



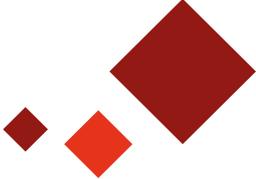
COUNTRY STUDY

NIGER

Social Protection Monitoring

Main recommendations for the National Indicative Programme to

- Continue to focus on providing support to social services' provision. There is an urgent need for more funding in health and education, to raise the quality of services and ensure access for all.
- Keep food security as an urgent priority. Other measures to increase income security for those not in the formal economy should also be considered.
- Support the further development of a financing plan for social protection and the mobilisation of domestic sustainable resources to ensure the success of the National Social Protection Policy adopted in 2011.
- Support the creation of a platform for non-state actors to unite and work together to establish a comprehensive national social protection floor in Niger. The EU should support civil society in opening up a formal dialogue with the Government on the revision, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the National Social Protection Policy.



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INTRODUCTION

Niger has ratified a number of international agreements relating to social protection, including some parts of ILO Convention 102 on Social Security (those related to old-age benefits, accident at work and occupational diseases, families' and maternity benefits), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Moreover, by adopting the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Recommendation on National Floors of Social Protection (R 202) the country is engaged in the set-up of a national floor of social protection for all its residents with the aim of building a comprehensive and human rights-based national social protection system. Currently, there are significant challenges to achieving universal social protection in Niger, to address which will require support from the development community.

In 2011, Niger adopted a National Social Protection Policy¹ which outlines the policy framework in the areas of food and nutrition security, social security, work and employment, basic social services and infrastructure, and specific social protection measures for vulnerable groups.

In the framework of the 11th European Development Fund (EDF), the EU's development cooperation priorities with Niger are defined in the National Indicative Programme 2014-2020². The four priority areas for cooperation were agreed jointly by the EU and Government of Niger, in consultation with other donors and civil society. These include: 1) **food & nutrition security and resilience**; 2) **building state capacity to implement social policies**; 3) **security, governance and peacebuilding**; and 4) **opening up the regions affected by insecurity and the risk of conflict**.

The following report provides the views of **SOLIDAR member FICEMEA³ and its partner in the field ONPPE**

1 <http://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/Ner146468.pdf>

2 https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/nip-niger-20140619_fr.pdf

3 Federation Internationale Centres d'Entrainement aux Méthodes d'Education Active (International Federation of Training centres in active education methods).

(*L'Organisation Nigérienne pour la Promotion de la Petite Enfance* – The Niger Organisation for the promotion of early childhood)⁴ on issues the NIP could tackle to better support the achievement of decent work and social protection for all in the country. This would be in line with the EU's commitments enshrined in the 2012 Communication on Social Protection in Development Cooperation, the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy and the objectives and targets of Agenda 2030 adopted in September 2015.

In this respect, the forthcoming NIP Mid-Term Review could provide the space for these commitments to be better reflected in the 11th European Development Fund programmes.

NIGER

NIGER AT A GLANCE⁵

Population
19.11 million

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
US \$8.169 billion

Human Development Index (HDI) and ranking
0.348 (188th out of 188 countries)

Public spending on social protection including health
2.91 % of GDP

Total envelope of National Indicative Programme (NIP)
EUR 596 million

4 Hereinafter referred to as the partners.

5 World Bank: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/niger>, UNDP Human Development Report 2015: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries>, ILO World Social Protection Report 2014/15, Niger National Indicative Programme 2014-2020.



MAIN ISSUES TO BE TACKLED

- **Human development outcomes, including health and education, are amongst the lowest in the world.** One of the main causes of this is the chronic underfunding of social services.
- **Funding for a free health care initiative is falling short of the need, and many health facilities frequently run out of essential medicines.** Health user fees remain high, putting people's health at risk. Out-of-pocket payments accounted for 38% of total health expenditure in 2011.⁶
- **Niger is highly food insecure** and vulnerable to climatic and other shocks which have a devastating impact on health and nutrition outcomes.
- **The majority of workers** are employed in agriculture and the informal economy, with **no guarantees of income security or decent working conditions.**

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EU NATIONAL INDICATIVE PROGRAMME TO

- Continue to focus on providing **support to social services' provision.** There is an urgent need for more funding in health and education, to raise the quality of services and ensure access for all.
- Keep **food security as an urgent priority.** Other measures to increase income security for those not in the formal economy should also be considered.
- Support the further development of a **financing plan for social protection** and the mobilisation of domestic sustainable resources to ensure the success of the National Social Protection Policy adopted in 2011.
- Support the creation of a **platform for non-state actors** to unite and work together to establish a comprehensive national social protection floor in Niger. The EU should support civil society

in opening up a formal dialogue with the government on the revision, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the National Social Protection Policy.

REPORT

1. Improving access to essential services

As the country ranked lowest in the UNDP Human Development Index 2015, Niger has **poor health outcomes and limited access to quality health services.** The population suffers from high rates of malnutrition, malaria and other infectious diseases. In 2006, the Government of Niger introduced a free health care policy for children and reproductive services for women in order to tackle the very high maternal and child mortality rates. This has had a significant impact on the uptake of health services and mortality rates have fallen, but many challenges remain. **Funding for the free health care initiative is falling short of the need, and many health facilities frequently run out of essential medicines.** Moreover, the health user fees for the rest of the population remain high, putting people's health at risk. Out-of-pocket payments accounted for 38% of total health expenditure in 2011.⁷

As regards to **education**, despite successful efforts to raise the net enrolment rate, there are low retention and completion rates in primary and secondary schools. In 2011, over a third of primary age children were out of school.⁸ There are also significant gender and income disparities: in 2012, over 70% of poor girls had never attended school, compared to less than 60% of poor boys.⁹ **Niger has one of the lowest scores in the world in the Education for All Development Index.** Although the Government has increased total public expenditure on education as a share of GNP, expenditure per primary school pupil fell from US\$207 to US\$130 from 1999 to 2012, as finance failed to keep

⁶ ILO World Social Protection Report 2014/15.

⁷ ILO World Social Protection Report 2014/15.

⁸ <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/education/wStateEdu/StateEducation.aspx>

⁹ Education For All Global Monitoring Report 2015.



up with increased enrolments.¹⁰

The second priority area of the NIP specifically deals with supporting the state in social policy and the delivery of social services. The expected results include the implementation of effective national policies in health, education and social protection; increased equitable access to quality social services; increased utilisation of health services amongst mothers and children, including reproductive and family planning services; and increased promotion of girls' basic education. Priority area 4 also relates to the improvement of access to basic social services in the regions affected by insecurity and the risk of conflict. **In light of these priorities, it is clear that the EU can play a significant role in supporting the Government to improve access to services.**

According to the partners, the major issue to highlight is the **lack of resources for both health and education**. They are concerned that out-of-pocket expenditure still accounts for a large proportion of health spending. They believe that **universal health coverage should be promoted** in order to ensure that all people have access to health services. **The privatisation of education is also a huge problem, risking the outcome that quality education no longer is a basic and public service, and becomes increasingly unaffordable for the majority.**

The partners are also concerned at the **low quality of education in schools**, one cause of which is the weak technical capacity of teachers. Vulnerable groups of children, including those from rural areas and nomadic families, as well as girls and disabled children, face particular challenges in terms of access and retention, and steps should be taken to provide support to families to enable and encourage these children to attend school. The partners also wish to highlight that early learning (i.e. education in early childhood) is essentially an urban phenomenon. The Government has failed to honour its commitments to provide free education, particularly at this early learning stage, as

¹⁰ Ibidem.

well as at the level of higher education. This is due in large part to the inadequacy of available public resources. Thus **a key priority according to the partners is the better management and allocation of resources for education**, specifically by allocating at least 25% of domestic resources to education and mobilising additional funds from development partners. The partners also believe that there is an **urgent need to build capacity to improve communication between stakeholders involved in public service delivery and coordination between the different interventions.**

2. Ensuring income security

As one of the poorest countries in the world, Niger faces considerable challenges in ensuring income security for its population. The majority are reliant on subsistence agriculture and are highly vulnerable to climatic and other shocks. Most are either **un- or underemployed in the informal economy**, which offers no guarantee of decent work opportunities and conditions. There are very few national statistics available after 2008 but according to the ILO the proportion of poor workers represent more than half of all workers (51.4% in 2008).¹¹ In addition, one-third of salaried and contract workers, who account for just one-quarter of the total employed, are in temporary employment. **Women represent just 17.2% of salaried workers.**¹² In addition, the partners point out that employers' obligations to reserve 5% of all positions for disabled people is not always met.

Niger has ratified the ILO Convention on **Minimum Wages**, and in 2012 the Government set the minimum wage at CFA 30,047 francs per month (equivalent to around EUR 45).

The National Social Protection Policy aims to extend social security to those not already covered, including informal economy workers, as well as to provide support and training for vulnerable groups with low access to the labour force.

¹¹ ILO (2013) Profil Pays du Travail Décent, Niger.

¹² Ibidem.



The partners strongly believe that **social security must be extended beyond the formal sector** to ensure that all individuals, households, and communities are protected in the face of risks.

Another challenge is the **increasing number of internally displaced people in the country**. Since 2013, an estimated 70,000 Niger nationals have returned from a neighbouring country to the Diffa region due to acts of violence. At the same time, population displacements have been caused by the attacks carried out by Boko Haram. Most displaced persons in the Niger are vulnerable and live in extremely precarious conditions. According to SOLIDAR and its partners in the field, international cooperation should also support the Government to adopt a national law on internal displacement and enhance current protection for internally displaced persons and the civilian population in conflict-affected areas, as well as **mainstream protection and assistance for internally displaced persons in national social protection systems and in national and regional development plans**.

Finally, when it comes to food security, **Niger is highly vulnerable to climatic and other shocks**, which puts people's food security at risk. The first priority area of EU cooperation with Niger is food and nutrition security and resilience, which aims to increase the availability of food as well as agricultural incomes. This should be achieved through the sustainable growth of community and individual agricultural production, and better water management, amongst other measures.

3. Promoting a rights based approach to social protection

ILO Recommendation 202 promotes a rights-based approach to social protection. This entails, among others:

- Adequate and predictable nature of benefits;
- Non-discrimination, equality between men and women and taking into account specific needs;

- Entitlement to benefits prescribed by national legislation;
- Effectiveness and accessibility of complaint and redress procedures;
- Respect for the rights and dignity of persons covered by social security guarantees;
- Full respect for collective bargaining and freedom of association for all workers.

The right to social security is enshrined in the Constitution of 2010. The National Social Protection Policy of 2011 is described as a social pact between State and citizens, representing an opportunity to realise the universal right to wellbeing based on the principles of solidarity, equity, social justice and the realisation of rights.

According to the partners, there is a need to evaluate the National Social Protection Policy, and to revise it in light of developments in the country, taking into account regional specificities and cultural diversity. Civil society can play a crucial role in this process, and the **EU can support building their capacity to enable them to fully play their watchdog role and be involved in consultation and negotiation with the Government**.

Finally, SOLIDAR members and partners highlighted that although the right to food is enshrined in the Constitution, there is no specific law on that right and the percentage of the population facing food insecurity and malnutrition have remained unchanged for many years.

4. Promoting Freedom of Association and CSO participation

According to SOLIDAR, Freedom of Association is not only a right per se but is also an essential precondition for the progressive realisation of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCRs) including social protection. Although the Niger constitution and law provide for freedom of association and assembly, there have been reports of the forced dispersion of demonstrators and the banning of gatherings where



organisers did not provide 48-hour advance notice to authorities. Opposition party conferences and rallies have also been subject to police interference. The government does not restrict the operations of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), though a lack of security in the north prevents such groups from accessing or functioning in the region. The Constitution also guarantees the right to form unions, to bargain collectively, and to strike. However, over 95% of the workforce of Niger is employed in subsistence agriculture and the informal economy and is therefore nonunionised.¹³

The NIP contains an envelope to support civil society and to promote its role in the development of the country and in improving the effectiveness of public policy. It also specifically mentions the improvement of the legal and administrative framework governing the status of civil society organizations (CSOs) and the terms of their relations with the state.

The partners believe that the setup of a **platform of non-state actors should** be supported to unite and work together to establish a comprehensive national social protection floor in Niger. The EU should support civil society in opening up a formal dialogue with the Government on the revision, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the National Social Protection Policy adopted in 2011.

5. Mobilising financial resources for social protection

The economy of Niger is driven by agriculture, which contributes 26.6% to GDP, followed by livestock, which contributes 10%.¹⁴ The extractive industries, including uranium, gold and petrol, also represent 10% of GDP. Public spending on social protection amounted to just 2.91% of GDP in 2010, the bulk of which was spent on health.¹⁵ The National Social Protection Policy recognises the weak internal revenue mobilisation capacity of the country and the Government's low spending on the social sector as a proportion of the

13 US Department of State Human Rights Reports 2014, Niger; <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/niger>.

14 African Economic Outlook, Niger 2015.

15 ILO, World Social Protection Report 2014/15.

total budget. It also recognises the need for a specific financing mechanism for social protection, to which the contribution from the national budget should constitute at least 1% of GDP. Potential internal revenue sources could include taxation on the extractive industries, and with the adoption of the Mining Law of 2006, there is considerable scope to raise fiscal revenue through value-added tax.

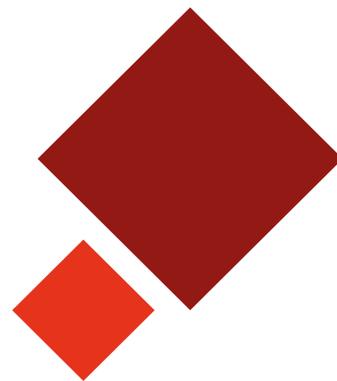
The EU is committed to supporting the capacity of the state to finance public policy through priority area 2 of the NIP, including reforming public financial management (PFM), mobilising domestic revenue, improving governance of the extractive industries and fighting corruption and fraud. Thus there is significant scope for the EU to support the Government in ensuring that a sound financial plan is put in place to achieve a national floor of social protection.



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The Social Protection Monitor is a tool developed by SOLIDAR, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and the Africa Platform for Social Protection to consult partner organisations on the priorities of the 11th European Development Fund's (EDF) National Indicative Programmes (NIPs).

SOLIDAR is a European network of membership based Civil Society Organisations who gather several millions of citizens throughout Europe and worldwide. SOLIDAR voices the values of its member organisations to the EU and international institutions across the three main policy sectors; social affairs, lifelong learning and international cooperation.

