



Country Specific Information
Niger Multi-Year Development Food and Nutrition Security Activity
Fiscal Years 2018 – 2023

I. Summary

The U.S. Agency for International Development’s (USAID) Office of Food for Peace (FFP) intends to award up to three cooperative agreements for the implementation of multi-year activities in Niger to sustainably improve food and nutrition security and resilience among extremely poor and chronically vulnerable households and communities in the regions of Zinder and Maradi. Niger will follow the Refine and Implement (R&I) approach. Please see Appendix II to the RFA for additional information on R&I for this application process.

The anticipated funding for these new multi-year development food and nutrition security activities is approximately \$150 million (total resources for up to three awards) for a five-year period. Subject to the availability of funds and commodities, it is expected that the activity(ies) will be funded with either USAID Bureau for Food Security Community Development Funds (CDF) and/or Title II resources. With appropriate justification, applicants may request funding for in-kind Title II commodities, funding to support the local and/or regional procurement of food commodities, cash transfers, and vouchers as FFP seeks to address underlying issues surrounding access to and utilization of food. Monetization is not authorized.

The proposed FFP development food and nutrition security activities are not intended to be “stand alone” activities. Rather, they will contribute to the achievement of the USAID/FFP 2016–2025 Food Assistance and Food Security Strategy,¹ USAID’s Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced II (RISE II) Strategy,² the U.S. Government Global Food Security Strategy (GFSS)³ and the Government of Niger’s (GoN’s) Resilience Strategy. The FFP activities will serve as the foundation for USAID’s Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced II (RISE II) program, which aims to help “*chronically vulnerable populations in Burkina Faso and Niger, supported by resilient systems, effectively manage shocks and stresses and pursue sustainable pathways out of poverty.*” The FFP activities will work in coordination with other U.S. Government (USG) agencies, the World Food Program (WFP), host country government, and other donor initiatives that collectively benefit chronically vulnerable populations in the RISE II zone. While the FFP activity(ies) should support the RISE II results framework, it is not intended to imply that these

¹ <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1867/FFP-Strategy-FINAL%2010.5.16.pdf>

² See Annex 1

³ <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/administrator-green-announces-next-phase-feed-future-first-international-trip>



activities must address all intermediate results (IRs) and sub-IRs of that framework. Applicants should be strategic in their selection of activities and prioritize activities that will have the most impact on food and nutrition security. These activities are part of a collaborative effort and are expected to focus on household, community, and commune level interventions. Other RISE II investments will focus on complementary activities at the community, commune, regional and national levels. Please consult the RISE II Technical Approach Working Paper⁴. Applicants may propose activities at higher levels, depending on the theory of change, identified gaps, and current needs. However, applicants should know that there will be other RISE II activities, and that they may need to adjust their design to better integrate and coordinate with those activities during the first year startup, as other activities are finalized. The successful applicant will demonstrate meaningful connections with existing institutions and other actors in the targeted regions, and fit within the strategic approach of the RISE II initiative.

USAID’s 2012 Policy and Programming Guidance on Building Resilience to Recurrent Crisis defines resilience as “the ability of people, households, communities, countries, and systems to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth.” In short, resilience is the ability to manage adversity and change without compromising future well-being. As this suggests, resilience is a necessary condition—or set of capacities—for reducing and ultimately eliminating poverty, hunger, malnutrition, and humanitarian assistance needs in the complex risk environments in which USAID works and poor and chronically vulnerable people live. For more information on USAID’s resilience work, visit: <https://www.usaid.gov/resilience>.

Applicants, as a first step, must set a clear methodology for identifying the target population. Poorest households should be intentionally targeted, and the proposed activities should benefit them and respond to their specific needs while ensuring they have appropriate knowledge and skills to successfully sustain FFP activities.

II. Context Analysis

II (a) Country Level

Niger ranks 187 out of 188 on the Human Development Index, and nearly half of Niger’s inhabitants subsist on \$1.90 a day or less.⁵ A multitude of factors contribute to the country’s economic and broader underdevelopment context: Niger has the world’s highest adolescent birth

⁴ <https://www.usaid.gov/documents/1860/usaid-resilience-sahel-enhanced-rise-ii-technical-approach-working-paper>

⁵ http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2016_human_development_report.pdf



rate and seventh highest population growth rate (3.2 percent per year).⁶ At current rates, its population will double in less than 25 years. Among children under five years, the stunting prevalence rate is 43 percent,⁷ and acute malnutrition is alarmingly high, particularly among children 6–23 months of age, with a wasting prevalence of 19 percent.⁸ Nigeriens are also highly exposed to shocks. For example, according to the RISE baseline survey in the Niger RISE zone, during the previous year 53 percent of households experienced drought-related shock, 39 percent experienced an insect invasion, and 25 percent had a significant health expense.⁹ Please see the ‘Technical Approach’ section for further discussion of these indicators and context.

The majority of Niger’s population relies on agriculture for employment, with 87 percent of the labor force working in this sector.¹⁰ Despite the large number of people employed in agriculture, cereal crop yields have stagnated for the last 50 years.¹¹ The population has grown tremendously during this time, leading to a doubling of land under cultivation between 1973 and 2013.¹² The stagnant yields and increase in land cultivation have resulted in significant decreases in available arable land per person, which has decreased from 2.2 ha in 1973 to 0.86 ha in 2013.¹³

Gender inequity is highly prevalent in Niger. Niger ranks 45th out of 52 African countries on the African Development Bank’s African Gender Equality Scale.¹⁴ Nigerien women are less educated, lack asset ownership and have low income levels and little decision-making authority compared to men. Although women play an important role in agriculture, they rarely have property rights and face substantially greater challenges than men in accessing agricultural inputs and financial services.¹⁵ Only 12 percent of women reported participating in major decisions regarding their own health, household purchases and decisions on when to visit relatives. The common practices of polygamy (58 percent of households are polygamous, one of the highest rates in the Sahel) and early girlhood marriage (62.9 percent of girls aged 15 to 19 years are married, divorced or widowed)¹⁶ contribute to the lower decision-making power of women and girls within households. Domestic violence against women is widespread and is considered somewhat socially acceptable: six out of 10 women believe it is justifiable in at least one

⁶ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ng.html>

⁷ UNICEF, 2014

⁸ Ibid

⁹ USAID, 2016. https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00MFFC.pdf

¹⁰ UNICEF, 2014

¹¹ <https://data.worldbank.org/country/niger?view=chart>

¹² Mathys et al., 2017

¹³ <https://data.worldbank.org/country/niger?view=chart>

¹⁴ https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/African_Gender_Equality_Index_2015-EN.pdf

¹⁵ <http://www.genderindex.org/country/niger/>

¹⁶ 2012 Demographic and Household Survey (DHS)



situation for a husband to beat his wife.¹⁷ In parts of Niger, women are required to have a male escort to leave their house, which severely limits their physical mobility and their ability to contribute to the food security and well-being of their families.¹⁸

Niger has the world's youngest population.¹⁹ Almost seven out of 10 Nigeriens are under the age of 24. More than 1.5 million youths between 13 and 19 years of age are neither in school nor employed. Enrollment rates in secondary school are low for both sexes: males at 14.7 percent and females at 9.7 percent. Opportunities for those who do graduate are scarce, with more than 50,000 graduates in Niger unemployed. Young men experience a delayed adulthood transition as traditional markers of manhood (marriage, starting a family, jobs) are unattainable for many, which can increase risk for radicalization. Boko Haram (BH) has been recruiting youth in Diffa with substantial financial benefits, and young men report they have joined BH for financial, not ideological, reasons.

Niger also has the highest rate of child marriage in the world; three in four girls marry before their 18th birthday. The average age for girls to marry is 15.7 years, and childbearing tends to follow soon thereafter. There is a direct relationship between early first pregnancy and high rates of stunting. One out of four adolescent girls (25.6 percent) in a union report not wanting a child in the next two years, yet only one out of 10 of those young girls (11.2 percent) are currently using any modern contraceptive method to prevent pregnancy.²⁰

One of Niger's most significant combined development-security-political challenges is the government's inability to respond to citizens' basic needs. The inability to meet basic needs, address corruption and effectively decentralize power and resources to local levels has resulted in a crisis of confidence between citizens and the state. Local leaders, whether elected or appointed, lack connections to communities. Instead, communities often rely on traditional leaders to provide advice and address local needs. Compounding these major challenges is the fact that Nigerien women and youth, the vast majority of the population, are often alienated in terms of decision-making, economic opportunities and political power. A recent USAID household survey found that, despite significant community frustration with all levels of government, the large majority of respondents took little to no collective or individual action to voice their dissatisfaction, address governance issues or improve service delivery.

¹⁷ 2012 DHS reports

¹⁸ <http://www.genderindex.org/country/niger/>

¹⁹ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/05/the-world-s-10-youngest-countries-are-all-in-africa/>

²⁰ WHO Contraceptive Country Reports



The targeted geographic areas are extremely prone to natural shocks and hazards, such as extreme weather events, variable rainfall and pest outbreaks.²¹ The majority of potential target beneficiaries in these areas are among those least able to prepare for, respond to, recover from or cope with sudden shocks, or manage the risks and stresses they confront regularly, such as poverty, water scarcity and soil and land degradation. Other types of shocks (such as currency fluctuations) also perpetuate cycles of vulnerability.

Access to scarce water is central to life and livelihoods in the Sahel. Droughts and water deficits have historically been drivers of Niger's historically elevated humanitarian caseloads.²² Acute needs for basic drinking water in Niger remain, and population growth is rapidly outpacing gains – 60 percent of rural Nigeriens currently lack access, and despite seven years of FFP development activities in Maradi and Zinder, only 29 percent of beneficiaries had access to basic drinking water in 2017.²³ The impacts of increasing access to water on a woman's health, nutrition, time and dignity, as well as economic opportunity cannot be overstated in the case of the Sahel.²⁴

High levels of open defecation and minimal access to basic sanitation are strong correlates with diarrheal disease and stunting worldwide. Despite concerted efforts by previous FFP food and nutrition security interventions, limited progress has been made on reaching or sustaining open defecation free (ODF) communities and affecting sanitation access and behaviors of rural Nigeriens.

Applicants should refer to the FFP Food Security Desk Review for Niger for additional background information on the unique food security, health, nutrition and shocks situations, and development opportunities in Niger. Applicants should also refer to the FEWS NET Niger Staple Food and Livestock Market Fundamentals,²⁵ the Niger Food Security Brief,²⁶ and USAID/Sahel Regional analysis and reports.²⁷

II (b) Activity Area

²¹ <https://www.climatelinks.org/resources/climate-risks-food-peace-geographies-niger>

²² The World Bank (2013). AGRICULTURAL SECTOR RISK ASSESSMENT IN NIGER: Moving from Crisis Response to Long-Term Risk Management, (REPORT NUMBER: 74322-NE).

²³ ICF (2017). Endline Study of the Title II Development Food Assistance Programs in Niger, (under review).

²⁴ Curtis et al. (1995). Potties, pits and pipes: explaining hygiene behaviour in Burkina Faso, Soc Sci Med:41(3):383-93.

²⁵ https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/FEWS%20NET%20Niger%20MFR_final_20170929.pdf

²⁶ http://www.fews.net/sites/default/files/documents/reports/Niger_Food_Security_Brief_Final.pdf

²⁷ <https://www.usaid.gov/sahel-regional/newsroom/documents>; new documents will be posted as they become available.



Maradi and the Southern Zinder Region (excluding the northern departments of Tesker Belbedji and Tanout) have been chosen as possible sites for FFP activity(ies). Smallholder agriculture, characterized by rainfed millet and sorghum production, agro-pastoralism and trade, predominates throughout the zone. Applicants can propose specific target zones within the sub-region. In doing so, applicants need to explain the technical and operational criteria that influenced the refinement of geographic targets. Key criteria to consider are: 1) the degree of food insecurity and the prevalence of wasting and stunting among children under five; 2) the extent of poverty; 3) any water and sanitation deficiencies; 4) the potential for integration with other U.S. or non-U.S. investments, especially RISE programs; and 5) the presence of under-served populations. Given the number of other donor-funded programs in the region, particularly in Maradi, applicants should ensure proper coordination and avoid duplication of efforts in the same area. USAID intends that all other RISE II activities will overlap in FFP-supported communes.

In 2015, 52 percent of Zinder's population and 43 percent of Maradi's population was food insecure.²⁸ Transitory food security crises have played a large role.²⁹ The zone is susceptible to both frequent weather shocks and fluctuations in the exchange rate between the FCFA and the naira. Market access is a critical determinant to resilience in Maradi and Zinder. On average, residents must purchase anywhere from 51-70 percent of their annual food needs, making vulnerable households susceptible to fluctuations in food prices.³⁰

Stunting affects approximately 50 percent of children under five in Zinder, and close to 54 percent in Maradi.³¹ Wasting in children under age five is critically high, at 11.7 percent in Zinder and 12.9 percent in Maradi, and 4.4 percent of children under the age of two are severely acutely malnourished.³² The final evaluation of FFP development activities in FY 2017 reported a reduction in stunting. However, nutrition-related indicator results, such as exclusive breastfeeding, dietary diversity and minimum acceptable diet, were either unchanged or remained worrisomely low. Issues related to maternal and adolescent health and nutrition, adolescent pregnancy, family planning and socio-cultural norms related to gender and infant and young child feeding, are all drivers of malnutrition in Maradi and Zinder.

The EU, the World Bank and various bilateral donors currently support agricultural development, food security, water and sanitation, health, family planning, youth programming

²⁸ République du Niger, 2015C

²⁹ FEWS NET, 2014

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ SMART survey, 2016

³² Ibid



and social safety nets in Maradi and Zinder.

II (c) Inequality in Maradi and Zinder

Although chronic poverty and food insecurity are widespread throughout Maradi and Zinder, residents are not uniformly deprived. In some communities, there is often considerable variation in access to arable land and to reliable sources of water for agriculture and human consumption. With an increasing population, a growing percentage of rural inhabitants have settled on marginal lands that are not reliably productive.³³ Women, socially excluded men and youth often have particular challenges in terms of access to productive resources.

When crops fail, poor households are forced to rely on limited food stocks and savings. In extreme situations, they may also liquidate productive assets and/or go into debt to purchase food and rely on social networks to see them through. More prosperous households may be able to sell or lend grain to needy farmers, hire labor or purchase livestock from distressed farmers at unusually low prices. Thus, during a food crisis, a cycle of accumulation and de-capitalization can occur simultaneously within a single community.

III. Conceptual Framework

The overarching goal of this activity is to sustainably improve the food and nutrition security and resilience of extremely poor and chronically vulnerable households by enabling people to identify and take advantage of transformational opportunities to learn, mitigate, adapt, invest and thrive. Guided by FFP's 2016–2025 Food Assistance and Food Security Strategy and by the RISE II results framework, transformational outcomes and operational principles (Annex 1), successful applicants must develop a coherent, evidence-based theory of change (ToC) to achieve the goal.

These development food and nutrition security activities are intended to be the core community-based activities within the RISE II portfolio. As such, they have a central role in implementing the RISE II operational principle of community-led development, with the goal of enhancing community leadership of local development, meaning communities have their own capacity to learn and adapt. The development food and nutrition security activities should also play a key role in enhancing citizen engagement, so that citizens have agency to demand accountability and transparency from local leaders. Additionally, the activities should strengthen village and

³³ For information on settlement of marginal lands, see: <https://eros.usgs.gov/westafrika/land-cover/land-use-land-cover-and-trends-niger>. For information on patterns and drivers of poverty in these areas see: Baro, 1998 and Afifi, 2011.



community development planning and implementation, effectively manage shared resources and reinforce local support systems in times of shock. While it is not the intent for the development food and nutrition security activities to directly address violent extremism, the activities are considered relevant to violent extremism. Through managing local conflict, reinforcing inclusive societal norms and practices and engaging youth, the activity should reduce grievances and make communities more resilient to extremist messages and the violence they promote.

It is critical that applicants place poor people at the center of their strategy and design activities to help them develop the capacity, aspirations and access to resources and services so they are empowered to drive their own development journey and pursue a pathway out of poverty. FFP encourages applicants to propose innovative technical approaches that can help break the cycle of poverty and chronic food and nutrition insecurity. Such approaches require robust strategies for strong coordination and collaboration, and they take advantage of other relevant development activities or humanitarian assistance in the target area to achieve their goal.

IV. Programming Principles

IV (a) Targeting Approach

Key household-level indicators of poverty include: ownership of productive assets; stocks of liquid assets such as cash, grain or livestock; duration of seasonal food deficits; and terms of trade. These factors are interrelated. The RFA outlines the targeting strategy for extremely poor households, chronically vulnerable households and households vulnerable to chronic malnutrition.

The ToC should identify different pathways to achieve the goal based on household poverty, vulnerability and capacities. Applicants should propose different packages of interventions for people in different wealth quintiles, aimed at creating sustainable access to adequate food at all times; improving nutrition, health and hygiene; and improving management of risks and shocks. For example, extremely poor households that are economically active, but chronically unable to meet their basic needs and with little chance of improving their circumstances without some form of assistance, might require a different set of interventions compared to households above the threshold of extreme poverty.

Targeting for nutrition interventions may be expanded as needed to include people who are economically better off, but who are nonetheless vulnerable to malnutrition. Based on the applicant's theory of change, health and nutrition interventions may target the community as a



whole, or households with or without women/children in the 1,000-days window.³⁴ However, any Maternal Child Health and Nutrition (MCHN) food transfer should target the extremely poor and be designed to achieve appropriate nutrition outcomes for chronic or acute malnutrition. Reflecting best practice, whole-of-community targeting for WASH interventions is recommended, but additional focus on the needs of the poorest to achieve WASH gains is likely needed.

IV (b) Refine and Implement

FFP envisions that with R&I, the project design will be shaped to better reflect the operating environment during project inception and respond to changing or unanticipated situations on the ground once the project is implemented. Applicants should plan to identify and strengthen key areas of collaboration, identify crucial knowledge gaps, consult with communities, and adapt programs during the first year refinement period in collaboration with USAID. Applicants may propose activities during the first year and/or may propose interventions that have the potential to be refined and scaled up for better implementation in out years. Successful applicants will be expected to collaborate with USAID on the following:

- **Learning and adaptation:** Develop a learning agenda based on the key knowledge gaps that remain during implementation start up. Adapt the program’s theory of change, proposed interventions and Logframe based on the outcomes of various learning exercises, including the results of the baseline study.
- **Collaboration:** Identify key stakeholders who are crucial for achieving the activities’ desired outcomes. Particularly during the first year, it is expected that the activities may need to be adjusted to better integrate with other identified USAID or donor programs in order to contribute to the RISE II resilience objectives and learning agenda.
- **Targeting:** Demonstrate a rigorous approach to participant targeting that ensures inclusion of extremely poor households. Include a plan for assessing the needs, constraints, capabilities and opportunities faced by participants. Design an intervention strategy tailored to participants’ circumstances.
- **Integrate, Sequence and Layer Interventions.** Produce a detailed and deliberate plan on how best to integrate multi-sectoral interventions at the household and community levels, and sequence and layer interventions to enable participants to maximize their learning to achieve sustainable food security outcomes.

³⁴ The 1,000-day-window from pregnancy to a child’s second birthday is the most critical time for positive impact on a child’s cognitive, intellectual and physical development. Good nutrition in the first 1,000 days lays the foundation for health, development and even prosperity for the next generation. Source: USAID Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy, 2014.



IV (c) Inclusion of Gender and Youth

Since some hazards and barriers are gender-specific, applicants are strongly encouraged to consider context-specific constraints and opportunities faced by women and youth in Niger in activity design. Activities should support the enfranchisement, aspirations and agency of women and youth. It is important to build on the wisdom and experience of women, while also recognizing that women continue to face disproportionate economic, social and health challenges. Low levels of literacy and numeracy serve as a barrier to strengthening the livelihood options of women and girls. Under previous FFP programs, Nigerien women cited numerous positive impacts of literacy programs.³⁵ It is essential to understand what demographic and societal changes are underway and how to promote positive changes in how older and younger men and women relate—both for social stability and for attaining food security objectives. Activities to consider are those that address/prevent early marriage and/or early pregnancy, and promote family planning and reproductive health.

FFP promotes a focus on young people as positive change agents who bring creativity, energy, commitment and novel perspectives to food insecurity challenges in their communities. Approximately 68 percent of Nigeriens are under 24 years of age and facing their own significant challenges.³⁶ Youth play a significant role in the future of food and nutrition security in Niger. Where appropriate, applicants are encouraged to engage youth strategically, through youth-focused programming and the integration of youth throughout the proposed interventions. Many youth migrate as a key livelihood strategy, seeking employment and education opportunities elsewhere. Further, the seasonal presence or absence of a male head-of-household will affect female participation in household decision-making and women and girls' labor burden in reproductive, productive and community roles. FFP considers understanding youth migration a top priority. Applicants should consider activities that include youth, equipping them with productive and mobile livelihood options that may mitigate disenfranchisement, reduce the risk of trafficking and contribute to the diversification of income.

IV (d) Disaster Risk Management

Building resilience –including preparing for, responding to and recovering from shocks at the household and community levels—is central to moving populations out of poverty and food insecurity traps. Applicants are encouraged to articulate how proposed programming will reduce vulnerability to shocks that are common to the target area and increase capabilities to respond in the event of shocks. To address this, applicants must contain a response strategy for dealing with predictable shocks relevant to the proposed target area(s) and livelihood group(s). The response

³⁵ FFP Food Security Desk Review for Niger

³⁶ <https://www.usaid.gov/documents/1860/usaid-sahel-youth-analysis>



strategy should be embedded in the proposed activity's strategy, meaning it should align with and support development goals and preserve development gains made in intervening (non-shock) years.

Successful applicants will offer an appropriate package of technical assistance and behavior-change activities that address vulnerabilities to shocks and stresses, as well as the systemic changes needed to enhance household capacities to cope and recover from shocks and stresses. Systemic transformational factors may include governance-related issues such as improved service delivery and risk management. FFP also encourages applicants to pursue options that engage key United Nations agencies and other RISE II actors to ensure a robust framework for coordination in disaster risk management and response, and to strengthen linkages with national social protection programs, where applicable.

Environmental degradation amplifies the effects of natural disasters and limits the ability of food-insecure households to recover and rebuild their livelihoods. The increasingly dry and variable climate in the Sahel threatens ecosystems and livelihoods, while the need for productive land and increased yields increases. Applicants are encouraged to explore integrated approaches that can deal with a variety of complex environmental concerns while also enabling communities to identify, analyze and develop solutions and then implement those solutions within minimal or no outside support.

IV(e) Local Capacity Building

Successful activities will incorporate local capacity building and encourage mobilization of in-country resources, while gradually transitioning responsibility to local partners, when appropriate. Applicants should make effective use of local organizations and entities, such as universities, civil-society organizations, local grantees or contractors as a means of promoting customized solutions sustainable beyond the program's life cycle.

IV (f) Resource Transfers

With justification, applicants can request funding for any combination of local or regional purchases, cash transfers, vouchers and/or Title II commodities. Applicants are encouraged to consider which resource transfer modalities are appropriate to enable vulnerable households to smooth consumption, to increase the availability of and access to nutritious foods that could lead to improved nutrition outcomes for mothers and children, and to take advantage of opportunities leading to sustainable linkages to services, markets and employment. Resource transfer selection should be justified based on market appropriateness (including seasonality), feasibility, activity objective and cost efficiency, while adhering to do-no-harm principles.



V. Technical Approach

Applicants should present a clear vision of how the interventions will work together to reach food, nutrition and resilience outcomes, not just outputs. Successful applicants will need to clearly prioritize a manageable number of interventions based on the needs assessment, the context and the applicant's internal considerations

V (a) Addressing Extreme Poverty

These activities will be designed to sustainably increase household income to access food at all times, reduce hunger, increase resilience and improve nutritional security.

It is expected that the applicants will first identify the target groups and then develop a ToC to achieve the goal. The ToC will recognize the variable needs, assets, risks and capacities of different wealth groups. It is important to note that the income pathways for people in different wealth groups are likely to be different. Extremely poor households, for example, may need support to smooth out food consumption so that they do not divest and can develop productive livelihood assets for investments. Households above the extreme-poverty threshold may not need support for consumption smoothing. Poor and extremely poor households often lack the necessary information, skills and confidence to make optimal decisions on matters such as production, marketing, investment and financial services, as well as nutrition and hygiene behaviors and life skills. Tailored counselling and social and behavioral change strategies designed for adult learners could increase the capacity of poor and extreme poor households to overcome these barriers. Applicants may consider strategies to effectively design and implement counselling and/or social and behavior change.

The ToC will focus on building confidence; adaptive, absorptive and transformative capacities; accumulating assets; increasing the capabilities, and building agency of extremely poor, chronically vulnerable, and moderately poor individuals and households so they are confident to implement and sustain positive changes. The applicants should carefully analyze all systemic, structural and behavioral barriers to escaping poverty and food insecurity. This approach should aim to enhance community assets while also building bonding, bridging and/or linking social capital.

V (b) Maternal Child Health and Nutrition (MCHN)

Applicants are encouraged to propose a comprehensive package of MCHN activities designed to improve the health and nutrition status of Nigeriens and break the intergenerational cycle of



malnutrition. Applicants should consider appropriate nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions for the prevention of chronic and acute malnutrition, as well as the management of moderate acute malnutrition (MAM), also known as wasting. The activities should also align with the Government of Niger’s National Nutrition Action Plan.³⁷ Community health and nutrition systems strengthening should be considered as a base for all health and nutrition interventions, ensuring FFP community health and nutrition investments are linked to and synergistic with other GoN, RISE II, and other USAID and other stakeholder investments at the community, district, or regional level. For one example, USAID is planning a separate activity that will strengthen the quality of social behavior change, health family planning and nutrition services at health facilities in similar geographic zone.

Health and nutrition interventions need to be available at the household and community levels and need to be designed to target all nutritionally vulnerable people, particularly women and children in the 1,000-day period as well as children under five with MAM. Special emphasis should be on interventions that aim to shift social and cultural norms to improve maternal, infant, and young child nutrition practices, and the availability and access to high quality health and nutrition services. Social mobilization and a behavior-centered approach may be needed to achieve this.

Approaches must consider adolescent health and nutrition, including community approaches to address/prevent early marriage and/or early pregnancy and to improve adolescent girls’ nutritional status; and maternal health and nutrition, including promotion of and referral for family planning and reproductive health services.

Other illustrative nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive considerations include:

- Social and behavior change that addresses relevant individual, community and key influencers/networks. Interventions should seek to transform social dynamics that keep women and children in the vicious cycle of malnutrition, build social cohesion, include a focus on problem solving, and avoid didactic message delivery as the primary communication approach;
- Quality improvement of community based health and nutrition service delivery and its utilization;
- Support to national policies related to the management of acute malnutrition and/or evidence based and innovative community based models which address acute malnutrition;

³⁷ <https://extranet.who.int/nutrition/gina/en/node/7943>



- Nutrition-sensitive agriculture/livelihoods, including approaches to improve dietary diversity for adolescent girls and women/children in the first 1,000 days;

While all health and nutrition services, including social behavior change activities, should be designed for the entire intervention target group, applicants should consider additional, specialized nutrition services for extremely poor and food insecure households with women and children in the 1,000-day period and for children with acute malnutrition (wasting). These additional services may include individualized, interpersonal nutrition counseling at the household level, provision of a monthly transfer of specialized nutritious foods for the duration of the 1,000 days, and ensuring management of acute malnutrition in accordance with GoN policy on the management of acute malnutrition. Options for a monthly nutrition ration may include: Title II Fortified blended flours and fortified vegetable oil; use of lipid nutrient spreads; use of a cash transfer or food voucher for foods rich in micro- and macronutrients; micronutrient powders; or a mix of the above food assistance modalities.

V (c) Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

Water. As reflected in the broader RISE II design framework, USAID aims to improve water security through water resource management (WRM), as well as sustainable domestic and productive water services. Applicants should refer to GoN’s policies on drinking water service delivery and private sector operations and maintenance (O&M)^{38,39} to guide partners’ water strategies (e.g., the engagement of public–private partnerships (PPPs), schemes such as *l’affermage* contracts, tariff setting and population-driven infrastructure selection). Space exists for innovation and thought leadership from applicants on innovative WRM interventions that link domestic and productive water uses (e.g. multiple use water systems (MUS), cross-subsidies between productive and domestic tariffs, watershed management and community-driven watershed mapping). Investments in water infrastructure should be well thought out with respect to design, construction quality, water quality and operations and maintenance. Water infrastructure planning should be done using available data and technical resources and personnel to determine the most appropriate technology solution for the context. Decisions as to rehabilitation or construction should be decided similarly. Open wells do not meet criteria for basic drinking water and therefore will not be funded by FFP. Given the level of need for WASH services in the Sahel, FFP is open to testing and evaluating new methods, approaches and

³⁸SEEN (Société d’exploitation des eaux du Niger; Niger’s Water Services Company); SPE (Service public de l’eau; Public Rural Water Supply Services); SPEN (Société de Patrimoine des Eaux du Niger; Niger’s Asset Holding Company).

³⁹ The World Bank (2016). [Domestic private sector participation in water and sanitation : The Niger Case Study](#)



technologies, given a clearly articulated plan for testing and evaluating the effectiveness of proposed interventions.

Sanitation. WASH strategies should reflect the understanding that water alone will not improve health and nutrition. Meeting stunting targets will likely require partners to tackle high levels of open defecation with the same earnestness as nutrition-specific behaviors. Working on demand-driven sanitation in the Sahel, particularly in Niger, presents a unique set of challenges (e.g. ubiquitous shifting sandy soils guarantee pit collapse if unlined, and undermine behavior change strategies; natural leaders/facilitators lack critical attitudes and behaviors to affect change; the absence of inter-community learning; the absence of aspirational but viable sanitation marketing to move from unimproved ('latrine traditionnelle') to basic sanitation ('latrine moderne'); poverty levels that constrain households' ability to build even basic pit latrines; and lack of a uniform subsidy approach across partners and the government). Partners are strongly encouraged to learn from previous sanitation implementers in Niger and to tackle these challenges in a multi-faceted manner, including cross-partner learning and monitoring. Significant space exists for FFP partners to innovate and provide thought leadership on sanitation for the ultra-poor in Niger, and partners are expected to engage and coordinate activities with RISE II.

Hygiene. Affecting health and nutrition indicators will require putting behavior change around Nigeriens' hygiene norms front and center. Clear emphasis on handwashing and other critical hygiene behaviors within sanitation strategies is expected. Deliberate efforts to weave hygiene messaging into other sectoral activities (e.g. linking agricultural asset transfers to hygiene messaging on animal feces and child health) and to push behavior change approaches beyond communication are strongly encouraged. As with sanitation, there are unique challenges to improving hygiene behaviors in the Sahel - e.g., hygiene practices are largely absent from cultural norms (only 19 percent of rural Nigeriens have access to handwashing stations⁴⁰); hygiene behaviors have been deprioritized in the face of scarce water resources; and customary use of the bouilloire for washing does not include soap.

Additional criteria. Reflecting the importance of WASH and Water Resource investments to meeting the broader objectives of reduced poverty, improved nutrition and overall resilience, FFP strongly encourages partners to invest an appropriate level of resources in WASH and WRM to meet the full scope and goals of the development food and nutrition security activities. Recognizing the relatively new emphasis placed on WASH within FFP's development portfolio, partners are encouraged to integrate capacity building and ensure proper staffing and technical experience. Staffing capacity and necessary skill sets will be reviewed.

Objective and clearly articulated targeting strategies and coverage levels for WASH interventions are encouraged, as are clear links to other WASH actors (e.g. local/commune-level

⁴⁰ ICF (2017). Endline Study of the Title II Development Food Assistance Programs in Niger (under review).



government structures). Reflecting best practice, whole-of-total community targeting for WASH interventions is recommended, but additional focus on the needs of the poorest is likely needed.

V (d) Diversification and Strengthening of Livelihoods

Applicants are encouraged to propose a comprehensive set of interventions that facilitate the strengthening and diversification of livelihood opportunities as a means of smoothing household consumption and stabilizing incomes of vulnerable households in the target areas. Off-farm sources of income play a growing role in rural Niger livelihoods. Existing youth unemployment and migration patterns, together with increasing opportunities linked to better market integration and value chain development warrant significant consideration in any strategy looking at livelihood diversification in Maradi and Zinder. Low levels of literacy, numeracy and access to financial services limit the opportunities to diversify livelihoods and engage in the larger economy.

Interventions should be strategic, properly targeted and sustainable. Targeting should include poor and vulnerable households and communities and should include those who may not have land suitable for agriculture. It is important to ensure that livelihood investments help vulnerable populations manage current climatic variability while help them prepare for more severe climate changes in the future.

The specific context of, and prior experience, in Niger should underlie the entire strategy. Illustrative factors specific to Niger include, but are not limited to:

- Variable rainfall and poor water holding capacity of soils;
- Heavy reliance on markets for purchasing food;
- Limited off-farm and non-agricultural livelihood options;
- Low baseline levels of education and literacy;
- Poor soil fertility and seed systems leading to stagnant yields and cultivation on marginal and degraded areas;
- High post-harvest storage losses;
- Epicenter of self-financing and self-transferring model of Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration;⁴¹
- Lack of land for agriculture and land tenure issues;
- Inadequate water resources for livestock and constraints on access to grazing land;
- High population growth rate;
- Limited decision making by women; and
- Poor dietary diversity.

⁴¹ <http://ebrary.ifpri.org/utis/getfile/collection/p15738coll2/id/130817/filename/131028.pdf>



VI. Management Approach

VI (a) Collaboration and Coordination

This FFP activity is an integral component of the overarching RISE II program. The underlying assumption for RISE II is that by deliberately layering, sequencing, and integrating efforts, the collective activities will produce greater and more sustainable results than any single activity could do in isolation. FFP and all other USAID activities in the RISE II zone will be required to contribute to the joint results framework, transformative outcomes and operational principles.

To facilitate the collaborative process, FFP activities will be required to do the following:

- Proactively seek opportunities for joint programming that amplifies results;
- Describe joint activities in annual work plans that clarify roles and responsibilities around specific programmatic linkages with other RISE II activities;
- Conduct joint site visits with other RISE II partners, when appropriate, to facilitate learning across activities;
- Actively participate in USAID partner meetings and learning events;
- Contribute to joint indicators linked to the RISE II results framework, analysis, and the diffusion of reliable information in collaboration with other RISE activities, the GoN's reporting system, and other donors.

VI (b) Adaptive Management and Learning

This FFP activity will have a robust learning and evidence-based adaptive management strategy. Activity success will require good coordination with other institutional actors and purposeful layering of activities and services, because the poor face multiple deprivations. No single institutional actor has the expertise or the means to comprehensively address every social problem that will arise in this genre of programming. Therefore, coordination will be key to success. Applicants are encouraged to actively engage with and share learning with communities.

VI (c) Key Personnel

In addition to the Key Personnel identified in the RFA, the activity has the following additional key personnel

Food Security Technical Coordinator: The technical coordinator will be charged with ensuring that all of the technical sectors work together to create multiplier effects across and between sectors. The technical coordinator will also ensure that overall technical implementation quality remains consistent and high across all sub-awardees and implementation locations in the award.



The technical coordinator will report directly to the COP or DCOP and be highly experienced in a broad spectrum of food security technical focus areas, with responsibility for establishing and managing systems to ensure cohesion across all technical sectors in the application. The technical coordinator should also ensure technical interventions are integrated, layered and sequenced appropriately at all levels of implementation within the FFP activity, and USAID and RISE II investments. The technical coordinator should have demonstrated experience developing - and ensuring quality control for - technically rigorous food security integration and collaboration. The technical coordinator will work closely with the Monitoring and Evaluation Lead and the Strategic Learning Lead to ensure that M&E and learning feedback loops are being properly fed into and utilized by the technical field staff. An advanced degree (PhD or Master's) plus a minimum of five years relevant experience or a Bachelor's degree and a minimum of seven years relevant experience is required.

Strategic Learning Lead: The strategic learning lead will work closely with the Technical Coordinator and the Monitoring and Evaluation Lead to ensure collaboration and learning across all projects in the applicant's selected implementation area. This staff will ensure the activity includes active, intentional and adaptive learning within and across its multi-sectoral activities. This includes but is not limited to U.S. Government, host country government, international donors, multilateral organizations and private sector investments. Additionally, the strategic learning lead will improve peer-to-peer learning, knowledge sharing and application, activity-based capacity strengthening, evidence and data utilization, and collaborating, learning and adapting (CLA). An advanced degree (PhD or Master's) plus a minimum of three years relevant work experience or a Bachelor's degree and a minimum of five years relevant experience required.



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ANNEX 1

DRAFT RISE II RESULTS FRAMEWORK

Goal: Chronically vulnerable populations in Burkina Faso and Niger, supported by resilient systems, effectively manage shocks and stresses and pursue sustainable pathways out of poverty.

<p>O1 Enhance social & ecological risk management systems</p>	<p>O2 Increase and sustain economic well-being</p>	<p>O3 Improve health, family planning, & nutrition outcomes</p>	<p>O4 Enhance governance of institutions & organizations*</p>
<p>IR1.1 Improved water security 1.1.1 Enhanced watersheds and water resources management 1.1.2 Improved water management for productive uses 1.1.3 Enhanced management of safe drinking water</p>	<p>IR2.1 Improved agricultural and pastoral livelihoods 2.1.1 Greater agricultural and livestock productivity 2.1.2 Improved access to inputs & services 2.1.3 Improved post-harvest practices 2.1.4 Increased employment in value chains & supportive markets</p>	<p>IR3.1 Strengthened health systems 3.1.1 Improved leadership, management and human resources 3.1.2 Improved supply chain management 3.1.3 Stronger health information systems 3.1.4 Enhanced policy, financing and governance</p>	<p>IR4.1 Improved performance of sub-national state institutions (village, commune, province, region) 4.1.1 Improved resource mobilization and coordination 4.1.2 Enhanced capability 4.1.3 Greater transparency and accountability 4.1.4 Enhanced women's and youth leadership</p>
<p>IR1.2 Enhanced sustainable productive land use 1.2.1 More equitable, secure access to land 1.2.2 Improved management of natural resource conflicts 1.2.3 Enhanced climate smart agricultural practices 1.2.4 Improved pasture management and restored land</p>	<p>IR2.2 Diversified economic opportunities 2.2.1 Enhanced asset ownership for women and youth 2.2.2 Improved personal business networks 2.2.3 Migration benefits local communities</p>	<p>IR3.2 Increased supply of quality health, family planning, and nutrition services 3.2.1 Greater access to quality services, including for youth 3.2.2 Strengthened linkages between community and facility platforms</p>	<p>IR4.2 Strengthened local civil society and community-based organizations 4.2.1 More inclusive civic participation in local government structures 4.2.2 Enhanced capability 4.2.3 Greater transparency and accountability 4.2.4 Enhanced women's and youth leadership</p>
<p>IR1.3 Improved management of shocks, risks, and stresses* 1.3.1 Enhanced preparedness 1.3.2 Improved early response 1.3.3 Strengthened recovery capacity 1.3.4 Enhanced social capital 1.3.5 More responsive relationships between local and national levels</p>	<p>IR2.3 More inclusive and resilient market systems 2.3.1 Enhanced business enabling environment 2.3.2 Improved access to market information 2.3.3 Improved infrastructure 2.3.4 Enhanced market organization 2.3.5 Increased capacity of producer organizations and businesses</p>	<p>IR3.3 Improved health, family planning, hygiene, and nutritional practices 3.3.1 Reduced barriers to adoption of priority behaviors 3.3.2 Improved capacity to implement social and behavior change programs</p>	<p>IR4.3 Improved functioning of national resilience institutions 4.3.1 Strengthened national resilience policies 4.3.2 Improved coordination and implementation 4.3.3 Strengthened monitoring, evaluation and learning systems</p>
	<p>IR2.4 Increased utilization of financial services 2.4.1 Enhanced informal financial services 2.4.2 Enhanced formal financial services 2.4.3 Improved access to quality insurance 2.4.4 Increased investment and value chain financing</p>	<p>IR3.4 Increased access to affordable, nutritious, safe foods 3.4.1 Enhanced local production of nutritious, safe food 3.4.2 Increased market availability of nutritious, safe food 3.4.3 Enhanced purchasing power 3.4.4 Improved food access through safety nets</p>	<p>IR4.4 Improved capability of regional institutions (USAID/West Africa)</p>
<p>IR2.5 Improved human capacity, especially for women and youth 2.5.1 Greater literacy and numeracy 2.5.2 Improved financial management skills 2.5.3 Enhanced vocational and life skills 2.5.4 Increased leadership capacity of women & youth</p>			
<p>O5 Enhance social, economic and political agency of women and youth*</p>			

* IR1.3, O4, and O5 are crosscutting as well as stand-alone



RISE II Transformative outcomes and operational principles

USAID’s Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced II (RISE II) results framework indicates the results required to achieve the project goal: **Chronically vulnerable populations in Burkina Faso and Niger, supported by resilient systems, effectively manage shocks and stresses and pursue sustainable pathways out of poverty.** As identified in the results framework, all RISE II implementing partners will be expected to address cross-cutting issues of gender and youth, risk management, and governance. In addition, all RISE II activities must work toward the following transformative outcomes and apply the following operational principles:

Transformative development outcomes

- **Enhanced community leadership of local development;**
- **Enhanced social capital through strengthened ties of mutual assistance among people;**
- **Enhanced capacity to learn and adapt among beneficiaries, local partners and partner governments.**

Operational Principles

- **Community-led development** – Through dialogue, support communities to develop and implement priority actions that address core challenges and opportunities;
- **Systems strengthening** - Analyze and seek to strengthen formal and informal systems that build resilience and improve well-being;
- **Inclusive targeting** - Support the poorest households by responding to their specific needs, enhancing their aspirations, and strengthening their ability to access resources and services to pursue pathways out of poverty;
- **Collaboration for collective impact** - Seek active collaboration among RISE II implementers, host country governments, community leaders, the private sector, civil society, USG agencies and partners, international agencies, and donors to collectively benefit chronically vulnerable populations.