and the results of direct observation, the ongoing decline in incomes, which is associated with poverty, makes housing arrangements precarious, and leads to malnutrition, poor sanitation conditions, avoidance of others, begging and prostitution. In addition, other interviewees state that poverty leads to marginalization, exclusion and social injustice.

In order to mitigate or stop the impacts being experienced, the poor resort to day-to-day survival strategies and mechanisms, and some opt for resignation.

Table 1.10 Causes, Effects and Impacts of Poverty

Causes and determinants mentioned	Frequency of mention			
	Rural milieu		Urban milieu	
	II	FG	II	FG
Failure to assume responsibility and family dislocation	88%	77%	38%	96%
Marginalization, exclusion and social injustice	81%	68%	42%	88%
The poor derive little benefit from services offered	73%	56%	35%	56%
Psychological stress	60%	37%	82%	33%
Delinquency	56%	89%	11%	87%

1.6.1 Malnutrition and poor sanitation conditions

Observations reported from nearly 241 poor compounds mention that 56 percent eat one meal a day: lunch. Dinner is an occasional event in more than 80 percent of cases. In addition, one child in three in these compounds exhibits obvious signs of malnutrition (swollen belly or feet, sunken fontanel). These phenomena are more frequently observed in rural areas.

Moreover, it was pointed out that poor compounds are characterized by poor sanitation conditions shown in the table below.

Table 1.11 Poor Sanitation Conditions

Dirty courtyard	67%
Cooking and bathing utensils not differentiated	50%
Livestock enclosures not separate from the courtyard	27%
Children dirty and half naked	19%

The overall frequency of these conditions in this milieu, although difficult to attribute to poverty, still contribute to the underpinnings of poverty.

1.6.2 Lack of capital and property

Objectively, the lack of capital and property constitutes one of the characteristics of the poor in the sample. Poor residential compounds are woefully under-equipped. Of 143 compounds observed in this connection, 18 heads of household (12 percent) own a radio, compared to at least 50 percent of heads of household in the 27 affluent and middle-income compounds studied. Only three poor heads of household owned his own cart. The rooms of about thirty poor women visited lacked equipment and/or furnishings. Livestock capital is present in poor compounds, but most of the animals do not belong to the people living there.

1.6.3 The poor are underrepresented in community structures

The diagnostic of Grassroots Community Organizations yielded data on the degree to which the poor are represented in these entities. Men and women from these entities were sought out, in

order to determine how many poor people belonged to such organizations.

It emerged that, in about one hundred of these committees, only 9 persons were from poor compounds, out of a total of over 500 GRO promoters.

1.6.4 Marginalization, exclusion and social injustice

Interviewees in about sixty FGs mentioned marginalization, exclusion and social injustice among the effects endured by the needy in their daily life. Remarks such as “*poor people are marginalized*”, “*a poor person is never right*”, “*a poor person is excluded*” were frequent in their statements. The underrepresentation of poor people in GCOs illustrates this exclusion.

Stereotypes and offensive remarks about poverty, along the lines of “*... poor people are dishonest...*”, “*...poor people are ungrateful ...*”, “*... Poor people have no dignity ...*”, “*...poor people are crooks ...*” are not very helpful in generating equity or in arbitrating conflicts between poor people and other social strata, especially in terms of poor people’s opportunity for exerting influence.

1.6.5 The poor benefit indirectly from certain services

It goes without saying that development interventions are constantly providing regions, localities and villages with infrastructures, services and other equipment. In the field, therefore, and depending on the contexts and strategies, a certain number of practical ways of gaining access to goods and services is worked out. These procedures are often burdensome for the weakest.

Aside from such basic infrastructures as the mini-AEP (*alimentation en eau potable – drinking water supply*), rural markets, wells and boreholes, which the poor in our sample claimed to have no difficulty using, the other services offered tend to narrow the opportunities of the poorest, because of the conditions of access (e.g., prior mobilization of savings, etc.).

According to 218 II respondents (11 percent) from poor compounds, services such as credit for carts, IGAs and agricultural inputs only reach them via third parties. They assert that, having insufficient

resources, they are unable to meet the conditions of access. This is why some say: “...some of us wait, unfortunately, for those who have the means to get those things, so that then we can benefit from them ...”.

1.6.6 Psychological stresses

Interviewees in IIs as well as in FGs (418 respondents, or 26 percent) gave various responses to queries on impact of poverty on personality. The responses are shown in the table below.

Table 1.12 Impact of Poverty on Personality

Poverty leads to solitude	91%
Poverty creates worry	82%
Poverty leads to fear and an inferiority complex	63%
Poverty makes a person impulsive (nervous)	59%
Poverty creates despair, frustration and shame	55%
Poverty makes one subservient and dependent	42%
Poverty coarsens a person’s character	26%

1.6.7 Poverty as a breeding ground of delinquency

Poverty, according to 88 percent of opinion leaders and administrative authorities and 38 percent of II respondents, is a powder keg, especially in urban areas.

Unlike rural poverty, urban poverty causes young people to form networks and gangs known as “Fada”, which exist in more or less all main towns at the regional level. This form of young people’s grouping has received increased attention, especially over the past five years. Sociological studies of the “Fada” structure have led some to conclude, contrary to certain preconceptions, that this is an assemblage of young people who feel a lack of social direction in a poor country like Niger. In a way, young people are expressing their autonomy and trying to manage the frustrations caused by the disconnect between their aspirations and expectations and real life, in which jobs and leisure pursuits are lacking. The institution of “fada” is akin to young people’s quest for a collective identity in the face of the growing individualism of cities,

especially since most of these young people are from rural areas. One might interpret this as an attempt by young people to return to the old community-based society in which young people moved about by age cohort.

In rural areas as well as in urban areas, theft was mentioned as a consequence of poverty. The worse the poverty becomes, the more thefts and attacks on homes there are. Officials of the *Gendarmerie* cited an increase in property theft over the past five years of generalized poverty in Niger.

■ 1.7 ATTITUDES AND REACTIONS TO POVERTY, AND SURVIVAL STRATEGIES AND MECHANISMS

1.7.1 Attitudes and reactions

Attitudes and reactions to poverty vary widely depending on income level.

Among affluent and middle-income persons, nearly 70 percent claimed to feel pity and indignation on the subject of poor people. However, only 28 percent declared that they would be willing to lend assistance to a poor person, since most of them think: “...a poor person is going to stay poor no matter how much help one gives him ...”, while others opine: “...they are lazy, and even cursed...; ...it’s a sort of heresy to help them... .”

On the other hand, responses from the poor themselves indicate, in about 100 cases, that they feel a sense of personal responsibility, i.e., they do not blame others for their difficult living conditions. Others do blame other people or God, or blame their situation on inadequate help and/or social injustice, their families, or their employers: “...we are the way we are because of the family, the State, or the rich people ...”.

In this connection, two opinions were often voiced in interviews at all survey sites. On the one hand, there were those (62 percent in the sub-set of 532 II and FG respondents) who felt that a person is born poor, while others (38 percent) believed that a person becomes poor.

Three types of behaviors or attitudes towards poverty were noted:

- A small proportion of the poor (17 percent) know that they are poor and believe that it is possible to remedy this. As proof, nearly all are engaged in two or three marginal occupations. The majority of the poor in this cohort are those for whom something is missing from their lifestyle;
- A large proportion (45 percent), are skeptical: aware of their poor status, they doubt very much that it can be changed since, according to some, the odds of escaping from it are very slim. This category includes poor people who are in the stage of incapacity and dependency. However, they are all attempting to deal with it.
- Those who know that they are poor (38 percent) and are convinced that there is no possibility of improvement. The poor who are at the 'destitution' stage were unanimous on this score.

The intensity of the struggle against poverty varied widely, depending on the milieu: in rural areas, the poor seemed to make more energetic efforts. The difference was attributable to the range of activities undertaken and the option of outmigration.

Poor women seem to be more dynamic than poor men: over 47 percent are engaged in at least one supplemental activity, compared to 22 percent of the men. The poor in sedentary environments engage in more varied activities than nomads, who basically resort to outmigration, agriculture or herding.

Overall, according to 42 percent of respondents, person who are seeking to lift themselves out of poverty do so in the following ways:

- outmigration motivated by survival ("*tchin rani*"), a practice consisting having some household members leave in order to reduce pressure on the existing food supply (33 percent);
- expansion of cultivated areas and elimination of fallow periods, (21 percent);
- strict management of food stocks, i.e., the hoarding of harvests until the next rainy season. Small income-generating activities and outmigration are supposed to help make this possible (19 percent);
- market gardening, more common among the women, and flood recession and bottomlands

- crops, (17 percent);
- sharecropping, (10 percent);
- salaried agricultural work, or livestock herding (8 percent).

1.7.2 Social strategies

Communities usually try to attenuate the impacts of poverty by the following means:

- aid and support to the most needy;
- apprenticeships in marginal professions that provide jobs, especially for young people;
- the practice of entrusting children from needy families to marabouts (religious teachers) for Koranic study, or to third parties who are supposed to teach them how to make their way in life;
- intensification of IGAs and marginal professions.

Young people in urban areas, unlike those elsewhere who engage in activities to improve their living conditions, develop networks of solidarity and mutual aid that lead to the creation of gangs, "fada", which usually go on to racketeering or pimping in order to eke out a living. The last resort of girls is the sale of their bodies.

1.7.3 Expectations and suggestions for escaping poverty

Various suggestions were made by a sample of II and FG respondents. These suggestions were both objective and subjective and can be summarized as shown in Table 1.13 on the next page.

The poor and the affluent were nearly unanimous (95 percent) in saying that poverty reduction must aim first and foremost to ensure food self-sufficiency, to protect production potential (i.e., land and water) and to sell cereal grains at moderate prices, and then must strengthen the population's skills so that people can develop their existing potential.

The rest, namely the health, social service and educational infrastructures, will complete the process, according to 51 percent of II respondents, 78 percent of opinion leaders, and 100 percent of administrative authorities. For 37 percent of interviewees at the community level, especially the most needy, an effective poverty reduction effort simply involves re-working the strategies and approaches

Table 1.13 Suggestions for Escaping Poverty, and Frequency of Mention

Suggestions	Frequencies by target group category			
	Beneficiaries		Opinion leaders	Admin. authorities
	II	FG	II	II
Ensure food self-sufficiency	95%	90%	80%	83%
Enhance the population's skills	63%	59%	70%	100%
Create and/or rehabilitate social/educational infrastructures	51%	49%	78%	100%
Re-think development strategies and approaches	37%	40%	58%	23%
Create jobs	43%	56%	62%	68%
Rehabilitate productive potential	75%	63%	81%	78%
Labor-intensive works	33%	40%	37%	80%
Mobilize populations around a collective ideal or vision	17%	12%	68%	21%
Transform projects or NGOs into conduits through which the poor can express themselves	23%	77%	29%	18%
Make the population responsible for development activities	32%	41%	38%	29%
Total, all respondents combined	648	118	317	40

used thus far, which pay scant attention to their needs and aspirations: "...the way things are done...", they say, "...must absolutely be worked out for and with the needy... ."

As for the breakdown of suggestions given by rural or urban milieu, it was more often suggested in urban areas that jobs needed to be created, whereas respondents in rural areas (75 percent) focused on the rehabilitation of productive potential.

A large proportion (80 percent) of administrative authorities envisage labor-intensive works as a solution to poverty.

According to 68 percent of opinion leaders and about twenty FGs, there is a need to mobilize the populace around a common ideal, as happened immediately after independence with the participatory *Samaria* movement, which revolved around intense emotions. There is a need, according to these interviewees, for a kind of proselytism aimed at creating a certain mobilizing vision within the

populace. This is the job of leaders, according to some resource people. Looking beyond the responses given, the implication is that poverty reduction efforts, in order to succeed, must first generate hope among most people.

According to 23 percent of II respondents and 77 percent of the FGs, projects and NGOs must transform themselves into avenues of expression for poor people, in order to identify their needs and decide what type of help to give them.

The populace, for its part, must make a choice, stick to it, and implement field interventions through their organizational structures. The whole endeavor must occur in a climate of partnership/contractualization that includes an obligation to obtain results and a right to recourse.

- Open centers of apprenticeship for the rural masses;
- Create and/or rehabilitate structures that support farmers' organizations.

CHAPTER 2



POVERTY AND INTERVENTIONS

Research into interventions and poverty essentially consisted of identifying the various actions and accomplishments completed or underway in the regions. Beneficiary judgments as to the quality of services received was the secondary concern. Also, the impacts of interventions were identified, their effect on poverty analyzed and the facilitating and limiting factors identified.

■ 2.1 SUMMARY DIAGNOSTIC OF INTERVENTIONS

The country's seven regions and the City of Niamey have all benefited to various degrees from interventions completed or underway. The initiatives implemented or envisaged are national, regional, local or community-wide in scale.

The term 'interventions' is used here to designate the actions of development projects and/or programs. The scope of interventions differs visibly from one region to another, within the same region, or from one locale to another. These disparities are rooted in:

- policy decisions;
- financing available for the operations and, sometimes, the targeting of zones by donors.

Thus, the inventory showed that the urban/peri-urban milieu is still the 'stepchild' in terms of interventions, with 20 percent of activities taking place there, compared to 80 percent in rural areas.

Aside from projects dealing with micro-finance, the creation and/or rehabilitation of infrastructures (e.g., paved roads, tracks, schools, health

services, sewers, potable water supply, markets, etc.), projects in urban areas are rare, except for some social welfare projects implemented by national and international NGOs with donor assistance.

■ 2.2 INTERVENTIONS AND POVERTY

Analysis of the areas of project intervention reveals that 11 percent of projects are integrated or multisectoral development operations, while 89 percent are sectoral in nature. This indicates the extent to which development in Niger has been more sectorally-oriented than integrated. In this context, one is justified in wondering how poverty, which is multidimensional, could be adequately addressed by a largely sectoral approach.

According to 90 percent of the staff of technical services, some retirees and one-third of opinion leaders, integrated projects seem to be more varied in nature and more likely to respond to community concerns that are as diverse as they are complementary. Others added that the synchronization of sectoral initiatives would also be an alternative.

By correlating the areas of program/project intervention with certain results of the poverty diagnostic (i.e., causes, effects, strategies and survival mechanisms, factors contributing to vulnerability), the following elements emerge:

- 30 percent of projects are in areas that strengthen the survival mechanisms and strategies used by populations when faced with poverty (IGAs, market gardening, etc.);

- 21 percent of projects are focused on the various causes of poverty, with 9 percent of those dealing with its recurrent or cyclical causes (e.g., cereals banks, cereals sales at moderate prices, crop protection programs, etc.);
- 16 percent of projects deal with the endemic causes, intervening in areas such as protection of productive potential (land, water, pasturage, etc.), improved accessibility, and family planning. It is important to emphasize here that one of the endemic causes – namely, socio-cultural deficiencies – is not being addressed by any coherent intervention. There are, however, some radio broadcasts that touch on this subject through outreach modules;
- only four projects/programs deal with good governance and economic management.

The vulnerability factors that contribute to poverty are addressed to a greater or lesser degree by the multitude of health and education projects, although literacy has not received all the attention it deserves. The other factors, such as alcoholism, drug addiction, divorce, old age, young people's problems, etc., have lacked a coherent framework and interventions capable of generating the appropriate social programs. These are potential areas that need to be promoted by the relevant ministries, such as the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Social Development.

The range of projects and programs examined does not include enough initiatives directly targeting the results of poverty, i.e., marginalization, urban violence, social injustice, precarious housing, begging, exclusion of poor people from GCOs, etc. Yet, it is only through efforts directed at these effects of poverty that the poor can be reached directly. Their actual day-to-day living conditions can only be addressed in this manner. Analysis of the institutional framework shows that only 25 percent of ongoing projects/programs are conducting their activities via sub-contracting with local structures; this is still an area with potential for community mobilization and skills-building within endogenous organizations.

■ 2.3 POVERTY, MOBILITY, PROSTITUTION AND AIDS

The dire situation afflicting certain target groups (e.g., domestic servants, school children and

students, some female vendors and traders, etc.), and the daily trials and frustrations that they endure have cultivated in them an automatic reflex of seeking the easy way out. This makes them vulnerable to the slightest social and economic temptation.

Based on the results gathered, it appears to be well established that there is a close linkage between poverty and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Indeed, in all the sites visited, the ranks of sex workers were made up of prostitutes motivated by a need for food. In Maradi for example, they are known as “...*chiini in chii tuuwo...*” (literally, “I give you sex, you give me food.”). Prostitutes such as these are selling themselves for a piece of bread in Bangabana, a neighborhood in Niamey. Nearly all of them claim that they do not use condoms, adding that “...*a hungry mouth heeds no warnings...*”. It is undeniable that the decline in household incomes over the past ten years has exacerbated the propensity for prostitution, with a concomitant increase in the number of denizens of prostitution ‘lanes’, bordellos, etc.

On the subject of poverty and AIDS, interviews with 1,023 persons in IIs and FGs yielded two main points of view:

- “... *Poverty leads to AIDS...*” was a view shared by 86 percent of respondents;
- “...*The rich are the most in danger, since a poor man who toils for survival cannot afford the luxury of multiple sex partners ...*”, according to 14 percent of respondents, a rather restricted view in that it seems to attribute HIV/AIDS transmission to sexual contact alone.

Those who asserted that poverty generates AIDS most often argued as follows:

- The neediness that is characteristic of poverty leads to despair and, in turn, to a diminished motivation to use protective measures (71 percent);
- Poverty leads to outmigration, and it is these migrants who often return home infected (58 percent);
- Poverty leads people, especially women, to prostitute themselves and/or to seek multiple sex partners. They usually end up contracting HIV/AIDS (49 percent);

- A poor person, without resources or decision-making power, is usually ill-informed. He is thus a potential breeding ground for HIV, AIDS and STDs.

To sum up, these interviewees do not make a direct cause-and-effect connection here between poverty and HIV/AIDS. They more often attempted to point out the intermediate situations resulting from poverty – i.e. mobility, prostitution, poor access to information, despair – that make the poor vulnerable and expose them to HIV/AIDS infection.

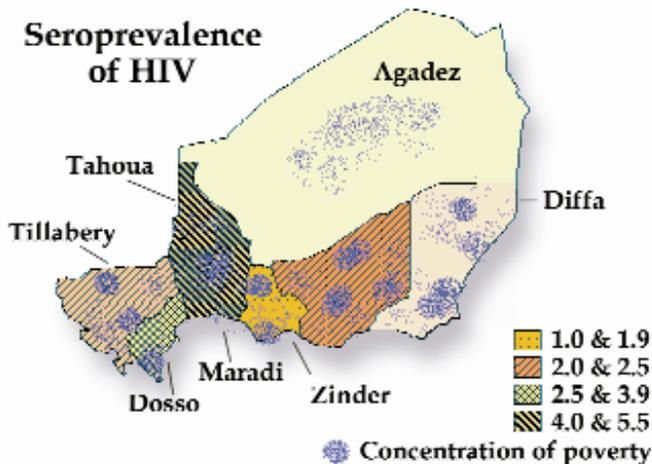
In other words, it is the manifold effects of poverty (e.g., prostitution, migrations and multiple sex partners, etc.) that create conditions favorable to HIV/AIDS infection. Figure 2.1 makes this interrelationship more tangible.

In the interest of a certain objectivity, the nature of the linkage between poverty and AIDS was further researched, beyond the opinions gathered. The aim was to identify the factors likely to expose the correlation between poverty and AIDS. In order to do this, the investigation was conducted mainly by superimposing the map of poverty on the map of seropositivity (cf. combined data map) and by consulting the main conclusions of seropositivity studied conducted in Niger.

The triangulation and analysis of the data indicates that:

- in places where poverty is widespread, and especially in urban areas, rates of seropositivity are high;

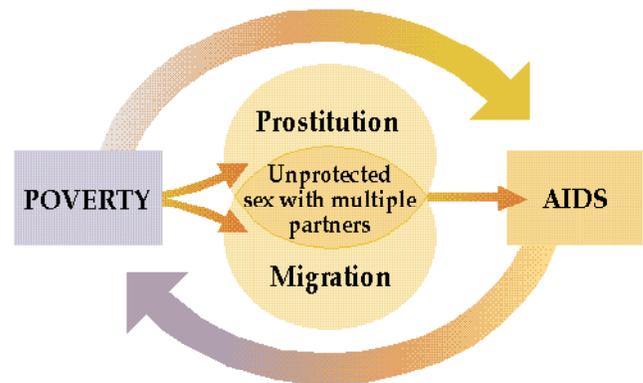
Figure 2.1 Combined Data Map for Seropositivity and Poverty



- the profile of infected persons includes a large contingent of the needy, according to data from health agencies (which give a figure of 74 percent) and community evaluations (81 percent). This would seem to indicate that AIDS has made significant inroads among the poor. This objective observation is no accident, since it is confirmed by the views expressed by the target groups interviewed, 86 percent of whom agree that AIDS leads to poverty. In addition, the results of surveys of seropositivity posited a rate of 28.7 percent among the prostitutes of Firdji in 2000.

Thus, the objective and subjective data all indicate a cause-and-effect relationship between poverty and AIDS, with migration and prostitution as contributing factors.

Figure 2.2 Relationship between Poverty and AIDS



Overall, there were disparities between urban and rural milieus in the range of development interventions. The actions carried out do not cover a sufficiently wide range of aspects of poverty, and there are fewer interventions targeting the poor directly.

As for judgments about the structures that implement these operations, they were generally judged mediocre by beneficiaries, who criticized projects for their short duration, NGOs for their lethargy, technical services for their lack of dynamism and the municipalities for their inappropriate methods, all of which seems to indicate that beneficiaries and other actors still have little influence over these structures.

In order to change this, it is necessary, and even imperative, to change these structures so that they

can listen to the population and address its concerns effectively.

Regarding the effects and impacts of interventions, enormous impacts were reported, most of them positive, in rural as well as urban areas, including the creation of basic socio-economic infrastructures, organizational development (e.g., the multitude of operational committees), the transfer of skills to target groups, income generation and the creation of some employment opportunities.

However, these interventions have not been able to bring about any real reduction in poverty. This is undoubtedly due to the above-mentioned constraints linked to the nature of the interventions and perceptions of the structures, as well as to the following factors:

- the weak influence of the population over development projects;
- population growth, which greatly reduces multiplier effects;
- Niger's political and institutional instability over the past several years;
- mobility, which greatly limits the effectiveness of interventions;
- the centralized nature of the administration and of opportunities;
- the absence of an operational framework for local development and/or poverty reduction strategies;

The absence of structures that support farmers' organizations, such as SONARA, UNCC, etc.

CHAPTER 3



BASIC NEEDS AND SECTORAL PRIORITIES

This topic of investigation was addressed by all of the respondents. The subject of basic needs and sectoral priorities provided an opportunity for target populations to talk about their own concerns. The responses gathered reflect a wide range of needs, which vary depending on the target group, sex, age, rural or urban variables, and sedentary or nomadic lifestyle. The needs recorded were usually expressed in the form of expectations and suggestions, often backed up with arguments. These were sorted and broken down socio-economic sub-sector, as expressed by the beneficiaries, and then analyzed. Overall, the needs recorded correspond closely to those emerging from the pilot survey. However, additional needs are noted, such as public safety and good governance. In general, interviewees approached the sub-topic by mentioning progress made in one sector or another, as well as the resulting problems. The results of the interviews are presented in the table on the following page (see Table 3.2).

■ 3.1 FOOD SECURITY

The food situation is not at all encouraging, according to 98 percent of the 1,018 II respondents and two-thirds of the 180 FG respondents. About 83 percent of respondents also made reference to the recurrent bad harvests to back up their statements on food shortages. Over 50 percent of city dwellers indicated that they live in a state of food insecurity, spending twice, or even three times, the price to get the same amount of grain, and rural people in the sample added that they also had food supply problems in times of shortage.

As for the outlook on food security, 72 percent of II respondents (732 persons) and 30 percent of

the 221 FGs (66 interviewees) felt that food insecurity was something requiring a whole set of survival mechanisms and strategies: individual, familial, community-based and even governmental. These strategies include: rural outmigration, IGAs, market gardening, strict management of cereals stocks, mutual aid, cereal banks, food aid, and the sale of cereal grains at moderate prices. Food security is the main priority, according to the vast majority of respondents. The young, the elderly, adults and women in both urban and rural areas often claimed in interviews that any development initiative must first seek to meet food needs, since, as some put it: “...an empty sack cannot stand up...”. A whole list of suggestions for attaining food self-sufficiency was provided by beneficiaries and actors. They are summarized in the following table:

Table 3.1 Needs Expressed for Attaining Food Security

Needs expressed	Frequency of mention by category			
	Rural milieu		Urban milieu	
	II	FG	II	FG
Food aid	23%	66%	25%	52%
Promotion of agricultural techniques	33%	38%	27%	34%
Credit for agricultural inputs	46%	53%	13%	73%
Promotion of cereal banks	39%	55%	10%	34%
Sale of cereals at moderate prices in the event of a crisis	28%	83%	64%	86%
Employment	7%	5%	66%	78%
Market gardening	23%	51%	82%	60%
IGA	16%	36%	71%	65%
Information campaigns on the issue of waste of food	10%	56%	39%	39%
Total - II and FG respondents combined	503	37	307	23

Table 3.2 Positive Changes and Problems, by Sector

Sector	Progress made	Constraints
Water supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proliferation of standpipes; • Proliferation of modern water points; • Availability of ultra modern construction materials; • Availability and accessibility of potable water; • Improved quality of water; • Sale of water has become an IGA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of water points has become problematic; • Equipment is often ill-suited; • Poor distribution of wells in pastoral areas; • Low coverage of water needs.
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disappearance of certain endemic diseases; • Proliferation of health infrastructures; • Beginnings of community participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor quality of reception; • Poor service quality; • Low use of services; • High price of products.
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehabilitation of productive potential; • Involvement of the population in village land management schemes; • System of natural resource management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban expansion policy; • Sewers; • Small scope of interventions; • Logistics of environmental resource management.
Livestock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disappearance of certain livestock diseases; • Increase in overall livestock numbers; • Demarcation of livestock corridors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of substantial help to marketing streams and producers; • Expansion of cropping areas; • Inadequate fodder; • Management of water courses and grazing areas.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proliferation of educational infrastructures; • Decentralization of educational offerings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of instruction leaves something to be desired; • Progressive disengagement of the State; • Poor fit between instructional content and development concerns; • Schooling crises; • Unemployment of young school leavers; • Low rate of school promotion.
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proliferation of private services in urban areas; • Specialized structures; • Privatization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak local development dynamic; • Low level of qualification and partnership arrangements.
Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market-gardening crops; • Efforts made in areas of soil and environmental restoration; • Importance attached to cultivation of gum arabic trees and flood recession crops; • Creation and installation of cooperative structures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate number of market outlets; • Lack of significant support for rural development; • Dysfunctional cooperative structures.

Although food security has been a central concern of the public authorities who have succeeded one another in Niger, the food situation is hardly encouraging, since the slogan “...No one in Niger will die of hunger...”, has yet to become a reality. The recurrence of poor harvests only accentuates an increasingly chronic food deficit, and food imports are increasing, to cite only those two problems. This means that Niger has not been able to, and still cannot, meet the minimum vital needs of the greatest number. Efforts in the area of food security have failed to lay the groundwork of an ongoing dynamic. The situation is apparently rooted in the following factors: interventions are more focused on disaster management than on the major determinants of food insecurity. Moreover, this day-to-day management of food security has probably contributed to a great extent to these needs, as elucidated in Table 3.1.

Based on the wide range of solutions proposed by the beneficiaries and other actors, it can be inferred that food crises can only be dealt with by means of multidimensional responses that vary depending on whether the rural or urban milieu is being addressed. In this study, rural respondents in the sample placed more emphasis on the improvement of production factors (e.g., techniques and agricultural inputs), whereas peri-urban and urban dwellers displayed an interest in employment promotion, IGAs and market gardening as remedies for food insecurity. It is undeniable that various other interventions (e.g., reforestation, reorganization of production and marketing streams, soils protection and restoration, pest control, etc.) have helped in the quest for food security, although they have had mixed results. This probably explains why interviewees emphasized IGAs, credit and agricultural inputs. In general, it should be noted that the food security sector, which is very crucial, has the dubious distinction of lacking coherent strategies and effective medium- and long-term assistance in the locales studied. However, the government recently set up a Food Crisis Management Unit (*Cellule de gestion des Crises Alimentaires* (CCA)) in charge of coordinating and harmonizing measures to attenuate such crises, with the help of the Common Donor Fund. Activities such as the financing of micro-projects and the sale of cereal grains at moderate prices (in order to ensure the availability, regular supply and economic and financial accessibility of cereals in times of crisis) are in the process of being implemented.

■ 3.2 HEALTH

Health is the second concern, once food needs are met. This feeling was shared by all cohorts and categories of target groups and by urban and rural respondents alike (903 II respondents (76 percent) and two-thirds of the FGs (134 FGs). Most respondents had comments on various aspects of the health issue. The responses obtained were the following:

For nearly 200 II respondents (28 percent) and 81 percent of FGs, three main elements are lacking in the health sector, namely: quality at reception, health infrastructures and affordable drugs. Beneficiaries, local actors and opinion leaders were nearly unanimous in acknowledging that the health situation is improving. The reasons cited were the following: opening of new health centers with surgical units (45 percent), increased outreach efforts (32 percent), renewed availability of drugs due to the introduction of cost recovery (29 percent), the emergence of community participation in health actions and activities (22 percent). Other respondents (nearly 33 percent of IIs), who were mostly women, even asserted that they had noted a significant drop in the frequency of endemic diseases. However, opinion leaders and nearly 1/4 of II and FG respondents state that the low incomes affecting the population means that most people do not derive any benefit from the services offered. In addition, physical isolation was also mentioned occasionally, especially in rural areas, as a major obstacle that increased the difficulties associated with evacuating the sick, which is still a problem despite the increased availability of carts for this purpose.

Another element deserving of mention is that most rural respondents had a greater appreciation for the quality of health services than did peri-urban and urban respondents: 29 percent compared to 13 percent. This dichotomy is due to the fact that rural dwellers, with few services available, appreciate what little they have, whereas city dwellers are more demanding because they have more options.

In terms of the needs expressed, the list is longer in the area of health than in any other sector. A total of fifteen main needs were recorded, broken down by target group categories and sites. These needs varied considerably depending on the

sex, category and milieu (i.e., rural or urban) of the respondent.

Table 3.3 Needs Expressed in Health Sector

Needs expressed	Frequency of mention, by milieu			
	Rural milieu		Peri-urban/urban milieus	
	II	FG	II	FG
Midwife for the integrated health center (IHC)	55%	61%	48%	17%
Reduction in fees for medical consultations	38%	53%	72%	21%
Reduction in drug prices	35%	33%	52%	83%
Improved reception	42%	58%	31%	43%
More pre-natal counseling	33%	22%	41%	18%
Installation of pharmaceutical depots	28%	20%	18%	8%
Equip and expand the integrated health center	28%	19%	77%	88%
Build an IHC	21%	12%	8%	18%
Create health posts	19%	8%	7%	3%
Cart for evacuation of the sick/injured	17%	6%	4%	8%
Provide the IHC with an ambulance	12%	5%	2%	2%
Build a morgue for the IHC	7%	4%	41%	28%
Train midwives	5%	4%	0%	0%
Mobile health centers	3%	4%	3%	3%
Vaccinations	3%	0%	0%	7%
Total respondents, II and FG combined	585	76	318	58

Training more midwives, reducing consultation fees, improving reception and reducing drug prices were the four general needs expressed at all sites, and they were often cited in all cohorts within the target groups. The need for female staff in health facilities was quite often mentioned by respondents at all levels (55 percent of rural dwellers and 48 percent of urban and peri-urban dwellers in IIs. This suggestion was already made by over 50 percent of respondents during the Beneficiary Assessment of the First Health Project in 1996 and the assessment of the Second Health Project in 1998, a sign that this request has not gotten an adequate response. Moreover, this request came up in

53 percent of IIs and 21 percent of FGs. This is due to a critical shortage of female nurses and midwives in the peripheral health care professions in Niger, especially in rural areas. Socio-cultural considerations, according to which *“it’s better for a woman to be treated by another woman than by a man”* fuel the demand for female staff. The need to reduce fees for medical consultations was frequently mentioned (35 percent of rural II respondents and 52 percent of urban II respondents). This has assumed great importance due to recent changes in health policy, especially as regards cost recovery, which requires households to assume a portion of the costs, whereas this was not the case previously. In a context of generalized poverty, the poorest can only hope to see medical costs go down. The quality of the reception given to patients remains an unmet need, and, for this reason, several interviewees suggested that it be improved. Urban respondents were more demanding in this area. Specific needs were also noted: women more often asked for pre- and post-natal consultations (83 percent of respondents in the sub-sample.) Nomads expressed a wish for mobile health centers and for a particular emphasis on vaccinations along the transhumant herding routes. This would seem to imply that, up to now, development interventions or initiatives have been very ill-adapted to the nomadic lifestyle. Finally, a request for health posts was submitted by nearly 100 percent of respondents in sites that were more or less remote from health facilities.

■ 3.3 AGRICULTURE

The sub-topic of ‘agriculture’ came up with 121 FG respondents (55 percent) and 882 II respondents (75 percent). Respondents emphasized the need for some sort of assessment of the sector (problems, accomplishments, strengths and weaknesses) and, in some places, expressed opinions and suggestions for improvement that they consider essential.

As a primary source of income, agriculture has become the most risky activity, according to 80 percent of II respondents and 62 percent of FG respondents, because of the decline in rainfed crop yields and the paucity of commercial outlets for market garden products. Adversity and a lack of support for rural development are, in the opinion of 10 percent of respondents, factors impeding the attainment of the desired results. Problems such as

difficult access to agricultural inputs and inadequate technical outreach were also cited as contributing factors.

The emergence of market gardening was a particularly welcome development for women, nearly one-third of whom said that they took advantage of this opportunity to obtain food and income. In Maradi, Diffa and Galmi, the absence of support for the marketing of agricultural products, in the opinion of 33 percent of II respondents, causes producers to incur losses, since they find themselves enmeshed in cereals speculation. In Kollo, about 32 percent of farmers working on hydro-agricultural perimeters complained of the high fees that keep them mired in a vicious circle of debt.

About 41 percent of FG respondents in rural areas pointed to efforts made by certain implementers of development operations in the area of water and soils restoration and conservation, which are both achievements and opportunities. Young people and adults in all regions welcomed the renewed attention accorded by the public authorities to the cultivation of gum arabic trees and flood recession agriculture (reference was made in this connection to the *Programme Spéciale du Président de la République* which includes the creation of mini-dams and dikes). These new initiatives will, according to 72 percent of respondents, re-energize the agricultural sector that has been sluggish for a long time.

According to the respondents in the sub-sample, promotion of the agricultural sector required solutions to the following complaints

Table 3.4 Needs Expressed in Agriculture Sector

Needs expressed	Frequency of mention			
	Rural milieu		Urban milieu	
	II	FG	II	FG
Agricultural inputs	78%	97%	41%	13%
Agricultural credit	69%	70%	78%	6%
Agricultural equipment	42%	52%	33%	35%
Agricultural advice	27%	15%	21%	26%
Plows and draft animals	29%	18%	3%	4%
Support for marketing channels	23%	22%	19%	9%
Total respondents, II and FG combined	510	121	372	44

It appears, based on the frequency with which agricultural needs are mentioned, that there is strong demand for inputs for market gardening and rain-fed crops. Frequencies of 78 percent of II respondents and 97 percent of FG respondents in rural areas corroborate this observation. Fertilizer is first among the needs expressed, followed by pesticides and seeds. The importance attached to agricultural inputs is linked to the fact that interviewees are convinced that they will increase agricultural production. It is also due to the failure of previous agricultural extension policies, although the private sector is gradually taking up the promotion of fertilizer, seeds and crop protection products in rural areas. Agricultural equipment and credit are also priorities for actors and beneficiaries, with an average frequency of mention of over 30 percent for each type of interview and site. The poor quality of agricultural extension is a constraint that is sorely felt and expressed by 27 percent of rural II respondents and by 21 percent of urban II respondents. This is understandable, especially since the technical services have not received enough support to enable them to maintain the regular schedule of field visits to producers.

■ 3.4 LIVESTOCK

In its various forms (intensive and extensive), livestock is a very widespread socio-economic activity, in rural, urban and peri-urban areas. Even in the heart of the capital city, a sizeable number of households are raising large and small ruminants. Among sedentary populations, livestock is a sideline or a way of amassing savings. In nomadic herding areas, however, livestock is the very foundation of production. The importance of livestock in all the zones and localities studied requires no explanation: the classification of people by level of prosperity is everywhere based to some extent on the number of animals owned. Discussions on livestock were more intense in rural areas, where this sub-sector has a large role in the production system. According to 789 II respondents (67 percent) and 78 FG respondents (35 percent), stock-raising is the 'lifblood' of the economy "...*Kyo fufun tatalen arziki...*" (literally, the 'lungs') due to its multiplier effects. Nearly 80 percent of FG respondents claimed that livestock : "...*multiplies wealth, with the reproduction of the animals, and regenerates the soil, and the products derived from livestock provide jobs and incomes to a great many people ...*".

Certain opinions are widely shared concerning certain livestock interventions such as the demarcation of transhumant herding 'corridors', and the development and rehabilitation of grazing areas. About 70 percent of nomads in the sample had a favorable opinion of these initiatives, whereas the same proportion of sedentary respondents has various complaints about them, emphasizing that these interventions are the main source of conflict between farmers and herders. This problem is essentially rooted in the approaches and strategies used, in the activities undertaken to support livestock (with communities often insufficiently involved in identifying the sites to be developed), and in a failure to adequately publicize rules and management methods.

The availability of animals and their health were judged acceptable by over half of actors and beneficiaries. According to some interviewees, the number of head per capita has been on the upswing over the last few years and the incidence of certain livestock diseases is down. Intensive livestock herding is gaining ground, due to credit for fattening operations that is made available by development agencies, particularly to women.

Various problems plague the livestock sub-sector according to nearly one-third of II and FG respondents who often cited, in order of importance, the inadequacy of fodder and grazing areas (83 percent), the inadequacy and poor distribution of livestock watering points (77 percent), the absence and/or narrowness of livestock corridors (60 percent), the poor organization of channels for marketing hoof livestock (48 percent), the scarcity of veterinary drug outlets (33 percent), and the recurrence of certain livestock diseases (21 percent). More specifically in Agadez, Tanout and Arlit, the vast majority of respondents added the lack of public safety to the list, due to livestock thefts that cause herders to congregate in areas that are not suitable for this activity. The recovery of the livestock sector was the central concern of all respondents — 789 in IIs and 78 in FGs — who suggested as shown in Table 3.5.

Successive droughts have taken a toll on the livestock sector, both for sedentary populations and for nomads who own a large number of animals. This is undoubtedly why the request for '*reconstitution of the herd*' was so often cited and also dominated the statements of those in IIs as well as in FGs. The

Table 3.5 Needs Expressed in Livestock Sector

Needs expressed	Frequency of mention, by milieu			
	Rural milieu		Peri-urban/urban milieus	
	II	FG	II	FG
Reconstitution of the herd	76%	45%	53%	28%
Continued demarcation of livestock corridors	52%	32%	18%	12%
Credit for fattening and draft animals	79%	29%	25%	48%
Creation, rehabilitation and/or development of watering points	83%	11%	17%	25%
Development and expansion of grazing areas	38%	17%	12%	13%
Continued credit for fattening	72%	43%	47%	27%
Availability of fodder plant seeds	38%	15%	28%	18%
Availability of veterinary drugs	19%	20%	30%	16%
Total respondents, II and FG combined	518	55	271	23

demarcation of livestock corridors, the development and/or expansion of grazing areas, the creation and/or rehabilitation of water points and the availability of fodder plant seeds were often mentioned by respondents, with some variations. Poor people were more attracted to the idea of credit for draft animals for transport and animal traction, since they are usually involved in these areas, often on a sub-contracting basis.

■ 3.5 ENVIRONMENT

Environmental issues were also frequently discussed during the interviews: 718 II respondents (61 percent) and 53 FGs (24 percent.) The focus of interest varied depending on whether the respondents were urban or rural. In the main regional towns or *communes*, environmental sanitation and the problem of urban sprawl were the main concerns. On the other hand, rural residents in the sub-sample of respondents were more focused on the overall framework of life. Comments were always accompanied by the corresponding needs.

In this connection, 226 II respondents (31 percent) in urban areas complained bitterly about the spread of unsanitary conditions. About 60 FG respondents felt that sanitation must become a priority. Others were indignant about the policy of urban expansion that constantly dispossesses them of their lands. Rural respondents are all unanimous in saying that the physical environment is undergoing irreversible damage resulting in depleted soils, dwindling water courses and shrinking bodies of water. Respondents repeatedly attempted, through their description of the environmental situation, that the past situation was better than the current one. Certain II respondents concluded that the outlook was rather uncertain. For those subscribing to that opinion, environmental degradation is associated with the continued drop in rainfall (100 percent), dune encroachment (83 percent), deforestation (77 percent), absence of significant anti-desertification measures (61 percent) and population pressure on the land (59 percent).

The consequences of such a situation came up in 57 percent of the FGs, in which respondents listed: the decline in agro-pastoral yields, the scarcity of fuel wood, conflict in the countryside, the radical drop in farmers' incomes and outmigration. About 78 percent of II respondents in the sub-sample pointed an accusatory finger at environmental interventions. They noted that various support efforts had borne fruit, in particular, the development and stocking (with fish) of water courses, soil protection and restoration measures, the dissemination of water and soil conservation techniques, and reforestation. The following suggestions for improving the physical environment were advanced, with varying frequencies, by 718 II respondents and 59 FGs:

The complaint about continued anti-desertification efforts was the most frequently cited, all milieus and target groups combined: at least 66 percent of II respondents and 51 percent of FGs brought this up. Beneficiaries are very concerned with desertification, since it threatens the production potential and they have high hopes for current initiatives that have produced some positive impacts in certain areas.

The frequency with which dune stabilization was mentioned is attributable to the number of respondents living in arid zones, who are standing helplessly as cultivable lands, watercourses and

bodies of water are being destroyed by sand encroachment.

Table 3.6 Needs Expressed in Environment Sector

Needs expressed	Frequency of mention, by milieu			
	Rural milieu		Peri-urban/urban milieus	
	II	FG	II	FG
Continued anti-desertification efforts	82%	94%	66%	51%
Dune stabilization	63%	78%	27%	32%
Development of water courses and bodies of water	57%	23%	42%	56%
Support for tree planting	42%	28%	58%	55%
Environmental sanitation	-	-	49%	38%
Improvement in urban expansion policies	-	-	41%	30%
Total respondents, II and FG combined	492	33	226	26

■ 3.6 WATER SUPPLY

Water supply was the central concern of 600 II respondents (51 percent) and 61 percent of those in FGs. Most respondents in every village were pleased to have access to potable water thanks to modern water points (boreholes, cement wells, mini-AEPs, etc.). The respondents underlined the considerable progress made in the area of water supply by comparing past and present situations. The quality of the materials used in the construction of water supply infrastructures was highly satisfactory for many interlocutors. The women extolled, in particular, the merits of the standpipes and mini-AEPs that have lightened their water-hauling chores and generated some income through the sale of water. Despite these positive observations, the existing hydraulic infrastructures are either barely, or not at all, meeting the water requirements of populations and livestock. At all sites, the need for additional infrastructures was expressed.

In the herding areas, in the villages around Tanout and Dakoro, the population mentioned problems

that occur when nomads share water points with sedentary populations. Contrary to all expectations, urban residents claimed to have more trouble than rural people in this regard, and asked for an expansion of infrastructures. In certain fringe neighborhoods, a specific request was made for freely-managed standpipes. The management of water points was mentioned in rural areas by nearly 50 percent of implementers of development projects, some of whom boasted of the efficiency of their management, while others denounced the embezzlement of funds and the lack of transparency in financial management. The quality of water was also called into question by the residents of the Tillabery, who were unanimous in stating that their so-called 'drinking' water is that in name only. They complain that the water is murky and tastes of salt and sulfur. The main needs expressed, in the area of potable water, are shown in the following table:

Table 3.7 Needs Expressed for Water Supply

Needs expressed	Frequency of mention, by milieu			
	Rural milieu		Peri-urban/urban milieus	
	II	FG	II	FG
Creation of modern water points	96%	100%	77%	95%
Expansion of installations	83%	98%	89%	88%
Adequate maintenance of modern water points	47%	85%	23%	57%
Increase the output of water points	79%	79%	61%	38%
Improve the rules of water point management	33%	60%	22%	22%
Improve water quality	5%	3%	6%	4%
Total respondents, II and FG combined	321	69	279	66

In all regions, locales and villages, the creation of modern water points was a major concern for 96 percent of rural II respondents and for 77 percent of urban II respondents. This eagerness for more water points undoubtedly reflects water needs that are not being met. In many regions of the country, hydraulic installations and infrastructures are serving far more people than they were designed to

supply. The frequency with which maintenance of installations and infrastructures was mentioned, and the call for better management rules, are a reflection of persistent problems in managing modern water points. The issue of water quality is another point that does not get enough attention, even though water users attach a certain importance to it. This indicates that water supply involves some enormous challenges.

Not only must the rate of water service coverage be increased, but there must also be an effort to refine the management rules and to guarantee the quality of the product and services. Thus, attention must be paid to fine-tuning, on a continuous basis, the capacities of hydraulic infrastructures based on the population's water requirements. This is important not only because of the potential for conflict among users of an overstrained water point, but also because users, when water becomes scarce, turn to other water courses and bodies of water, with all that that implies in terms of a resurgence of waterborne illnesses.

■ 3.7 EDUCATION

For the 578 II respondents (49 percent) and 127 FG respondents (57 percent), the education sector spurred debates on school attendance, recent changes in educational policy, infrastructures and equipment, literacy and the quality of instruction.

Regarding literacy, nearly one-fifth of II and FG respondents and half of beneficiaries and actors mentioned that this service "*Yaki da djahiltchi*", which used to be a source of pride for farmers, is being increasingly neglected for reasons that are not clear to them. On this subject, some seized the opportunity to talk about the ancillary impacts of literacy in terms of management and accounting within grassroots groups: "...with the Kurdadi, we had our own local managers who knew how to read and fill out the accounts books ...". A few women in Tanout indicated that they were able to read letters.

Rural and urban respondents all vaunted the merits of schooling, which provides a way out of ignorance and opens up job opportunities. However, 42 percent of II respondents find the current education situation baffling, due to the following:

- Frequent crises in the schools (81 percent);
- The declining quality of instruction (71 percent);
- The declining rate of promotion from one grade to the next (59 percent).

This situation has been discouraging for parents who have had the financing of their children’s schooling placed back on their shoulders, according to some opinion leaders. Some interviewees indicated that the State’s abandonment of the financing of children’s schooling has affected the morale of pupils, who now skip classes and are unwilling to study. Parents also observed that for lack of an income (or too small an income) they are helpless when confronted with this disregard for school, i.e., they feel that they can no longer demand that their children make an effort in school.

School infrastructures and equipment drew the attention of 38 percent of II respondents and 29 percent of those in FGs. The overwhelming majority of these respondents, especially in urban areas, mentioned excessive class size due to the inadequacy of school infrastructures. In the nomadic milieu, the inadequacy of school cafeterias was mentioned by nearly 80 percent, who conclude that this deficiency reduces educational options and thus weakens the level of utilization of the service.

The quality of instruction leaves something to be desired, according to 53 percent of urban respondents and 27 percent of rural respondents, many of whom noted: “...our children don’t know anything, despite all these years spent in school ...”. In the region of Tahoua, Agadez and Zinder, about 60 percent of respondents per site deemed the content of instruction to be too theoretical and irrelevant to local realities. Instead of this, they often expressed a desire to see educational options tailored to the local demand for manual trades, which require a vocational apprenticeship and the identification and assessment of skills to be strengthened.

All of the above opinions were supported by references to needs, expectations and suggestions that are summarized, by frequency of mention in IIs and FGs, in Table 3.8.

In terms of frequency of mention, school allocations, literacy, increase and/or creation of classrooms were the most highly sought after. The quality of instruction is also an important concern for

Table 3.8 Needs Expressed in Education Sector

Needs expressed	Frequency of mention			
	Rural milieu		Urban milieu	
	II	FG	II	FG
Create modern water points in the schools	68%	36%	55%	40%
Increase allocations	48%	61%	13%	8%
Teach people to read and write	53%	38%	17%	23%
Create apprenticeship centers	18%	27%	11%	18%
Finance or build cafeterias	58%	67%	62%	51%
Strengthen the skills of teachers	32%	28%	40%	30%
Build schools	57%	59%	69%	51%
Increase the number of classrooms	97%	21%	53%	59%
Total respondents, II or FG combined	311	78	267	49

beneficiaries and actors. The creation of apprenticeship centers relates to the population’s concern: “...that schools be able to incorporate local realities... we think that the last two concerns must be taken into account if the goal is to respond to the needs and priorities of beneficiaries...”. It should be pointed out that there are some glaring discrepancies between frequencies of mention in IIs and FGs. For example, the creation of modern water points (MWP) in schools was mentioned in 68 percent of II respondents compared to 36 percent of FGs, and the increase in numbers of classrooms, 97 percent compared to 21 percent. This difference reflects the fact that beneficiaries and actors remain silent about certain needs when they are questioned collectively, but express them in individual interviews.

■ 3.8 EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

Employment was a need mentioned by young people, adults, and old people in a total sample of 460 II respondents (39 percent) and in 100 percent of FGs involving young people. Employment has become scarce in Niger, according to nearly all respondents, due to the country’s economic situation. For others, the problem is caused by the incompetence and laziness of the public authori-

ties, who do not care much about jobs. The absence of job opportunities at the community, local and regional levels is the reason for migrations, according to most respondents. The main reasons behind the lack of jobs, according to 50 percent of II respondents and FGs, are:

- The weak local dynamic of local development (cited by 89 percent);
- Young people's lack of credentials (81 percent);
- Lack of initiatives specifically geared to employment (68 percent);
- Low level of support for initiatives (53 percent);
- Poor access to information on job opportunities (41 percent);
- The low level of partnership/contractual arrangements in development operations (33 percent).

■ 3.9 INCOME-GENERATING ACTIVITIES (IGAs) AND MICRO-CREDIT

The 433 II respondents (37 percent) and the 38 FGs (17 percent) who supported the idea of IGAs were mainly women (73 percent of IIs). These women feel that IGAs are a crucial tool for local development. As for the micro-credit underlying IGAs, it is looked upon very favorably by 78 percent of II respondents, although the logistics involved in getting access to the credit are deemed too onerous by over 25 percent of the sample. They find that repayment periods are too short and that the specifications associated with micro-credit (micro-credit for fattening, micro-credit for market gardening, etc.) limit its access and efficacy, and some find the interest rates exorbitant. Three main criticisms recurred in the sampling of respondents:

- Intensify and diversify IGAs and credits (83 percent);
- Lower the interest rates (70 percent);
- Make logistics of getting access to credit more flexible (43 percent).

■ 3.10 TRANSPORT

The transport sector did not escape analysis by actors and beneficiaries (447 II respondents (38 percent) and 38 FGs (17 percent), most of them men.

Nearly all mentioned the issue of road infrastructures, and the way in which the transport of passengers and goods is organized. In discussing the importance of road infrastructures, 47 percent of II respondents indicated that the roads have deteriorated seriously in Niger over the last few years. On this subject, some respondents who are transporters, claimed in focus group discussions to be incensed at having to pay a road toll when the roads are impassable.

More than one-third of young people, adults and older persons in the sub-sample of respondents complained about the organizational deficiencies plaguing the transport sector for passengers and goods. Several problems afflict this sector, according to one-third of respondents, including:

- Failure of transporters to heed maximum authorized load limits (56 percent);
- Lack of regular service in various parts of the country (49 percent);
- Presence of vehicles in poor condition on the roads (31 percent);
- The scant, or nonexistent, compensation for passengers when accidents occur (23 percent);
- The constant increase in transport costs (18 percent).

When responses from all milieus were combined, 89 percent of respondents suggested the creation and/or rehabilitation of roads and rural tracks. The poor in this sub-sample, especially those in rural areas, asked for carts. Nearly 52 percent of urban respondents expressed a desire to see a resolution to the problems afflicting the transport of passengers and goods.

■ 3.11 CAPACITY-BUILDING

Various needs related to strengthening the organizational capabilities of target groups or structures were cited by 300 beneficiaries, local actors and opinion leaders, who had both critical and positive remarks to make about organizational development. According to 90 percent of respondents, the multitude of grassroots community organization (GCOs) is definitely an asset for communities that use them as channels to transmit their complaints or to get responses to their demands. Some promoters of these organizations praised study trips, which they claimed made it possible for them to

become familiar with the initiatives and organizational methods of other actors. Local and community structures for the protection and restoration of soils were seen in a particularly favorable light in all regions in which they are available, because they have helped disseminate small-scale water and soil conservation techniques and technologies. Female respondents in the sub-sampling indicated their satisfaction with their women's organizations, which they say have allowed them to: *"...have a certain amount of influence..."*.

Petty quarrels between structures, the incompetence of promoters, and the lack of transparency were the main constraints mentioned by beneficiaries and other actors. They had the following suggestions, which were put forth with varying frequency:

- The various committees should complement one another (78 percent);
- There be more transparency in management (67 percent);
- People should be elected democratically (58 percent);
- Promoters of organizations should be fully aware of all the details of collective undertakings (43 percent);
- The skills of members of the structures need to be improved (40 percent).

As for the promoters of NGOs/associations, they limited themselves to the following requests:

- Creation of a framework for dynamic partnerships with projects at the local and regional levels;
- Increased opportunities for financing;

- Capacity-building through adequate training;
- The circulation of information among NGOs and donors.

A great many needs emerged on a sectoral basis. These needs can be either general or specific. Taking them into account makes it possible to create a framework for collaborative interaction with target groups.

Many of the needs expressed by intended beneficiaries (IGAs, health posts, health centers, drug outlets, rural credit, etc.) are beginning to be addressed by development partners (either in completed or current operations), although much remains to be done, given the demographic pressures and the steady decline in rural living standards.

Needs and priorities in certain key sectors were ranked by persons interviewed as follows:

1. food security
2. health
3. agriculture
4. livestock
5. environment
6. water supply
7. education
8. employment and training
9. income-generating activities (IGAs) and micro-credit
10. transport

More specifically, the needs and priorities of the poor are: credits for carts, motorized pumps, agricultural inputs, food aid, expanded water output of mini-AEPs, the right to be heard within GCOs and, to a lesser extent, micro-credit.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This PPA in Niger, focusing on the diagnostic of poverty, an overview of interventions, an analysis of the essential priority needs of communities and the channels and avenues through which those needs are expressed, has yielded a huge volume of responses and data, which can be summarized as follows:

- Poverty is an everyday phenomenon for the populace, and is easily discussed;
- In the survey's seven target regions and the city of Niamey, poverty is perceived by communities to be a state of being below the minimum threshold. Poverty occurs along a continuum consisting of stages: penury, incapacity, dependency, and destitution. From this standpoint, poverty starts out as an economic problem that then becomes social and then psychological.

Poverty has both a horizontal dimension (i.e., it radiates out in villages, target groups, and the country) and a vertical dimension in that it affects the various social strata to varying degrees, depending on the context and the socio-economic situation.

According to the responses gathered, four forms of poverty are commonly found in Niger, namely:

- Crypto-poverty, which affects a small segment of the population, i.e., the allegedly well-off;
- Endemic poverty, which affects all those who lack production potential or the means of production;
- Recurrent or cyclical poverty, which affects everyone at one time or another;
- Structural poverty due to public institutions that lack the resources to create opportunities for the populace.

In Niger, the endemic, structural, cyclical or recurrent forms of poverty interact and reinforce each other in such a way that they worsen the population's tendency towards impoverishment.

According to the community classification by level of prosperity, an exponential increase in poverty is occurring at all levels: 75 percent of households are poor, and 66 percent of the sample respondents are mired in destitution. This situation results from endemic, recurrent and structural factors that have accentuated the scope as well as the severity of poverty. It has been established that poverty is more severe in cities than in rural areas, since rural poverty feeds into urban poverty.

Seen from a completely different angle, urban poverty is a 'younger' phenomenon (i.e., it affects mainly young people), whereas rural poverty is more a problem affecting women and old people. Horizontally and vertically, poverty's effects are enormous and varied. Poverty causes outmigration and social avoidance, prostitution, divorce, marginalization, violence and AIDS, and is responsible for the despair afflicting 38 percent of the poor in our sample.

When faced with poverty, people resort to a whole range of survival mechanisms and strategies: marginal activities, strict management of harvests, seasonal outmigration, market gardening, etc.

Nevertheless, a significant contingent among the poor simply give in to inert resignation.

In order to counter this generalized impoverishment, many interventions are currently being deployed at the regional, local and community

levels with the aim of improving living conditions. These interventions have provided communities with socio-economic infrastructures, a super-structure (i.e., a multitude of committees), incomes and employment. However, the range of services offered has not been able to stem the tide of impoverishment. The inappropriateness of strategies, the low level of community 'ownership' of development initiatives, problems with access to services, especially for the neediest, and the fact that the interventions have not been able to address all aspects of the problem, have all lessened the ability of the interventions to diminish poverty.

Factors such as population growth, the low level of administrative decentralization, the scarcity of opportunities, outmigration, and the low level of synergy between actors and implementers, have all prevented development operations from affecting the poor as they should.

Despite these constraints, there are many instances of helpful initiatives that generate jobs and incomes and boost the skills of the poor (e.g., hydraulic infrastructures, transfer of skills, etc.) and that deserve to be consolidated and applied. These accomplishments can inspire future poverty reduction strategies. With regard to the severity, scope and different forms of poverty, efforts to reduce the phenomenon will require long-term effort.

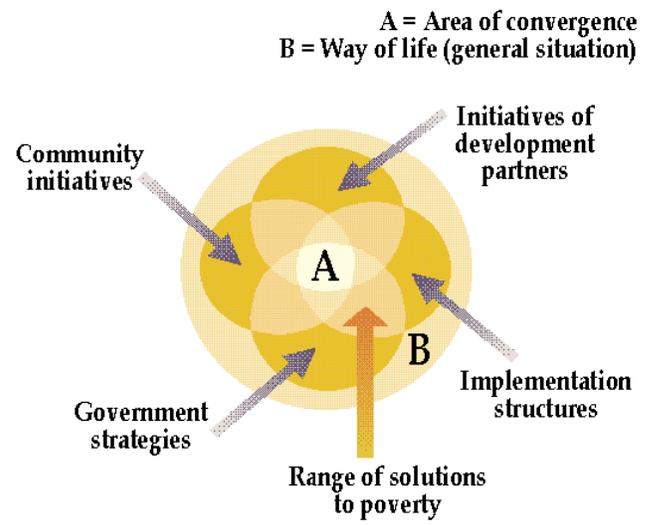
In addition, it is increasingly obvious that poverty reduction efforts, if they are to be relevant and effective, cannot be carried out under a program approach, since the study's results indicate that solutions to the problem of poverty involve:

- completed or ongoing interventions dealing with the standard of living;
- the agencies that implement development operations (e.g., projects, programs, NGOs, municipalities, GCOs, etc.);
- strategies; and
- communities.

Thus, only a strategic approach can work. It goes without saying that Niger's decision to develop a poverty reduction strategy is an appropriate measure that deserves to be maintained and pursued in greater depth.

The strategy development task consists, in short, of identifying an area of convergence that is as broad as possible between development initiatives, agencies, strategies, lifestyle (national, regional, local, and community) and communities, as shown in the figure below.

Figure 4.1 Schema for Strategy Development through Convergence



Poverty reduction can be summarized as the quest for a set of actions and strategies that can bring these various elements together and thus broaden the range of solutions. Based on the results of this study, the poverty reduction strategy should, in order to be operational, be constructed around three main strategic themes as described below.

I. GENERATING ONGOING DIALOGUE

Niger's standard of living and its development interventions have not been able to reduce the severity and scope of poverty over the past ten years because, in addition to the problems already mentioned, there is not enough dialogue.

Since solutions to the problem of poverty cannot be found anywhere else, they must be integrated into the interventions, woven into the way of life and incorporated into communities. Poverty reduction strategies in Niger must therefore generate a dialogue. This powerful tool is the only one that can

identify, create and broaden the space in which solutions intersect. The promoters of the poverty reduction strategy must help stimulate ongoing dialogue at all levels: political, institutional and within communities, in order to identify actions and strategies that are sustainable as well as socially and economically viable. The current trends toward democratization and decentralization are factors working in favor of this dialogue directed at poverty reduction.

II. MAKING POVERTY REDUCTION A VISION AND A PHILOSOPHY THAT INSPIRES HOPE

Poverty reduction must not be reduced to a simple goal to be reached, given its severity and scope in Niger. It must instead be addressed in holistic fashion, containing philosophical underpinnings, the only thing that can create conditions that are conducive to the introduction of changes into interventions, within communities, in the way of life, at the level of the structures in charge of implementing development operations.

Poverty, in terms of its definition, causes and effects and goes back to a way of life. Fighting poverty means improving the framework of life and living conditions. The continuing search for improved living conditions is at the core of the struggles of any human society. Since Niger's problem is primarily its poverty, the struggle against this scourge must assume the character of a moral, social and political imperative providing the hope and confidence to create favorable conditions for future generations.

Poverty reduction must also be the standard by which the performance of projects and programs is judged. However, short-, medium- and long-term objectives are required in the struggle against poverty. The content of the Poverty Reduction Strategy must revolve around actions aimed at addressing causes and effects, and other targeted initiatives providing help to GCOs and communities, and helping them to better identify, monitor and implement poverty reduction efforts.

III. IMPROVING THE MECHANISMS FOR MONITORING POVERTY REDUCTION EFFORTS

The efficacy of poverty reduction is closely linked to the monitoring of socio-economic indicators, project performance, strategies and impacts. As has already been noted, however, there is a chronic shortage of basic data. Even when data does exist, it is scattered or incomplete. A poverty reduction strategy must remedy this deficit by creating a public or private entity that can centralize and update data arriving every day from the various technical ministries, decentralized services, projects or other specialized institutions. Without a grasp of these basic indicators, a poverty reduction strategy cannot gauge the performance of interventions, nor can it evaluate the achievements of completed projects, to say nothing of identifying the remedies required.

Based on this study, the following operational areas should be topics for monitoring:

- socio-economic indicators;
- causes of poverty;
- impact of poverty;
- social conceptions of poverty in order to identify its content and attributes;
- quantitative trends in poverty (horizontal and vertical);
- encounters aimed at identifying, implementing and monitoring (i.e., the range of participants in actions and decisions and their level of implementation);
- size and number of structures (e.g., NGOs, projects, GCOs) involved and those that have implemented poverty reduction activities;
- size and scope of financing mobilized;
- mapping of actions and their implementers in the area of poverty reduction;
- number of regional or local development plans designed or implemented ;
- size and number of human resources and/or structures strengthened in the area of poverty reduction.

From the didactic and strategic standpoints, poverty reduction must occur in stages, given the severity and scope of the problem:

- The first priority is to address its effects, which involves working with the poor;
- Second, current causes must be addressed, since they offer an opportunity for reducing the horizontal scope of poverty;
- Third, activities involved in protecting and restoring productive potential must be consolidated and intensified. This provides an opportunity to arrest or attenuate endemic poverty;
- Fourth, an effort must be made to implement initiatives that address structural causes;
- Finally, a communication plan must be developed with a view to reducing the scope of crypto-poverty.

One should recall that these actions must take place on a large scale and not one after the other. In addition, it is important to ensure that the interventions can cover the various facets of poverty. In order to do this, a framework must be created for the kind of dialogue that can mobilize actors, structures, implementers and communities around the goal of poverty reduction and around strategies that can feed into PRSP.

This mobilization can occur through workshops or conference/debates on such topics as the scope of poverty reduction efforts in Niger, including:

- causes and consequences;
- inventory of beneficial initiatives;
- interventions and poverty: achievements, limiting and contributing factors.

These encounters can be used to identify poverty reduction strategies, and to improve field activities targeting the poor in the participant's zone of intervention (potential areas, strategic themes and activities, logistics of implementation and monitoring, anticipated results and costs, skills requirements, etc.).

At this level, one must develop integrated poverty reduction strategies. There is a need to address the strengthening of target group capacities and to monitor activities financed in the context of future development plans at the regional, local and community levels. Once this is done, the next step will be to submit funding requests to donors and to make sustained efforts to train target groups, GCOs and other actors so that they can better identify and analyze poverty reduction strategies and

actions. This must not obscure the need to disseminate information about the range of opportunities available to them. In order to do this, the assistance must be backed up by strategies to make them more operational and to help them mobilize themselves to develop concrete field interventions. The following things must be envisaged, among others:

- Integrated poverty reduction strategies for development projects and programs;
- Integrated poverty reduction strategies for grassroots organizations;
- Integrated poverty reduction strategies for NGOs;
- Integrated poverty reduction strategies for technical ministries;
- Integrated poverty reduction strategies for the private sector.

Making the case for the strategy

The implementation of poverty reduction strategies requires a case be made not only for mobilizing the necessary financial, material and human resources, but also for creating a framework for collaboration at all levels (partners, government, regions, sub-regions, towns and communities). Efforts must continue to be made to strengthen the State's economic management skills.

Because certain causes of poverty are structural in nature and result from political and institutional instability, the case for a poverty reduction strategy must be made at the political level (i.e., National Assembly, local elected officials, members of the government). The goal here is to convince these political actors of the cause and effect linkages between political instability and the decline in socio-economic indicators while insisting on the fact that *poverty reduction efforts are an alternative to the dismal failure of projects and programs which are largely political in nature.*

Efforts made to seek broad macro-economic equilibrium and to strengthen economic management capacities and good governance must be pursued and intensified. Indeed, this type of action is a way for the State to improve its economic performance and fulfill its international commitments in terms of counterpart funds, which would lift the restrictions on various projects and programs that are on hold.

Implementation conditions

Poverty reduction requires decentralization;

- Administrative decentralization , and
- Decentralization of development opportunities.

This is why it is urgent that local elections occur, that regional, local and community development plans be developed, and that these plans inform poverty reduction activities.

In the interest of efficiency, the field of poverty reduction efforts must be opened up to enterprises, NGOs, the private sector, projects and GCOs. Initiatives in urban areas must also be intensified.

The overall strategy for implementing poverty reduction efforts must promote partnerships and contractual arrangements, which are an alternative way of enlarging the scope of action and improving the competence of actors at the community level. Niger's poverty reduction strategy must place human beings at the center of development. Indeed, since it is located in the hostile environment of the Sahel, Niger has no other wealth besides its people. For this reason, the actions chosen must be ones that enhance the skills of Niger's people. This can be done through efforts in education and training, and by adapting instructional content to the needs of the people, the demands of development.

ANNEX 1: General Characteristics of the Sample and Target Groups

Given the assigned objectives, implementation of this study required a sampling at several levels (i.e., region, *arrondissement* and village). Thus, there were plans to conduct 1,771 interviews and 50 instances of participant observation. Their complete breakdown by site is given below.

INVESTIGATION SITES

The study deals with the urban area of Niamey and the seven regions of Tillabery, Dosso, Tahoua, Maradi, Agadez, Zinder and Diffa. Within each, forty-seven (47) sites/locales were visited. They are distributed as follows:

Table A1.1 Breakdown of Target Groups

Regions	Chief towns of Regions	Arrondissement/ Commune	No. of villages to be covered	Total # of investigation sites
Tillabery	Tillabery	Ouallam	3	9 sites
		Kollo	3	
Dosso	Dosso	Dogondoutchi	3	5 sites
Tahoua	Tahoua	Keita	3	5 sites
Agadez	Agadez	Arlit	3	5 sites
Maradi	Maradi	Dakoro	3	9 sites
		Madarounfa	3	
Zinder	Zinder	Mirriah	3	9 sites
		Tanout	3	
Diffa	Diffa	N'Guigmi	3	5 sites
Niamey	-	Commune I	-	2 sites
		Commune III	-	

The choice of locales (i.e., *arrondissements* and *communes*) takes into account certain criteria, such as:

- socio-economic conditions;
- geographic position;
- size of population;
- volume of assistance provided by development projects.

As for the villages to be involved, their selection, aside from these criteria, takes into account the representativeness of the cantons and/or zones comprising the *Arrondissement*. For example, in Dogondoutchi, the investigation involves one (1) village per Canton, i.e., one in Tibiri, one in Douchi and one in Matankari.

However, for locales that include both cantons and zones, two villages per canton are selection and one village per zone, in order to ensure that the various milieus are properly represented.

If the locality consists of a single canton, the above-mentioned criteria are used to make the choice.

TARGET GROUPS

Target group descriptions are as follows:

Technicians, Structures and Other Actors

With regard to technicians, the investigation involves all those who have been involved directly or indirectly in poverty reduction activities.

As for structures existing at the level of the investigation sites, given their numbers, they are sampled on a one-in-ten basis, taking into account such variables as the category and status of the structure, its date of creation and/or installation, the size, nature and type of services it offers, the level of involvement in the process, etc.

Beneficiaries

- In each village: 9 opinion leaders (1 village chief, 2 marabouts/sages, 1 prominent citizen, 2 women's leaders, including one midwife and one influential woman, 1 practitioner of traditional healing arts, 1 first-aid provider/midwife and one community development agent), 20 individual interviews at the household level (10 women and 10 men), 4 focus groups (2 with young people and 2 with adults), and one instance of participatory hands-on observation.
- In each urban center: 15 opinion leaders (3 neighborhood wardens, 3 marabouts/sages,

3 women's leaders, 3 traditional healers, and 3 development agents), 20 individual interviews at the household level (10 women and 10 men), 4 focus groups (2 young people and 2 with adults), 1 case of participatory hands-on observation.

- For the *City of Niamey*: 15 opinion leaders

(3 neighborhood wardens, 3 marabouts/sages, 3 women's leaders, 3 traditional healers, and 3 development workers), 40 individual interviews at the household level (20 women and 20 men), 4 focus groups (2 with young people and two with adults), 3 cases of participatory hands-on observation.

ANNEX 2: Implementation of the Study

The study was carried out in three main phases:

PREPARATORY PHASE

Based on the specific nature of this evaluation, the following activities were decided upon during the preparation phase:

Review of documents and exploratory discussions at the central level (i.e., with MEP and DRSP), intermediate level (DRP and DS) and peripheral levels (IHCs and villages).

Training of members of the investigation team

In order to familiarize the investigation team with the evaluation technique, CNESS-Bozari designed and implemented a seven-day training program. The content of instruction was the following:

- definition of the PPA concept, its principles, methods and tools;
- interviewing techniques;
- topics and sub-topics of investigation; and
- case studies and role-playing.

The training session concluded with the refinement and finalization of the draft interview form used to collect data and the dispatching of five sub-teams to the field (City of Niamey, Tahoua-Agadez, Maradi, Zinder-Diffa and Dosso-Tillabery). In addition, the opportunity was taken to conduct a preliminary test of the forms.

Pre-testing of study tools

In order to refine the investigation topics, data-collection procedures and study tools, CNESS-Bozari organized a four-day 'pre-test' in the City of Niamey. Upon the conclusion of this practical exercise, various didactic aspects of the survey were perfected (e.g., timetable, distribution of tasks within the sub-teams, types of summaries to be provided, etc.). Also, topics and sub-topics were refined and the interview guides for each target group were further improved.

FIELD WORK PHASE

For the seven (7) regions and the City of Niamey, data collection in the field began in mid-December and took about forty days. The NGO KarKara in Diffa also participated in this phase. Halfway through the field phase, a retreat was organized in Konni from January 2-5, 2002 in order to check on

the progress and performance of the data-collecting sub-teams.

It should be pointed out that data collection was done by mixed-gender teams. This work was preceded, within each region and locality, by a search for basic data through exploratory discussions and a document review, in order to get an idea of the context in which opinions and perceptions were going to be gathered. Check-list sessions were also organized to assess progress in data collection and to identify issues that seemed to require more in-depth exploration.

Results were reported back, on an as-needed basis, to the interviewees in the relevant villages, in order to validate the information and/or get additional information.

Also, given the study's qualitative dimension and the number of interviews, the team manually recorded the contents of the interview sheets onto specially-designed processing grids, as the study proceeded in the field.

Preliminary analysis of results was carried out in a systematic manner during this phase, following a schema by means of which the data was broken down by gender, age, entity, target group, zone or any other variable deemed relevant.

SUMMARY REPORT PHASE

The summary report of the study was produced on the basis of data emerging from the daily pooling of the interviewers' results. This document was written by a multidisciplinary team under the leadership of Mamane BOZARI, Director of CNESS-Bozari, consulting sociologist and study coordinator. The team's other members were:

- Mr. Combasset Ibrahim, consultant and team leader;
- Mme. Tidjani Habsatou, consultant and team leader;
- Mr. Harou Lassan, consultant and team leader;
- Mr. Assoumane Boubacar, consultant and team leader.

In addition, a supporting team of report-writers employed by CNESS-Bozari was also called upon for assistance.

ANNEX 3: Sample Target Sites and Their Characteristics

TARGET SITES AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

As planned, a total of nineteen (19) *Arrondissements* or *Communes* were involved, within which forty-nine (49) villages and/or encampments were subjects of investigation. Table 2 indicates the regions, localities and villages that were study sites.

Of the 49 sites touched, nine (18.4 percent) were urban entities. Ten (20.4 percent) were peri-urban areas, and rural areas accounted for about 61.2 percent of the sampled sites (30 villages and/or encampments).

This sampling of sites displays, more or less, the same characteristics as the country as a whole. It should be noted that 10 (or 18.4 percent) of the study's target entities are located in the nomadic area, and that 81.6 percent are sedentary.

From the standpoint of ethnic composition, specificities emerge by region, locality, village and neighborhood, depending on the influence or numerical weight of one ethnic group or another in a given site. Overall, the sampling of sites is diverse, and the main ethnic groups represented are: Haoussa, Zarma Sonraï, Kanuri, Tuareg, Gourmantché, Peul, Toubou and Arab.

Population density in the study area varies from one site to another. The regions of the South and Center have high density (37 percent of sites studied), whereas densities in the North and East are relatively low and can be as low as three (3) inhabitants/km².

As for the socio-economic status of the study sites, agricultural and herding activities predominate, especially in rural areas, where they occupy over 80 percent of the working population.

Overall, the economy's sub-sectors are not very diversified and suffer from a lack of effective

Table A3.1 Listing of Regions, Localities and Sites Studied

Region	Arrondissement/ Commune	Investigation site
Tillabery	Kollo	Kollo (chief town)
		N'dounga
		Karma
		Dagari
	Tillabery	Tillaberi commune
	Ouallam	Tondi Kiwindi
		Simiri
		Tolkoboye
Niamey	Commune III	Commune III
	Commune I	Commune I
Maradi	Maradi Commune	Maradi Commune
	Madarounfa	Madarounfa chef-lieu
		N'Yalwa
		Tchikagi
		Angoual Roumji
	Dakoro	Dakoro chef-lieu
		Birnin Lallé
		Sabon Machi
		Azagore
Agadez	Agadez commune	Agadez commune
	Arlit	Arlit chef-lieu
		Dannet
		RTA
		Gougram
Dosso	Dosso Commune	Dosso Commune
	Doutchi	Doutchi commune
		Tibiri
		Kiéché
		Bagagi
Tahoua	Tahoua commune	Tahoua commune
	Keita	Keita chef-lieu
		Ibou hamane
		Morey
		Guidan Fako
Diffa	Diffa commune	Diffa commune
	N'guigmi	N'guigmi chef-lieu
		Gaskerou
		Kawa
		Kabléwa
Zinder	Zinder commune	Zinder commune
	Miriah	Miriah commune
		Kagna malan
		Gouna
		Fotoro haoussa
	Tanout	Tanout chef-lieu
		Guézawa
		Amourzouk
		Boubram

assistance to agro-pastoral producers. Various potentials exist, but they remain under-exploited.

Aside from handicrafts, small-scale commerce and paid agricultural work, job opportunities are still limited. Study sites generally have Grassroots Community Organizations (GCOs) such as Economic Interest Groups (EIGs) and cooperatives that are engaged in promoting the main socio-economic sectors.

The generally informal nature of the economy means that the public contribution to the financing of local development is haphazard. However, one should remember that past and current development interventions have given certain areas an injection of economic “oxygen”, in the form of funds generated by the activities.

- Water supply/hydraulics: Water Fund
- Health: Cost recovery
- Food security: Cereals bank
- Trade: Taxes, IGAs

Some NGOs/local associations are active in the various study sites. The targeted regions and localities are, in over 50 percent of cases, within the zones of intervention of NGOs and national/international organizations, nearly all of which agencies representing them at the local, and even community, level. In general, these organizations are involved in the main sectors of socio-economic life.

The study sites are overflowing with a multitude old and new organizations associated with development projects. Nearly two-thirds of the study’s target sites have village health committees, water management committees, credit committees, cooperatives, conflict management committees and other Grassroots Community Organizations (GCOs). This welter of organizations is involved on a day-to-day basis, alongside the development workers (i.e. projects, programs, NGOs, associations, etc.), in executing, evaluating and monitoring development activities. In addition, a skills net-

work (in the form of resource persons) exists in the various sites to build the capacities of communities.

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE SAMPLE OF RESPONDENTS

In focus groups (FGs) and individual interviews (IIs), a total of 3,950 persons expressed opinions on the topics presented to them, compared with the figure of 3,143 persons stipulated in the TOR. This surplus of 807 interviewees leads to an implementation ratio of 126 percent. This significant disparity reflects a desire to ensure proper cross-referencing/triangulation of information. The breakdown of the 3,950 respondents by target group is as follows:

Table A3.2 Numbers of Respondents by Category of Target Group

Development partners		95
Local actors (LAs)		312
Administrative authorities (AAs)		48
Community leaders (CLs)		527
Beneficiaries	II	1181
	FG	1787
	Total	2968
Grand Total		3950

Table A3.3 Distribution of Respondents by Sub-category of Target Group, by Site and by Region

Regions	Level	Target groups and numbers of people						total
		Dev. Partners	CLs	LAs	AAs	Beneficiaries		
						II	FG	
Tahoua	Rural	3	28	12	1	92	130	266
	Urban and Peri-Urban	5	33	10	3	39	87	172
Zinder	Rural	7	32	8	1	133	212	393
	Urban and Peri-Urban	5	30	13	5	74	114	114
Diffa	Rural	3	35	15	1	62	91	207
	Urban and Peri-Urban	8	37	14	4	44	92	191
CUN	Rural	17	71	77	12	111	84	372
Maradi	Rural	6	34	18	1	140	195	394
	Urban and Peri-Urban	11	30	17	2	62	108	230
Tillabery	Rural	6	33	15	1	121	208	384
	Urban and Peri-Urban	9	23	23	3	61	108	227
Dosso	Rural	2	40	22	1	81	92	238
	Urban and Peri-Urban	9	30	16	4	41	86	186
Agadez	Rural	6	35	27	5	49	116	237
	Urban and Peri-Urban	3	44	25	4	71	64	212
Total		95	527	312	48	1181	1787	3950

This sample of respondents exhibits the following characteristics:

Development partners

The 95 development partners interviewed are promoters of NGOs responsible for projects, agencies and service providers. Their agencies are essential institutional and field-level collaborators on several operations or development initiatives.

Administrative authorities (AAs)

A total of forty-eight (48) AAs were met. Most of them are delegated administrators, prefects, sub-prefects and other persons responsible for administrative services.

Community leaders (CLs)

The sample of 527 community leaders interviewed was composed of: 11 canton heads; 87 marabouts, traditional healers and sages; 65 teachers; 27 neighborhood/village heads; 35 leaders of ethnic groups or social organizations; 147 women’s leaders; and 185 prominent citizens.

Local actors (LAs)

The 312 local actors interviewed were: promoters of Grassroots Community Organizations (120 persons, or 38.5 percent of the sample); persons involved in projects and other development initiatives (46); community-level resource persons (106), including first-aid providers/midwives, pest control brigade leaders, and plant nursery workers; and 40 technicians working for technical services.

Target groups (TGs)

As for IIs at the household level, 1,181 were obtained or 15.7 percent more than planned. Regarding FGs, 201 were done, compared to the 196 planned. These two (2) sub-samples break down by gender into 590 men (49.96 percent) and 591 women (50.04 percent), while the FGs had 947 men (53 percent) and 840 women (47 percent). Details are given in Tables 5 and 6 below, and their accompanying graphs.

Figure A3.1 Gender Breakdown of Respondents for IIs

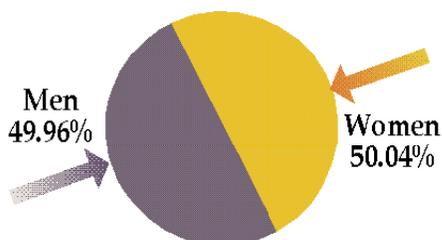
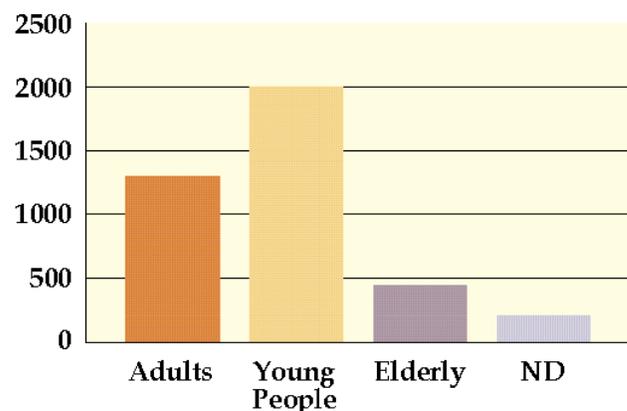


Table A3.4 Distribution of Numbers of II Respondents at the Household Level, by Target Category and Gender

Target groups	Gender and numbers		Combined
	Men	Women	
Agadez	56	64	120
Maradi	102	100	202
Dosso	62	60	112
Zinder	106	101	1207
Diffa	60	46	106
Tahoua	66	65	131
Tillabery	92	90	182
City of Niamey	46	65	111
Total	590	591	1181

The total sample of 2,968 people targeted (IIs and FGs combined) breaks down by age group, in the following way: young people were in the majority with 67.2 percent, followed by adults (28.4 percent) and the elderly (3 percent).

Figure A3.2 Age Breakdown of Respondents



As for the “socio-professional category” variable, 3,622 people of the 3,950 queried provided input on this. The fairly large number of people (328) for whom this information was not obtained were in the FGs. Thus, farmers top the list in the sample, with 27.7 percent. This is explained by the clear predominance of peri-urban and rural sites, where the overwhelming majority of people in this sub-sector work. People involved in the informal sector are estimated at 22.6 percent. Their numbers are explained by the multitude of sub-categories that this sub-sector covers: e.g., shopkeepers, carpenters, masons, butchers, restaurant owners, tin-smiths, ironworkers, blacksmiths, etc. Housewives

made up a significant contingent: 10.2 percent. The 8.6 percent figure for traders reflects the dynamic of some income generating activities in which the populace gets involved with the help of development partners. The unemployed – 2,3 percent – were found at the level of communes and regional capitals.

The “marital status” question was answered by 3,600 interviewees. The breakdown of responses is as follows:

Table A3.5 Breakdown of Respondents by Marital Status

Gender	Monogamous	Polygamous	Single	Divorced	Widowed	Cohabiting	Total
Men	378	288	405	540	234	153	1,998
Women	537	192	351	300	135	87	1,602
Total	915	480	756	840	369	240	3,600
%	25.4%	13.3%	21%	23.4%	10.2%	6.7%	100%

The breakdown of the sub-sample by marital status reveals a clear predominance of persons in monogamous marriages, 25.4 percent. The rather high rate of divorced persons (23.4%) can perhaps be attributed to socio-economic and cultural shifts, with their accompanying changes in lifestyle, drastic drops in income, loss of employment etc. The number of people in cohabitation arrangements was not negligible – 6.7 percent; they were found more often in urban and peri-urban milieus. The

number of unmarried individuals (21%) was also high, probably reflecting the significant rise in age at the time of first marriage. However it should be noted that, statistically, unmarried individuals are encountered more frequently in urban areas than in rural ones.

“Level of education” question

An important observation emerges from this table: illiteracy is a significant factor for 15 percent of those interviewed, who declared themselves to be without instruction. Those with a primary or secondary education represent 28.2 percent and 9.8 percent of the sample, respectively. Beneficiaries of functional literacy courses were also fairly numerous. Their weight in the sample is a tangible sign of Niger’s efforts in this area, even through the nationwide literacy rate remains below the Africa-wide average of 51 percent. However, on the subject of level of instruction, clear disparities emerge between urban and rural milieus, since nearly 78 percent of those who have not education live in rural areas.

Table A3.6 Distribution of Respondents by Level of Education

Gender	None	Primary	Secondary	Higher Ed.	Literate	Koranic School	ND	Total
Men	220	460	182	20	194	118	260	1454
Women	232	396	114	8	260	46	522	1578
Total	452	856	296	28	454	164	782	3032
%	14.9%	28.2%	9.8%	0.9%	15%	5.4%	26%	100%

ANNEX 4: Interview Guide

IDENTIFICATION

Region _____

Locality _____

Village/neighborhood or encampment _____

Last name, First name _____

Ethnicity _____ Marital status _____

Age _____ Sex _____

Level of education _____

Profession _____

Number of children _____

Number of dependents _____

TOPIC I: STANDARD OF LIVING

What are people's thoughts about the standard of living in the past, present and future (e.g., achievements, problems, etc.)

As present, what is lacking in your standard of living?

What actions, events and/or factors have contributed to a deterioration in living conditions? By the same token, what actions, events and/or factors have helped to improve living conditions?

Which problems have been resolved? Which ones still persist? Why?

What efforts have been made to resolve them? By whom?

TOPIC II: BASIC NEEDS AND SECTORAL PRIORITIES

Can you list for us the basic priority needs of the population in the following sectors: health, environment, education, agriculture, livestock, employment, local development, food security, water supply, income-generating activities (IGAs), democracy and good governance, rights and freedoms, conflict prevention and management, other (please specify).

Can you rank the needs you just mentioned in order of importance?

Can you give a brief description, for each sector, of the kinds of progress or changes that have occurred, as well as the corresponding problems?

What can be considered as an accomplishment, or an example of a need that has been met?

TOPIC III: OPINIONS ABOUT INTERVENTIONS

Make a list of various interventions that have affected your entity (title of initiative, objectives, target groups affected, results, approach and strategy, impacts).

List all the infrastructures and superstructures put in place by the various interventions and state what impact they had on local development and on communities or villages.

Identify positive and negative changes brought about by them (describe, and explain why they were positive or negative)

Analyze how and to what extent the interventions can better meet the needs of the population, and especially those of the poor.

Can you describe for us the factors that determine whether an intervention has succeeded or not?

TOPIC IV: POVERTY

What is the profile of poverty in your entity or village? (trend, extent, gender breakdown, etc.) and draw up a classification and categorization of populations in order of prosperity.

What does the concept of poverty mean to people in your community? Who is considered to be poor? Exactly how does poverty manifest itself?

What are the causes or determinants of poverty?

What do people do when faced with poverty?

Where does poverty lead? What are people's thoughts and feelings about the poor?

What is the best way to combat poverty? What should one concentrate on? At what level? Who should do what? How?

How would you characterize your own personal level of prosperity?

TOPIC V: POVERTY AND AIDS

In your opinion, what is the connection between poverty and AIDS?

How does this interrelationship manifest itself? Where? (If possible, provide facts and examples in support of your viewpoint).



Africa Region



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