

NIGER CRISIS APPEAL – LOCUST INVASION AND DROUGHT

May 24, 2005



For every child
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ADVANCE HUMANITY



NIGER CRISIS APPEAL

- **800,000 children in Niger are currently suffering from hunger. Of these, 150,000 show signs of severe malnutrition.**
- **In order to assist these children, UNICEF urgently needs US\$1,353,000. Additional funds would allow for the procurement and distribution of therapeutic food, cereal banks, seeds and supplies for irrigated gardening.**

BUDGET

Table 1: URGENT REQUIREMENTS (MAY-OCTOBER 2005)	
Sector	US\$
Food	400,000
Nutrition	953,000
Total¹	1,353,000

ISSUES FOR CHILDREN

Nutritional surveys² and food security data³ are showing a critical situation in the poorest, most food insecure and vulnerable departments in the agro-pastoral regions of Niger, (Tillabéri, Tahoua, Maradi, Diffa, Agadez, Zinder) which were affected by the 2004 desert locust infestation and drought. These two combined hazards had a strong negative impact on both pasture and cereal production, bringing the already impoverished population to critical levels of food insecurity and high rates of malnutrition for children below five years of age.

3.6 million of Niger's 12 million inhabitants have been directly affected by this food crisis. 800,000 children under 5 are suffering from hunger, including 150,000 who are currently showing signs of severe malnutrition. This estimate from a joint FAO/CILSS/FEWSNET/WFP mission has been validated by the national Early Warning System, under the Prime Minister's cabinet.

The DNP-GCA (Food Crisis Prevention and Mitigation Mechanism) is leading the coordination and execution of food aid operations under the authority of the Prime Minister's Cabinet and in partnership with donors, multilateral organisations, UN agencies and NGOs. It employs both preventive and mitigating means in order to avoid crises, and maintains reserves in food stocks and funds in order to respond to larger crises. However, the resources of the DNP-GCA have been insufficient to address the country's needs and it is therefore necessary to mobilize more resources to cover the upcoming lean season (April-September). In addition, Niger could face an even more critical food crisis situation if the 2005 agricultural campaign is again affected by drought and/or locusts.

Results of a recent WFP/Helen Keller International nutritional survey indicate alarming and unusually high overall rates of acute malnutrition (13.4%), including 2.5% severe malnutrition in the regions of Maradi and Zinder. These figures, recorded 4 months prior to the onset of the lean season, are comparable to rates commonly seen in countries at war and those observed during the peak of food crises and at the height of the lean season in Niger. Rates will certainly continue to rise over the next few months. The survey also found that 60.2% of

¹ The total includes a maximum recovery rate of 12%. The actual recovery rate on individual contributions will be calculated in accordance with the Executive Board Decision 2003/9 of 5 June 2003.

² WFP/Helen Keller International – January 2005, Médecins sans frontières/France – April 2005

³ Early Warning System; Ministry of Agricultural Development, CILSS Conference, Bamako, November 2004.

children show signs of stunting, which is the evidence of long-term nutritional deficiencies; WHO qualifies a 40% rate as an alarming nutritional situation.

MSF is currently finalizing two nutritional surveys whose preliminary results indicate an alarming increase in malnutrition among children under 5: between 2.4% and 2.9% severe acute malnutrition and between 19.3% and 19.5% global acute malnutrition for the areas surveyed.⁴ This could indicate that the situation is indeed continually deteriorating.

Context

Niger is currently undergoing a “silent crisis”; all indicators point towards increasing poverty under the weight of a galloping demography, desertification, locust infestations, rain shortfalls, and socio-economical impacts of crises in the sub-region, combined with weak national capacity in all areas. This “silent crisis” is taking place within a context of behavioral patterns that adversely affect human lives, particularly in the area of child nutrition.

The mortality rate for children under 5 years of age is 274/1000 and the infant mortality rate is 123/1000, which is among the highest in the world.

The majority of Nigerien families practice subsistence farming, only growing enough food to sustain themselves until the next harvest. Even in the best of years, 40% of children are malnourished (chronic and acute malnutrition). This trend is significantly worsened during years of crop failure. Livestock breeding plays a key role for Nigerien agro-pastoralist families, serving as a kind of savings account; whenever the household needs cash, they sell some of their animals on the market. A loss of livestock or decrease in their market value deprives the household of a key resource and exposes it to food insecurity. This sale of livestock is often a final measure taken at a time when families have already consumed all of their cereal stocks and the cash is thus required to buy food for the lean season.

The food security situation is worsened by the frequent onset of natural disasters, such as the drought and locust infestations which affected Niger's agro-pastoral areas during the last agricultural campaign. It is estimated that 2/3 of the 2004 loss in food production and pasture is rooted in the impact of the drought at national level, while desert locusts, which infested the country afterwards, caused 1/3 of the overall damages. In certain areas, swarms of desert locusts consumed nearly 100% of the crops.

The loss in cereal production (deficit of 223,448 MT out of a total requirement of 2,991,616 MT⁵) is estimated at 15% compared to the average annual production over the past 5 years in the affected areas. The livestock fodder deficit is estimated at 4,642,219 tons, which is 36.5% of needs. With scarce pasture and water, livestock conditions are reported to be deteriorating in spite of increased movement of herds, which has led to occasional conflicts between pastoralists and farmers in number of locales (including 11 killed in May in Falmey).

The Food Crisis Prevention and Mitigation Mechanism (DNP-GCA) is the national coordinating body for all partners active in food security. UNICEF participates in the DNP-GCA, together with sister agencies such as WFP, FAO and UNDP.

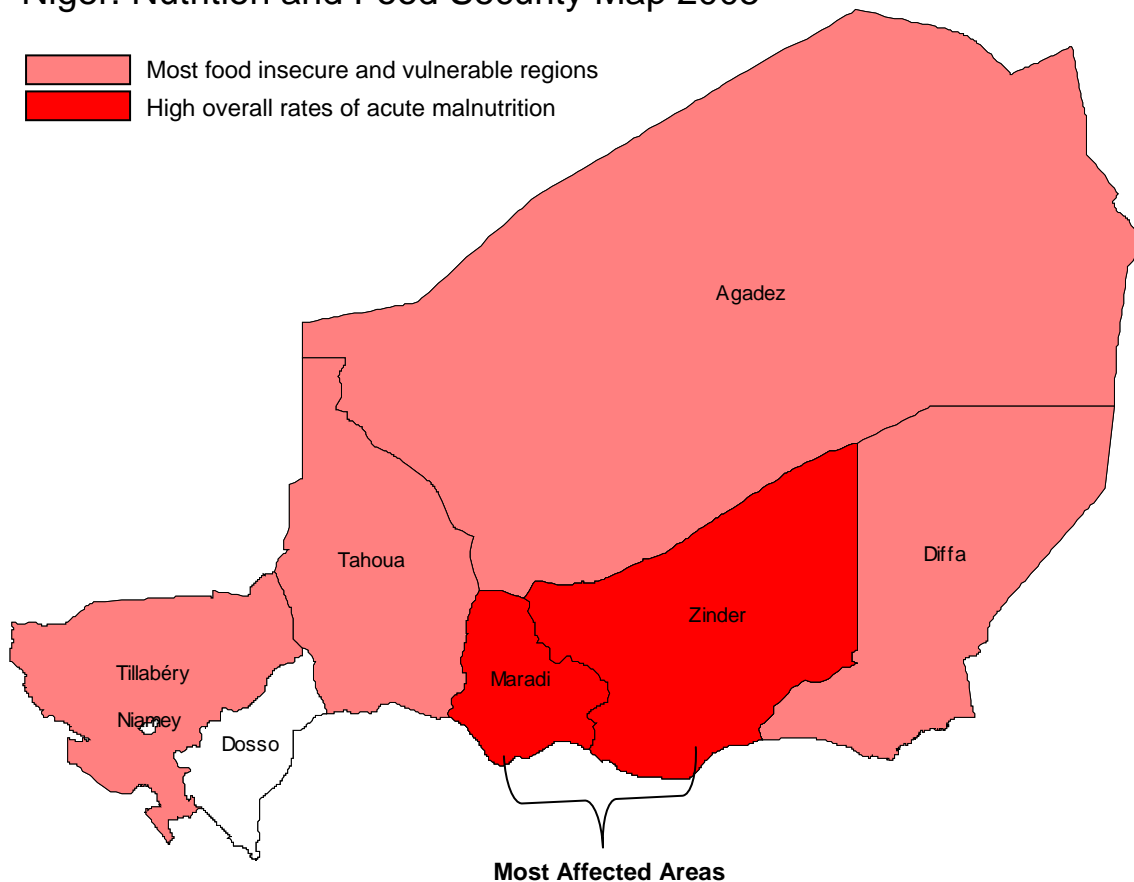
UNICEF Niger's Country Programme addresses the problem of chronic malnutrition among children through a variety of strategies. 245 village cereal banks in UNICEF's intervention zones stock staple grains to ensure availability of food supplies during the lean period. 298 Community-based Growth Monitoring Teams promote exclusive breastfeeding, monitor children's growth during monthly weighing operations, and provide nutritional counselling to mothers of malnourished children. Twice a year, vitamin A supplements are provided to all children under the age of five years. The Country Programme has also promoted a community development approach through integrated basic services aiming at providing access to safe water, in the view of reducing incidence of poor sanitation. In addition, deworming activities conducted through the Accelerated Child Survival and Development approach (ACSD) will be strengthened over the period. Despite these efforts, acute cases of severe malnutrition continue to occur. In an ongoing effort to treat these children,

⁴ Figures provided by MSF/Niamey

⁵ Ministry of Agricultural Development, CILSS Conference, Bamako, November 2004.

supplementary feeding centres are provided with therapeutic food (therapeutic milk, Plumpy'nut® and ORS).

Niger: Nutrition and Food Security Map 2005



ACTION TO DATE

Since mid-June 2004, UNICEF, together with its sister agencies, has been closely monitoring the situation and supporting the government efforts to evaluate and mitigate first the desert locusts invasion and second the food insecurity in Niger.

In response to this emergency situation, UNICEF supported the NGOs Bald, World Vision International and Plan International with the supply of: i) therapeutic food, ii) monitoring and training sessions. WFP and UNICEF have reinforced their activities in the field of malnutrition together with Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) by opening additional therapeutic feeding centres throughout the country, with other non-governmental partners' activities and the national health structures. WFP and UNICEF provide therapeutic food to malnourished children as well as food commodities to prepare meals for mothers staying in the centres. This assistance has lowered the absentee and drop-out rates and thus increased the recovery rate of children attending the centres.

UNICEF has reoriented US\$577,000 of regular resources for cereal bank activities and the purchase of food commodities (mainly therapeutic milk) in order to treat 30,000 severely malnourished children. Additional available contributions of US\$118,000, from funds raised, will allow for the purchase of therapeutic food in the coming weeks.

PLANNED ACTION

FOOD PROJECT: SUPPORT TO COMMUNITY CEREAL BANKS

UNICEF Niger has already purchased 299 tons of cereals for a total cost of US\$207,000 from regular resources. 515 tons are expected to be delivered by WFP to UNICEF. Requested funds will enable UNICEF to procure additional 641 tons of cereals. 164,000 inhabitants, of which 30,500 children under the age of five, will get access to food through 65 cereals banks. These funds will also help to restock 99 seed banks and livestock feed banks.

Table 4: FUNDS REQUIRED FOR FOOD PROJECT: SUPPORT TO COMMUNITY CEREAL BANKS		
Activity/Item	Beneficiaries	US\$
Increase household food security	164,000 people (30,500 < 5 yrs.)	400,000
Sub-total		400,000

NUTRITION PROJECT: EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO FIGHT MALNUTRITION

UNICEF Niger is making significant investments to address the country's food shortage in 2005. It has spent US \$418,000 to purchase therapeutic milk and Plumpy'nut®, both of which are essential for treating severe and acute malnutrition. The quantities of milk already purchased will meet the needs of 30,000 malnourished children for six months. However, with funds that are currently available, only 4,000 of these children will receive Plumpy'nut®. Additional funds of US \$953,000 are being sought mainly to provide Plumpy'nut® for the remaining 26,000 children.

UNICEF is working in collaboration with the government, NGO partners — Médecins sans frontières, World Vision, SIM, BALD, and Plan International — and sister UN agencies FAO and WFP to treat remaining children not reached by UNICEF support.

Table 4: FUNDS REQUIRED FOR NUTRITION PROJECT: EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO FIGHT MALNUTRITION		
Activity/Item	Beneficiaries	US\$
Nutritional recuperation of severely malnourished children	30,000 children under 5 years	953,000
Sub-total		953,000

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