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COUNTRY DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION STRATEGY (CDCS)

JULY 17, 2022 - JULY 16, 2027

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ACRONYMS

AFD	Agence Francaise de Developpement
AFOLU	Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Uses
BHA	Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance
CEFMU	Child, Early, and Forced Marriage and Union s
CLA	Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CRM	Climate Risk Management
CSA	Climate-Smart Agriculture
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
DRG	Democracy, Human Rights and Governance
DRGC	Democracy, Human Rights, Governance, and Conflict
DO	Development Objective
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Aid
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FY	Fiscal Year
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GHG	Greenhouse Gasses
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GoN	Government of Niger
HDP	Humanitarian-Development-Peacebuilding
ICS	Integrated Country Strategy
IP	Implementing Partner
IR	Intermediate Result
JSP	Joint Strategic Plan
LuxDev	Luxembourg Development Cooperation Agency
MEL	Monitoring Evaluation and Learning
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MCH	Maternal and Child Health
NSS	National Security Strategy
PITA	Participation, Inclusion, Transparency and Accountability
PDES	Plan for Economic and Social Development
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
RDO	Regional Development Objective
RDCS	Regional Development Cooperation Strategy
RFSA	Resilience and Food Security Activity
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SRO	Sahel Regional Office
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
VEO	Violent Extremist Organization
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CDCS GOAL:

Progress towards a more inclusive, peaceful, and resilient Niger, improving the economic and social well-being of its communities

The 2022–2027 Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) goal reflects the long-term vision of USAID/Niger to support progress toward inclusion, peace, and resilience to unlock greater capacity for locally-led development. Over the next five years, the Mission will partner with communities, civil society, the private sector, other donors, and the Government of Niger (GoN) to build capacity and commitment toward improving the economic and social well-being of Niger. USAID/Niger will work to elevate the voices of all Nigeriens, including women, youth, nomads, and other marginalized communities, and support the foundations for more enduring peace and stability, while reducing community and institutional vulnerability to recurrent shocks from climate, conflict, and disease.

As violent extremism extends its grip and food insecurity escalates, the multidimensional poverty across Niger is compounding the pressures on communities grappling with increasingly severe recurrent crises. Historically weak governance systems, characterized by high levels of corruption, fail to extend basic services and leave critical gaps in health, education, and administrative service provision. There is an immense need for development support across Niger to break this cycle of fragility. Despite these challenges, the Mission worked alongside the GoN, civil society, other donors, development actors, and communities to identify strategic opportunities. The recent democratic elections, the discovery of immense groundwater resources, and an active civil society are all entry points.

This strategy builds upon lessons learned and seeks to maximize the comparative advantages of USAID/Niger to provide catalytic support to Niger's people and government to advance their development agendas. USAID/Niger will work toward this CDCS goal through three integrated Development Objectives. The first objective focuses on the challenge of working at the community level to strengthen capacity for locally-led action, empower community-based organizations, and build the resilience of individuals, households, and communities to withstand the many shocks and stresses common in Niger. The second objective seeks to support greater inclusive economic opportunities through interventions that establish the foundations for a healthy, productive, and qualified workforce, while strengthening the market systems needed for new livelihoods. The third objective outlines the USAID/Niger approach to supporting the GoN to improve the performance and responsiveness of institutions to deliver key services, such as health and education, and to promote accountability, through improved oversight mechanisms including credible, peaceful and inclusive elections.

To support the integrated vision of the strategy, USAID/Niger will apply four overarching approaches across the portfolio. In the face of escalating violence and deteriorating security, the Mission will work to integrate conflict sensitivity and promote intra- and inter-group social cohesion. To decrease the vulnerability of individuals, communities, and institutions to shocks and stresses, the Mission will support a continued focus on resilience. The impact of development investments in Niger across all sectors will be promoted through democracy, human rights, and governance principles and practices across sectors that integrate the core principles of participation, inclusion, transparency, and accountability (PITA) [1] Tying those three approaches together is a commitment to advancing coordination and collaboration through the humanitarian-development- peacebuilding nexus to save lives and reduce dependency on emergency assistance in the long term by addressing the root causes of fragility and conflict.

[1] In line with the USAID Cross-Sectoral Democracy Human Rights and Governance Integration Action Plan and PITA Integration for Sustainable Development (PITA-SD), Independent Key Issue.

Across these approaches and objectives, USAID/Niger will apply gender equity and inclusive development lenses to all interventions. The Mission will work to intentionally address the unique needs of women, men, boys, and girls in advancing this CDCS. Across the portfolio, the Mission will seek opportunities to more thoroughly engage diverse stakeholders to elevate the voices of youth, nomads, and other marginalized groups.

USAID/Niger intends to carefully evaluate programmatic approaches and context trends on an ongoing basis to identify windows of opportunity, learn, adapt, respond to threats, and manage risk. This CDCS assumes and prepares for risk and uncertainty to ensure that communities and the GoN continue on a path toward self-sufficiency. The Mission will continue to build on the legacy of layering, sequencing, and integrating sectoral interventions to strengthen resilience and maximize impact. As opportunities arise, in line with budget and staff capacity, the Mission will seek to engage a greater number of local partners and scale proven interventions to new areas. The Mission's integrated take on the challenges of resilience, empowerment, conflict, and systems are unique among the development actors in Niger.

Commitment and Capacity of Government of Niger

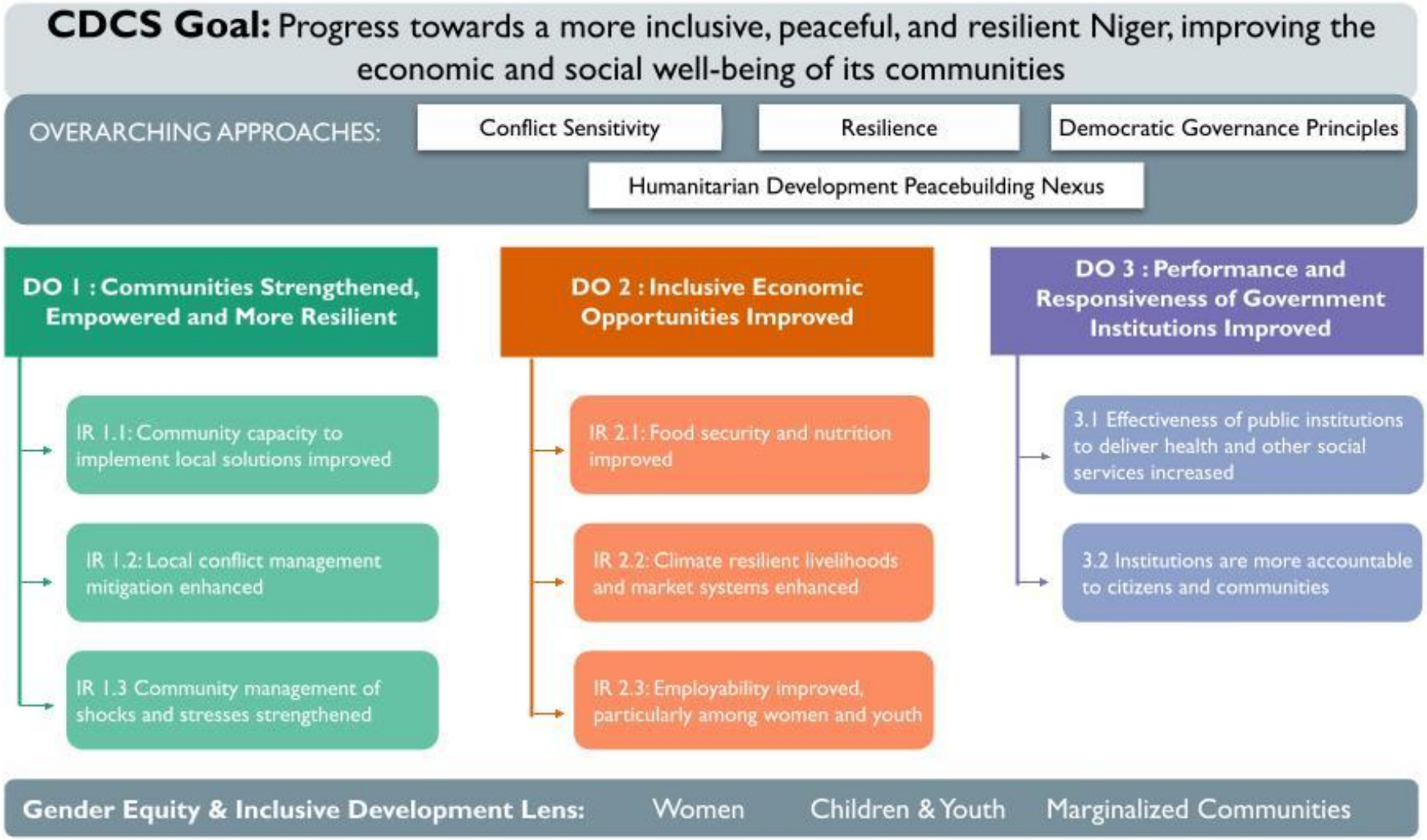
The GoN has made important strides in support of anti-corruption and democratic governance, but remains a fledgling democracy in a coup-prone region with significant concerns around stability, security, and delivery of programs and services. Weak political competition and accountability in Niger inhibit the incentives for public actors to govern in ways that promote political legitimacy, inclusion, rule of law, and delivery of adequate public services. Formal institutions do not function effectively to supply public goods and provide limited opportunities for constructive interaction with citizens. There are serious capacity gaps at all levels, a persistent lack of qualified civil servants and administrators assigned at the sub-national level, and a lack of resources contributing to continued gaps in financing and the extension of public services, including health, education, water, and justice. The GoN budget depends heavily on support from foreign funders. Defense spending is often prioritized over social services given the surge in violent extremist activity, armed banditry, and regional instability.

GoN priorities for the upcoming five years are reflected in the 2022-2026 Plan for Economic and Social Development (PDES), which was recently finalized. USAID/Niger participated along with other donors and development partners in the PDES development process. USAID shares many of the PDES priorities and is committed to accompanying the government to implement the proposed programs. USAID/Niger plans to partner closely with the GoN through capacity building, co-creation, and collaboration to align programs with the PDES. USAID/Niger will pursue government-to-government activities in the future.

Strategic Choices

The new CDCS aligns with the U.S. Government's (USG) National Security Strategy, the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan, and Embassy Niamey's Integrated Country Strategy. Working with other USG institutions in Niger, particularly the Department of State, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and the Department of Defense, USAID/Niger will follow a systems approach to supporting the USG interagency goals of advancing democracy and promoting economic growth through this strategy. The humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus is a priority for USAID and within the interagency. USAID/Niger will lead interagency coordination with other Sahel Alliance countries. The USAID/Niger CDCS also closely aligns with the four development objectives in the West Africa Mission and Sahel Regional Office joint Regional Development Cooperation Strategy. USAID/Niger will build on the momentum gained and lessons learned from previous investments and legacy projects conceived in the Sahel and West Africa regional platforms to increase resilience and reduce vulnerability to violent extremism.

USAID/Niger Results Framework



I. COUNTRY CONTEXT

Communities across Niger struggle to meet their basic needs in the face of mounting insecurity, severe climate vulnerability, and multidimensional poverty. Niger is ranked the least developed country in the world[2] with an estimated over 10 million people living in extreme poverty and over 3.8 million people living in crisis in need of emergency humanitarian assistance.[3] Extremely low educational attainment averaging a mere two years of schooling, an abysmal literacy rate of under one-third of the population, poor income prospects, and limited access to basic health services, sanitation, vaccines, and proper nutrition are exacerbating drivers of poverty and disenfranchisement. Population momentum[4], driven by the world's fastest-growing population, and a youthful demographic structure with high unemployment rates, threaten backsliding on key development gains as protracted food insecurity and conflict emergencies increase dependence on humanitarian assistance and undermine local systems. If population growth remains constant in Niger, the population will double from 24 million to nearly 50 million in the next 15 years. Development progress is further threatened by weak government systems, entrenched corruption, and a fledgling democracy in a region of social unrest and political instability across the Sahel.

Once talked about as a spillover problem in Niger, violent extremist organizations (VEO) are now entrenched, with a clear lack of state control in certain areas.[5] VEOs are working to exploit tensions between and within ethnic groups and nomadic and sedentary populations. Conflict has resulted in school closures, burning of schools, displacement, and negative health outcomes. Niger had the second highest increase of terrorism deaths globally in 2021.[6] Regionally, Niger is a strategic lynchpin for security in the Sahel and buffers the spread of insecurity into the West African littorals. With Mali, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria unable to control their border areas, Niger will continue to face increasing instability.

Compounding this instability are significant climate shocks and stresses. The effects of climate change are diminishing already limited surface water and viable land resources while increasing the vulnerability of communities to economic and health crises from upstream climate change drivers.[7] Niger ranks as the country most vulnerable to negative impacts from climate change,[8] including severe flooding and drought cycles, extreme heat, desertification, and pest and zoonotic disease outbreaks. [9] These impacts intensify external factors driving food price increases, unplanned rural to urban migration, and the food insecurity crisis.[10] Floods are the most common recurring natural hazard in Niger, impacting more than 196,000 people in 2021. Beyond destroying homes and crops, floods threaten already limited infrastructure and foster conditions permissive to increasing the spread of diseases such as cholera. Children in Niger are ranked as the seventh most affected by the impacts of climate change globally.[11]

Humanitarian assistance needs have increased 74 percent over the past two years.[12] Triggered by escalating conflict, severe drought, and COVID-19 related restrictions, food prices surged and food

[2] Niger is last in the 2021 UN Human Development Index and has been in the bottom two for over a decade
[3] Data on Humanitarian Need reflects the September 2021, USAID Niger-Complex Emergency Factsheet
[4] Even with sudden and rapid declines in fertility rates, the high proportion of young people who will go on to start their own families in coming years means population size will continue to grow and may not stabilize for decades to come.
[5] The Islamic State of the Greater Sahel and JNIM are present in Tillaberi with increasing influence spreading into both the Dosso and Tahoua regions. Boko Haram and the Islamic State of West Africa are present alongside high organized crime and banditry along the Nigeria border region and have destabilized the Lake Chad region, making Diffa a humanitarian focus zone.
[6] Second only to Myanmar as reported by the 2021 Global Terrorism Index
[7] USAID's Climate Risks in Food for Peace Geographies: Niger Analysis, 2017
[8] As ranked by the most recent Notre Dame Global Adaptation Index on climate change vulnerability dated 2019
[9] Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. UN International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 6th Assessment Report
[10] Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. UN IPCC 6th Assessment Report.
[11] UNICEF Children's Climate Risk Index, 2021
[12] Based on information from the Cadre Harmonisé, 2021

security diminished significantly across Niger since 2020.[13] Deteriorating security in Diffa, Tillaberi, Tahoua, and Maradi, compounded the situation by decreasing crop production, increasing internal displacement, and keeping youth out of schools. Over 2.3 million people needed food assistance in 2021 during the period between harvests known as the lean season (May to August). This is when temperatures are at their peak, the threat of monsoons is highest, and food stocks are lowest. Acute malnutrition is estimated to affect 1.3 million children under five with a prevalence persistently above the 10 percent emergency threshold. A startling 43.5 percent of children under five are stunted, and 12.5 percent are wasted from malnutrition. Stunting impairs lifetime cognitive development, impedes educational attainment, and impacts long-term human capital. An estimated one in 13 children dies before the age of five, many from malaria. There are significant unmet humanitarian needs countrywide, including 1.1 million people requiring access to emergency water, sanitation, and hygiene services.

At the community level, climate stress, recurrent natural shocks, and rapid population growth compounded by increasing violent extremist influence have led to conflict over diminishing access to land and water resources. The strain on these resources threatens food availability and rural livelihoods, fuels farmer and herder conflicts, challenges transhumance, and exacerbates rifts in communities that undermine security and stability. Niger's rising number of violent conflicts highlights both the growing extremist influences and the vulnerability of communities, particularly youth. Communities across Niger lack the capacity and resources to address their priority needs. Under-governed communities are marked by deeply ingrained gender inequity, sub-group marginalization, and chronically poor access to education, health, security, formal justice, and other basic services. Severe malnutrition, infectious diseases such as malaria, meningitis, and COVID-19, and a general lack of access to critical life-saving assistance are primary concerns in many communities. Malaria is endemic to Niger and affects over 4.2 million people annually, accounting for 37 percent of all recorded deaths.

Women face a disproportionate share of these burdens. In addition, gender-based violence (GBV) is an important concern. Girls and adolescent women face particularly acute challenges. Niger has the highest adolescent birth rate and the highest rate of child, early and forced marriage and unions (CEFMU) globally. Before the age of 18 more than three out of four girls will marry; more than half will give birth to their first child.[14] Family responsibilities limit girls' access to education and other resources. Women are largely excluded from decision-making positions and face significant social and cultural barriers. Niger enacted gender quotas for elected office and government administration, and female members of the National Assembly increased from 17 to 30 percent, but quotas have not been applied consistently at all levels. The disadvantaged position of women, including inadequate care for mothers and young children, coupled with high levels of early marriage and pregnancy, solidify an intergenerational cycle of malnutrition, vulnerability, and poverty.

More than half of Nigeriens are under age 16. Nearly 7 out of 10 youth between the ages of 15–24 are neither employed, nor in education or training. The risk of dropping out is significant for those who are still in school due to poor retention conditions. There is a pervasive disconnect between market needs, youth aspirations, and training offerings. Though driven to create their own livelihoods, youth have little support to launch their businesses and lack information on financial options, markets and networks. For those who have existing income-generating activities, there are few linkages to help them access markets to improve their earnings.[15] Youth are further alienated from society by distrust towards government institutions, often perceived as being corrupt. Many have little faith in government to enact change, create economic opportunities, or protect against conflict and instability. Disenfranchisement leaves youth vulnerable to recruitment by VEOs. Furthermore, youth in conflict affected areas lack access to

[13] According to World Food Program (WFP) Annual Report, 2021
[14] Data in previous statements taken from the USAID/Niger Gender Analysis Inception Report
[15] Learnings from Mercy Corps' PEACE and VRAI projects

the resources and social emotional skills needed to process trauma stemming from armed conflict, forced displacement or the daily struggles of living in low-resource conditions.

Despite chronically under-productive agriculture, more than three out of four Nigeriens work in subsistence agriculture and livestock. Farmers face environmental challenges that threaten the viability of crops and livestock, including soil degradation, rainfall variability, and extreme heat. While a growing number of families are gaining side incomes from non-agricultural sources to provide buffers in times of stress,[16] there are limited economic avenues outside of agriculture. A growth opportunity recently emerged from Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) studies that identified 50 billion m^3 worth of accessible and renewable groundwater resources along the Niger River basin. Safe, clean, and consistent water resources are currently scarce and sorely needed across Niger.

In 2021, Niger had its first democratic transition of presidential power in its 61-year history, as well as the first transition of power among local elected officials since 2011. Up to 90 percent of newly elected officials are holding office for the first time and some are illiterate.[17] While polls show 95 percent of Nigeriens agree that popularly elected leaders are a good way to govern, 74 percent of youth also considered army rule a good way to govern, highlighting the fragility of democratic commitment. [18] Niger has a history of successful and attempted military coups, including an attempt in March 2021. Regionally, disturbing trends around insecurity and political turmoil threaten to reach Niger. Grand corruption, unchecked banditry, and weak justice have entrenched public feelings of a lack of accountability, impunity, and distrust in the political elite. Transnational organized crime has captured significant influence and power with evidence of collusion between traffickers, VEOs and select security and government officials. [19] However, the current administration has made notable arrests of public officials involved in drug trafficking and embezzlement of public resources.[20]

While civil liberties across gender, ethnicity, and religion are protected on paper, in practice, certain ethnic groups and rural and nomadic communities face political and social exclusion and discrimination. Despite the 2011 Charter on Access to Information, there have been delays in implementation that limit freedom to public information. Nigerien civil society and media are active in efforts to hold the government accountable, but some efforts resulted in arrests or other repression. Many groups that engage in advocacy or push for transparency are branded as "opposition," increasing political polarization and fragmenting civil society. Signs of closing civic space are visible and include the application of the law on public gatherings and a restrictive 2022 decree on non-governmental organizations. The imposing of these restrictions represents backsliding for freedom of expression and association in Niger.

Donor Engagement and Coordination

The United States is the largest bilateral donor followed by Germany through the *Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit* (GIZ) and Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KFW); and France through the *Agence Française de Développement* (AFD). Other leading bilateral donors include the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Luxembourg Development Cooperation Agency (LuxDev), Belgian Enabel, and the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (UK). The European Union (EU) and the World Bank are the leading multilateral funders for Niger. The United Nations (UN) is also active across Niger. The UN, EU, and most other bilateral donors

[16] Citing the Global Food Security Strategy for Niger
[17] Resilient Governance in Niger 2021/2022 baseline study in Jagoranci's 19 communes in Tillaberi, Maradi, and Zinder.
[18] ORB International, annual Mizizi longitudinal survey in Niger, 2021 -
[19] Organized Crime, Violent Extremists & The Security Sector In Niger Trends And Recommendations, Chemonics, 2020.
[20] On April 20, 2022, the State Prosecutor arrested the sitting Minister of Communications for embezzlement of $5 million during his former position in the state-owned mining company, although this official was not from the ruling PNDS party.

contribute to coordinated basket funds or "Common Funds," which exist for multiple sectors including health, water and sanitation, and education. Different donors lead coordination as technically relevant.

The Government of Niger (GoN) State budget depends heavily on foreign financial and defense support. Niger is a popular partner for foreign security interests, development assistance, and humanitarian aid. Over the past decade, there has been a dramatic increase in donor funding, however mismanagement remains a serious obstacle to on-budget support. While the GoN provides clear development agendas and planning through the Vision 2035 for Niger and the five-year Plan for Economic and Social Development (*Plan de Développement Économique et Social)* (PDES), there is a need for more coherent policies to achieve these targets. Donor coordination is often siloed and reforms are donor-driven with a need for the GoN to take a greater leadership role.

II. STRATEGIC APPROACH

USAID/Niger's goal for this Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) is to accompany the people and Government of Niger to progress toward a more inclusive, peaceful, and resilient Niger, improving the economic and social well-being of its communities. The three Development Objectives (DOs) integrate across sectors to: 1) strengthen and empower communities to be more resilient; 2) increase inclusive economic opportunities; and 3) support the government of Niger to strengthen key service delivery systems, such as for health and education. The strategy is informed by consultations with Nigerien stakeholders and aligns with the priorities in the five-year development plan for Niger. Throughout the strategy period, USAID/Niger will continue to seek new opportunities to strengthen local commitment and capacity while supporting Niger as it leads its development trajectory. The strategy is guided by USAID Agency priorities, U.S. foreign policy, national security considerations, and USAID/Niger's comparative advantages among donors. USAID Niger is a Resilience Focus Country, a Feed the Future Target Country, a Nutrition Priority Country, a Global Health Security Agenda Country, and a U.S. President's Malaria Initiative Partner Country. This CDCS also aligns with the USAID West Africa Regional Mission and Sahel Regional Office (SRO) joint Regional Development Cooperation Strategy (RDCS).[21] Four overarching strategic approaches buttress the strategy. These overarching approaches emphasize integrating conflict sensitivity in support of inter- and intra-community social cohesion and conflict prevention; building resilience to shocks from climate, conflict, and disease; respecting the principles of democratic governance for participatory, inclusive, transparent and accountable systems; and strengthening coordination along the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding (HDP) nexus to bring communities out of crisis toward more locally-led, peaceful development. The Mission applied gender equity and inclusive development lenses to highlight opportunities to support and empower women, youth, nomads, and other marginalized communities. There is a focus on building in flexibility and integrating adaptive management mechanisms to respond to the fluid context in Niger. Through scenario planning the Mission identified potential shocks, drivers, and assumptions that could shape the future context in Niger and consolidated the information to use as foils for strategy development and drive adaptive management.

Conflict Sensitivity

By applying conflict sensitivity considerations to the entire CDCS, USAID/Niger seeks to foster social connection and leverage opportunities to build peace while diminishing tensions or conflicts. Societies with high levels of social exclusion and marginalization, particularly where there is inequality between different identity groups, are more likely to experience violent conflicts. Since 2012, security in Niger is increasingly volatile. Violent extremism was seen as a spillover problem from border nations, but is now endemic: Boko Haram is active in eastern Diffa, and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb are in the tri-border area of Tillaberi. Violent conflict is spreading in Tahoua, Maradi, and Dosso. VEOs exploit local inter-ethnic, tribal, and agro-pastoralist rifts and community grievances against the State to gain support and adherents. Regional instability, environmental degradation, accelerating climate change, and population momentum are exacerbating conflicts that lead to violence, GBV, and exclusion. Youth are particularly vulnerable to VEO recruitment. Ensuring equitable access to development and humanitarian activities among marginalized communities in Niger, requires planning around conflict dynamics to build upon positive and connecting factors, while reducing the risk of provoking underlying grievances. Analyzing explicit and implicit context dynamics at the community level, allows for better adaptations and responses. The Mission will coordinate closely with

[21] The RDCS has four Regional Development Objectives (RDO): RDO 1: Democracy, Peace, and Stability Enhanced; RDO 2: Inclusive Broad-based Economic Growth Advanced; RDO 3: Governments, Institutions and Partners Catalyzed to Strengthen Health Systems; and RDO 4: Vulnerability of Targeted Populations Reduced.

the Center for Conflict and Violence Prevention and the USAID West Africa Regional Peace and Governance Office on interventions to integrate conflict-informed approaches across all sectors to advance the goal of a more peaceful Niger. Building upon USAID lessons learned globally and in the Sahel, efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism (CVE) will be nested across sectors. Efforts will support inclusion of women in peacebuilding and security efforts. As a documented tool of VEOs, the threat of GBV is a focus of conflict sensitivity. A new Mission order integrates conflict-sensitivity across the Program Cycle to reduce local grievances and mitigate intra- and inter-community conflicts through holistic support along the HDP nexus. This will include complexity-aware monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) and context monitoring to inform adaptive management. This approach is consistent with the Global Fragility Act, the U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security, and the U.S. Strategy on CVE.

Resilience

Strengthening the sources of community resilience and government's ability to reduce risk and mitigate the impacts of shocks and stresses will be central to USAID/Niger programs across all three DOs. Chronic food insecurity and infectious disease in Niger have resulted in some of the highest rates of malnutrition and mortality in the world. Climate projections forecast Niger's rainfall will become more intense, unpredictable, and infrequent; changing weather patterns will impact the frequency and intensity of major droughts; and average temperatures in the Sahel will increase. Recurrent climate shocks and stresses, including drought, flood, pests, and zoonotic and other infectious diseases, will only become more severe in the future. Given the increasing magnitude of shocks and stresses from climate, conflict, and disease, USAID/Niger will work to reduce dependence on emergency humanitarian support and address the ongoing food security crisis through a mix of short and long term interventions. The Mission is committed to working with people, families, communities, and the government to reduce vulnerability to shocks and stresses in a manner that facilitates inclusive economic growth and advances communities along the HDP nexus.

Democratic Governance Principles

The effectiveness of development investments in Niger depends on capable institutions, citizen participation, accountable governments, and equitable growth. USAID/Niger and USG interagency partners will work alongside the GoN to strengthen legitimacy and responsiveness to their constituents and to support efforts to restore trust between the state and the population. Despite the first democratic presidential transition of power in 2021, Niger still faces significant governance deficits. USAID/Niger will advance the democracy, human rights, and governance (DRG) principles of participation, inclusion, transparency, and accountability plus nondiscrimination (PITA+) and leverage political economy analyses to think and work politically. Weak political accountability and competition are cross-sector challenges in Niger. The weakness of effective institutional, electoral, or societal checks on executive authority, coupled with a political system based on elite patronage networks contributes to corruption at all levels of governance in Niger and undermines the people's trust in government.[22] Linking the DRG principles to ongoing resilience and CVE-focused initiatives will consolidate and extend positive impacts across sectors. This approach aligns with USAID Agency priorities, the USAID Strategy on DRG, USAID Anti-Corruption efforts, and the objectives of the Summit for Democracy.

Humanitarian-Development-Peacebuilding Nexus

Armed conflict, widespread flooding, and acute food insecurity drive internal displacement and contribute to chronic complex emergencies in Niger. Research shows operating in sector silos without coordination is not effective to address immediate needs or the root causes of key development

[22] 2017 DRG Assessment, though outdated, based on anecdotal evidence the conclusions on structure remain valid

challenges.[23] USAID/Niger will build on the comparative advantages of HDP efforts to address fragility and build resilient pathways out of multidimensional poverty. Niger receives substantial emergency and non-emergency humanitarian assistance[24] from USAID as well as other donors. While emergency assistance is outside the scope of this CDCS, in Niger there is an opportunity to strengthen development and humanitarian coherence by integrating peacebuilding into the nexus. The approach creates space for USAID to work toward delivering life-saving assistance—in health, water and sanitation, food security, and early recovery—while reducing dependence on humanitarian assistance and advancing a more peaceful, stable, healthy, safe, and productive Niger. USAID/Niger will support all partner communities to go beyond do-no-harm principles to increase conflict sensitivity, mitigate potential drivers of conflict, and strengthen inter- and intra-group social cohesion. The Mission will continue to intentionally promote layering, sequencing, and integrating among humanitarian, development, and peace activities in jointly targeted geographic areas.

Gender Equity[25]

Advancing this strategy requires intentionally addressing the needs of women and girls. Women in Niger face deeply ingrained social, religious, and cultural norms that limit their rights and freedoms. While the specific treatment and role of women varies between ethno-tribal communities, across Niger women are disproportionately affected by poverty and grossly excluded from opportunities to assume decision-making roles or participate meaningfully in the economy. High birth rates coupled with weak systems for maternal and child health (MCH) endanger mothers. USAID/Niger recognizes the importance of increasing voluntary family planning and reducing CEFMU as cross-cutting tools to improve women's health and resilience as well as the economic and social well-being of their families. Moving the needle on women's health can support improved outcomes for families and as a tool to break intergenerational malnutrition and poverty. This strategy advances the USAID Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy, the U.S. National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality, the Update to the U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to GBV, and the U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security.

Inclusive Development

The growing disenfranchisement of youth, nomads, and other marginalized groups threatens to destabilize Niger. Evidence shows inequitable access to services is a key factor in perceptions of poor governance and instability.[26] USAID/Niger recognizes the value of engaging representative and diverse voices as well as the divisive risks posed by inequitable provision of support. Given youth comprise the majority of Niger's population, the Mission will prioritize investments in youth skill-building and leadership across all sectors. Recent focus groups indicate limited reach of development activities into nomadic groups and highlight the opportunity for increased representation in commune and local governance structures.[27] USAID/Niger will identify additional entry points across sectors to engage youth and other under-represented groups as aligned with the Youth in Development Policy, the Policy on Promoting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the USAID Disability Policy.

Geographic Criteria

USAID/Niger currently maintains a programmatic footprint across the country as determined by coordination with the GoN and other donors, emergency need, and the Resilience Focus Zones. The

[23] The 2022 Development Assistance Committee Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus
[24] Emergency humanitarian assistance will continue to be implemented in strict adherence with humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence.
[25] Informed by the Inception Report for the ongoing Niger Gender Analysis
[26] Assessing Good Governance in Liptako-Gourma, ORB International, Peace through Evaluation, Learning and Adapting, 2022
[27] USAID Niger Stability Support Initiative Focus Groups with Sedentary and Nomadic Communities, 2021.

Mission will define a holistic set of strategic, resilience, and humanitarian criteria to guide geographic selection. In addition to the resilience and humanitarian criteria, geographic selection will factor for emerging threats and opportunities, host government priorities, opportunity to prevent the violent extremism, climate and natural resources opportunities, health, and other strategic considerations, such as MCC investments or safety and security. The Mission will strengthen geographic flexibility mechanisms in future designs to enable adaptation to shifting conflict trends, scaling of successful pilots, and context-driven pivots. Geographic focus will be re-evaluated annually and may be activity specific.

Flexibility and Adaptive Management

USAID/Niger chose a set of tools to integrate flexibility and adaptive management throughout operations in order to better respond to different possible scenarios. USAID will expand on lessons learned in building flexibility into award language, including the use of inception periods, flexible response capability, contingency plans, and crisis modifiers. The Mission will use context monitoring for regular insights into trends and challenges that will inform decision-making. Frequently operating in the space between development work and humanitarian crises, USAID/Niger will monitor potential trigger indicators and trends to implement necessary adaptive management responses and leverage windows of opportunity.

Localization

Through each DO, USAID/Niger will promote opportunities to engage more closely with local partners and leaders to enable locally-influenced development and empower the people of Niger to be leaders of their own development. The Mission will seek opportunities for co-creation with local stakeholders in activity design, review, and learning. Through DO 1, the Mission will identify and support local organizations and civil society partners to build the capacity to manage direct awards. Under DO 2, efforts will prioritize private-sector engagement to drive innovations that solve problems and shape new opportunities. Closer government partnership will be a hallmark of DO 3.

Alignment with the Government of Niger

Niger's Vision 2035 is the overarching strategy for "a united, democratic, and modern country that is peaceful, prosperous, and proud of its cultural values, underpinned by a sustainable, ethical, fair, and balanced development in an Africa marked by unity and solidarity".[28] The development priorities of the GoN are laid out across Vision 2035, the 2022–2026 five-year PDES, and the 2021 General Policy Declaration outlining the policy orientations of the new president and prime minister. The three priority pillars for the GoN are: 1) human capital development, inclusion, and solidarity; 2) consolidation of governance, peace, and security; and 3) structural transformation of the economy.

The GoN strategy on human capital development highlights education, health, inclusive development, and gender equity initiatives. The GoN is seeking to increase access to education, with a focus on increasing the educational attainment of girls, addressing the teacher shortage, and increasing professional training opportunities. On health, priorities include improving nutrition and food security, increasing access to potable water, and supporting sanitation and hygiene—with explicit recognition of the need for improved maternal and reproductive health. The GoN is also planning to develop a specific youth policy. Under consolidation of governance, peace, and security, the GoN supports more equitable access to public services including health, education, and justice. An additional focus is strengthened local governance, anti-corruption, and decentralization. The government will support efforts to promote peaceful coexistence between different ethnic and community groups and regional peace and stability. Structural transformation of the economy supports agriculture, livestock, and fisheries value chains,

[28] The Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth Strategy Niger 2035

private-sector development, and environmental management. This includes a focus on modernizing agricultural production and land management to address climate change.

USAID will partner with the GoN to achieve their vision for a more modern, peaceful, and prosperous Niger. The integrated DOs proposed in this CDCS link closely with the GoN strategic priorities on economic growth, good governance, and bolstering human capital. Cross-cutting conflict sensitivity, local conflict management and mitigation, and efforts to address the drivers of conflict, align with the GoN priority of peace and security. Support for democratic governance and expanded accountability is in line with Niger's good governance and anti-corruption focus. USAID's work with youth, supporting girls' education, and the focus on employability feeds directly into human capital development. There is a window to align targeted support to improve maternal and reproductive health and reduce CEFMU with a recent Nigerien presidential policy directive. USAID will also work to support the government's goal to modernize rural areas to better adapt to climate change.

Alignment with Interagency Priorities

The new CDCS aligns with the USG National Security Strategy, the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan (JSP), and the Embassy Niamey's Integrated Country Strategy (ICS). Working closely with other USG institutions in Niger, particularly the Department of State, MCC, and the Department of Defense, USAID/Niger will follow a systems approach to supporting the interagency goals around strengthening good governance, reducing vulnerability to violent extremism, and supporting inclusive and sustainable economic growth. MCC is a close technical partner on agriculture and water investments. USAID/Niger leads the interagency Peace and Security working group and is also leading interagency coordination and collaboration with Sahel Alliance countries. Given the recent escalation of instability and military coups in neighboring countries, Niger is a strategic partner for democracy and security in the Sahel.

Alignment with Other Donors

As the largest bilateral donor, USAID has an opportunity to exercise greater leadership in donor coordination with the GoN. The re-establishment of the Mission and this first CDCS present opportunities to forge closer ties and explore deeper collaboration with other donors. At the time of CDCS development, new country strategies were also being developed for the UN and the EU. Closer consultation with major donors will allow USAID/Niger to maximize strategic investments and limit redundancies. USAID is an active participant in donor technical coordination groups as further described below. USAID/Niger directly supports programs through the World Food Program (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Health Organization (WHO), including the Covax initiative. The Mission works closely with the Global Fund to ensure quality support for public health programs across the country, particularly for malaria programs. The United States recently joined the Sahel Alliance alongside France, Germany, Spain, the UK, the EU and other partners to support Sahel countries to enhance the stability and development of the region.

III. RESULTS FRAMEWORK

Goal Statement and Narrative: Over the next five years, USAID/Niger will accompany the people and Government of Niger to **progress towards a more inclusive, peaceful, and resilient Niger, improving the economic and social well-being of its communities.** In the face of continued conflict, climate, demographic, and security challenges, USAID/Niger will seek to elevate the voices of marginalized groups including women, youth, and nomadic communities and respond to their needs to strengthen community resilience, improve climate and conflict resilient economic opportunities, and advance national development priorities through a systems-strengthening approach. USAID/Niger will make progress toward this goal through three DOs bolstered by the overarching This strategy is designed around a multi-sectoral approach to key development challenges. Each DO, together with the overarching approaches, contributes to the outcomes of the others. DO 1 will enable citizens to better participate in public life, resolve conflicts and boost their resilience. Stronger community structures and dialogue will also lead to improved government responsiveness to local needs and create a more stable environment, resistant to shocks and conflict. DO 2 will enable citizens, especially youth and women, to better participate in the workforce. Healthier, better educated individuals and families connected to an enabling economic ecosystem are foundational to this approach. DO 2 contributes to DO 1 by building a stronger, more inclusive economy that will propel citizen and system resilience. Coupled with better management of natural resources and human capital, this will increase incomes and the tax base, which is necessary to expand public service delivery to a growing population under DO 3. Through strengthening government institutions and guiding policy reform, DO 3 will support healthier and better-educated citizens, a stronger, more productive workforce, a more inclusive economy, communities with greater resilience, and a more peaceful Niger.

DO 1: Communities Strengthened, Empowered, and More Resilient

Across Niger, many communities teeter precariously on the edge of protracted crisis. Communities face food insecurity, persistent extreme poverty, corrupt governance, population momentum, and recurrent climate shocks that too often drive vulnerable communities into crisis and conflict. These communities are frequently in under-governed areas marked by deeply ingrained gender inequity, marginalization of sub-groups, and chronically poor access to education, health, security, formal justice, and other basic services. In the face of increasing inter-ethnic conflicts, escalating farmer-herder tensions, and active VEOs, DO 1 will increase the resilience of these communities and build capacity for locally-led development, while promoting intra- and inter-group social cohesion.

DO 1 seeks to empower the people of Niger, including women, youth, and those from marginalized communities, such as nomads, to act as grassroots-level agents of change to unlock local solutions. Focusing at the community level—including recognized villages, hamlets, tribal settlements, and nomadic camps— DO 1 directly engages the people of Niger in working toward a future where strong community structures and empowered citizens are able to advance their priorities to improve well-being and mitigate vulnerability to shocks and stresses from conflict, climate, and disease. Village development committees and citizen monitoring and working groups[29] are key entry points for working with communities. Where appropriate, community-level interventions will seek to foster close collaboration with commune leaders in government and civil society. This work requires a nuanced understanding of the socio-political, ethno-tribal, and religious dynamics underpinning conflict trends to drive equitable participation and inclusion.

[29] Comités de Veille Citoyenne (CVC) and "Citizen Working Groups", now merged in some communities

USAID/Niger will work at the HDP nexus and to strengthen the connections between not only humanitarian and development programs, but also peacebuilding efforts to build community resilience. By building capacity, reducing vulnerability and strengthening community structures, DO 1 will reduce community dependence on humanitarian assistance. The layered, sequenced and integrated community-level activities around the Resilience and Food Security Activities (RFSAs) contribute to this DO.

DEVELOPMENT HYPOTHESIS

IF target communities have the capacity to advocate for community priorities and initiate and implement local solutions through participatory mechanisms and improved accountability;

And IF community level conflict management and mitigation mechanisms are strengthened to be more fair, transparent, and inclusive of women, youth, and marginalized communities;

And IF communities are supported to mitigate risks and prepare for, respond to, and facilitate early recovery from shocks;

Then target communities will be strengthened and empowered to become more resilient.

IR 1.1: Community Capacity to Initiate and Implement Local Solutions Improved

Against the backdrop of multi-generational poverty, conflict, disease, and climate change, there is an opportunity to support communities to advance locally-led development through collective action. Empowering Nigerien communities with the capacity, leadership, and resources to identify community-level concerns and mobilize solutions through collective action is a building block of locally-led community development. Intermediate Result (IR) 1.1 will build the capacity of communities to implement local solutions to address priority needs. Given scarce access to external resources, USAID/Niger recognizes the primacy of building capacity to leverage local assets to solve local problems *(sub IR1.1.1)* with a focus on open, participatory, inclusive, transparent, and accountable governance. Local assets could include labor—skilled or unskilled—raw materials, or even land. USAID/Niger will seek to strengthen existing community structures, including village development committees, nomadic associations, womens and youth groups, and other community-based organizations. Capacity development efforts will also intentionally expand the leadership pool to include more women, youth, and other marginalized groups *(sub IR 1.1.2).* At the national level, the GoN recognizes the important role of women in community-level peacebuilding and development. However, community politics are viewed almost unanimously as the realm of men in Niger.[30] While older women are more engaged in community structures than young women—who are expected to uphold more stereotypically family-based roles—most women must seek a male relative's approval to participate in events outside the home. Young women suffer the greatest exclusion from information and decision-making. Within the Nigerien social hierarchy it is often deemed inappropriate to contradict elders, yet young men and women now represent the majority population. USAID/Niger will work to reduce the barriers to meaningful participation and unlock the important contributions of youth to community well-being.

With improved capacity to leverage local assets and more representative leadership, support to community collective action can galvanize important gains *(sub IR 1.1.3).* Evidence from USAID activities in Niger shows that locally-led development can be effectively promoted through collective matching grants to local organizations working together toward a shared objective.[31] Even within rural communities, there are emerging opportunities to build civil society effectiveness and promote collective action. Local solutions also directly involve commune government structures. A key piece of implementing local solutions is the capacity of local organizations and others to hold the government

[30] According to the Niger Gender Analysis Inception Report, 2022
[31] USAID/SHIGA FY 2021 Annual Report - Outcome Harvesting Report

accountable (*sub IR 1.1.4).* Advancing local solutions includes working with communities to increase coordinated demand for and use of key public services. Community-level accountability mechanisms will include improved community-based organizations advocacy, citizen participation, and civic education, including social accountability training and participatory community score cards, among others.

IR 1.2: Local Conflict Management and Mitigation Enhanced

Strengthening Nigerien communities also requires working to proactively address and mitigate drivers of conflict. Niger is characterized by complex conflict dynamics that are increasingly leveraged by VEOs for recruitment and control. These dynamics are driven by simmering ethnic and caste-based rifts; gender inequities; population momentum; competition for land and water between farmers and herders; and inequitable access to services among communities—particularly for Tuareg, Fulani, or other nomadic populations. By enhancing local management of these types of community conflicts, USAID/Niger will continue to build the capacity of local partners to prevent the escalation of conflicts and counter the creeping influence of violent extremism. To enhance management of local conflicts, USAID/Niger and its partners will support the adoption of improved natural resource management approaches *(sub-IR 1.2.1)* proven to reduce the conflicts particularly prevalent between nomadic and sedentary communities.[32] As climate change compounds resource scarcity, improved natural resource management structures are a key proactive measure to maintain peace. To improve responsiveness to disputes within and between communities, USAID/Niger will enhance customary conflict mediation mechanisms to resolve disputes *(sub-IR 1.2.2)*. Customary conflict management mechanisms relying on traditional chiefs are prevalent across Niger, particularly in regions without formal access to state courts.[33] Customary mechanisms are often a first line of response to community conflicts for minor offenses or those involving divorce and adultery. USAID/Niger will work alongside community leaders to build the capacity of these structures to deliver fair and transparent decisions that recognize the rights of women and youth.

As the majority of the Nigerien population, youth play a key role in community-level conflict, as drivers and as mediators. Youth disenfranchisement fuels violent extremist recruitment. Improved conflict prevention skills, especially among youth from differing backgrounds *(sub-IR 1.2.3),* are paramount to achieving this IR. Strengthened intra- and inter-community social cohesion *(sub-IR 1.2.4)* will mitigate future conflict outbreaks by increasing dialogue, fostering mutual respect, and promoting equitable access to resources to improve the well-being of all community members. Lessons learned on social cohesion highlight the importance of sensitivity to the differing roles of women and men of different ages and different identity/ethnic groups. More socially cohesive communities where youth are actively engaged in peacebuilding and where individuals are governed by improved natural resource management covenants and enjoy access to fair and transparent mediation mechanisms will more effectively mitigate and manage conflicts in ways that promote resilience and local leadership.

IR 1.3: Community Management of Shocks and Stresses Strengthened

Shocks and stresses from conflict, climate, disease, and other factors threaten the narrow margin keeping communities out of protracted crises. Addressing this vulnerability is a critical building block for resilient communities empowered to lead their own development. IR 1.3 will advance work in target communities toward community management of shocks and stresses across all four phases of emergency management, including mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. Within the context of insecurity and extreme climate events, women and marginalized groups tend to suffer disportionately in

[32] USAID/Resilience and Economic Growth in the Sahel - Enhanced Resilience - Local Conventions: Rural Municipalities Manage their Natural Resources Sustainably

[33] USAID/Peace through Evaluation, Learning and Adapting (PELA) - Customary Mechanisms for Conflict Reconciliation and Resolution

crisis situations, so efforts will support more equitable leadership across emergency management. USAID/Niger will support improvements to community-level risk management planning (*sub-IR 1.3.1)* and early warning systems, including better access to climate information. Risk management planning will provide communities the opportunity to mitigate risks and proactively plan responses to shocks and stresses in ways that reduce the impacts on overall well-being. Systematizing the sharing of climatic information coupled with guidance for risk reduction will support important exchanges between rural development technicians and community members. Efforts to build community level surveillance capacities, in line with global health security and One Health principles, will help deliver early warning alerts for pending animal and human disease outbreaks. USAID/Niger will work alongside national response mechanisms to increase community capacity to absorb and adapt to both natural and man-made shocks and stresses (*sub-IR 1.3.2).* Food security, resilience, climate change, conflict, and health are all part of strengthening the HDP nexus to protect and save lives. USAID/Niger will support target communities to deliver life-saving assistance *(sub-IR 1.3.3).* These interventions include support for early recovery, quality community-level health prevention and services to ensure safe deliveries, prevention and treatment of infectious diseases, and efforts to address acute malnutrition and wasting. Given the significant health needs in Niger, the Mission anticipates continued support of life-saving assistance to prevent mortality and morbidity, particularly related to malaria.

Integrated Strategic Linkages

There is an intersection between DO 1 efforts to reduce barriers to the participation of women and youth with DO 2 efforts around voluntary family planning and reducing CEFMU. Evidence shows women and girls who delay marriage have lower lifetime fertility rates, better health outcomes, greater access to education, and more opportunities to engage in productive employment and civic action. Addressing malaria and other infectious diseases facilitates the participation of girls and women in education, training, employment, and civic action by keeping them and their families healthy. As the primary caregivers, women are predominantly tasked with staying home to care for sick family members, especially young children. Reducing malaria and other disease burdens can help families avoid the need to use limited household resources to pay for curative care. Efforts under DO 1 to build the conflict prevention skills of youth also overlap in important ways with DO 2 work to increase soft skills and social and emotional learning for youth. In addition, DO 1 will support community-based organizations, including local associations and producer organizations, to build capacity to leverage economic opportunities promoted under DO 2. DO 1 activities will work to build community-level demand for participatory governance, which will be complemented by work under DO 3 to provide improved performance of government institutions to deliver public services. Communities will develop capacity to identify their priorities and organize themselves to advocate to decision-makers under DO 1, while those institutions will benefit from increased oversight and anti-corruption mechanisms under DO 3. Work on government capacity to deliver key sectoral public services under DO 3 links to DO 1 work to deliver life-saving assistance through quality health and infectious disease services, and water, sanitation, and hygiene. Efforts to address malnutrition link life-saving assistance under DO 1 with focused efforts on food security and nutrition under DO 2 as well as with DO 3 focus on improving and extending integrated health systems.

DO 1 aligns closely with the regional development objectives (RDO) identified in the joint RDCS for West Africa and the Sahel under objectives to reduce vulnerability of targeted populations (*RDO 4)* and enhance democracy, peace, and stability *(RDO 1).*

Overarching Approaches

By increasing absorptive and adaptive capacities, DO 1 contributes to building community resilience and advancing work along the HDP nexus. These investments improve the ability of communities to reduce risk and mitigate the impact of shocks and stresses, especially those related to climate change, conflict, and disease, to improve well-being. Reducing disease burden from malaria, meningitis, COVID-19 and other infectious diseases by increasing availability of and promoting access to life-saving assistance is a key component to household resilience. USAID will also build the capacity of communities to advocate for transparency and accountability in decision-making. Development and peace actors will seek opportunities to advance layering, integrating, and sequencing with humanitarian programs to maximize impacts, while humanitarian actors will add conflict sensitive approaches to protect social cohesion. To advance more inclusive participation, USAID will use a conflict sensitive approach to include women, youth, and marginalized people in programming and community decision-making, while mitigating the critical risks of exacerbating GBV, competition for scarce land and water resources, or ethnic conflict. Understanding of the socio-political, ethno-tribal and religious dynamics underpinning conflict trends will be integrated into this work.

USAID Policy Priorities

Working alongside communities to strengthen their systems, empower their people, and build resilience, provides important opportunities to advance localization through targeted local capacity building, leadership development, and support to local organizations to elevate more diverse voices in decision-making processes. The Mission will explore the possibility of direct awards to local organizations through an Annual Program Statement, working carefully to respect community power dynamics and advance inter- and intra-community social cohesion. DO 1 aligns with USAID's Youth in Development Policy, in particular with support for youth participation in decision-making, to contribute to individual, household, community, and national well-being. DO 1 efforts also address key priorities of the Climate Policy by advancing more inclusive and participatory approaches to early warning systems, supporting better-informed natural resource management as a conflict mitigation tool, and support for incorporation of climate change information into peacebuilding communication systems.

Government of Niger Alignment

Activities under DO 1 contribute to the GoN's priority for consolidation of governance, peace and security, and support for local governance. To improve community capacity to initiate and implement local solutions, USAID will work with local civil society, non-governmental organizations, and citizen committees to interact more effectively with local officials, including regional and municipal councils, mayors, and decentralized representatives of line ministries. USAID/Niger will also support local peace and conflict and mediation committees to increase their capacity and coordination with government institutions (e.g., High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace, Ombudsman (*Le Mediateur*), Executive Secretary on the National Strategy for Prevention of Radicalization and Violent Extremism, Center for National Strategy and Security Studies, and the Defense and Security Forces). To support community management of shocks and stresses, USAID/Niger will seek to foster links to the National Center for Coordination of Early Warning Systems *(Centre National de Coordination du Mécanisme d'Alerte Précoce)* and support citizen engagement in early warning systems (*Système d'Alerte Précoce*).

Donor and Development Partner Landscape

The Mission will continue to coordinate community-level activities with other major donors including AFD, GIZ, EU, European Commission Humanitarian Aid (ECHO), SDC, UK, and World Bank, among others. Most donors in Niger share a focus on food security, poverty reduction, enhanced security, and peace. The World Food Program (WFP) is a key partner on resilience programming. The World Bank also recognizes the strategic need to address interlinkages in fragility, conflict, and violence in

strengthening resilience.[34] The Mission participates in the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) led coordination on humanitarian response and collaborates closely with ECHO. These partners do humanitarian emergency and resilience and development activities across a range of sectors and regions. Health sector collaboration to empower and strengthen community health care workers and extend the coverage of integrated health care services for this DO will include the UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, a key partner of the U.S. President's Malaria Initiative.

Assumptions:	**Risks:**
• Security conditions over time allow for consistent, at a minimum sporadic, access to participants • Perception of American support does not directly put activity participants in harm's way and communities are willing to engage, even through remote methods • Niger's central and local government institutions remain open to citizen participation and engage with civil society to tackle priority issues	• Increasing insecurity could trigger massive population displacement and community asset loss • Major natural disaster or disease epidemics could disrupt community collective action and structures • Adverse effects of restrictive government measures to contain VEOs • Increased violent extremist activity and occupation of territory may hinder implementation, especially inclusion of women, and increase GBV

DO 2: Inclusive Economic Opportunities Improved

Empowering the people of Niger to meet their basic economic needs is fundamental to a more inclusive, peaceful, and resilient country. DO 2 focuses on the foundations for a more healthy, productive, and qualified workforce with sustainable economic opportunities. To address barriers to participation in the economy, USAID/Niger proposes a holistic approach that integrates nutrition, agriculture, climate adaptation, education, health, resilience, and economic growth. Interventions will work to unlock the productive potential of Nigeriens through improvements in food security—including efforts to reduce malnutrition and stunting—and employability, to allow greater participation in livelihoods and market systems resilient to climate and conflict. Efforts to improve employability will focus on increasing educational attainment, enhancing social-emotional and soft skills for youth, and unlocking the potential of girls and women through enhanced access to and use of family planning and reduced CEFMU. Agriculture and livestock provide necessary means of survival, building blocks to combat food insecurity, and income-generating avenues for economic growth. Given the threat of climate change, Niger must advance adaptation to seasonality and extreme shocks through climate-smart agriculture, improved water management, and off-farm climate-resilient livelihoods to protect development gains. This DO will couple efforts to prepare the next generation of Nigeriens with the education and skills needed for employability and the creation of improved economic opportunities resilient to climate change.

[34] World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence 2020-2025 WB has committed $1.7 billion in Niger

DEVELOPMENT HYPOTHESIS

IF individuals consume safe and nutritious food produced through climate-smart agriculture, improved livestock management, and strengthened water management for health, hygiene, and productive uses as part of an enhanced agricultural market system;

AND IF individuals in targeted communities, including nomadic populations, have access to financial services, are better linked to markets and the private sector, and can diversify livelihoods to be more climate resilient;

AND IF human capital is increased through improved learning outcomes and reproductive health, particularly for girls and young women;

THEN inclusive economic opportunities, particularly for women, youth, and other marginalized populations, will be improved.

IR 2.1 Food Security and Nutrition Improved

A necessary component of increasing economic opportunities in Niger is that individuals be adequately nourished and food secure to productively participate in the economy. Well-nourished individuals, consuming safe and nutritious foods, *(sub-IR 2.1.2)* are less susceptible to illnesses and able to reach their cognitive potential, which leads to increased productivity and participation in school and the labor market. Under this sub-IR there will be a particular focus on women, including adolescent girls, as nutrition interventions benefit their individual well-being and contribute to breaking a multi-generational cycle of malnutrition among families. While women are critical changemakers for improved nutrition, men are often the principal decision-makers in families and control the resources needed to make dietary shifts.[35] How malnutrition affects communities varies widely across regions and ethnic groups. Tailored approaches to promote consumption of nutritious foods are critical for success. Improved access to and use of water *(sub-IR 2.1.4)* is fundamental for both productive agriculture and livestock uses, as well as ensuring people are healthy enough to participate in the economy and children are healthy enough to pursue education. There are important formal and informal conventions around how water is used and managed between sedentary and nomadic communities that will be the basis for improved water management. There is a unique opportunity in Niger to build off MCC investments in agriculture and water, including a significant study that identified tremendous renewable near-surface groundwater aquifers. The study revealed a series of renewable groundwater aquifers with over 50 billion meters of available water in storage between five and 40 meters underground across Tillaberi, Dosso and Tahoua that could support two million hectares of cultivable land. In order to mitigate the potential for conflict or elite capture, USAID will work with the recently established National Groundwater Authority and others to promote conflict-sensitive management of these new water resources.

Improving food security in Niger is a cross-sector priority that requires building demand for healthy and nutritious foods, as well as increasing local supply and production. Transformative adaptation through scaling climate-smart agriculture (CSA) *(sub-IR 2.1.1)* and strengthening agriculture market systems *(sub-IR 2.1.3)* will allow Nigerien farmers and herders to better participate in the local economy while providing needed food products. Severe drought and flood cycles, extreme heat, soil degradation, and pests are just some of the climate challenges. In this context, CSA refers to a suite of practices to sustainably increase income and productivity, while building the adaptive abilities and resilience of households, cooperatives, and companies. CSA promotes the application of practices in production that

[35] Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced (RISE) II Social Behavior Change Baseline

reduce emissions, increase yields in water scarce and heat affected environments, and foster sustainable use of resources using methods indigenous to and adapted for the Sahel, including land regeneration. CSA includes improved weather variability monitoring, environmental services (e.g., soil quality), on-farm production, and postharvest handling and storage. The vast majority of Nigeriens are engaged in agriculture and livestock activities, yet the agricultural market system remains largely underdeveloped and informal. USAID/Niger recognizes the value of taking a systems approach to increase the productivity and competitiveness of products that contribute to food security, nutrition, and economic growth. Working through agricultural market systems connects farmers and herders to opportunities to more efficiently participate in markets and help ensure goods and services are more widely available.

IR 2.2 Climate Resilient Livelihoods and Market Systems Enhanced

Evidence emphasizes the importance of connecting livelihoods and market systems. Livelihood creation without market systems is unsustainable, while enhancing market systems without a focus on livelihood creation does not meet the pressing need in Niger for more economic opportunities.[36] IR 2.2 aims to strengthen the resilience of target communities to prepare for and respond to recurring shocks through economic diversification outside of agriculture. Resilient market systems are dynamic spaces designed with proactive adaptive capacities in which private and public actors collaborate, coordinate, and compete for the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. Many economic opportunities in Niger are vulnerable to shocks and constrained by stresses, such as land disputes, low levels of education, weak market infrastructure, lack of individual empowerment, and inequitable access to resources for marginalized populations. Women, youth, and marginalized people in Niger face greater barriers to accessing finance and economic opportunity. This is particularly true in cases where women or nomads lack acceptable collateral because they are not land title holders. By identifying market opportunities, providing productive assets or cash grants, and building linkages to professional network and business contacts, DO 2 will support diversification. Given the impact of climate change in Niger, USAID will prioritize support to market systems and livelihoods that are able to absorb and adapt to climate shocks and stresses. IR 2.2 prioritizes increasing access to financial services *(sub-IR 2.2.1)*, building partnerships among private-sector actors to broaden the range of off-farm and nonfarm economic opportunities *(sub-IR 2.2.2)* and creating linkages across producers, input suppliers, buyers, end markets, and financiers *(sub-IR 2.2.3)*. USAID/Niger will continue to monitor for opportunities in digital development, but recognizes the limited digital penetration nationwide, particularly in rural areas.

IR 2.3 Employability Improved, Particularly Among Women and Youth

Agriculture, livestock, and informal sector employment dominate the labor market. Nearly two-thirds of Nigeriens above 15 are illiterate and on average they will have only 2.1 years of schooling, a mere 1.4 mean years of schooling among girls. Youth face particular difficulties entering the labor market and finding viable livelihoods, only 31% are in school, in training or employed. Many youth lack the ability to engage in the labor market and entrepreneurial initiatives.[37] IR 2.3 will contribute to an enabling environment where individuals, particularly women and youth, can actively participate in the economy. To improve employability, the focus will be on improving educational attainment *(sub-IR 2.3.1)* through increased access to quality basic education and vocational training. To meet the immediate needs of youth, activities will promote non-formal learning to advance basic literacy and numeracy skills central to employability. Responding to a GoN call for support on vocational education, the Mission will support curriculum development for a resilience and agri-business masters program with Nigerien Universities. Education will be coupled with efforts to build social and emotional skills *(sub-IR 2.3.2)* to boost the

[36] Rise II Technical Approach Working Paper
[37] UNICEF Niger Youth Assessment Report, 2019

growth of academic and positive career outcomes while mitigating the negative effects of prolonged exposure to conflict and crisis. USAID will seek to break the cycle of low educational attainment and impaired cognitive and social-emotional skills that reduce lifetime productivity and earnings.

When young women and girls marry early, they often stop attending school, start having children, and may not fully engage in productive activities. Niger's rate of CEFMU is the highest in the world: three out of four girls marry before the age of 18. Additionally, the use of contraceptives among married and in-union women is only 20.7 percent. Research shows that girls and young women with secondary-level education marry later, have fewer children, and are less likely to suffer from malnutrition. [38] Reducing the rate of CEFMU could have a dramatic impact on Niger's future economic prosperity, saving the country more than $25 billion by 2030.[39] To unlock the productive potential of girls and women, USAID/Niger will support access to and acceptability of voluntary family planning *(sub-IR 2.3.3)* and efforts to reduce CEFMU *(sub-IR 2.3.4).* USAID/Niger will work to reduce the incidence of CEFMU. Working alongside communities, USAID/Niger will support efforts to shift norms and behaviors to facilitate girls' and young women's access to quality education, including formal and non-formal learning opportunities. Given that girls who drop out of school are more vulnerable to CEFMU, USAID/Niger will promote improvements in girls' education as a way to delay marriage and interrupt the intergenerational impacts of CEFMU.[40] USAID/Niger will promote voluntary family planning programs to help increase birth spacing, improve MCH outcomes, and create more opportunities for women to engage in productive activities. Large families and early marriages are ingrained cultural norms in many communities and efforts to change those behaviors are often cast as anti-Muslim or anti-Nigerien. Integrating family planning information and services with critical nutrition and MCH programs for girls, women, and families has generated progress in Niger that the Mission will continue.[41] USAID/Niger will also engage men, as the customary decision-makers, in conversations about family planning, CEFMU, MCH, and other gendered issues. Linking birth spacing and delayed marriage with improved economic productivity, better nutrition and health outcomes, and household resilience builds acceptability of family planning in Niger.

Integrated Strategic Linkages

DO 2 is inherently linked to both DO 1, focused on strengthening community resilience, and DO 3, to improve the capacity of public institutions to deliver social services. Improving resilient and inclusive economic opportunities at the community level creates more resources for community empowerment. DO 2 supports economic empowerment of women and youth by removing some of the barriers to economic participation. Beyond productive outcomes, promoting family planning and reducing CEFMU contribute to MCH and support the well-being of women and families. The close links with the expansion of quality health services supported under DO 3 and life saving assistance for malaria and infectious disease under DO 1 will further enhance women and girls participation in education and productive enterprises, as care-giving for ill family members predominantly falls upon women and girls. When combined with DO 1 efforts to reduce barriers to participation of women and youth in leadership, DO 2 will help build communities that are inclusive and contribute to a more peaceful Niger. DO 1's focus on community resilience will help ensure climate, security, and disease shocks do not erode economic gains. Fundamentally, the effectiveness of public institutions to provide social services, including education, as described in DO 3 provides the basis for healthy Nigeriens' to improve

[38] Niger Gender Analysis Inception Report, 2022
[39] Lo Forte, C, Mann, G. and de Vise Lewis, E. (2016). Child Marriage in Niger: A qualitative study of four communities in Dosso and Maradi
[40] The USAID Child, Early, and Forced Marriage Resource Guide, recognizes that children of educated mothers are more likely to be better educated and less likely to experience early marriage themselves.
[41] RISE-FP Initiative: Zinder, Niger; Building Resilience through Capacity Building and Integration of Reproductive Health and Family Planning" Evidence To Action Final Report September 2020.

educational attainment and productively participate in economic opportunities. There is an explicit link between efforts to improve production and consumption of nutritious foods under the food security component of DO 2 and the work under DO 3 to improve the utilization of nutritious foods through integrated health services. This includes nutrition counseling for families and children, referrals and treatment of acutely malnourished children, and social and behavior change for improved diets under DO 3. In addition, there is an important link within food security to work under DO 1's focus on community interventions to sustain families during shocks. USAID/Niger's support of improved climate information as a public service supports advancements in CSA and agricultural market systems. At a higher level, work on key sectoral policy reforms under DO 3 may include policy and regulatory reforms that contribute to the enabling environment required for DO 2. DO 2 aligns closely with the regional efforts identified in the joint RDCS for West Africa and the Sahel under the objective to advance inclusive broad-based economic growth (*RDO 2*).

Overarching Approaches

DO 2 increases resilience by reducing economic vulnerability to climate shocks through CSA and economic diversification. The explicit focus on food security and nutrition recognizes the ongoing food insecurity and malnutrition crisis across Niger and the role peace and development actors can play in layering, integrating, and sequencing with humanitarian interventions to build resilience while reducing the long-term need for emergency support. In the short term, humanitarian assistance will continue to play a crucial role in food security. Ensuring equitable access to health, education, food security, and economic opportunities, particularly among marginalized communities in Niger, requires planning around conflict dynamics to build upon positive and connecting factors, while reducing risks of exacerbating underlying grievances. DO 2 will integrate preventing violent extremism and conflict sensitivity to mitigate risks around increased insecurity negatively impacting import, export, and livelihood opportunities. The intentional pairing of increased educational attainment and economic opportunities seeks to mitigate risks of youth disenfranchisement that have been tied to susceptibility to VEO recruitment. This DO will promote DRG principles by engaging on economic and environmental issues central to people's livelihoods, such as corruption, extortion, impunity, illegal trade, weak land tenure, and lack of transparency on efforts to increase economic opportunities and private-sector engagement.

USAID Policy Priorities

Under the umbrella of improving inclusive economic opportunities, USAID/Niger recognizes the critical importance of advancing Nigerien private-sector actors as development partners and decision-makers in support of locally-led development. USAID/Niger will expand work under the West Africa Trade and Investment Hub to grow small businesses and unlock equity investment, with a focus on women and youth. The Mission will also extend its loan guarantee with the Development Finance Corporation to support the private sector. DO 2 aligns with USAID's Youth in Development policy, in particular supporting the ability of youth to access information, education, safe services, and livelihood opportunities to build the skills they need to lead healthy, productive, and engaged lives. These efforts will also make significant contributions to the Agency's climate change and resilience agendas through the efforts on CSA and climate resilient livelihoods and market systems. DO 2 efforts are further supported by designations as a Feed the Future target country and a Nutrition Focus Country.

Government of Niger Alignment

Structural transformation of the economy, modernization of rural areas, and development of human capital are key priorities in the government's PDES for Niger. W orking with youth feeds directly into Niger's focus on human capital. Targeted support to girls and their education aligns with stated

presidential priorities that also include improving access to family planning and reducing the incidence of CEFMU to help unlock the potential of young women. Through DO 2, USAID/Niger will work to support the government's goal to modernize rural areas and foster economic growth. USAID/Niger will complement MCC's work on irrigation with the newly created National Groundwater Authority, the Ministry of Hydrology and Sanitation, Ministry of Agriculture, and Ministry of Livestock, to leverage extensive renewable aquifers for productive use as well as drinking water to improve health and hygiene. USAID/Niger will also work with the High Commission for Nigeriens Nourishing Nigeriens on food security and nutrition.

Donor and Development Partner Landscape

Many development agencies support inclusive economic growth, notably the UN through WFP, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the World Bank. WFP is most active on emergency food security and nutrition. FAO is an active partner in food security, agricultural market systems. and animal health. USAID collaborates with the nutrition cluster led by UNICEF. The education sector's financial and technical partners group, led by the EU and UNICEF, serves as the coordinating body for GoN and donors on education. The World Bank works primarily on the business enabling environment and larger infrastructure type investments. The International Monetary Fund works with the Ministry of Finance on access to finance and the macro-economic climate. In terms of bilateral support, LuxDev heads GoN and donor coordination on water, sanitation, and hygiene and advocates for multi-donor well building. AFD investments focus on support for agriculture and food production, education system strengthening, and environment. The Niger Education Cluster seeks to strengthen education opportunities to enhance physical (protected learning environments) and psychosocial well-being for children and youth in crisis-affected regions. USAID is supporting education efforts in Niger centrally through multilateral pooled funds, such as Education Cannot Wait and the Global Partnership for Education.

Assumptions	Risks
• Niger continues to be able to participate in global and regional markets • GoN continues to support a business-enabling environment for private sector engagement • Communities engage with donor-funded activities despite anti-foreign sentiments and potential security risks to participants • Economic impacts of COVID-19 and other diseases remain manageable	• As a landlocked country, increased insecurity, particularly in key transportation corridors, will negatively affect imports, exports, livelihoods, and transhumance. • Macroeconomic instability may undercut the investment climate, impede trade, and negatively impact economic well being • Global or regional financial shocks constrain economic growth • Spread of zoonotic disease severely damages livestock based livelihoods • Insecurity or disease drive mass school closures beyond current levels

DO 3: Performance and Responsiveness of Government Institutions Improved

Improved delivery of public services and more accountable government institutions, including through free, fair, and transparent elections, lead to confidence in the State to advance the social and economic

well-being of the people of Niger. Conversely, breeches in service delivery and lack of local representation erode public trust and contribute to insecurity, posing significant risks to Niger's development agenda. Under DO 3, systems strengthening is paired with improved accountability and oversight measures to produce incentives for public actors to govern in ways that strengthen legitimacy, inclusion, and the rule of law and promote the delivery of adequate health, education and other public services. When asked how to measure good governance, participants in Nigerien communities most often cited service-delivery related metrics, such as schools being adequately staffed with teachers, rehabilitation of community health centers, and health workers welcoming to patients.[42] More effective governance systems will benefit all sectors and programs, including access to justice , global health security, integrated primary health care services, nutri tion, education, climate information services, early warning systems, and management of natural resources. Access to quality education and health care services has direct bearing on the economic development and well being of Nigeriens, particularly women. Direct partnering with government institutions and promotion of inclusive planning and political processes will facilitate the achievement of this objective. Government responsiveness and effectiveness in Niger is inhibited by a lack of capacity for essential reforms, such as decentralization, and the corruption that robs the state of the resources with which to respond.[43] Improved governance and public policies will contribute to a government system supporting healthier and better-educated Nigeriens, a more productive workforce, a better functioning market system, and more resilient communities with hope for a more peaceful Niger.

DEVELOPMENT HYPOTHESIS

IF Niger's government receives strategic support to ensure public institutions are more capable, better able to manage their resources, and implement improved policies in order to more effectively deliver priority public services, including health, education, water, emergency response, and justice, in ways that are perceived as equitable and fair;

AND IF mechanisms to hold institutions accountable are strengthened—including through support to elections and other oversight measures—so that public services are more transparent, inclusive, equitable, and of higher quality;

THEN government institutions will improve their performance and responsiveness to meet community needs, thus building trust between the government and Nigeriens.

IR 3.1 Effectiveness of Public Institutions to Deliver Health and Other Social Services Increased

There is a stark deficit of public services across communities in Niger. Institutional checks and balances are weak. Scarce financial and human resources are diverted from responding to citizen needs and the social contract is weakened. Nigeriens face a variety of inclusion and rule of law issues where rights are not protected. The president of Niger has highlighted that to solidify development gains across sectors, there is a need to build the capacity for accountable, inclusive, and responsive governance systems that are able to meet communities' basic service delivery needs in health, education, justice, and other key sectors. Complementing other donor investments by the EU, UN system, and Global Fund, under IR 3.1,

[42] Community Generated Indicators Niger 2022, Assessing Good Governance in Liptako-Gourma, ORB International, under Peace through Evaluation, Learning and Adapting (PELA) activity, draft May 2022
[43] Democracy, Human Rights and Governance Assessment of Niger, Management Systems International (MSI), 2017.

USAID/Niger will work alongside the GoN to increase the effectiveness of public institutions to deliver health and other key social services.

Efforts under this IR will seek to build capacity at the national and commune levels to deliver quality social services *(sub-IR 3.1.1)*, inclusive of health, nutrition, education, water, emergency response, climate services, and justice, among others. As the government grapples with deconcentration and transitioning toward decentralization, where communes would lead service delivery, capacity development of core competencies is key. USAID/Niger will work across line ministries at national and regional levels, fostering partnerships with the ministries of Vocational Training; National Education; Higher Education; Public Health; Population and Social Affairs; Agriculture; Livestock; Hydrology; a nd Interior and Decentralization, among others to ensure support for the responsive provision of social services and sustained enhancement of national systems. Given the ongoing climate pressures, the Mission also will support the government to improve climate services and tools for climate-informed decision-making at the national and regional levels that will benefit education, health, agriculture and economic growth systems. USAID/Niger will obtain institutional buy-in and commitment, integrate efforts, and maximize flexibility in providing capacity development support.[44]

Quality health service delivery will be a priority as a fundamental building block to address chronically high rates of morbidity and mortality that prevent productivity, impede educational attainment, and compound household level vulnerability. Rather than a siloed approach, the Mission will support capacity development for the delivery of integrated health services. This integration will include layering health services within other sectoral approaches, such as promoting sanitation and hygiene through education, as well integration of different health services, such as providing nutrition screening during malaria prevention visits. USAID/Niger will work with the GoN to strengthen the systems for nutrition interventions that improve infant and young child feeding practices to address early childhood malnutrition and stunting, while also providing a safety net for malnourished and food insecure households with a particular focus on improving MCH and intake of critical micro-nutrients.

USAID/Niger will strengthen the capacity of the Nigerien higher education system by improving the quality of undergraduate coursework, developing new graduate-level coursework, providing instructional staff with professional development in both content and pedagogy, increasing the quality of university agriculture research, improving university-community linkages, and increasing women's and other marginalized populations' access to graduate degree programs.

This approach will also seek to identify and address gaps in access to services that exist between marginalized groups and the general population, such as barriers to basic health or infectious disease services for people from minority ethnic groups or nomads. Perceptions of inequity between groups are also proving to be an entry point for VEOs seeking to exacerbate social rifts. USAID/Niger will seek to mitigate differential impacts of uneven or absent service delivery on women, youth, people with disabilities, and nomadic populations. For example, gendered service barriers may affect if women can access legal aid or claim identity documents, services critical to support survivors of GBV or other forms of exploitation. Access to preventive and curative health care, for family planning and maternity services, nutrition and infectious diseases such as malaria is key for the well-being of girls and women, both as individuals and as family caregivers.

Enhanced ability to deliver services will be complemented by increased ability of the government to plan, manage and mobilize qualified human resources and required financial resources for sustained delivery of key services. Defense spending is prioritized at the expense of investments in social services such as health, education, or water. S tate resources are primarily kept by the central government and only three

[44] USAID Human and Institutional Capacity Development: Recommendations for Improving Capacity Strengthening Approaches,

percent of resources are transferred to local authorities.[45] Improving resource mobilization and management *(sub-IR 3.1.2)* for service delivery supports GoN intentions on decentralization. Improvements to national data systems and supply chains will enhance the planning and distribution of key products and supplies, such as diagnostic tests for malaria and contraceptive supplies, creating greater cost efficiencies and promoting availability of key services. The Mission will also support the GoN with their efforts to improve their sovereign credit rating to facilitate greater liquidity for social and health service expenditures.

Building the capacity of the government to advance policy reforms in key sectors *(sub-IR 3.1.3),* such as health, education, climate change, and others is a critical piece of service delivery effectiveness. A key challenge will be building capacity for quality data collection for planning and evaluations. USAID will support the national census, demographic and health surveys, and sectoral assessments, and will work with GoN partners to build capacity for evidence-driven policy development. Among others, USAID will work with the Ministry of Health's National Malaria Control Program, the High Commission for Nigeriens Nourishing Nigeriens, the National Institute of Statistics, the Ministry of Environment and Combating Desertification, and the Ministry of Hydrology to advance policy reforms. USAID will also support the Ministry of National Education to strengthen policy reform to deliver formal and non-formal education services.

As the current public health system reaches only half of the population of Niger,[46] there is a need to strengthen the system in terms of capacity, resource mobilization and policy reform to deliver consistent high quality services across a wider geography. The Mission will continue to support and expand the public health care system in Niger to address key drivers of morbidity and mortality. Notably, USAID/Niger will continue to support the GoN in combating infectious diseases including COVID-19, meningitis, and malaria via the U.S. President's Malaria Initiative.

IR 3.2 Institutions Are More Accountable to Citizens and Communities

USAID/Niger will support the GoN's intention to put in place a robust system of checks and balances to hold themselves accountable for improved performance and responsiveness to citizen needs. While in principle public officials act in the best interest of the people, in practice patronage systems and weak checks and balances impede effective service delivery. Through support for systems to increase accountability through elections and political processes, communities hold incentives for politicians to meet the needs of their constituents in order to be elected or stay in office. USAID/Niger will also support increased accountability through capacity building for accountability agencies, such as audit institutions, election commissions, anti corruption bodies, courts, human rights commissions, and statistical offices. Through community monitoring, the Mission will promote direct contact between citizens and providers to reduce corruption and build accountability.

Efforts under IR 3.2 will support the accountability of institutions to citizens and communities. Working with the electoral commission, civil society, women's networks, youth organizations, journalists, and political parties, USAID/Niger will support on-going multi-donor coordinated efforts to strengthen electoral systems and political participation ahead of the 2025 elections. Increasing citizens' ability to select their leaders through transparent, periodic, free, and fair elections fosters accountability of elected officials *(sub-IR 3.2.1)*. Bringing excluded groups into political processes increases representation. Despite progress on quotas for gender equality in the National Assembly, Niger has not managed to meet 25 percent and 30 percent quotas for elected regional and local and appointed female officials.

[45] Education, Financial, and Technical Partners Decentralization advocacy points, March 2022
[46] According to a presentation by the Secretary General of the National Health Committee in Niger dated February 2022.

Oversight of national institutions and anti-corruption measures will be enhanced *(sub-IR 3.2.2)* through improved access to information and support to key institutions, such as the national anti-corruption commission, the supreme audit institution, the ombudsman, sectoral ministry inspectors general, and the National Assembly. These efforts will build transparency and reduce corruption within institutions and among civil servants, appointees, and elected officials to reverse the corrosive effects of fraud, waste, and abuse on citizen trust in the government. Public resources—inclusive of both human and financial capital—are a critical factor for a country's overall development, security, health, resilience, and welfare. External oversight of public resources and funding is necessary to ensure resources are used effectively. USAID/Niger will support the GoN in strengthening mechanisms for oversight within targeted government institutions to monitor, disclose, investigate, or otherwise bring attention to public resource use. Improved government transparency and justice actions that address grievances of local populations related to corruption will contribute to preventing the spread of violent extremism.

Integrated Strategic Linkages

The commune level is the territorial entity which assures public services respond to the needs of the population under DO 3, but it is also the space for the participation of populations in local affairs and local development under DO 1. Work to improve the supply of and access to social services for the population at the local level links to DO 1 efforts to empower citizens to access and use those services and to promote better governance of local affairs, particularly around life-saving health and infectious disease interventions. Institutional oversight under DO 3 is linked to supporting community capacity to hold the government accountable through support to community monitoring committees and non-governmental organizations under DO 1. Similar linkages help ensure individuals have the information to be effective participants in the democratic process. DO 3 links with DO 2 in three important ways. First, interventions on key sectoral policy reform will include key business enabling policies, and regulatory reforms to support markets and economic growth. Second, improved public service delivery, particularly of health and education, are enabling conditions to unlock the productive potential of Nigeriens. There is an explicit link to nutrition through both the health system of DO 3 and the food system improvements of DO 2. Access to safe and nutritious foods paired with utilization of essential health services supports healthy and more productive communities. Provision of infant and young child feeding matched with support for nutrition counseling and services for vulnerable and undernourished Nigeriens through extension into communities and quality primary health care and emergency nutrition services under DO 1 are key to these achievements. And finally, improvements in climate information services and early warning systems play a key role in enabling CSA.

DO 3 aligns closely with the regional efforts identified in the joint RDCS for West Africa and the Sahel under their objectives to enhance democracy, peace, and stability *(RDO 1) and* there is a shared focus on strengthening democratic governance and health systems *(RDO 3).*

Overarching Approaches

An overwhelmingly security-focus to preventing violent extremism has limitations, so DO 3 charts a more expansive approach to address underlying drivers of insecurity more holistically. If advanced in a conflict sensitive way and informed by a local understanding of political, economic, and social power dynamics, improved government performance and responsiveness can contribute to reducing grievances of local populations and mitigating perceptions of inequitable treatment among groups. This would help reduce conflict and vulnerability to VEO recruitment. These efforts strengthen the social contract between communities and their governments and provide important safety nets in times of crisis. More fundamentally, better access to quality public services leads to healthier, more educated and productive human beings. Leveraging programs such as the U.S. President's Malaria Initiative and Feed the Future to

strengthen national systems for health care and access to nutritious foods through more productive agricultural markets gives communities greater resilience. Due to persistent complex crises, humanitarians have provided significant social services. Creating space for coordination along the HDP nexus, this DO will support a shift along the emergency to long-term development continuum toward locally-led service delivery by the government.

USAID Policy Priorities

Building a closer and more collaborative relationship with the GoN is in line with the Agency's priorities on localization and inclusivity. This DO seeks to support greater locally-led development by empowering the national and sub-national governments as partners on programs aligned with key USAID interests, such as Feed the Future, the U.S. President's Malaria Initiative, Global Health Security, and the USAID Climate Strategy. To achieve this, USAID/Niger will actively seek departments or government agencies to pilot government-to-government awards. The Mission will more closely engage GoN partners in co-creation during activity design to ensure ownership. Improving the performance and responsiveness of government institutions in Niger, aligns with the USG priorities of supporting democratic governance and combating corruption as well as the President of Niger's policy agenda. Effective mobilization and management of resources in support of increasing delivery of key services highlights opportunities to collaborate on transparent and accountable governance systems.

Government of Niger Alignment

USAID/Niger is committed to accompanying the GoN along their five-year plan as set forth in the PDES. Support for democratic governance and expansion of accountability is in line with the government's good governance and anti-corruption focus. Good governance—focused on improved government relations with civil society and political parties, anti-corruption, and state modernization —helps build trust with communities through the provision of public goods and services. GoN priorities to develop human capital highlight systems strengthening to provide nutrition and health services, including MCH and family planning. USAID will continue to support line ministries at national and regional levels on enhancement of national systems. Supporting sub-IR 3.2.1 on elections and political competition contributes to GoN's priority on improved political and administrative governance, including improving the effectiveness of political dialogue and electoral institutions.

Donor and Development Partner Landscape

Donor coordination on this DO crosses all sectors. Key collaborating UN agencies include the WFP, FAO, UNICEF, WHO, the UN Population Fund, and World Bank. LuxDev coordinates sectoral donors for support of water access and management. In health, in addition to the UN partners referenced above, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria is a key partner with the U.S. President's Malaria Initiative. The EU, Gates Foundation, Belgian Enabel, and GIZ also coordinate for health sector development and service delivery. The Common Fund for the Education Sector supports the GoN in enhancing access, quality, and governance in education. Partners contributing to the education common fund include the AFD, SDC, LuxDev, UNICEF, and the Global Partnership for Education. The World Bank works closely with GoN to improve the quality of teaching and learning conditions and strengthen education planning and management, with a focus on fragile and vulnerable regions. The decentralization donor partner group is led by GIZ and SDC. The justice sector donor partner group is led by AFD.

Assumptions	Risks
• Continued GoN commitment to	• Civil opposition or unrest escalating to

decentralization process, increased anti-corruption, and reforms in target sectors • Minimum political stability upholds the constitution • Continued non-USG donor investments in key sectors • Champions for reforms can be identified and cultivated • Continued interest of GoN and Nigeriens in USG partnerships • Continued relative freedom of expression, assembly, association and the press	violent protests could undermine civil society, advocacy, and participation platforms • Regional political/economic trends: coups, transnational organized crime expansion, and government corruption/collusion inhibits activities beyond the point USAID/Niger can have an impact • Increased instability and VEO activities hinder regional and local government processes beyond support

IV. MONITORING, EVALUATION, and LEARNING

Niger faces complex development challenges. USAID/Niger sees the benefits of an integrated approach to address these challenges. This strategy is buttressed by four overarching approaches on conflict sensitivity, resilience, the democratic governance principles, and the HDP nexus. This integrated strategy demands robust and adaptive MEL to ensure programming is achieving results and the Mission remains responsive to the dynamic operating environment. The Nigerien context changes rapidly, presenting new risks and threats, as well as windows of opportunity and stabilization. This strategy wil l leverage a wide range of MEL and collaborating, learning, and adapting (CLA) tools and activities to track progress and inform adaptations and pivots. The Mission will expand the use of complexity-aware monitoring and evaluation in support of equitable and evidence-driven efforts. CLA will be integrated across operations to enable the flexible, agile, and responsive development needed for working successfully in Niger. A context monitoring system is one of the tools the Mission will use to track those trends to enable proactive decision-making, strengthen adaptive management, and increase the agility of USAID to respond to context shifts.

In accordance with the Program Cycle Operational Policy, USAID/Niger will formalize the MEL framework, evaluation plan, and learning agenda to accompany this strategy in a Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) following approval of this CDCS. The PMP will reflect the Mission's approach to tracking changes in scenarios through context monitoring as well as uptake of the four overarching approaches.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Processes and Systems

Once a PMP is finalized, the Mission plans to prioritize the development of strategy specific Mission Orders to ensure integration throughout the Program Cycle. All individual-level indicators will be disaggregated by gender and age bands. All organizational indicators will be disaggregated by group type (women's group, youth group, religious group, etc). Appropriate conflict-sensitive disaggregation will be defined in the PMP.

Context Monitoring System

Context indicators measure external conditions that affect the CDCS goals and activity implementation. Dedicated context monitoring resources can prepare the Mission to respond to emerging threats and opportunities to protect USG investments and maximize impact. The Mission will monitor key drivers, assumptions, and trends to inform possible programmatic pivots and more nuanced adaptations. To gather relevant context inputs and atmospherics, the Mission works through implementing partner coordination groups as one means to track trends in the field, for example through the legacy CLA mechanism technical working groups, including on Governance, Peace, and Security and Resilience, Risk and Catastrophe. Specific quantitative indicators, qualitative trends, and atmospherics to be included in the more formal context monitoring system will be defined during PMP development. Combined with conflict analysis, political economy analysis, and other tools, the Mission will leverage these insights to engage in more proactive planning with implementing partners. GIS capabilities will complement these efforts.

Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting Processes and System

The Mission will continue to advance CLA under legacy programs through 2024. The current CLA partner coordinates a series of thematic working groups on topics of particular interest to the Mission, including disaster risk reduction and economic growth. The Mission will seek to further advance learning opportunities through the proposed Niger-specific platform and more fully engage implementing partners in these efforts. The Mission will also continue its established practice of joint cross-sector site visits in support of cross-sector learning. The PMP will include a learning agenda with questions and lines

of enquiry around the DOs, the overarching approaches, gender, youth and inclusion. The Mission will carefully crosswalk these learning priorities with learning from legacy programs to ensure continuity.

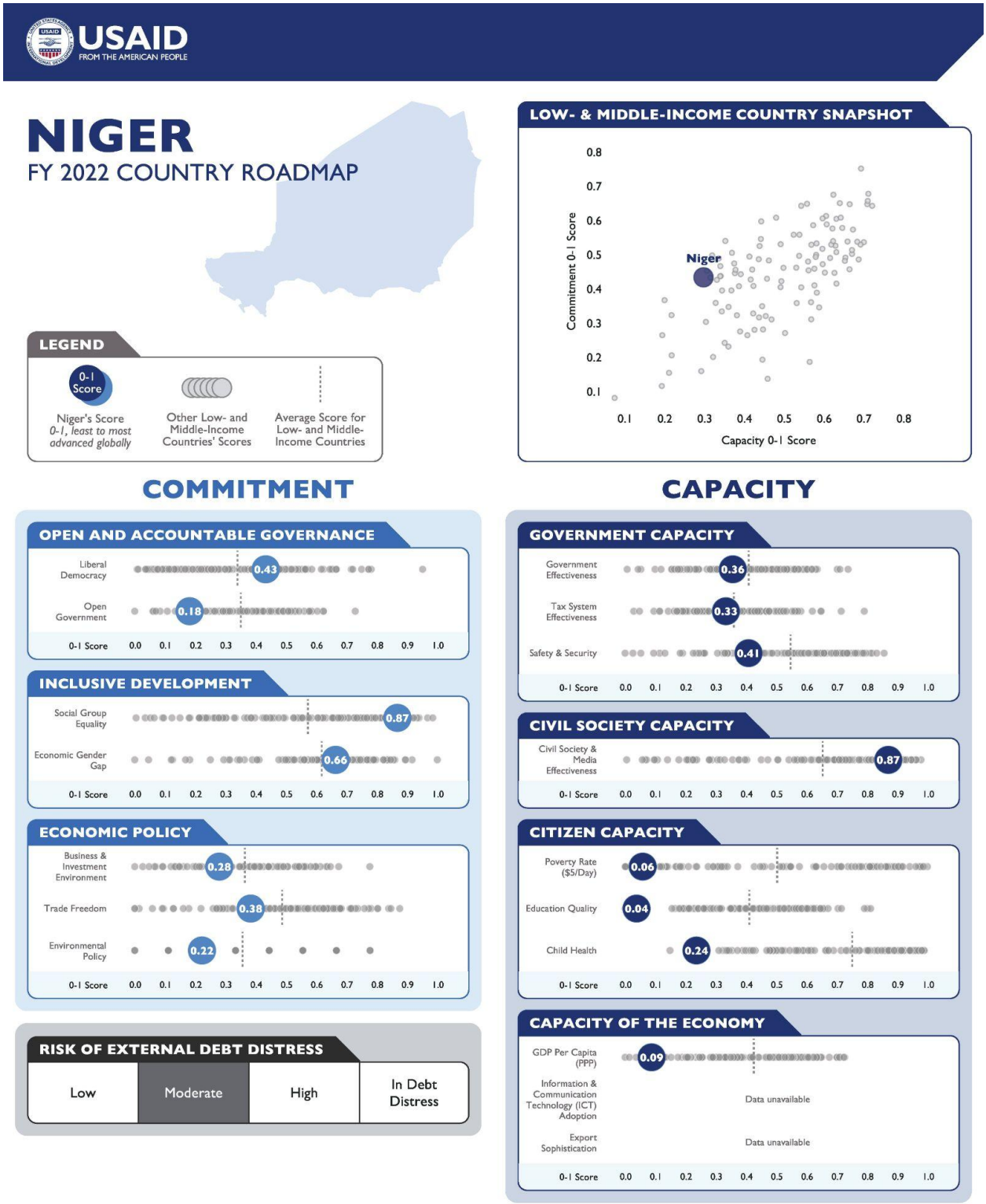
Local Priorities

At a local level, USAID/Niger is piloting the use of community generated indicators to localize activity goals and more directly represent the vision of communities in MEL. Nationally, USAID/Niger will continue to support improved data collection by the GoN under DO 3 with a specific focus on census and early warning systems. The last population census and credible nationwide Demographic and Health Survey were completed in 2012. There are significant data blind spots in Niger for the GoN, USG, and other development partner interests. Without a nationally and regionally representative assessment of Nigerien demographic, economic, and health indicators, reliance on models and estimates of need and population size frequently result in service gaps due to demand underestimation. The population growth rate is the world's highest, and there is significant variance in growth across regions, further complicating projections for planning, resource mobilization, policy development, and service delivery.

V. ANNEX

a. USAID/Niger Country Roadmap 2022

Annex A. USAID/Niger Country Roadmap



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

COUNTRY ROADMAPS

INDICATOR DEFINITIONS AND SOURCES

The FY 2022 Country Roadmaps draw on the latest data available as of July 2021, with latest results typically covering the 2020 or 2019 period. All source data are derived from third-party institutions. All indicators are weighted equally in the calculation of the overall Commitment and Capacity scores. Map boundary representations are not necessarily authoritative.

For more information on definitions and sources, please see the USAID Country Roadmap Methodology Guide.

COMMITMENT

OPEN AND ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE

Liberal Democracy: Measures freedom of expression, freedom of association, suffrage, elections, rule of law, judicial constraints on the executive branch, and legislative constraints on the executive branch. Source: Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), Liberal Democracy Index.

Open Government: Measures the degree to which a government shares information, empowers people with tools to hold the government accountable, and fosters citizen participation in public policy deliberations. Sub-factors include: publicized laws and government data, right to information, civic participation, and complaint mechanisms. Source: World Justice Project, Rule of Law Index.

INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

Social Group Equality: Measures political equality with respect to civil liberties protections across social groups as defined by ethnicity, religion, caste, race, language, and region. Source: Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), Social Group Equality in Respect for Civil Liberties.

Economic Gender Gap: Index comprising five components: (1) wage equality between women and men for similar work; (2) the ratio of female estimated earned income to male income; (3) the ratio of female labor force participation to male participation; (4) the ratio of female legislators, senior officials, and managers to male counterparts; and (5) the ratio of female professional and technical workers to male counterparts. Source: World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report, Economic Participation and Opportunity Sub-Index.

ECONOMIC POLICY

Business & Investment Environment: A composite measure gauging the conduciveness of a country's (1) enterprise conditions—the degree to which market, entrepreneurial, tax, labor, and other regulations enable businesses to start, compete, and expand—and (2) investment environment—the extent to which investments are protected adequately through the existence of property rights, investor protections, and contract enforcement, as well as the availability of domestic and international capital. Source: Legatum Institute, Prosperity Index.

Trade Freedom: Measures a country's openness to international trade based on average tariff rates and non-tariff barriers to trade. Source: Heritage Foundation, Index of Economic Freedom.

Environmental Policy: Gauges the soundness of environmental stewardship and natural resource management, factoring a wide array of macroeconomic policies with environmental consequences, such as energy and tax policies, and incentives at the firm and household levels. The metric also factors whether legislation and regulations are effectively executed, as well as the influence of societal stakeholders beyond the government, including the private sector and civil society. Source: Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI).

RISK OF EXTERNAL DEBT DISTRESS

Rates a country's risk of public sector debt distress on a four-tier scale: "low risk," "moderate risk," "high risk," and "in debt distress." Ratings are based on countries' debt and market structures, fiscal and macroeconomic outlook, and institutional capacity to manage debt burden. Ratings help guide the borrowing decisions of lower-income countries to meet development needs while reducing the chances of excessive debt build-up. Ratings are shown for 62 lower-income countries for which the IMF prepares risk ratings and are not scored components of Commitment or Capacity. Source: International Monetary Fund, Debt Sustainability Analysis for Low-Income Countries.

CAPACITY

GOVERNMENT CAPACITY

Government Effectiveness: Measures the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and its independence from political pressure, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to its stated policies. Source: World Bank, Worldwide Governance Indicators.

Tax System Effectiveness: Ratio between a country's actual tax collection and the estimated level of tax revenue that a country could achieve, given its macroeconomic, demographic, and institutional features. Source: USAID, Collecting Taxes Database, Tax Effort Indicator.

Safety & Security: Measures the degree to which individuals and communities are free from war and civil conflict, terrorism, politically related terror and violence, violent crime, and property crime. Source: Legatum Institute, Prosperity Index.

CIVIL SOCIETY CAPACITY

Civil Society & Media Effectiveness: Measures the range of actions and mechanisms that citizens, civil society organizations, and an independent media can use to hold a government accountable. The mechanisms include using informal tools such as social mobilization and investigative journalism. Source: Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), Diagonal Accountability Index.

CITIZEN CAPACITY

Poverty Rate ($5/Day): Measures the percent of the population living under $5/day in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms. Source: World Bank, PovCalNet.

Education Quality: Gauges both the quality of education—using harmonized scores across major international student achievement testing—and the quantity of schooling received—using age-specific enrollment rates—to evaluate the relative performance of educational systems worldwide. Source: World Bank, Human Capital Index, Learning-Adjusted Years of Schooling Indicator.

Child Health: A composite measure that aggregates child mortality, access to at least basic water sources, and access to at least basic sanitation facilities. Source: Columbia University Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN).

CAPACITY OF THE ECONOMY

GDP Per Capita (PPP): Measures the flow of resources available to households, firms, and government to finance development as the country's total Gross Domestic Product (PPP) divided by the country's population. Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators.

Information & Communication Technology (ICT) Adoption: Index comprising: (1) mobile-cellular telephone subscriptions; (2) mobile-broadband subscriptions; (3) fixed-broadband internet subscriptions; (4) fiber internet subscriptions; and (5) internet users. Source: World Economic Forum (WEF), Global Competitiveness Index.

Export Sophistication: Measures the diversity and ubiquity of a country's exported goods, key markers that can help gauge economic sophistication and resilience. Source: Center for International Development at Harvard University, Economic Complexity Index.