

NIGER

The Humanitarian Context

Niger is a low-income, landlocked Sub-Saharan country, located in the West Sahel region. The Human Development Report 2015 ranks Niger 188th (out of 188 countries), with a Human Development Index of 0.348. Although, during the last three decades, Niger has experienced considerable improvements in life expectancy at birth, expected years, and mean years of schooling, the standard of living (measured by the Gross National Income per capita) is still below the level of 1980. Almost 90% of the population in Niger are multi-dimensionally poor, and 40.8% live below the income poverty line (\$1.25 a day). Most of the poor (94%) live in rural areas.

Fertility rates in Niger are among the highest in the world (7.6 children per woman) as well as population growth rate (3.8% annual change), which means the Sahelian country would triple its population by 2050. Niger's economy relies mainly on agricultural production, and the majority of the population concentrates in the South, where environmental conditions for farming and herding are more favourable. Agriculture employs two thirds of the workforce in Niger, and accounts for more than half of household income nationally and over 60 percent for rural households.

Production levels of rain-fed subsistence crops, the majority of Niger's agricultural sector, have been negatively affected by rainfall variability. For example, over the last decade, three periods of drought (in 2004, 2009 and 2011) led to significant deficits of agricultural production. Other factors impacting farmers and pastoralists include poor management of natural resources, overgrazing, soil erosion, and insufficient access to markets. In sum, increases in the amount of farmland have not been enough to compensate for population growth rates, affecting food availability.

Niger has experienced regular food crises since the early 1970s. The sequence of food crises intensified during the 2000s, with recurrences in 2005, 2008, 2010 and 2012, severely affecting the lives and livelihoods of millions of people. The Global Hunger Index qualifies the situation in Niger as 'serious', although it reports improvements in the proportion of undernourished in the population (9.5% in 2015 compared to 34.9% in 1995). According to the United Nations Strategic Humanitarian Response Plan 2015, between 3 and 4 million people are vulnerable to food insecurity even in 'good years'. Meanwhile, instability in

neighbouring countries led to an influx of refugees (currently there are 37,000 refugees from Mali and 16,000 from Nigeria residing in Niger) and the return of migrant workers from Libya.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the European Union is the largest donor of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Niger, followed by the World Bank, the United States, and France. Of all the bilateral ODA to Niger, humanitarian aid accounts for 27%. In 2015, the US was the largest contributor to the UN Humanitarian Response Plan (\$110 million), while the European Commission disbursed \$55 million. The World Food Programme received 68% of the total humanitarian funding.

**Even the river has need of its tributaries:
An exploration of humanitarian effectiveness
in the slow-onset context of Niger¹**

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Introduction

A hyena goes on the hunt and it finds nothing. Then it sees a drum player. It scares the drum player who throws away his drum. The hyena takes the drum thinking it is some meat. He starts banging it and says to the drum 'don't cry, I want you to be fat when we get to the house'. The NGO is like the hyena and the drum player is the community. The fact that the project is working with us and has made us many promises, it is like they have taken our drum. At the end of the project, if it satisfies all the promises that it has made, then the drum will have become nice and fatty. If not, it will be like they threw away our promises.

Analogy from a community elder.

La grande sécheresse – as the extreme drought of 1972 to 1974 was known in the West Sahel – stretched to the limit the already weak coping mechanisms of Sahelian farmers and communities. The sequence of drought and famine – with over 100,000 deaths reported across six countries in 1973 alone² – triggered the attention of the international community, and over \$150 million were committed, mainly in food aid, by donor governments. Perhaps more importantly, the fact that a disaster of such magnitude was not avoided despite ample warning – 'to the [US]AID and FAO bureaucracies from 1968 onward came significant and ever-increasing intelligence on the catastrophe overtaking the Sahel'³ – led to a reaction in the form of international conferences, starting with the first World Food Conference in 1974 and the World Conference on Desertification in 1977, and aid programmes for the countries affected by hunger.

Donor governments and aid organisations took on roles and made promises to help Sahelian countries better face the risk of famine, with the progressive understanding that food security was not just a matter of short-

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term nutritional intake, but of the long-term resilience of livelihoods and viability of households.⁴ Moreover, increasing soil degradation, extremely high temporal and spatial rainfall variability, and the so-called ‘human-pressures’, running in parallel to multiple food crises during the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, strengthened the common perception of the Sahel as ‘the quintessence of a major environmental emergency’.⁵

Since the 1970s, policies and programmes seeking to reduce vulnerability and alleviate suffering in the West Sahel have been implemented, and an architecture of aid has become further entrenched and normalised in the region. However, as Michael Mortimore and William Adams point out, aid to Sahelian countries has been characterised by a particular approach:

In many countries, a strongly interventionist philosophy of government, and a theory of development based on economic ‘take-off’ through public investments and export agriculture, gave support to an almost unquestioned assumption that the solution to poverty would be found from the ‘top-down’.⁶

With diverse aid challenges and opportunities, the Sahel has engendered distinct and evolving understandings of humanitarian effectiveness. The East African drought of 2011 and the West African food crisis of 2012 heightened the attention of the international aid community on the challenge of slow-onset shocks and how to be more effective in these contexts. For some actors, the answer lies in improving community resilience to seasonal variation and recurrent shocks; for others, in bridging the ‘development-humanitarian divide’ in contexts of chronic vulnerability;⁷ and for others still, in improving early-warning and ensuring early-action.⁸ This has led to new funding and approaches from institutional donors,⁹ novel initiatives from non-governmental organisations and academics,¹⁰ evolving approaches for United Nations coordination,¹¹ innovative analysis of cost effectiveness,¹² and increased political commitments from governments and regional bodies in affected areas.¹³

Focusing on the West African country of Niger, this study explores how humanitarian effectiveness is being understood at national and local levels. Beyond common international understandings, how is humanitarian effectiveness being framed and approached among government, NGO, donor and UN actors in Niger? How do the local populations think of humanitarian effectiveness? How can these local perspectives help re-frame how humanitarian effectiveness is understood in slow-onset contexts? Drawing on primary research conducted with international experts and government actors in the capital Niamey, as well as with local officials and populations across

the regions of Maradi and Zinder, this study offers a critical perspective on common humanitarian themes of effectiveness as they apply to this context.

In the capital, Niamey, government and aid actors expressed a strong desire to transition to more ambitious, wider-reaching framings of effectiveness that touch on themes like sustainability, self-determination and sovereignty, leaving behind the perception of Niger as a country in permanent ‘state of exception’. In rural areas, peoples’ understandings of shocks and aid continue to discredit an ‘exceptional’ framing of slow-onset shocks. Meanwhile, the local perspective also reveals alternative understandings of effectiveness, such as: the ability to stay in place; problematic national level framings; the interactions of self-determination and dependency; immanent contradictions of effectiveness; and the relationship between trust and time.

Understanding slow-onset shocks in the context of Niger

Like many of its neighbours in the Sahel, Niger has experienced several major food security shocks in the past ten years – in 2005, 2008, 2010 and 2012 – and also during the 20th century – in the 1910s, 1940s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.¹⁴ Food security shocks in Niger occur in a context of already chronic vulnerability, poor development performance (the country ranked 188 out of 188 countries on the 2015 Human Development Index¹⁵), and intense dynamics of change – with a growth rate of 3.52% the population will double in 20 years.¹⁶

The inability of an agro-pastoralist household in Niger to survive a bad season is not a circumstance created in a single year, but rather over multiple years as the assets of that household are degraded in what has been termed a ‘download spiral’ or ‘ratcheting effect’.¹⁷ Unsurprisingly, levels of Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) in Niger are systematically above the World Health Organisation (WHO) serious thresholds of 10% and regularly approach the critical level of 15%.¹⁸

Although food shocks cannot be correlated with any single particular hazard,¹⁹ the increasing variability of rainfall over the past 50 years in the West Sahel is a determinant factor.²⁰ This variability is not only temporal, with cyclical droughts recorded since the late 1960s, but also spatial – 90 per cent of Niger receives on average less than 350mm of rain each year, 10 per cent between 350 and 600mm, and 1 per cent over 600mm. As professor Mike Hulme points out, ‘there is no such thing as normal rainfall in the Sahel’,²¹ not even during the wet decades of the first half of the twentieth century.

Due to the intensity of the phenomenon, climatic variability in Niger and the West Sahel has been erroneously perceived by external observers as exceptional²² and, as such, the main cause of food shocks, but this neglects socio-economic factors and the adaptive capacity of communities and households

in the Sahel.²³ Indeed, focusing on the drought is to imply that the difficulty is of production of food, but slow-onset shocks are more closely related to access to food.²⁴ A major food shock can – and in fact many do – take place in a context where local markets are well provisioned and not experiencing any shortages of food.²⁵ Here, the slow-onset shock and limited access may be more closely related to major price fluctuations, be those local, regional or – as it was the case with the rise in food prices in 2008 – international; or to variations in the terms of trade, than to any problems with production. In Niger during the food shock of 2010, the caseload of Severe Acute Malnutrition was 320,000 children, but twelve months later – despite strong agricultural production and good rains – this number had fallen by only 13,000 children to 307,000.²⁶ Alternatively, restrictions on coping strategies such as migration²⁷ and constraints on democratic processes²⁸ can be compounding factors that contribute to the transformation of a shock into a crisis.

The fragility of Niger in even the ‘best years’ demonstrates the weakness of existing social service systems that are only further pressured by the occurrence of slow-onset shocks and the inability to prevent them or mitigate their impact. Indeed, despite the regularity of food security shocks associated with these factors and the months or even years between the first signals of a stress and its evolution into an emergency, international and national actors have consistently struggled to provide timely responses and succeed in protecting households and livelihoods in Niger.²⁹ Indeed, while there are increasingly robust and refined tools and processes for categorising levels of acute food insecurity,³⁰ there is a risk that this state of chronic vulnerability masks the urgency of early response to slow-onset shocks for national and international decision-makers.

In this scenario of recurrent shocks and chronic vulnerability, Niger has seen an entrenchment of numerous international NGO and UN agencies with a longstanding presence in the country – some organisations, such as Care International have been present since the mid-1970s; others, such as Oxfam, World Vision and Action Against Hunger (ACF), since the 1990s. However, the food crisis of 2005 triggered an intensification of international engagement, with the arrival of additional humanitarian actors, increased funding from donors, and the establishment of the UN cluster system.³¹ According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Financial Tracking Service, humanitarian funding grew from \$2.7 million in 2004 to \$113.5 million in 2005 – the year of the shock.³² In the following decade, the lowest level of annual humanitarian funding has been \$47.6 million, in 2007, and the highest \$433.9 million, in 2012, with average annual funding of \$178.4 million.³³ Over this time, the US and the European Commission have been by far the largest contributors.³⁴ In this context, many NGOs perceive themselves as working in accordance with a dual-mandate of both development and emergency response, though the nature of short-term

funding and project-based work in the country has a tendency to reinforce a limited focus on response and relief, even where their workers consider themselves to be development agents.

Finally, part of the interest of international donors in Niger in recent years may be attributable to geopolitical considerations and certain strategic interests. The operations director of OCHA described Niger as ‘a fragile island of stability in a region of conflict’,³⁵ with ongoing insecurities in neighbouring northern Nigeria and Mali that occasionally traverse its borders.³⁶ Both France and the US maintain a military presence in the country and have used it as a staging base for attacks against extremist groups. France – and AREVA, the world’s largest nuclear company – has major stakes in the country, with suggestions that one in three light bulbs in France is lit thanks to Nigerien uranium.³⁷ But changes in government positioning on aid and humanitarian interventions have also convinced certain donors that they have a more willing partner in Niger. From 2005, when there was deep-rooted government denial of hunger (in one infamous account an ACF placard was removed for fear that the president would see a reference to hunger in Niger), to 2011, when the current President proactively requested international support, there have been notable changes in how the Nigerien State has perceived and supported interventions.³⁸ These geopolitical factors, in conjunction with recurrent, foreseeable shocks, a willing government, and a situation of chronic vulnerability, have helped put Niger at the centre of many policy and programme efforts.

An evolving understanding of humanitarian effectiveness in Niger

For humanitarian actors operating in a context of slow-onset shocks, responding ‘in time’ or in ‘a timely manner’ is a story of weeks and months rather than hours and days. In Niger, the seasonality of agricultural production is such that weather forecasts in May could already give some tentative indication of the coming agricultural season, and by August or September, government and independent early-warning systems may issue alerts on failing production. Depending on the relative wealth of the household and the severity of the shock, the adverse effects of this event might be felt only six to eight months later.³⁹ Accordingly, preparedness and the prevention of adverse effects define timeliness of response, rather than the speed of reactivity to these adverse effects. As one government respondent stated:

[A timely response] is not a response in 2013 that treats malnutrition and distributes food, etc. It is a humanitarian intervention that already from November 2012 avoids the loss of life and peaks of malnutrition

[that will occur] 10 months later.

However, the longer time-horizon should in no way indicate that the situation is less urgent or demanding, for while early-warnings in slow-onset contexts provide more time for early-action, they also provide more time for ‘prevarication, delay and buck-passing’.⁴⁰

Assessed according to the dominant effectiveness criteria of 2005⁴¹ – namely timely, NGO-led, reactive life-saving interventions –, the perception among the aid community in Niger has been that the development and refinement of early-warning information systems led to more timely responses today, and an improved ability to target the most vulnerable consistently over time. Moreover, the recurrence of seasonal interventions has brought more experienced national practitioners, more accurate monitoring and evaluation tools, and a better ability to deliver output-based results. A case in point is the significant improvement on child mortality rates through preventative and curative interventions.⁴²

Yet, despite the impression that effectiveness has improved over time, there is a widespread dissatisfaction among government, NGO, donor and UN actors with the terms being used to understand humanitarian effectiveness in the context of Niger. This dissatisfaction is often based on a critique of the sustainability and substitution effects of foreign interventions. For example, when discussing current malnutrition support interventions, one senior NGO worker responded:

Effective yes, because it is life-saving. Now, if effectiveness is to be measured based on sustainability, there the situation is different. Efficient maybe not, because the [cost] per beneficiary is expensive. Effectiveness is debatable, but definitely not sustainable.

Similarly, a humanitarian donor expressed the situation in the following manner:

We are always balancing. We are like those players with those plates on sticks. They have different sticks and they are trying to keep [the plates] spinning and if you don’t continue moving them, they will fall down. Sometimes we have the impression that our work is a little bit like this. We always have to push if we are to keep things going.

These actors recognise the unsustainability of the approach, but also operate with a deep-seated concern for the negative impacts on lives and livelihoods

that would obtain if these interventions were stopped. Though substitution for government services is understood to be restricted and restricting, these actors feel trapped in short- to medium-term programme cycles disconnected from longer-term system-strengthening and budget-support initiatives. For national NGO staff and government actors, the dissatisfaction with effectiveness understood in these terms is based on concerns over how seasonal interventions, or actions targeted at the lean season of a slow-onset shock, create dependency and engender a perpetual repetition of interventions – compromising the self-determination and sovereignty of the people receiving assistance.

Beyond the financial and operational constraints of repetitive interventions, national NGO staff and government respondents expressed the concern that free distributions during recurrent slow-onset shocks lead to dependency. In this context, dependency may be understood as ‘the choice by a social transfer recipient to forego a more sustaining livelihood due to the receipt of a cash transfer’.⁴³ While the claim that cash-based interventions actually lead to dependency has been called into question elsewhere,⁴⁴ in this context the perception appears to be both deep-rooted and widespread.

One government response worker expressed the importance of self-determination, stating that ‘the more the population’s capacity to face future shocks is reinforced, the more our interventions are effective’. Touching on the repetitiveness of aid, another government worker expressed similar sentiments:

We have seen the limitations of humanitarian [aid] for a long time. We distribute, we make sales at subsidised prices, but since these are [short-term] interventions, each year we have to do them over again. We do not have the resources to repeat the same operations every year. But, if we start to support the productive base – agricultural, pastoral – I think with proper technical support it is possible [to advance].

These remarks illustrate the feeling of futility among these actors of continuously repeating short-term interventions, and their belief that strengthening local capacity can break this cycle. Perhaps because of this feeling, many respondents expressed the importance of a response being ‘over time’ and not simply ‘in time’, using the French term *accompagnement*. One government respondent stated:

When we intervene, there is already the potential that we can help these people to further develop. There is a catego-

ry [of households] that you certainly have to provide with free distributions, but at the same time you can teach this category of people to do something productive. Unfortunately, we come, we target, we distribute, we turn our backs and they sell [what we have given them] because they do not have any need for it. They have need for cash.

This *accompagnement* was generally presented as year-round support. Multi-year seasonal cash transfers – such as the World Bank funded safety-net and ECHO Alliance proto-safety net currently being piloted in Niger – were greeted in some instances as support ‘over time’, but in other interviews as interventions ‘in time’ rather than interventions ‘over time’. The perceived risk is that recurrent short-term interventions – unsupported by *accompagnement* over time – can create negative associations about the objectives and motivations of international non-governmental actors. One national actor expressed a perception of NGOs shared by some local stakeholders, saying, ‘these international NGOs wait until the catastrophe, then they seek funds for themselves. They are people who live on the backs of the misfortunes of others’. If effectiveness is to be gauged by criteria such as community and government approval and support, acceptance may be as much a product of ‘when NGOs work’ as a function of the more common ‘how NGOs work’ – namely participatory methods, feedback mechanisms, community-led needs assessments, etc.

In the slow-onset context, while the humanitarian imperative of saving lives continues to be seen as an important condition of effectiveness, it is, at times, understood in different terms than in other contexts. While the causality of life-saving interventions is not always straightforward, respondents from multiple sectors in Niger specified that theirs was not, as a government respondent noted, a work in ‘saving lives but rather avoiding the need to save lives’. Similarly, a UN employee stated that ‘there are two types of crises, rapid-onset, where we are obliged to save lives because they are in danger and slow-onset, where if we intervene early we will not be obliged to save lives because we will have already protected lives by intervening early’. Here, the scope for early-response in the face of slow-onset shocks seems to be increased by a shift in understanding, from life-saving as response to life-saving as prevention.

Another important element is the necessity of taking the future into account. ‘We can’t stop at saving lives’, said one government official. ‘If you save them, then leave them, then you have not really saved them at all’. An International NGO worker brought this situation into relief with the following example:

I have frequently received children that we save. We find them in the village, they come to the CRENI, they are moribund and we proceed

to track their nutritional progress. They were at three or four kilos, we help them get to eight kilos, we discharge them. They then return to their community where they find themselves in the same situation as before and after two months the child is back in the CRENI. It is a vicious cycle.

Given the recurrent nature of slow-onset shocks in Niger, actors seem to recognise life-saving as an activity that is not bound to a particular moment in time, but a process that also takes the future into account. Intervening agencies need to be conscious and considerate of this social and cultural dynamic. As one respondent expressed, ‘the situation is so almost normal that you can’t set a precedent and deplete social cohesion. You can’t act as a humanitarian GI JOE’.

However, while these evolved understandings of saving lives are emerging, the prominence and pertinence of traditional understandings remain, given the continuing precariousness of the existing humanitarian apparatus, and the fragility of populations receiving aid. Life-saving does occur on an annual and seasonal basis; one study found that in 2009, the lives of 59,000 children under five in Niger were saved, demonstrating an annual decline in the mortality rate of children under five of 5.1 percent, compared to 1998.⁴⁵ In this context, focussing exclusively on prevention, or taking the future into account, may be aspirational dimensions of an understanding of effectiveness.

A third illustrative trope of effectiveness identified by NGO, UN and donor respondents in this context is that of needs-based programming. Given the chronic and recurrent nature of the slow-onset shocks in Niger, however, the identification and prioritisation of needs do not follow conventional logic. As an NGO respondent stated:

[The intervention] should have been based on the early-warning system mapping of villages that are in need. But, [X] said to [the donor] that we are going to stay for four years and distribute cash, and goats, and supplementary feeding in the same villages each year even if they are no longer ‘in red’ in the early warning system mapping, because, we want to see the longer-term impacts of our approach.

Here, the actor is presenting needs-based effectiveness as a multi-year process that exists even in the absence of immediate needs. Rather than being based on objective and immediate criteria, needs are being brokered in consideration of longer time-horizons. This understanding relates to similar concerns raised in relation to saving lives and timeliness.

Uncertainty in determining how needs are to be prioritised in this context is not limited to NGOs and donors, but also seems to persist due to differing

prioritisations from government. A UN respondent expressed:

The government will always say to us that if, for instance, they have 5 thousand tons, instead of sending these 5 thousand tons to three regions to make up for any deficits, they will want to send them everywhere. But this will dilute the humanitarian assistance and it will have no impact. It is true that we are often manipulated by the government because there are many other areas where we are obliged to find a consensus. We know that consensus is always something where we need to concede a bit, to not insist so much on certain principles, in order to enable us to advance on others.

In this quotation, the notion of ‘greatest need’ is confronted with the persistence of ‘some need’. The brokering of needs seen in this and the previous example raises questions related to the autonomy of organisations in making decisions and shaping their politics. In seeking to confront underlying weaknesses stemming from the context – whether through consistent multi-year support or collaboration with government – what are acceptable compromises with regards to the alleviation of suffering and the targeting of those in greatest need? Here the neutrality and impartiality of organisations may be faced with a different set of challenges than those pertinent to rapid-onset shocks and complex emergencies.

Ultimately, though there is variation in the basis of dissatisfaction with current understandings of effectiveness held by international NGOs, UN agencies, governments and national NGOs, there is a common underlying sentiment that the use of the humanitarian lens in the this context of slow-onset shocks has become the new normal – a state of emergency becomes ‘not the exception but the rule’.⁴⁶ Instead of a humanitarian mechanism that is gradually shifting towards a longer-term development paradigm, there is a feeling of stagnancy, repetition, and even entrenchment of the status quo. As one national NGO worker stated, ‘when I look at the faces [around the table] they are the ones who have been in the humanitarian [sector] for ten years and for ten years we have not seen any changes in the results’.

A state of effectiveness or a state of exception?

These various tropes of effectiveness point to a blurred prioritisation of humanitarian and development objectives. Elsewhere, this has been presented as a need for a *continuum* between these domains that links relief with rehabilitation and development, or a *contiguum* that sees them overlapped,

with disaster risk-reduction mainstreamed into longer-term work.⁴⁷ Yet beneath this at times technocratic discourse about ‘bridging the humanitarian-development divide’, the blurring also reflects an understanding that contexts like the Sahel are best understood as disequilibrium environments where recurrent droughts are normal events.⁴⁸ The objection is that instead of existing in a system that treats them as such, exceptionality persists.

In his work on the ‘state of exception’, the philosopher Giorgio Agamben explores the extensions of power that take place during purported times of crisis.⁴⁹ This concept, typically employed in the legal sphere to describe the legitimisation of the extension of one individual or institution’s power beyond where the law has traditionally confined it, is applicable to the understanding of effectiveness, or rather ineffectiveness, in this context.

In Niger, following the 2005 food crisis, there has existed a structure of continuously activated UN clusters, recurrent annual humanitarian funding cycles, and multi-year strategies regularly superseded by one-year plans. As such, there has been an extension of the power of the humanitarian structures in Niger – including both international and national actors – in financial, operational and normative domains. As one actor asked, ‘should clusters be activated forever? They should have been de-activated and then re-activated with Diffa.’⁵⁰ This is a distortion of the system. It is adapted in the wrong way to the context’. Similarly, a humanitarian donor queried:

If you are [continuously] running lean-season activities, why not develop social safety-nets? Then, when you have a crisis like in 2005, 2010, 2012, and so on, you know everyone who is there, who you normally respond to, and then [donors can] see what kind of top-up they can cover. ‘Humanitarians can you help us?’ ‘Yeah no problem we can’. But currently we don’t only do that top-up. We do the lean-season top-up, which is there every year, as well as the 10% basis which is constantly there throughout the whole year. So, there is a major problem in balancing the workload between humanitarian and development actors. It is also not effective, because you take away resources that you could put into other crises.

If the system is only capable of viewing these events as anomalies, the normalisation of disequilibrium is constrained, while a perennial financial, operational and normative, ‘state of exception’ is perpetuated.

Among a variety of actors, there is a sentiment that, in order to be effective according to tropes such as sustainability, self-determination, and sovereignty, this ‘state of exception’ needs to be transcended. As one interviewee stated in reference to the government’s Nigeriens Nourish Nigeriens (3N) initiative,⁵¹ ‘you do your work so that big shocks can’t take away your sovereignty, so

that the space for external actors is as small as possible'. In a disequilibrium environment, recurrent slow-onset shocks need not perpetuate an exceptional state of operation or effectiveness. Instead, adaptation, flexibility, and seasonality can serve as the basis for policies, programmes, and strategies in this context. With the entrenchment of long-term, state-led development systems for slow-onset shock management, humanitarian interventions could transition from being acts of substitution to 'top-ups' of a climate-adapted base.

De-mystifying effectiveness at the local level

While these reflections are taking place among government, NGO and UN affiliates, for individuals in Nigerien villages there does not seem to be any differentiation between development and emergency initiatives. Villagers would distinguish between government actors and other organisations, but often not between UN agencies and NGOs. As one villager stated, 'if we hear a car, we get excited and everyone comes running, except if it is a soldier. Then we run the other way'. While these villagers may not distinguish between the actors that bring short-term emergency aid and longer-term development support, they do have an acute awareness of how the interventions relate to different seasons or to bad years. More importantly, they do have a deep-rooted desire to see the peaks and troughs of seasonal fluctuation stabilise. Furthermore, the nature of the aid that these populations receive can influence their perceptions and expectations regarding these organisations and their relationships with them.⁵²

Local understandings of effectiveness provide useful insights, complementarities and contradictions to those employed by national and international actors. In some instances – as with the idea of effectiveness as the ability to stay in place – communities are framing effectiveness differently than humanitarian actors. In other instances – such as those involving self-determination and dependency – aspirations for particular effective results may be shared, but perceptions of means to achieve those results may be based on different assumptions. Finally, seeking effectiveness in both the short and long term simultaneously can effect trust and in doing so may create blockages that could undermine effectiveness across both timescales.

Seasonal migration for work is an important livelihood strategy in Niger. Though variations exist between regions, this seasonal migration is typically most important for poor and very poor households, and takes place for three to six months between November-December, and April-May.⁵³ This migration has traditionally been international – to Nigeria or Libya – or internal – to Agadez or larger villages nearby. The migration can provide households with cash through remittances and food, and also, with less individuals consuming

food in the household, a small household calorie saving. It takes place to varying extents in both good and bad years, though it represents a significantly higher proportion of household income in years with a poor harvest.⁵⁴ In discussing origin stories with respondent villagers, many described how their villages were founded following the relocation from another geographic site. In several cases, a drought or flood was cited as reason for the migration. In other cases, land pressures were described as the motivation for moving. For instance, 'there was no space in the other place, so we came here as there was more land'.

Though there is a strong preference for staying in place, there is a shared memory of migration in the face of certain environmental and population pressures. As one respondent stated, beyond the humanitarian imperative of intervening to save lives, the local imperative seems to be to avoid the dissolution of the village:

If [the NGO] had not intervened, the village would not exist, the people would have left the village because of the lean season which was very hard. They gave the women 30,000 [West African CFA Francs] each month for six months. It was so that the women could stay and maintain their homes. If [the NGO] had not done this work, you would not find this village here today. The whole village would have migrated. Everyone would have left with their families and abandoned the village.

So, despite the importance of seasonal work migration as livelihood strategy, villagers still expressed their preference for being able to stay in place. As a result, they rated the interventions that allowed them to do so as effective: '[an NGO's] work is good when it permits us to stay instead of going elsewhere. If today the residents in the village didn't feel they needed to go elsewhere it would be really good work. If the organisations can do [work] so that we can rest at our [homes], that is good work'.⁵⁵

Sometimes the way local communities understand the effectiveness of an intervention is quite distinct from the objectives of the intervention as expressed by the agencies responsible. For example, cash for work and seasonal cash-transfers were cited by villagers as effective interventions in that they enabled them to stay in place rather than to migrate,⁵⁶ despite those interventions being designed to improve nutritional outcomes for children or meet food needs that emerge when crops fail. That cash for work, as one respondent stated, 'allow[s] each head of household to be stable, that he is at home with his family and that there is no migration', raises questions about the priorities of those recipients and how resources once transferred are being used. It also raises further questions about sedentary models of human settlement, demonstrating how seasonal migration fits within a grouping of a household's livelihood, coping

and adaptation strategies.⁵⁷

Several factors can help to explain this preference for staying in place, two of which are security and strains placed on individuals left behind. Security concerns relate to travel risks, petty theft, organised crime, conflict, and recruitment by paramilitary groups. As one respondent in the region of Maradi stated, ‘there are problems when people go searching for food for their households. It is often the Nigerien mafia, others are kidnapped and some are killed. Sometimes there is conflict, like we see in Nigeria. Other times, there are traffic accidents’. In the region of Zinder, which is closer to Northeast Nigeria, several respondents expressed concerns over possible attacks by Boko Haram. Additionally, as one village imam stated, ‘it is important that the community has the means that can permit it, above all, to retain the youth during the lean season. If these youth are always inactive, there is a risk that they will go in the way of the terrorists in the east of Niger in Diffa’. While it is unclear if any youth from respondent villages had been actually recruited by Boko Haram, village elders certainly expressed concern over the possibility that youth could be enlisted by the group when they departed from the villages.

Another concern expressed by female respondents was the impact on the running of the household when husbands left for seasonal migration. As a woman in an all-female focus group expressed, ‘what is bad is that there is no work, and when there is no work, our husbands leave us. They migrate and leave us with our children’. As another woman suggested in relation to the effectiveness of interventions that curtailed migration, ‘when the head of the household is comfortable, the family is comfortable’. This remark highlights the strain that migration places not only on those that travel, but also on those left or trapped behind.⁵⁸ A similar sentiment was expressed by an elderly respondent, ‘in past years, if there was a fire in the village and we cried ‘fire’, there was no one around to put it out. But, this time, people are here and it is the cash for work that allowed them to stay’.

Finally, the community understanding of effectiveness may in fact be implicated in ineffectiveness when viewed over a longer time-horizon. Amid population growth, increasing land pressure, and environmental degradation, there may be long-term implications from interventions that enable populations to stay sedentary. If migration releases pressure on a population facing a number of interconnecting drivers and strains in a particular environment,⁵⁹ an important focus for further research in this context could be on how facilitating short-term abilities to stay in place may contribute to an aggregation of longer-term risks across particular geographic regions. If effectiveness is to be understood as participatory and community-led, additional work could explore how needs and priorities might be considered among actors who tend to look at risks across different time-horizons.

Self-determination and dependency

The importance of self-determination of local populations and, concomitantly, of avoiding aid dependency, was raised frequently in Niamey and the villages. As one respondent stated, ‘the result that we see as good work is that the [NGOs] have shown us the routes to rise, work, and gain on our own, without waiting for someone for something’. At times, effectiveness as self-sufficiency was framed as the ability to control one’s own destiny: ‘if you have your own means, you will not be disappointed’. At other times, this effectiveness was framed as ensuring that populations could protect themselves independent of future relations with NGOs: ‘good work makes a foundation, a solid base so that tomorrow, or the day after, or in the future, even if [the NGO] leaves we can support ourselves’.

That respondents both in the capital and in the villages agreed that effective interventions are those that enable agency and independence is hardly surprising. However, views about appropriate timeframes and modalities of assistance do not always match. In Niamey – notably among government officials – the premise is that for interventions to yield this self-determination and to be effective, they must be long-term interventions and involve *accompagnement*; short-term distributions – such as unconditional cash transfers – would create dependency. In contrast, based on interviews conducted with three village clusters, those that were receiving the year-round support exhibited greater traits of dependency than those receiving seasonal support.⁶⁰

The variations in understandings of effectiveness between villages subject to the different types of intervention could be seen in three categories of their responses: aspirations for future relationships with NGOs, desired outcomes of interventions, and perceptions on targeting of the poor and very poor. The village clusters that had experienced the longer-term multi-sector programme with year round support tended to prefer deepened bonds and a continued NGO presence. As one village chief stated, ‘between now and ten years from now, I would like for our relationship [with NGOs] to be reinforced. That it develops for our benefit. Between now and then, each of us will know what to do. Each will know what will be his contribution in the community’. Conversely, those communities that had received the shorter-term seasonal cash transfer, seemed more focused on a future in which they had transitioned to a more autonomous and self-sufficient relationship with the NGOs. As one village elder stated:

Our wish for ten years from now, with the NGOs that work with us, is firstly that we have made some progress in the walk we are doing together, because we are walking together. Once there is an improve-

ment in our situation, our wish is that the NGOs will part, leave us, and let us fly on our own wings. The NGOs will go elsewhere.

Though respondents in the villages with longer-term interventions did certainly express a desire for autonomy, it was more-often presented in a future of continued and deepened NGO support. Conversely, respondents in the villages with shorter-term seasonal interventions described their autonomy in a future where NGOs were less present. This desire among those receiving short-term interventions for independence from NGOs, and among those receiving longer-term interventions for continued bonds with NGOs, offers a perspective on dependency and aid duration that breaks from the standard understanding.

The desired outcomes and futures described by the respondents in these different village clusters also varied. In the communities that received longer-term, multi-sector aid, respondents often described a future with further interventions across more varied sectors. For example, as one female respondent stated, ‘when [an NGO] does an activity, they should return to re-do it and not take too much time in returning. They should multiply their actions. If this year they come and do one action, next year they should come back and add more actions’. By contrast, in the villages with the more minimalist interventions, preferences trended towards a lessening of aid and an increase in self-sufficiency. As a youth in a village where seasonal cash transfers had been used said, ‘our wish is that [the NGOs] don’t continue to just give to us, but that we create a path so that we can earn for ourselves’. While the expectation might be for those receiving short-term, minimalist interventions to desire a broadening of interventions, it seems that this desire was expressed more strongly with the group receiving longer-term support.⁶¹

Villages that had received longer-term development support and those that had received shorter-term humanitarian interventions also had differing views related to targeting. Misunderstanding, frustration and manipulation among aid recipients with regards to targeting is well documented in Niger.⁶² There can be confusion over why some households are selected and others omitted, as well as suspicion over the processes employed for the selection. In the village clusters included in this study, respondents had different views on the targeting of the most vulnerable households. On the one hand, many respondents within the villages that had received longer-term, year-round interventions were perturbed by the targeting of some households and not others. As one respondent pointed out:

If an NGO comes and works with a small minority instead of the whole population, you could say that it has done nothing. If the project would

have given to everyone, then we would have all been happy and we would congratulate the project. But, if it is only 10 people, then we will not be happy.

Here, the issue is not so much that the poorest were targeted but rather that there was a targeting at all and that the distribution was not viewed as equitable. Conversely respondents in villages that had received only seasonal humanitarian interventions seemed more comfortable with the targeting of poor households and not wealthier households. As an elderly respondent in one of these villages stated, ‘the fact that the organisations helped the poor and very poor households, that is very good. Really, it is the poor that are the priority. They are the ones that need help’.

Notably, this distinction seemed to hold across wealth groups. While it might be expected that independent of village cluster, the poor and very poor households who had received aid would support targeting, while the medium-wealth and richer households would not, this did not seem to be the case. In the village cluster with seasonal interventions, medium-wealth and richer households seemed comfortable with the targeted approach. As a respondent in a focus group composed exclusively of medium-wealth and richer households in a village receiving seasonal interventions stated, ‘it is good [when the NGOs] give assistance to the diminished, to the poor. Without this assistance, the poor would always come and circle around those with means. But, if [the NGO] comes in assistance of the poor, it is like we were freed from the task of coming to their aid’. By contrast, in the villages where interventions were year-round, even some poor and very poor households seemed uncomfortable with the targeting. One respondent in an exclusively poor and very poor household focus group in a village with longer-term intervention suggested: ‘There is discrimination in the distribution of aid. Our village is small, so if we maximise, everyone can have. The problem is that some are discriminated against in favour of others’. Though this group clarified that the poor households should take priority over the wealthy households, they remained uncomfortable with the fact that some households received aid while others had not.

Further questioning the logic that short-term interventions lead to dependency these examples demonstrate an acknowledgement among those receiving shorter-term interventions that aid should be prioritised for those most in need. Meanwhile, among the longer-term aid recipients there was a desire for the reach of interventions to be expanded to provide for all types of wealth groups – suggesting a more dependent relationship with the aid providers. More specifically, the perspective that unconditional cash and food transfers create dependency and should thus be replaced with longer-term development programmes is based on problematic reasoning. Though unconditional cash and food transfers may lead to a certain dependency, it

does not follow necessarily that longer-term development programmes will create less dependency. While longer-term programmes may be favoured over shorter-term interventions due to their capacity to deliver results across a variety of domains and indicators, they do not inherently offer an approach in which the population is less dependent on the aid and, in fact, these interventions may lead to the opposite result.

Trust and time

The understandings of effectiveness as timeliness described above – interventions that are *in time* and/or *over time* – intersect with another trope of effectiveness: trust. Trust between NGO, UN actors, local governments, and local populations is an important factor for enabling the self-determination of these groups, for garnering their acceptance of, and participation in, activities, and for ensuring a contextual understanding of local needs. Yet trust and time are not necessarily mutually reinforcing. Intervening in a manner that seeks to build trust may compromise the ability of an intervention to arrive *in time*. Actions that work *over time* but not *in time*, or vice versa, may undermine trust between different actors. Interventions that take place *over time* may lead to situations that risk breaches of trust.

Both government and NGO actors in Niger recognise the importance of working together in the face of slow-onset shocks. NGOs can bring technical capacities and financial resources that local government actors may be unable to mobilise, while governments lend credibility, legitimacy, and a long-term development presence that extends beyond time-bound project cycles. In an environment where recurrent shocks are set against a backdrop of chronic vulnerability, these actors can contribute different and complementary elements towards effectiveness. Yet despite the acknowledged importance of this relationship, it is a bond that can be compromised by mutual distrust.

For local governments, a repeated complaint was the tendency of some NGOs to bypass their authority and intervene in a manner that did not adhere to long-term planning processes like the Community Development Plans (PDC). As the mayor of one commune expressed, ‘many NGOs approach the commune [administration] before doing their intervention. But, there are certain [NGOs] where it’s only when you go into the bush that you discover an action or activity that they are undertaking. We have to ask around to find out who’s done that activity and when’. The concern, expressed in similar terms by another mayor also, is that non-collaboration can lead to duplication and an undermining of local planning processes.

Beyond local authority requests for trust to be built through NGOs supporting local planning processes, local authorities also expressed the desire for more reliable and consistent communication and information sharing. As the first

mayor cited above stated:

What I say to NGOs, is that at least each trimester you write a report on your intervention in the commune. We want the reports to be succinct and specifically related to the commune so that we know exactly what is happening [in our region]. If [the report] is all global, we don’t even know our part, what are our results here?

Among these local authorities, the perspective is that if planning and management are undertaken in a shared and collaborative manner, it will help bolster aid effectiveness *over time*.

Though many NGOs are increasingly trying to work in a manner that engages and includes local governments, there is still an apprehension among some national and international NGOs with regards to supporting these governments. For local NGO actors operating in a logic of *in time* humanitarian effectiveness, these trust-building processes, such as the commune-specific trimestral reports described above, can feel onerous. Seeking approvals and working in a collaborative manner with local authorities can lead to delays in response and, in the perspective of some local NGO actors, not lead to much short-term value added for the intended aid recipients. The feeling is that the ability to intervene *in time* may be compromised if they are forced to adhere to slow-paced bureaucratic processes. But a greater challenge to collaboration and long-term trust is a questioning by some NGOs of the motivation of local authorities and whether they are actually committed to *accompagnement over time* with the population as a whole. As a representative from a national NGO expressed:

The NGOs’ goal is to help the populations. The state also from its side tries to help. They are parallel goals. It is just that the NGOs intervene earlier. The government may intervene too late or may even play the game of masking the [situation]. If we give to [the government], they will eat it. With the NGOs, [the aid] goes directly to the population. Alternatively, if we give [to the government], they may choose their people and keep the rest for themselves, to go and sell it, to become rich. Effectiveness, I find, is really across the NGOs. We have specialisation in distribution, in targeted distribution, in cash for work. But if we put this into the hands of the state, they will do whatever they want.

Here we see a disparity that exists between visions of effectiveness among humanitarian and government actors at the local level. While humanitarian

NGOs may believe that they can deliver aid in a timely manner to meet needs – something that the local government does not have the human or financial capacity to undertake at present – government actors feel that if they are not involved in the processes, the undertaking may be swift but will never be sustainable. A function of how *in time* and *over time* effectiveness are understood by these different actors, mutual distrust can undermine effectiveness in the short and long term.

For local peoples, there is also a relationship between trust and timeliness *over time* and *in time*. Unlike the tension between local government and NGOs regarding these two interpretations, however, with local populations problems arise when these two understandings are not taken simultaneously. Providing one type of support without the other in this context of recurrent, slow-onset shocks is perceived as ineffective by many local populations and can undermine the confidence that the populations have in the intervening agency.

In the face of seasonal variability and vulnerability, respondents in villages that had received longer-term, multi-sector interventions stressed the importance of complementary seasonal interventions. As one respondent in an all-female focus group stated, ‘the intervention that the project does during the lean season is better than the intervention that the project does in normal times. When someone is hungry and you come to give them something to eat, they are more thankful’. While for this respondent the lean-season support was of greater importance, for a village chief in another village the relationship was more categorical. As he saw it, ‘if the project did not help us during the lean season, for us the project has done nothing’. In this example, the community perspective suggests that a longer-term intervention is not effective if it does not simultaneously respond flexibly to shocks and changing circumstances.

Interestingly, at the community level, the inverse relationship also seems to be true for the effectiveness of interventions, with populations receiving support *in time* that was not then continued *over time* also being left unsatisfied. As a respondent in one village stated:

They should not halt the interventions. They come this year and then two years or three years later they come back. It’s like you start over at zero. They need to follow-up with us. When the project comes to work, it should not leave us like this. They need to follow-up even if it is irregular. If there are actions without following, we come back to zero.

Here, the punctual intervention is presented as ineffective in that it does not lead to longer-term change. Though the intervention does meet short-term needs, without *accompagnement*, it does not help the population exit from their situation of vulnerability.

A final element of note with regards to trust and time relates to the opportunities for cheating or indiscretion that can arise where local populations become accustomed to working with a variety of partners that intervene perpetually *in time* without building trust or engaging in a relationship of *accompagnement*. While some examples given by local populations reflected gross negligence – for instance, a major international NGO beginning a micro-finance initiative and then arriving with the armed police to collect repayment at the heart of the lean season, exactly when households were most vulnerable and had the least resources – other cases were even more egregious still. An elderly respondent in a control village gave the following example:

There was an NGO that came here. The NGO made it so that the population subscribed [to the program] for 250 [West African CFA Francs]. All the heads of households, the men and the women, everyone gave 250. They collected the funds but afterwards, they never came back again. There were at least three cases of this, for 250, 400 and 500 [West African CFA Francs].

This example highlights the precarious position of many local populations. Some may feel pressure to follow the proposals of an NGO even if little or no trust has been built with that organisation. Without the expectation of *accompagnement over time*, with familiarity only with interventions that arrive *in time*, local peoples in need may become regularly involved in interventions where trust with the NGO has not been built, and thus be susceptible to trickery and cheating.

Conclusion

There is a proverb in Hausa, *kogui ma yana son kari*, which translates into English as ‘even the river has need of its tributaries’. Local populations employ this proverb to describe how even the rich or powerful need support, how medium-wealth and richer households, despite being better off, can use help too, and how an NGO, with all its resources and knowledge, still has need of the local populations. It is a powerful image for the disequilibrium environment that is the Sahel, and provides an important analogy for understanding the current state of effectiveness in this slow-onset context.

In this analogy, providing repeat emergency support that is not fundamentally interconnected with prevention, sustainability and self-determination is like pouring buckets of water into a few tributaries and expecting them to replenish the river. Or perhaps, not even considering the river and judging the effectiveness of that aid by how quickly the water was poured, or by the

health of the shrubs along the tributary shores. Perennial interventions like this will never lead to robust national systems. Aid employed in this manner will always dry-up before it reaches the main current.

As UN, NGO and government agencies, and local communities have expressed, effectiveness in the slow-onset context of Niger needs to be gauged by more than just interventions arriving *in time*, saving the lives of affected populations or meeting the short-term needs of the most vulnerable people. The repetitive, foreseeable nature of these shocks provides a rare opportunity to normalise adaptive development systems that can then seamlessly accommodate humanitarian support in times of exceptional case-load or need. With ongoing dynamics of population growth, environmental change, and entrenched chronic vulnerability, compounded by a fragile donor environment and limited local capacities, evolved understandings of aid effectiveness may indeed become a necessity for facing these numerous, complex needs. In this future, effectiveness could be re-envisioned to provide for unconventional narratives, to challenge tropes based on problematic assumptions (like the relationship between cash-based interventions and dependency), and to build long-term trust with local communities through interventions that provide support both *in time* and *over time*. Working in these ways can help ensure ‘promises’ to local communities are kept and not ‘thrown away’ (to return to the analogy of the drum and the hyena). To achieve this, however, aid in Niger will need to break from the humanitarian state of exception.

In the build-up to the World Humanitarian Summit, as the international aid community considers the future of humanitarian effectiveness, the slow-onset context is a distinct and valuable area for consideration. It presents a number of particularities that call for re-interpretations of effectiveness, and a variety of opportunities to expand the scope and ambition of aid. It also challenges the rationale for a perpetuity of minimalist interventions. In the disequilibrium environment of the Sahel, the river might always have occasional need of its tributaries. But to focus on tributaries and overlook the broader watershed, may be to arrive at a future of continuously dry riverbeds.

ENDNOTES

1. Primary research for this field study was conducted over three weeks in May 2015, in Niamey, the capital of Niger, and the regions of Zinder and Maradi. Qualitative research methods including semi-structured interviews, focus-group discussions and participant observation were used. A wide range of individuals and groups were interviewed to try and capture a cross-section of perspectives on effectiveness at the local level. Despite these efforts to collect and convey a varied set of perspectives, the findings from the report should in no way be considered statistically representative. In Niamey, thirteen semi-structured interviews were conducted, with government officials, UN agency representatives, institutional donors and NGO actors. Additionally, three focus-group discussions were held. The first of these was with international NGO technicians, the second involved national NGO technicians, and the third was composed of international NGO monitoring and evaluation actors. In the field, research took place in three different ‘village clusters’ located across the regions of Zinder and Maradi. These clusters were selected as areas in which one of three approaches had been employed, directed to the particularities of the slow-onset context, namely; Communes de Convergence (collaboration), seasonal safety-nets (early-warning to early action), and multi-sector intervention (bridging the humanitarian-development divide). Within each cluster, three villages were selected – two of which received one of the aforementioned interventions and one of which represented a control village typical of the area though having not received an intervention – for a total of nine villages. Within each of the three clusters, six focus groups were held as well as two to three local interviews. The profile of these different focus groups was two mixed (across gender and wealth groups), one very poor and poor households (equal gender split), one medium and wealthier households (equal gender split), one youth (equal gender split), one female. The profile of the local interviews was: village chief, imam, small business owner. At the village level, a total of 18 focus-group discussions and seven local-level interviews were held. Additionally, within each cluster, two to three interviews were conducted with government officials and local experts for a total of seven local expert interviews. Villages involved in the study were predominately Hausa communities – a small number of villages also had minority Fulani populations. Additionally, with the exception of a few villages who were involved in fishing, livelihoods were predominantly agro-pastoral. The time-period selected to conduct the research was circumstantially based on the timeline of the overarching project. The potential influence of this period on respondents and discussions is noteworthy, however. May is one of the hottest months of the year in Niger. It generally precedes the rainy season, which typically begins between late May and early June in selected areas. It is also in the ‘lean season’ when many households have exhausted supplies produced in the previous harvest and are resorting to other coping strategies. The period in which research was undertaken thus had potential impacts on the availability of respondents, focus and direction of discussions, and energy levels of respondents during discussions. Semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions in Niamey were predominantly conducted in French, with some in English. Semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions in villages were conducted in Hausa and immediately translated into French by an on-site translator. Semi-structured interviews with representatives of local government were conducted in French. In expert interviews, the term *efficacité* was used to denote ‘effectiveness’. While the French term can mean both ‘effectiveness’ and ‘efficiency’ discussions with respondents did not seem to indicate a focus on efficiency. This potential discrepancy was not a factor in the Hausa interviews as the term

'effectiveness' was not employed with local respondents. In the report, quotations have been translated into English by the author in cases where English was not the language of interview. Definitions of effectiveness were not provided to respondents, in order that they frame the concept for themselves. However, 'slow-onset shocks' (*crise de long durée*) were defined in advance for experts as shocks that are recurrent, predictable and occurring in areas with stable governments. Given the recent humanitarian response in Niger to Malian refugees, and the ongoing crisis in eastern Niger with returnees/refugees in Diffa, this specification was helpful for focusing the discussion. With local populations, by contrast, the 'slow-onset' adjective was simply not used. Instead, at the local level, questions were framed with 'good' and 'bad' years as well as discussion of seasonal shocks. This approach was intended to limit scope for the slow-onset adjective to crowd-out more local understandings of 'what is a shock', and allow for more open, contextual understandings. As researcher for this study, it is important to note my proximity to the Niger humanitarian community. Having worked in the country between 2013 and 2014 as a technical advisor on resilience, my experience provides familiarity with the context but also the risk of researching along pre-conditioned themes and ways of thinking. The content of this report does not reflect the opinion of Save the Children UK. Responsibility for the information and views expressed in the report lies entirely with the author.

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32. Financial Tracking System, 'Niger Funding Received,' (2015). Accessed 10 October 2015. <https://fts.unocha.org/pageloader.aspx?page=emerg-emergencyCountryDetails&cc=ner>.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Interview in Niamey.
36. Conflict and insecurity are important elements to consider in relation to food-security in slow-onset contexts. This report, however, only focuses on these elements insofar as they were raised by respondents. Those peoples in Niger facing direct conflict and food-insecurity represent a small and distinct population located in particular areas. This report instead focuses on the larger majority of food-insecure peoples not directly affected by conflict. For more on the relationship between conflict and livelihoods, see for instance Simon Levine. 'Livelihoods in Protracted Crises'. Rome: FAO, 2012. Accessed 10 October 2015. http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs_high_level_forum/documents/Livelihoods-Protractedcrises-Levine.pdf.
37. Oxfam. 'Niger: a qui profite l'uranium? L'enjeu de la renégociation des contrats miniers d'Areva'. Paris: Oxfam France, 2013. Accessed 10 October 2015. https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/niger_renegociations_areva_note_oxfam-rotab.pdf.
38. Bailey, R. (2013). *Managing Famine Risk: Linking Early Warning to Early Action*. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs.
39. A typology such as the Household Economy Approach defines four relative wealth groups (very poor, poor, medium, wealthier) who will run out of food earlier or later depending on their means. For some households this gap may be four months and for others it could be six. It is important to note, however, that a fifth group of extremely poor often exist in the Sahel who may require continuous support throughout the entire twelve months of the year.
40. Bailey, 'Managing Famine Risk: Linking Early Warning to Early Action,' 10.
41. The evidence that these 2005 humanitarian criteria were in use is based predominantly on interview accounts from NGO, government and UN respondents, many of whom were actively involved in these responses.
42. Amouzou, A., Habi, O., Bensaid, K., and the Niger Countdown Case Study Working Group (2012). Reduction in Child Mortality in Niger: A Countdown to 2015 Country Case Study. *Lancet* 380 (9848): 1169-1178.
43. Michael Samson, 'Social Cash Transfers and Pro-Poor Growth,' in *Promoting Pro-Poor*

- Growth: Social Protection*, ed. DAC Network on Poverty Reduction (Paris: OECD, 2009).
44. See for instance Michael Samson and Martin Williams. 'A Review of Employment, Growth and Development Impacts of South Africa's Social Transfers'. Economic Policy Research Institute 2007; Stephen Devereux et al. 'Making Cash Count: Lessons from Cash Transfer Schemes in East and Southern Africa for Supporting the Most Vulnerable Children and Households'. London: Save the Children, HelpAge International, Institute of Development Studies & University of Sussex, 2005. Accessed 10 October 2015. <http://www.ids.ac.uk/files/MakingCashCountfinal.pdf>; Michael Samson et al. 'The Social and Economic Impact of South Africa's Social Security System: Final Report'. Economic Policy Research Institute, 2004. Accessed 10 October 2015. http://www.sarpn.org/documents/d0001041/P1154-sampsonsd_Sept2004.pdf.
45. Agbessi Amouzou et al., 'Reduction in Child Mortality in Niger: A Countdown to 2015 Country Case Study,' *The Lancet* 380, no. 9848 (2012).
46. Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. J. Osborne (New York: Verso, 2003).
47. Levine, 'Livelihoods in Protracted Crises'.
48. Hesse et al., 'Building Climate Resilience in the Sahel'.
49. Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
50. Diffa is a region in eastern Niger that shares a border with Northeastern Nigeria. The region has experienced recent conflict and insecurity related to Boko Haram and has seen an influx of returnees/refugees in the wake of this situation.
51. The 3N initiative is a flagship government programme for improving food-security and building domestic agricultural capabilities in the country. It is also the lead structure in Niger responsible for rolling-out the regional Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative (AGIR).
52. For a description of an alternative project in Niger and how villagers can instrumentalise aid discourses and manipulate interventions see B Rossi, 'Why Donors and Recipients Should Not Be Compartmentalized in Separate "Worlds of Knowledge"', in *Development Brokers and Translators: The Ethnography of Aid and Agencies*, ed. David Lewis and David Mosse (Bloomfield: Kumarian Press, 2006).
53. HEA. 'Profil de moyens d'existence zone agropastorale – Département de Mayahi'. 2012. 'Profil des moyens d'existence région de Zinder: Magaria/Kantche –Zone de subsistance irriguée'. 2009. 'Profil des moyens d'existence région de Zinder: Magaria – Zone centrale de cultures de céréales, de Niébé et d'Arachide'. 2009. 'Livelihood Profile Tessaoua District: North Settled Livelihood Zone'. 2007. 'Livelihood Profile Tessaoua District: South-Central Livelihood Zone'. 2007.
54. 'Profil de moyens d'existence zone agropastorale – Département de Mayahi.'; 'Profil des moyens d'existence région de Zinder: Magaria/Kantche –Zone de subsistance irriguée'; 'Profil des moyens d'existence région de Zinder: Magaria – Zone centrale de cultures de céréales, de Niébé et d'Arachide'; 'Livelihood Profile Tessaoua District: North Settled Livelihood Zone'; 'Livelihood Profile Tessaoua District: South-Central Livelihood Zone'.
55. It is important to note that this section is not advocating that the 'ability to stay in place' be used as an indicator, or objective, of humanitarian interventions. 'Top-down' sedentarisation programmes and initiatives that restrict movement have elsewhere proven ineffective and, in some cases, led to dire consequences. Instead, as stated in- the main text, it is intended merely to present this local perspective on effectiveness.
56. The community perspective that the humanitarian intervention allows them to stay in place does not necessarily imply that these peoples will in fact choose to stay in place. Elsewhere, it is shown that development can often lead to increased migration, rather than people staying in place. See for instance, Hein De Haas, 'Turning the Tide? Why Development Will Not Stop Migration,' *Development and Change* 38, no. 5 (2007).

57. James Morrissey. 'Environmental Change and Forced Migration: A State of the Art Review'. Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford, 2009. Accessed 10 October 2015. <http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/files/publications/other/dp-environmental-change-forced-migration-2009.pdf>.
58. The Government Office for Science. 'Foresight: Migration and Global Environmental Change. Final Project Report'. London: UK Government, 2011. Accessed 10 October 2015. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/287717/11-1116-migration-and-global-environmental-change.pdf.
59. Ibid
60. In distinguishing the differing views of those clusters receiving long-term and short-term support, it is important to note that one of the two long-term clusters interviewed, as well as the short-term cluster, received support predominantly from the same NGO using a similar HEA-based targeting methodology. This commonality, though not definitive, can help limit the attribution of the differing views from other potential factors affecting the experience such as communications approaches or targeting methodology.
61. Though quantitative methods would be necessary to statistically validate these trends and highlight any variation across different groups, the qualitative methods employed here present some interesting questions for future analysis.
62. See for instance Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan et al., 'Les transferts monétaires au Niger: Le grand malentendu,' *Revue Tiers Monde*, no. 2 (2014).; Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, 'La crise alimentaire vue d'en Bas,' *Afrique contemporaine*, no. 1 (2008); Rossi, 'Why Donors and Recipients Should Not Be Compartmentalized in Separate "Worlds of Knowledge".'

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THE PHILIPPINES AND TYPHOON HAIYAN

The Humanitarian Context

The Philippines is a middle-income South East Asian country made up of over 7,000 islands, with the majority of its fast-growing population (98.3 million) living on 11 of them. The country has been officially a democracy since 1986, following the fall of President Marcos, though it experiences fluctuating levels of political stability and variable economic strength – for instance, the economy grew by 7.2% in 2013, but the country is burdened by external public debt stocks of US\$38 billion (as of 2014). A forty-year conflict on the southern island of Mindanao between Moro rebels and the Government officially came to an end with a 2012 peace deal, though the radical Islamist Abu Sayyaf group continues intermittent attacks. The country has also experienced a protracted guerrilla campaign by the communist New People's Army, with limited success in recent peace talks. Due to its location on a typhoon belt and the 'Ring of Fire', the Philippines is hit by an average of 20 major storms per year, and is prone to earthquakes and eruptions from the country's 20 active volcanos.

Typhoon Haiyan – known locally as Yolanda – was the 25th tropical storm in Filipino waters in 2013, making landfall on the eastern Samar Island on 8 November local time. Much of the devastating impact came from a storm surge (tidal wave), caused by the typhoon, that reached heights of 25 feet in some areas, including the city of Tacloban. The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration noted that, when it made landfall, Typhoon Haiyan had sustained winds of 147mph and gusts of 171mph. It was the deadliest typhoon in the country's recorded history. Over 14 million people were affected across 46 provinces, more than one million people saw their homes severely damaged or totally destroyed, and 4 million were rendered homeless. Within days of the typhoon's landfall, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator formally activated a system-wide Level 3 response – designating it the highest level of humanitarian concern. This led to