

# *Recommendations for an enhanced humanitarian response in Niger (OIREN and OCHA contribution)*

## **MAIN CHALLENGES TO DELIVERY OF A HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE**

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*Identify key challenges (up to five) related to the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Niger.*

1. Insecurity, presence of armed groups and cross-border banditry
2. Bureaucratic and administrative restrictions on humanitarian actors' movement and humanitarian goods within the country – such as systematic military escorts from Niamey to Tillabéri region – Border closure with Benin – impact on intransit supply and costs of transportation – Restrictions on access by the authorities (imposition of armed escorts, visa restrictions, measures to control activities)
3. Difficult coordination and cooperation with the new local authorities; Unactive civil-military coordination **at the national level** – **Weakness of** coordination between humanitarian actors and with the authorities, **although some coordination and dialog exist at regional and local levels.**
4. Politization of development and humanitarian aid
5. Under-funding of responses and departure of donors, particularly following political change – Subsequent funds mobilization very difficult, given the current competitive global environment, with several crises in several countries
6. Logistical challenges (distances, poor road network, poor communications and electricity networks).

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENHANCE THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE**

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*Provide specific recommendations to enhance the response in key areas of the humanitarian crisis affecting the country, as listed below (maximum two recommendations per area).*

### **Forced displacement:**

1. While Niger is facing a protracted crisis accelerated by ECOWAS sanctions and withdrawal of some “development” donors, it experiences evolving number of displacements. It is crucial **to prioritize support to IDPs, refugees, migrants and host communities** for them to be able **to fulfil their basic needs** (protection, food, WASH, shelter, health, education and NFI) **and access to basic services** wherever they feel safe in the country.
2. To prevent long term displacement and allow resilience of forced displaced person, **preparedness and anticipatory action are key for a localized response.** Engage actively in this sector with support **to capacity development of localised actors** and **funding of model foreseeing displacement.**

### **Protection and IHL:**

1. Foster **necessary diplomatic engagement to contribute to unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance** and application of international norms such as international humanitarian law (IHL). There is an urgent need to prioritise humanitarian diplomacy. EU Member States/Donor governments need to remain engaged and ensure the protection of humanitarian space and respect for the humanitarian principles that have proven essential in allowing humanitarian actors to continue to operate in conflict-affected contexts.
2. Protection is key in humanitarian aid in Niger, to ensuring the safety and dignity of vulnerable populations such as refugees and internally displaced persons. By providing legal assistance and basic services, and empowering communities with self-protection mechanisms such as conflict resolution skills and livelihood diversification, risks are mitigated, resilience is reinforced, and humanitarian needs are reduced, fostering sustainable development.

### **Basic services in times of crisis:**

1. Adopt a **stronger people centred approach**, with emphasis on basic needs, such as health, education, clean water and sanitation, as well as resilience and livelihoods. The Niger's population access to basic services has been strongly impacted by the decisions to reduce/suspend development funding. To advance the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and leave no one behind, EU and other international donors need to increasingly stay and support the delivery of basic services in fragile and conflict affected contexts.
2. Suspensions and cuts in development aid have had significant repercussions for the population's access to basic services, **notably in terms of education in Niger**. While these decisions affect the sustainability and progress made by other emergency-focused projects, it also has broader consequences for communities where a chronic school drop-out – perpetuating cycles of poverty and vulnerability, may also increase the risk of recruitment of children into armed forces, child marriage and exploitation, among other coping mechanisms. – can become a bigger insecurity problem.
3. **Safeguard the donor's development budget envelope that was initially programmed for Niger**, and that has not been implemented due to the changes in the political landscape. Failure to utilize the available development budget will increase already dire and unmet basic needs.

### **Food and nutrition crisis:**

1. Ensure sufficient and flexible funding to respond to the 2024 lean season, which promises to have catastrophic consequences on the survival of populations. It is important not to allow a strong interconnectivity to develop between the different types of vulnerabilities, which could undermine efforts and undermine the results achieved so far. To this end, dedicating adequate financial resources to food and nutrition security crises remains essential.
2. Provide a rapid response based on current needs by acting in a coordinated manner with all humanitarian actors for a response adapted to the lean season, ensuring security and access

conducive to the redeployment and maintenance of basic social services in areas affected by insecurity and food and nutrition crises.

3. Strengthen information systems on data collection and in the regular conduct of food and nutrition security surveys and ensure preventive and management measures for acute malnutrition in areas where alert rates are reported.

**Other recommendations related to the delivery of the humanitarian assistance in the country:**

1. **Maintain dialogue and diplomatic relationships in Niger to advocate for the continuation of aid reaching populations.** Such dialogue with authorities needs to be based on equal terms and values. The Niger population needs and how to reach them shall be the focus of the discussions. The integration of local and cultural values into discussions is key to building collaborative cooperation with the authorities in Niger.
2. Advocate with national authorities for the **reactivation of civil-military coordination at the national level (Niamey)** to enable a concerted analysis of humanitarian access constraints by all stakeholders of humanitarian response.
3. Advocate with national authorities for the **opening of the Benin-Niger border** to facilitate, speed up and secure the delivery of humanitarian inputs and services in Niger.
4. **Depoliticise aid in Niger:** Humanitarian donors must protect the principled nature of humanitarian funding and action. In cases where donors deprioritise development funding for a country following an unconstitutional change of government (UCG), it must be **assured such decisions do not spill over and result in decreased humanitarian funding, or in more pressure to humanitarian aid** for the contexts. Humanitarian funding should be based on humanitarian needs alone and not be impacted by political interests.
5. **Live up to nexus policy commitments** by ensuring funding for and support to nexus approaches to build the resilience of people and communities. Development, peacebuilding and humanitarian assistance to Central Sahel are essential.
6. **Explore different and more flexible funding and implementation modalities** to be able to respond to the basic needs of the most vulnerable populations in the region such as reorienting development aid towards basic needs and livelihoods support” directly to the people with the support of local CSO.
7. **Ensure greater equity in the response to crises around the world**, for example by stressing the importance of donors continuing to protect most vulnerable people including children in Gaza, Ukraine, etc., while ensuring that most vulnerable people in other countries affected by conflict, such as the central Sahel, are also considered (forgotten crises). It will be key to strengthen coordination of humanitarian actors in country and donors’ coordination.