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# Early Action Protocol Operations Update Niger: Drought

 International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Operation n° MDRNE026

People to be assisted: **4,000 HH**

EAP number:  
EAP2021NE02

FbA by the DREF allocated: **CHF  
349,989**

Launch date **19/04/2022**

End date: **30/11/2022**

Timeframe covered by this  
update: **19/04/22 – 15/06/22**

## The Early Action Protocol hazard and trigger

### Timeline

**July 2021:** EAP approved

**March 2022:** Trigger reached

**April 2022:** Early actions launched

The Early Action Protocol (EAP) trigger anticipates a worsening food crisis based on the food insecurity assessment produced by the Cadre Harmonisé, which observes IPC 3 or more for the following lean season and the assessment of production conditions.

The EAP was initially planned based on triggers for two successive phases:

- i) the first trigger was meant to be met in April of any given year, when the season forecast Fifth generation seasonal forecast system (SEAS5) provided by the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF), with a lead time of three months. If this forecast showed a 40% (or higher) probability that precipitation will be in the lowest tercile ("below normal"), the conditions for the first trigger will be met and will launch the first round of early action activities.
- ii) the second trigger was supposed to be met in November of the same year as the first trigger, this one anticipates a future food crisis based on the food insecurity assessment observed by the Cadre Harmonisé/IPCI of IPC 3 or more for the following year's lean season and the assessment of production conditions in addition to the assessment of the previous rainy season Group on Earth Observations Global Agricultural Monitoring Initiative (GEOGLAM) early warning crop monitor (of below 50), with a lead time of five months.

In this instance, the activation to the EAP in April 2022 was based on the second trigger which was met in March 2022 despite the initial plan intended the two triggers be activated in a consecutive manner. The



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alarming deterioration in the food security situation in Niger led to the activation based on the second trigger only, with early actions that support the cereal banks and cash distribution in the Zinder region.

Summary of key revisions to the implementation plan for the early action:

#### **Activities implemented under the Early Action Protocol.**

To date, activities already implemented since the activation include:

- Development of visibility material and beneficiary cards.
- Field trip of the National Society (NS) focal point of the EAP to meet the actors of the Zinder region to explain the process of implementation of the activities following the trigger of the early action activities.
- Meeting with the technical services, the local authorities in the departments of Gouré and Damagaran Takaya to explain the EAP, the trigger, and the early action activities.
- Training of 40 volunteers (20 from each department) and four supervisors (two from Red Cross branches and two from the agriculture technical service of the local authorities).
- Diagnosis of the functionality of cereal banks in the four target villages.
- Meeting with the food security cluster to align the interventions.
- Signature of contract with radio stations for the dissemination of awareness raising/sensitization messages. These messages will start airing at the beginning of July.

#### **Proposed changes to the operational strategy:**

The Red Cross Society of Niger (RCSN) proposes suspending work with the cereal banks in favour of cash transfers to vulnerable food insecure communities in advance of a worsening food security situation. The NS will still target 4,000 households. However rather than the original plan to target 1,000 households with cash assistance, the RCSN will now target 4,000 households with a one-off cash transfer, in line with the Operational Strategy of the Emergency Appeal (MDRNE026).

#### **Reason for the requested change in approach:**

Support mission of the Niger Red Cross for the implementation of early action activities:

The NS's FbF focal point undertook a first exploratory mission across the two departments in IPC phase 03, specifically to Damagaram Takaya and Gouré in the Zinder region. The field visits and discussions with communities resulted in the identification of target villages:

Departments	Common	Villages	Affected persons
Gouré	Gamou said	Goubi Kalinbodi	1,476
		Agouma	1,532
Damagaram Takaya	Guidimouni	Someone	1,445
		Baoré Ali	1,106

#### **Functionality of the Cereal Banks:**

The field visit to Zinder found that the cereal banks were semi-functional. In Gouré and Damagaram Dakaya (covering the municipalities of Kazoe and Guidimouni) there are community cereal infrastructure, but they have no cereal stock available. Moreover, the cereal bank committees are not functioning.

During the Food Security Cluster meeting on 9 June, WFP and several other humanitarian partners confirmed the intention to move away from the cereal bank approach. This decision is based on historical management and integrity issues. According to WFP, the cereal bank approach can only be effective with long-term and close supervision, moreover it is not the most effective activity when people are facing food insecurity.

### Scenario Analysis by the Niger Red Cross:

Following the ongoing targeting, and in view of the conclusive preliminary results, the Red Cross branches in Zinder outlined the implementation scenarios, based on analysis of advantages and disadvantages, and proposed a more streamlined and faster option for implementation of the activity.

The **first scenario** is to supply the banks, and where banks are not in place, to stock the cereals in classrooms during the holiday period. This will be followed by a distribution of cereals. The advantage is that the early actions would be followed as initially planned, complying with the commitments made; however, the disadvantages include:

- Risk of diversion of cereal supplies during the operation, especially if the Cereal Bank's management committee is not well functioning.
- High probability that the food supplies may not meet quantitative and qualitative standards by the NS and the Food Security Cluster, and risks of doing harm to communities and the reputation of the NS.
- Delays in the procurement process will further delay assistance, as NS procurement rules and regulations require a national level tender, with minimum of two weeks for tender process. The whole process of procurement and transportation will require also a high level of logistics from the NS.

In the **second scenario**, the RCSN technical team, considering that it is still in the early stage of the lean season, proposes a one-off cash distribution so that families can procure grains and cereals directly, reaching the 4,000 households originally targeted by the EAP. The advantage being that the NS has already in place the mechanism to conduct the cash transfer in a short period of time. The rest of the planned activities in the EAP will remain the same.

### Selected scenario: distribution of cash instead of cereal banks:

The current budget allocated in the EAP for the cereal banks will be reallocated and distributed for cash assistance. The NS proposes to maintain the target population of 4,000 households which have already been identified. The 1,500 most vulnerable households will receive one transfer of 40,000 XOF (CHF 63). This is the amount agreed by the national-level food security cluster, and is the same strategy adopted by the Emergency Appeal. The strategy is to adopt a one-off payment, rather than successive payments as this will provide assistance faster and with lower overhead costs and will be supported by robust CEA messages. The remaining 2,500 households will receive one transfer of 20,000 XOF (CHF 31).

The selection of the most vulnerable households will be done using Protection gender and inclusion (PGI) criteria and the NS will ensure that clear CEA messaging is developed for communities to understand who is being targeted and why. Possible conflicts in the communities will be prevented by involving the community from the beginning of the selection process and throughout the distribution. Community leaders will be involved at all stages of project planning and implementation. Additionally, there are concerns that as the rainy season commences, communities' access to markets may be hampered and the impending risk of flood related epidemics.

This approach has the following advantages:

- Will speed up the operation delivery in view of the deadline
- Has low implementation costs
- Necessitates little need for logistical resources
- Guarantees more transparency in management

On 9 June 2022, the food security Cluster recommended partners to prioritize cash, whether mobile or voucher, in line with the recommendations of the government.

**Availability of food on the markets:**

At the beginning of May, cereal prices are marked by an increase for sorghum and a certain variability for other products in the country.

Increases were recorded for: (i) millet in Tillabéry (+3%); (ii) sorghum in Zinder, Tillabéry and Niamey (+4%). Some decrease in prices were observed for millet in Dosso (-5%) and Maradi (-2%) and for maize in Zinder (-7%), Maradi and Dosso (-2%).

In Zinder: the food situation is relatively stable compared to the previous month. Markets remain mainly supplied by imported cereals. Cereal prices are stable for some products (rice, and millet) but at an already very high level.

It is anticipated that the upward trend could amplify pressure on consumer demand for local products (millet, and sorghum) and the decline in local production, cross-border flows, and the substitution of imported products (oil, wheat, wheat flour, pasta, and milk) whose availability will decrease following the security crisis in Ukraine/Russia which impacts their import.

The Food Security Cluster, led by WFP, has recently conducted a market assessment, and concluded that the markets function accordingly. Before doing the cash distribution, the NS will conduct a rapid assessment to verify this information, this study will be conducted over two days per department, hence a total of four days. The market assessment will take place as soon as the operational changes are approved and validated.

Cash transfer has become a routine activity for the NS, which also has a Food Security and Livelihood's department within which the cash transfer modalities unit is located. Cash is well accepted by the communities. RCSN has expertise in cash transfer following capacity building by the British Red Cross and has the necessary skills and equipment (including a toolbox, pool of trainers, a cash transfer strategy, and trained cash transfer focal points in all regions). The cash modality is fast and flexible, ensuring the dignity of the already vulnerable communities and aligns with the recommendations of the Niger Food Security Cluster.

**National Society expertise in CASH**

Examples of successful cash distributions delivered by RCSN:

- 2017: vouchers distributed in Dosso for DREF on food security
- 2021: 1,000 vouchers distributed to households affected by COVID-19 pandemic with support from the Islamic Development Bank in Zinder
- 2021: distribution of 1,500 cash vouchers in Maradi and 2,000 in Diffa, and seeds for 1,000 households. These interventions were undertaken as part of [Complex Emergency Appeal \(MDRNE021\)](#)

Moreover, Belgium Red Cross has trained 10 people on RedRose in November 2021.

**Justification for the approval of the change in strategy**

The EAP activation is allowing the RCSN to keep the food insecurity situation from further deteriorating for the most vulnerable population in the Zinder region. Understanding that the initial EAP activities were based on assumptions that have changed in the current context, the NS is doing its best to adapt and still deliver anticipatory action support to the population. Further down the line, the NS and its partners will conduct a thorough learning exercise to identify what adjustments need to be made to their EAP based on this initial experience.

In Niger, millions of households are facing the devastating effects of food insecurity caused by consecutive failed rainy seasons and decades of increasing desertification of the Sahel. Women, men, girls, and boys lack adequate access to food, and are being pushed into negative coping strategies. Vulnerable groups face increasing threats, including natural hazards (climate, droughts, and wildfires), epidemics (measles,

malaria, meningitis, and cholera) and insecurity, leading to population movement and competition over resources.

The severe food insecurity situation is confirmed by the Cadre Harmonisé (IPC) findings, which reported that between 2.5 and 3.3 million people are currently food insecure countrywide (Phase 3 to 5 as per the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification – IPC), and that between 3.6 and 4.4 million people will be food insecure in June - August 2022.

On 6 May 2022, IFRC has launched an [Emergency Appeal](#) for implementing its Food Insecurity Crisis Emergency Appeal to support the RCSN to mobilize resources to scale-up its humanitarian assistance in the affected regions. The Emergency Appeal seeks for CHF 5 million and is largely underfunded with a coverage rate of 5,8%. With the funding available, the NS will start cash distribution to affected households in Dosso and Maradi whereas the EAP will continue to focus on Zinder region. In case more funding will come in, Zinder might be covered by the Appeal once the EAP activities are completed.

## Overview of the first actions

### Areas of intervention and implementation strategies



#### Livelihoods and Basic Needs

People targeted: 4,000 Households

Male: 13,720

Female: 14,280

**Population to be assisted:** The National Society will target vulnerable agro pastoral communities in Zinder region with a one-off cash distribution to meet basic needs in advance of a worsening food security situation.

**Intervention standards/benchmarks:** All activities will be carried according to the minimum standards of the Food Security Cluster decisions. RCSN volunteers will be trained on these standards to understand their application.

P&B Output Code	Livelihoods and Basic Needs Outcome 1: Communities, especially in areas affected by disasters and crises, restore and strengthen their livelihoods												
	Livelihoods and Basic Needs Output 1.2: Food and nutrition needs of the most vulnerable people targeted are met in advance of crisis												
	Activities planned	Timeframe (month)											
	Readiness activities	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
AP009	Preparation of survey questionnaires			x									
	Pre-positioning activities	Timeframe (month)											
AP009	Meeting of state actors/local authorities of Zinder and identification/confirmation of the area of intervention					x				x			
AP009	Broadcasting of radio messages						x						

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AP009	Training of volunteers on their role, targeting and distribution techniques in cash						x										
AP009	Market assessment						x										
AP009	Targeting of 4,000 households with cash assistance						x										
AP009	Cash transfer to 4,000 households and exit survey						x										
AP009	Sensitization of beneficiaries						x										
AP009	Evaluation post distribution									x							
AP009	Lessons Learned Workshop										x						
AP009	Evaluation of the impacts of actions												x				
AP009	Food and nutrition security needs assessment						x	x	x	x							

## Budget

To implement the Early Action Protocol (EAP) 349,989 CHF have been allocated split between readiness\*, pre-positioning of stock and early action costs as per below summary by area of intervention.

### Budget by Area of Intervention

Area of Intervention		READINESS	PRE-POSITION STOCK	EARLY ACTION	EAP Budget CHF
AOF1	Disaster Risk Reduction				0
AOF2	Shelter				0
AOF3	Livelihoods and Basic Needs	10,439		303,503	313,942
AOF4	Health				0
AOF5	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene				0
AOF6	Inclusion, Gender, and Protection				0
AOF7	Migration				0
SFI1	Strengthen NS Capacities	21,289		7,559	28,848
SFI2	Ensure effective int'l disaster mgmt.			7,199	7,199
SFI3	Influence others as leading strategic partners				0
SFI4	Ensure a strong IFRC				0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>31,728</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>318,262</b>	<b>349,989</b>

### Reference documents

Click here for:

- [EAP summary](#)
- [EAP Activation Notification](#)

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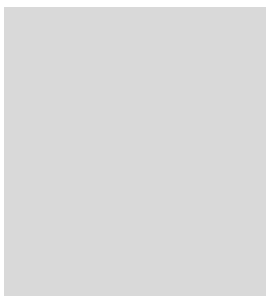
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