

## PACT Annual Report June – September 2012

# PACT

## “Projet d’Assistance Ciblée aux Communautés de Tchirozerine”

*Funded by USAID / Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)*



*United States Ambassador to Niger participating in unconditional cash distributions in Agadez*

COUNTRY CONTACT	HEADQUARTERS CONTACT	PROJECT SUMMARY
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## 1. Executive Summary

Niger's northern region of Agadez has been at the forefront of changes occurring throughout West Africa. Mercy Corps targeted population in Tchirozerine department, Agadez region, has been among the most affected by both the return of refugees and fighters from Libya, as well as the destabilization from Touareg communities and Islamic groups in northern Mali. In addition to these external pressures and threats, Agadez has experienced devastating floods during the 2011-2012 rainy season which was followed by crop failure during the subsequent drought and left more than 492 households<sup>1</sup> of small vegetable farmers with limited assets. With funding from USAID/OFDA, Mercy Corps launched a food security and economic recovery program in June 2012 to strengthen the purchasing power of poor farmers and to prevent migration and the sale of productive assets during the lean season, through unconditional cash distributions and vouchers for seeds and tools, while simultaneously reducing the risks of disasters through the protection of river banks from recurring floods, land rehabilitation and dredging of sand from flooded wells. As the program began just prior to the last quarter of FY2012, annual achievements are the same as quarterly achievements reported on in October 2012. The following achievements were recorded during the reporting period (June – September 2012):

- 1,040 household beneficiaries (or 7,280<sup>2</sup> individual beneficiaries) in 37 villages each received approximately \$200 in unconditional cash transfers over the three month lean season (June –August 2012)
- 500 household beneficiaries received the value of \$30 through vouchers for agricultural inputs (seeds/tools) for the planting season
- A procurement process was launched to identify a qualified service provider to train 25 Village Savings and Loan Associations. Trainings are scheduled to commence on December 1, 2012.

## 2. Program Overview

Funded by USAID/OFDA Mercy Corps' PACT program is an \$800,000, 12-month program designed to enhance food security and economic recovery for 1,040 disaster-affected households in the Tchirozerine Department, Agadez Region of Niger.

PACT targets vulnerable households through the following activities: unconditional cash transfers to 1,040 household beneficiaries to help them meet their immediate food need; cash for work activities to support land rehabilitation, and DRR activities, the provision of inputs to support agricultural production through vouchers, and VSLA formation and training for women, all for 500 household beneficiaries.

During the targeting process, considering the impact of chronic malnutrition among children in Niger, emphasis was placed on vulnerable households with children under the age of five. Other selection criteria included women who are heads of households, the disabled who are heads of households, widows, elderly community members, refugees/returnees from the recent insecurity in neighboring countries, and those with neither food stocks nor animals. While men are often responsible for all major household decisions in Niger, women are responsible for raising the children and securing food to feed the family. As such, PACT targets female beneficiaries in an effort to reinforce the role of women in community decision making.

<sup>1</sup> Mercy Corps rapid assessment September 2011 and confirmed by Agadez Regional committee for the Prevention and Management of Crisis

<sup>2</sup> The average size of a household is 7 members

### 3. Performance Summary

<b>Sector #1 Economic Recovery</b>	Vulnerable households' access to food during the lean season is increased			
<b>Beneficiaries Targeted</b>	7,280 IDPs: 0			
<b>Beneficiaries Reached</b>	7,280 IDPs: 0		100%	
<b>Geographic Area(s)</b>	Tchirozerine, Agadez Region			
<b>Sub-Sector:</b>				
<b>INDICATORS</b>	<b>BASELINE</b>	<b>TARGET</b>	<b>PROGRESS</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>Sub-Sector: Economic Asset Restoration</b>				
Number of people assisted through economic asset restoration activities	n/a	1,040	1,040	Completed in September 2012
Total USD amount channeled into the local economy (through cash grants, vouchers, livelihoods fairs, etc.)	n/a	225,333	204,849	Completed in September 2012
<b>Sub-Sector: Temporary Employment</b>				
Number of people employed through CFW activities	n/a	500	0	Activities to begin in November 2012
Average USD amount per person earned through CFW activities	n/a	\$166 (\$83,333)	\$0	Activities to begin in November 2012
Number and/or percent of women employed through CFW activities	n/a	200 (or 40%)	0	Activities to begin in November 2012
Number of infrastructures rehabilitated/built (garden wells)	n/a	60	0	Activities to begin in November 2012
Number of river banks protected	n/a	3,000 m	0	Activities to begin in November 2012
<b>Sub-Sector: Micro-credit</b>				
Number of people accessing financial services through savings groups	n/a	500	0	Activities to begin in November 2012
Number and percent of VSLA groups functioning properly according to their rules	n/a	25	0	To be achieved at end of program

#### Sector Summary

As planned, the project reached 1,040 vulnerable households (7,280 individual beneficiaries) in 37 villages. The 1,040 households received a cash transfer over a period of three months during the lean season (June through August) at a rate of approximately \$65 per month per household; injecting a total of \$204,849 into the local economy. Targeting was conducted in collaboration with local administrative authorities (prefects and mayors, supported by Memoranda of Understanding) through meetings and awareness raising activities where beneficiary selection criteria was developed (highly vulnerable households with children under 5 years, households not receiving the assistance of other partners, households residing in the village, households hosting returnees, households headed by persons with disabilities)<sup>3</sup>. The cash distribution during this period helped vulnerable families access food to feed their respective families, providing

<sup>3</sup> "Plan de soutien" (food crisis response plan), GON, 27 February 2012 –revision

three meals a day to children under five; while allowing beneficiary households to work on their own farms and gardens and repay debts.

### Cash for work

The CFW activities targeting 500 household beneficiaries were scheduled to begin in November 2012, to help families: 1) protect their households assets while providing cash to access basic needs, including food; 2) rehabilitate land, dredge sands out of 60 flooded garden wells to help beneficiaries water their year-round gardens; 3) protect at least 3,000 meters of river banks again flooding and further disasters. In collaboration with Government of Niger extension services from the Environment and Rural Engineering department in Tchirozerine, 11 sites were selected for the activities. Equipped with tools that will be procured in October 2012, CFW participants will be trained in proper and safe rehabilitation techniques.

Beneficiary identification was carried out during the reporting period. Considering that women are mostly responsible for raising children and securing food to feed the family, PACT CFW activities will target 404 female beneficiaries out of 500 (or 81%). This will also reinforce the role of women in community decision making.

<u>Sector #2</u>		Agricultural production in target areas is restored		
Agriculture				
<b>Beneficiaries Targeted</b>	3,500 IDPs: 0			
<b>Beneficiaries Reached</b>	3,500 IDPs: 0	100%		
<b>Geographic Area(s)</b>	Tchirozerine, Agadez Region			
<b>Sub-Sector: Seed Systems &amp; Agricultural Inputs</b>				
INDICATORS	BASELINE	TARGET	PROGRESS	Date
(Projected) increase in number of months of food self-sufficiency due to distributed seed systems/agricultural input for beneficiary families	5	9	N/A	30 September 2012
Number of people benefiting from seed systems/agricultural input activities	100	500	500	30 September 2012
Number of people who have demonstrated an increased understanding of business and technical principles	N/A	500	500	30 September 2012
Percentage increase in value of production between the 2011 and 2012 harvests	N/A	15%	N/A	30 September 2012

### Sector Summary

The project supported 500 farmers through the provision of corn and wheat seeds, with a second round of seeds/tools distribution scheduled for November 2012 that will include Irish potatoes, Roma Tomatoes, lettuce, Onions, and agricultural tools. Producers were targeted using beneficiary lists from cash payments. The seeds were distributed in collaboration with the suppliers, in a similar manner to the unconditional cash transfers: voucher cards were developed and distributed to the beneficiaries. The amount of each voucher received this reporting period is \$30, with another \$20 worth of vouchers to be distributed in November 2012 for seeds/tools (through a traditional voucher system). This reporting period, upon redeeming the voucher for a

type of seeds, the corresponding seed is punched out on the producers' voucher cards. After distribution, vouchers were redeemed and suppliers were reimbursed based on the total sales to the beneficiaries each vendor had, based on the number of vouchers redeemed. Prior to the seeds/tools distribution, the GoN department of agriculture extensions services provided three days training on agricultural and irrigation technics (production technics, water management technics, harvest and post-harvest, etc.) The usage of all these seeds complies with the appropriate periods of planting these crops.

#### **4. Monitoring & Evaluation**

The project is advancing according to schedule with noticeable positive results observed. Based on the baseline (report submitted in October 2012), Mercy Corps followed the developed work plan and indicators for the implementation of the program. Internal monitoring progress reporting occurred on weekly and monthly basis by the program staff supported by the M&E team in the field.

Before the household survey, the M&E team developed household census cards. These were adopted according to vulnerability criteria of the communities in the area. After each cash distribution, post distribution monitoring was conducted in order to collect information about distribution conditions, sources of expenses, conditions of acquisition assistance, market conditions and recommendations for improvement.

Each month a price monitoring survey is conducted on basic staples consumed in the region such as rice, millet, oil and sugar, to allow the monitoring of unintended project impact on market prices as a result of cash payments. To date, market prices are stable and have not been affected.

#### **5. Coordination**

To ensure solid project start up, the team organized a series of meetings with local authorities, including the Regional Committee of the Early Warning System and Crisis Management (SAP/GC) to plan its interventions and discuss possible areas of synergy with other partners in the region. At the end of each month, rotating coordination meetings are organized by the UN Office of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to present progress towards objectives and stay up-to-date on the humanitarian situation in the region. Mercy Corps continues to coordinate with peer agencies in Agadez involved in similar activities in order to avoid duplication and increase collaboration.

#### **6. Conclusion**

PACT has proven to be a valuable project at supporting community recovery in the target area. For example, the cash transfer activities conducted have improved access to food for vulnerable households during the lean period (up to 97.14% reported improved access during our 1<sup>st</sup> PDM). In addition, the introduction of improved seeds helped restore agricultural and cash crops production in the intervention area despite the damage caused by flooding in 2012. Beneficiaries interviewed during monitoring surveys mentioned that their production will support them for at least three months, a significant contrast to previous years when they produced enough for approximately one and a half months.

The appropriateness of program implementation and the selected geographic area, coupled with the technical expertise of Mercy Corps in economic recovery programming and experience in the Agadez region, are contributing to the success of the PACT program. Local stakeholders, including traditional chiefs, religious and influential leaders, administrative leaders and the beneficiaries are expressing their gratitude for these interventions. The planned Cash for Work and VSLA activities will support more durable change in the target communities.