



Photo by Sean Sheridan/Mercy Corps

# NIGER

## COUNTRY PROFILE

Niger is an emerging democracy landlocked in the Sahel, an increasingly unstable region facing numerous threats such as terrorism and climate change. Despite economic growth driven by the expansion of extractive industries, and recent progress in reducing poverty, broad-based development has been hampered by poor infrastructure, extremely low education levels, and multiple concurrent climatic shocks such as droughts and floods.

Economic progress is being further challenged by the highest fertility rate in the world (7 per woman), which is set to double the population size over the next twenty years. These hurdles, coupled with the increasing presence of violence, crime, and extremism, particularly along the border regions with neighboring Mali, Libya, and Nigeria, put Niger at risk of a reversal of its recent development gains. Niger is also grappling with a significant influx of refugees fleeing conflicts in the region, particularly in Nigeria and Mali.

## OUR WORK

### ENHANCING RESILIENCE: AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

Over 80 percent of Nigeriens rely on subsistence agriculture to meet their daily needs. The region's increasingly frequent climatic shocks, such as droughts and floods, lead to poor harvests and regular food shortages. USAID helps individuals, communities, and governments in Niger to better cope with recurrent crises, increase income levels, strengthen governance, sustainably manage natural resources, and improve health and nutrition. To make communities more resilient to food insecurity, USAID works to improve livestock, resource management, and agricultural practices with a view to supporting inclusive economic growth for the benefit of all Nigeriens. USAID's programs enhance the ability of stakeholders to make more informed decisions in four areas: agriculture and food security; water resources and hydroclimatic disasters; weather and climate; and land cover and land use change and ecosystems.

### DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND GOVERNANCE

USAID supports the Government of Niger's efforts to more effectively respond to citizen concerns and needs. In doing so, USAID focuses on citizen mobilization, advocacy, and dialogue with the government to improve a community's ability to enact change and demand more responsive governance. USAID is also encouraging cooperation among the legislature, civil society, and local governments to increase citizen participation in governance, particularly in areas vulnerable to violent extremism. Ahead of the 2021 national elections, USAID is promoting a peaceful democratic transition and the first-ever power handover from a civilian regime to another through free, fair, and inclusive elections. These programs promote consensus on the revised electoral code and the electoral processes itself while strengthening key institutions to effectively administer elections.

### GLOBAL HEALTH

In Niger, more than 47 percent of children under 5 years of age are chronically undernourished, and the rates of acute malnutrition are well beyond the threshold for public health emergencies. Malaria accounts for 50 percent of deaths among children under 5. In addition, Niger has the highest fertility rate in the world. Left unchecked, Niger's rapid population growth will further undermine the effective delivery of health services and weaken the resilience of the most vulnerable people in the country. USAID programs focus on developing the capacity of government, civil society, and other important partners to improve family planning, nutrition, and mitigate infectious diseases, including malaria and emerging health threats.

### EDUCATION

71 percent of Niger's population is illiterate and only 54 percent of female primary school students reach 6th grade. USAID has contributed to the Government of Niger's ambitious national education program with activities that have contributed to progress in the sector. This includes improved reading skills in local languages for primary school students; an improved school environment, especially for girls; increased parental engagement; and strengthened community linkages with education leaders.

### WORKING IN CRISES AND CONFLICT

Niger faces security threats from internal and external extremist groups and continues to be a major focus of the *Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Partnership* that USAID implements throughout the Sahel.

USAID is also helping the Nigerien government as well as local partners to create economic opportunities. In addition, USAID supports the civic and political participation of Nigerien youth to undermine extremist messages and encourage stability in Niger and the region.

## **HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE**

USAID is providing emergency humanitarian assistance to Niger with activities designed to support agriculture, livelihoods, food security, health, WASH, and nutrition. This life-saving assistance supports people's recovery from food insecurity while reinforcing their capacity to cope with future emergencies. An estimated 3.4 million Nigeriens are food-insecure and approximately 1.3 million children under five years of age suffer from acute malnutrition.

## **USAID/NIGER AND SUPPORT STRUCTURES**

USAID is supporting Nigerien pharmaceutical management systems to improve HIV commodity security (such as drugs and testing supplies) as part of a regional initiative that includes six countries in West and Central Africa. USAID also supports the Ministry of Health to eradicate neglected tropical diseases such as trachoma and lymphatic filariasis and to reinforce its capacity to detect and respond to emergent disease threats.

## **INFECTIOUS DISEASES**

USAID/Niger's activities are complemented by a suite of regional activities led by USAID/Senegal's Sahel Regional Office, its Bureau of Humanitarian Affairs Regional Office, and the USAID/West Africa Regional Mission in Ghana who share the management responsibility for programs in Niger.

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