TERMS OF REFERENCE – EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF UNICEF’S CASH TRANSFER PROJECT IN NIGER SEPTEMBER 2010

I. Background

Following poor crops in 2009-2010 in Niger, the vulnerability survey conducted in April 2010 revealed that 7.1 million people (48 per cent of Niger’s population) faced a situation of food insecurity. The results of the national nutrition survey in June 2010 revealed an alarming situation, with malnutrition prevalence over the emergency threshold of 15 per cent. In the regions of Maradi and Tahoua, GAM rates reached 19.7 per cent and 15.8 per cent respectively.

In response to this crisis the Government of Niger and its partners started implementing in April 2010 a response plan that included the distribution of blanket feeding rations to 500,000 children under two nationwide. The plan has been revised in June to enhance the coverage of the blanket feeding distributions to up to 900,000 children under two. Blanket feeding distributions have been implemented within the framework of a partnership between the Government of Niger, WFP, UNICEF and partner NGOs. From the Government’s side, the ‘Comite de Pilotage’ coordinates the whole project in a general manner. The ‘Celulle de Crise Alimentaire (CCA)’ is the focal point of the project for coordination, implementation and monitoring purposes. It works in close coordination with the ‘Direction de la Nutrition’, with SAP and with CIC.

Monitoring of the blanket feeding project revealed that because of the very precarious general nutritional situation, the whole household tended to eat the blanket feeding ration of the under two child. To ensure the protection of the blanket feeding ration, the Government with partners decided to distribute protection rations to families having children under two and receiving the blanket feeding. Within this general framework, the Government with UNICEF decided to implement in selected departments in Niger a cash transfer project, as an alternative to the protection ration distributions.

The cash transfer project is being implemented for the benefit of around 20,000 households in eight communes of the Konni and Illela districts of Tahoua region by CARE, and for around 10,000 households in three communes of the Tessaoua district of Maradi region by Save the Children, for a period of three months starting with August 2010 until October 2010. This period corresponds to the end of the ‘lean season’ in the selected areas of Niger. The geographical targeting was done according to four criteria: the GAM in selected areas had to be higher than 15 per cent, the selected communes were already benefitting of blanket feeding interventions, markets in the selected areas were functional, and experienced operators were available for the cash transfer operation. Given the emergency context, cash transfers were unconditional, but sensitization sessions have been organized to inform beneficiaries on the effective use of the blanket feeding rations and the purpose of the cash transfer.
The amount transferred is of 20,000 FCFA per household with one or more children under two. This amount is the equivalent in cash of the protection rations distributed in other areas of Niger by WFP as a protection to blanket feeding rations. Like the protection rations, it covers about 50 per cent of the food needs of an average household with seven members for a period of one month.

The cash transfer project has a very important capacity building component, to enable the government structures of the DNGPCA to coordinate, implement and monitor in the future similar projects if need arises.

II. Purpose of the evaluation

The objective of the evaluation is to assess the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of cash transfers by UNICEF and partners in the emergency response in Niger in 2010.

III. Deliverables

1. Based on the desk review of existing documents, preliminary paper for the food security conference, outlining first conclusions regarding the relevance of the project, main lessons learned and the challenges and orientations for scaling-up of such an initiative.
2. Final evaluation report (i) answering the main questions of the evaluation, (ii) outlining main lessons learned during the planning, implementation and monitoring phases of the project. and (iii) proposing future directions.

IV. Methodology

a. Learning objectives of the evaluation

1. Assessing the efficiency of cash as a complement to blanket feeding rations

• Assessing to what extent the logistics and rapidity of implementation of the cash transfer project allowed to protect the blanket feeding rations in households
• Assessing the timely implementation of the cash distributions in correlation with blanket feeding distribution as well as the quality of the distribution process (including security/protection issues for the beneficiaries)
• Assessing the cost-effectiveness of the cash transfer as opposed to protection rations, including direct and indirect costs, and the cost per child
• Assessing the contribution of the project to the government capacity development: how effective was the Government’s role and what are the main challenges in terms of national capacity building for cash transfer.
• Analysing coordination of the cash stakeholders in Niger- planning, implementation and monitoring of the project, including the project’s coherence with the humanitarian policy and coordination done with other humanitarian actors.
• Identifying aspects of the project that could be improved

2. **Assessing the effectiveness of the cash assistance as an emergency intervention to inform the technical guidance**

• Assessing the effectiveness of beneficiary targeting and the degree of inclusion of (vulnerable) children between 6 and 23 months in the project
• Mapping out the main use of the cash by beneficiary households
• Comparatively assessing the quality of the diet for both children and household members in households receiving cash and protection rations
• Analysing the experience of the beneficiaries, including their preferences on modes of assistance delivery (i.e. would they prefer to receive cash or food, and why?)
• Assessing the influence of cash transfer on the beneficiaries’ lives, i.e. on how the choices of coping strategies evolved during the project
• Assessing food market behaviours during project implementation

3. **Assessing the sustainability of the cash transfer project**

• Assessing the sustainability of the project (in terms of funding, capacity and motivation of the government, etc)
• Assessing whether the cash transfer project can be replicated in the future on a larger scale in Niger as part of national preparedness, and identifying the conditions that need to be fulfilled in case of scale-up

4. **Assessing the use of gender and Human Rights Based approaches**

• Assessing the human right-sensitive aspect of the project in its design and implementation
• Assessing the gender sensitive aspect of the project through the approach used (distribution of cash directly to women). Was the implementation of the project conducive to women empowerment - Was the project gender-sensitive in its design and implementation approach

The evaluation results will inform future programming decisions both at Niger country office and organization level, such as the possible scale up of the programme in coming years if needed. The key users of the evaluation report are key decision makers within UNICEF at HQ, regional and country levels and the Government of Niger.
b. Existing information sources for the evaluation

The evaluator will make full use of the following documents, which will be made available upon his / her arrival to UNICEF Niger of during his / her stay in the country:

1. The reports of the three rounds of post-distribution monitoring (PDM) conducted after each round of cash distribution. PDM reports contain data on the following indicators: the socio-economic profile of beneficiary households, their income sources and expenses; their survival strategies in times of food crisis; their migration patterns in the context of the crisis; their preferences for assistance (cash or protection rations); access to humanitarian assistance for the past six months; efficiency of the blanket feeding and cash distribution processes and beneficiary perceptions of the distribution process; the utilization of the blanket feeding ration in cash and protection ration contexts; utilization of the cash received; understanding of sensitization messages.

2. The findings of the focus groups with stakeholders conducted after the three rounds of cash distribution by UNICEF in mid-November in partnership with Institut National de la Statistique (INS). Focus group reports will contain inter alia data on the security of beneficiaries during and after cash distribution, effectiveness of the targeting methods used, exclusion concerns, preferences of beneficiary households for cash or protection ration and reasons for their preferences, reasons for using the cash received for buying things other than food, stakeholder’s understanding and appreciation of the project, perceptions of the beneficiary households about themselves in terms of regained dignity, necessary coping strategies such as migration etc.

3. The monthly and final reports on the market survey regarding the impact of cash transfers on the functioning of markets in the project area

4. Trip reports of the monitoring visits conducted by project staff and consultants, and monthly activity reports of the two cash transfer project consultants

5. Reports of CCA and other government partners, and of partner NGOs on project implementation

6. Preliminary reports of the nutrition survey

c. Other information required

The evaluation will use the following approaches:

- Interviews with UNICEF project staff, CARE and Save the Children (SC-UK) project staff, members of the government-led DNPGCA at the central, regional and sub-regional level, including CCA, SAP, CIC, as well as Direction de la Nutrition, INS, SIMA.

- Focus groups with key stakeholders on the perceived impact of the cash transfer project on the local economy (functioning of markets, comparison with situations when food is delivered instead of cash, etc)

- If additional quantitative and qualitative surveys need to be conducted to determine the impact of the project on the nutritional status of children, to determine with more precision spending patterns of the cash received and food consumption patterns, this will be determined upon the arrival of the evaluator.
V. Qualifications of the evaluators

The evaluation will be conducted by a team of two international consultants.

Consultant 1:
- At least a master’s degree in planning, monitoring and evaluation, economics or social sciences
- At least 8 years of documented experience in evaluation of emergency programmes, including cash transfer projects, preferably with a link to nutrition
- Knowledge of cash transfer and nutrition programmes in crisis context
- Knowledge of cost benefits analysis for cash transfer programmes
- Extensive experience in working with governments, UN (UNICEF experience preferred), local authorities, beneficiaries
- Demonstrated analytical, writing and computer skills
- Excellent knowledge of English and French

Consultant 2:
- At least a master’s degree in health economics with a good knowledge in nutritional and food security aspects
- At least 8 years of documented experience in evaluation of emergency programmes, including cash transfer projects, preferably with a link to nutrition
- Knowledge of cash transfer and nutrition programmes in crisis context
- Extensive experience in working with governments, UN (UNICEF experience preferred), local authorities, beneficiaries
- Demonstrated analytical, writing and computer skills
- Excellent knowledge of English and French

VI. Timeframe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deadline for applications</td>
<td>18 October 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Start of the evaluation</td>
<td>15 November 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finalization of preliminary paper for the food security conference</td>
<td>30 November 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>End of field work</td>
<td>10 December 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final evaluation paper finalized</td>
<td>31 December 2010</td>
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