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Niger Development Food Aid Program “Sawki”

2012-2017



Adolescent girls participants of a Safe Space in Maradi

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I. Executive Summary

Mercy Corps, Africare and Helen Keller International (HKI) are implementing a Development Food Aid Program (DFAP) entitled “*Sawki*” that is designed to respond to the food security needs of more than 92,092 beneficiaries in Maradi and Zinder, two of the most food insecure regions of Niger. Within these regions, *Sawki* is targeting 62 villages based on criteria of social vulnerability, economic opportunities and agro-pastoral linkages.

During this reporting period, the program accomplished the following activities:

Related to SO1: Health/ Nutrition

- 12 health promoters and 113 Mother Leader in Maradi Region were trained in Essential Nutrition Actions (ENA);
- 31,811 persons, including 2,803 men, were reached through 1,798 Mother Leader awareness-raising events related to ENA;
- 17,111 people, including 888 men, were reached through 1,153 nutritional cooking demonstrations;
- 43 health promoters were trained in family planning and management of community-based contraception distribution;
- 2,758 children were screened for malnutrition, of which 332 malnourished children were referred to health facilities;
- Food was distributed to 2,635 pregnant women, 1,630 lactating women and 6,486 children aged 6 - 23 months.

Related to SO2: Agriculture/ Livestock

- 2,425 women from 31 sites benefitted from monitoring and technical assistance in vegetable gardening;
- Vouchers were prepared for next quarter’s distribution targeting 2,425 women engaged in irrigated vegetable gardening;
- 1,234 women of childbearing age received 6,264 Moringa seedlings for planting in family compounds;
- 13 *Sawki* program officers and 8 government agents from the Ministry of Livestock were trained in herd management and milk production techniques;
- 117 livestock producers, 32 adolescent girls and 10 para-veterinary agents were trained in poultry production techniques;
- 3,854 producers, composed of 1,670 men and 2,184 women, benefitted from awareness-raising activities on animal health;
- 47,862 units of poultry were identified for vaccination against Newcastle disease;
- 18 community sites participating in the fodder production pilot planted 10,800 m² of forage.

Related to cross-cutting Gender activities

- Fieldwork was completed for the cross-sector gender assessment/ analysis, which represents a collaborative effort by all three DFAPs to gather the necessary information for a deeper analysis of the gender impacts of programming. The first draft of the report was submitted for review this quarter;
- 20 new Safe Spaces, involving a total of 500 adolescent girls and 30 mentors, were created in 10 out of 36 year-2 communities;
- 46 “Husband’s Schools” were created in 23 communities, two per village;

- Discussions with women's groups in target communities took place in order to identify actions, which will help decrease women's workload.

II. Program Overview

Mercy Corps, Helen Keller International (HKI) and Africare have joined their expertise in Niger to deliver a comprehensive package of activities, supported through partnerships with the Government of Niger (GoN), local NGOs, the National Institute of Agronomy Research (INRAN) and the private sector. *Sawki's* overall goal is to *reduce food insecurity and malnutrition among vulnerable populations in Niger*, with a special emphasis on empowering women and adolescent girls to achieve this goal. The two strategic objectives (SO) are:

SO1: Reduce chronic malnutrition among pregnant and lactating women and children under five with an emphasis on children under two;

SO2: Increase the local availability of and households' access to nutritious food by diversifying agricultural productivity, rural households' income and increasing resilience to shocks.

III. Program Activities

Activities related to program integration

The *Sawki* program has undertaken a number of initiatives to further improve integration of program activities, including establishing centralized community structures, and utilizing external partners to reach goals under multiple intermediate results (IR).

In order to foster better integration of program activities under SO1 and SO2, the program worked with communities to establish a centralized committee, which unites all sectoral community structures in beneficiary villages. This inclusive structure will also help foster stronger collaboration between community stakeholders involved in program implementation, such as local leaders, government and other community groups. During this quarter, the 12 remaining villages in the Maradi region established their centralized committees. In Zinder, high staff turnover caused delays this quarter; therefore the program will focus on establishing the remaining centralized structures during the next reporting period.

Mercy Corps and the Niger branch of the Orange Telecommunications Corporation (mobile phone company) signed a collaborative agreement covering all program villages in the Maradi region. Under this agreement, Mercy Corps facilitated linkages between Orange and at least four villages and two inter-community markets that allowed *Sawki* beneficiaries to learn more about two potentially useful Orange products: 1) *Labaroun Kassoua* – a market information hotline for agricultural products; and 2) Orange mobile-money service. At the same time, Mercy Corps utilized Orange's mobilization resources (e.g. vehicle equipped with loudspeakers) to conduct mass awareness campaigns on program-related themes, such as ENA. The 583 participating community members, 417 women and 166 men, showed great interest and have been very receptive to the communication campaign during this quarter. These campaigns also allowed staff to informally evaluate community understanding of major themes in ENA and hygiene through trivia games.

Women's vegetable gardens are also an activity where different program sectors have integrated their approaches to reach a common goal of improved food security and nutrition. Women in garden activities, who are organized into groups of around 20 members, benefit from a coordinate support in agricultural and nutritional fields. Female gardening groups benefit from training and demonstrations in improved agricultural techniques as well as nutritional best practices. Women are encouraged to grow crops rich in micro-nutrients, and then shown through culinary demonstrations how to use these local foods to create

nutritious meals for their households. During this latter phase, sensitization activities are conducted jointly by the Nutrition and Agriculture field agents. In addition, Mother Leaders encourage women in their care units and others in their communities to participate in the vegetable gardening to scale-up the impact of these activities. For example, during their awareness-raising sessions, the Mother Leaders who are members of the gardening activity show women in their care units and communities the importance of the producing and consuming vegetables for the household generally, and in particular for pregnant and lactating women, and children.

Another example of program integration is demonstrated in the design of women's gardening activities in conjunction with water infrastructure projects. The program recognized that women who engage in vegetable gardening need access to water for their crops as well as for household use. Because gathering water can be a labor and time-intensive task that often falls to women and girls, the program combined activities to target wells for rehabilitation that would be both suitable for gardening and household needs. This would allow women to garden close to well sites, where they would be able to gather water for their families on their way home. In this sense, program coordination between gardening and infrastructure activities contributed to reducing women's workload. In the next quarter, 17 well sites will be rehabilitated, allowing better access to irrigation for market gardens, and more efficient collection of drinking water, both of which will reduce women's daily workload.

In relation to inland valley agricultural development, the program will collaborate with a private company working in water management technologies to develop both a crop irrigation system and a water quality treatment system at the community level. Most water quality improvement activities concentrate primarily on the household level alone, whereas the Sawki program is researching the opportunity to include a water purification system at the community level in addition to working at the household level. The use of both surface water and groundwater for livelihoods relates to the SO2 agricultural component, but will also contribute to improved nutritional status and health of populations under SO1 through access to potable water. The creation of such infrastructure will be accompanied by joint training sessions on agricultural practices, and health and nutrition awareness-raising. Activities will also work with communities to ensure the meaningful involvement of women in decision-making processes around water infrastructures and water quality systems.

Activities related to coordination among consortium partners and externally

The Sawki program consortium partners, Mercy Corps, Africare and Hellen Keller International, continued to strengthen coordination among themselves in order to maximize the effectiveness of programming. Actions include:

- The program management unit (PMU) plays a crucial role in the functioning of the program. The PMU comprises senior Sawki staff from Mercy Corps, Africare and Hellen Keller International. It represents the decision making body of the program and is led by the chief of party (COP). All members of the PMU are based in Maradi and participate in all programmatic and administrative meetings;
- The three NGOs share the same offices in Maradi and Zinder;
- Weekly, monthly, quarterly and ad-hoc coordination meeting are held with the presence of all the Sawki staff from Mercy Corps, HKI and Africare. Partners from the Ministry of Agriculture, Public Health, Planning, the 3N and INRAN are also invited to quarterly coordination meetings and have thus far been active in these meetings.
- Recruitment of key personnel, such as strategic objective team leaders, are organized by the program in coordination with the consortium partner responsible of the recruitment;
- Regular meetings of the steering committee are held between the consortium partners. The Steering Committee comprises the three country directors and the COP;

- Monthly coordination meetings are held between the COPs of the three DFAPs, which help these programs exchange on subjects of common interest. These meetings has helped in the past to develop and coordinate joint activities such as the common gender analysis and the Pesticide Evaluation Report and Safer Use Action Plan (PERSUAP);
- Program or consortium representatives regularly attend relevant cluster meetings, including the Nutrition Cluster meetings organized by the Department of Nutrition and UNICEF at the national level and regional.

SO1: Chronic malnutrition among pregnant and lactating women & children under five is reduced

SO1 prioritizes reaching those in the 1,000-day window of opportunity between conception and a child’s second birthday. It employs a community-based model and research-based social and behavior change communications (SBCC) strategies to motivate the adoption of practices that protect or improve the nutritional status of pregnant and lactating women, adolescent girls, and children under five. *Sawki* works in partnership with existing community structures and health centers to ensure sustainability. Using the Essential Nutrition Actions (ENA) framework, the program promotes nutritionally-appropriate practices, healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies for wives and mothers very early in the targeted areas, SO1 also focuses on adolescent girls and appropriate sanitation and hygiene practices to reduce infectious diseases.

Program Achievement during reporting period (SO1)

Description of Activities	Achievement			Quantitative and Qualitative Description
	Achieved	Ongoing	No	
<i>SO1: Chronic malnutrition among pregnant and lactating women & children under five is reduced</i>				
IR 1.1: Appropriate nutrition practices during a child’s first 1,000 days adopted by pregnant women, mothers and caretakers				
ENA training for health staff, conducted by master trainers	X			12 health promoters and 113 leader mothers (from Maradi) trained in ENA 43 health promoters (Zinder) trained in family planning and management of contraception distribution centers.
Provide rations for leader mothers every six months	X			209 Mother Leaders and 17 health promoters
Monthly community meetings on ENA themes and behavior change, conducted by community health promoters	X			1,798 awareness-raising events, reaching 31,811 women and 2,803 men
Food distributions for pregnant and lactating women and children under 2 (every 2 months during the first two years of their participation)	X			The following received rations : 2,635 pregnant women 1,630 lactating women 6,486 children-age 6-23 months

Cooking demonstrations at distribution sites on preparation/ consumption of nutrient rich foods and animal products				1,153 cooking demonstrations, benefitting 17,111 people, including 888 men
Rehabilitate 20 wells, in collaboration with Ministry of Environment and Hydrology		X		Well site selection began in this quarter, and will continue next quarter, along with the selection of contractors.
Improve 30 wells (install animal troughs, solar pumps, pulley systems)		X		Site selection began in this quarter, and will continue next quarter, along with the selection of contractors.
Establish water-user committees (includes defining management roles and responsibilities, water use payment system, etc.)			X	Committees will be established and trained in the next quarter, in time to supervise well rehabilitation/ improvements.
Identify cost-efficient individual solutions to improve water quality, such as bio-sand or silver filters, or Aqua tabs		X		Selection planned for FY14 third quarter, discussions begun with Animas Sutura
Demi-E partner facilitate awareness-raising/analysis on sanitation conditions, as part of Community Total Led Sanitation (CTLS)		X		The contract conditions have been discussed, and activities will start next quarter. A WASH officer will be recruited next quarter to supervise.
<i>IR 1.2 Appropriate nutrition practices and healthy timing of first pregnancy adopted by adolescent girls and their partners</i>				
Sensitize communities on delayed childbirth and the health and economic benefits of girl's education through influential male and female community members. Specifically, awareness raising campaigns (health caravans, radio talk shows)		X		538 people (417 women) from at least four villages were sensitized on exclusive breastfeeding and hand washing through collaborative campaigns with Orange. Sensitization campaigns will continue next quarter.
Establish/strengthen Safe Spaces (weekly discussion groups for adolescent girls on ENA practices and life skills).	X			1,305 adolescent girls from 72 Safe Space groups participated in weekly meetings during the quarter (12 sessions) related to ENA, the importance of education and consequences of early marriage.
Safe Space participants and group mentors receive rations for participation in meetings (distributed every 6 months)	X			1,320 adolescent girls and their mentors benefitted from 25 kg of lentils each.
<i>IR 1.3 Counseling and care appropriately provided by health centers and other community actors</i>				
Collaborate with Ministry of Health and UNFPA to strengthen supply management of family planning supplies		X		Coordination meeting conducted with UNFPA to explain <i>Sawki</i> family planning approach and seek UNFPA support in implementation.

IR 1.1: Appropriate nutrition practices during a child's first 1,000 days adopted by pregnant women, mothers and caretakers

To achieve this intermediate result, *Sawki* is implementing the Preventing Malnutrition in Children under 2 Approach (PM2A). PM2A combines health capacity building, behavior change communication and food aid to provide a bridge toward long-term, sustainable improvements in health, sanitation and

nutrition practices. By the end of Year 2, 44,010 beneficiaries will be assisted in the nutrition sector. The program approach creates one care group per village, which is comprised of 10 to 15 Mother Leaders, and is supervised by a community health promoter, selected by the community. Mother Leaders are volunteers who each work directly with their own 'care unit', comprised of 10-15 pregnant and lactating women (PLW) to conduct cooking demonstrations and teach modules on health and nutrition, including ENA.

During this quarter, *Sawki* conducted training and awareness-raising events on issues related to ENA and general hygiene. In Maradi, 12 health promoters and 113 Mother Leaders from Maradi were trained on ENA. In Zinder, 43 health promoters were trained in the management of community-based contraception distribution sites using the standard Ministry of Health (MSP) modules. A total of 31,811 persons, including 2,803 men, participated in awareness sessions led by Mother Leaders on ENA.

As part of the partnership with the Dimagi Company, 23 health promoters in Maradi were trained in the CommCare application. This pilot aims at helping health promoters use mobile phones to access awareness-raising tools for behavioral change, as well as collect and upload health-related data that can be more efficiently utilized by the program and shared with local health partners.

The program distributed food rations to program beneficiaries in 62 villages, including pregnant and lactating women, health promoters, leader mothers and adolescents girls participating in Safe Spaces. In total 2,635 lactating women, 1,630 pregnant women and 6,486 children aged 0-23 months were assisted.

The program organized several cooking demonstration at food distribution sites and within care groups and vegetable market gardening sites. The program focused on local recipes such as mashed vegetables, mashed beans, enriched porridge and use of sweet potato. A total of 17,111 beneficiaries including 888 men participated in these cooking demonstration sessions.

During this quarter, the *Sawki* program also made advances in WASH-related activities. As planned, the *Sawki* program, in collaboration with Ministry of the Environment and Hydrology, has completed the selection of 20 well sites to be rehabilitated next quarter, as well as 30 other well sites to be improved upon through additions such as animal troughs and pulley systems. After some delay, the contract negotiations with local partner DEMI-E are close to completion and the contract will be signed early next reporting period. In addition, the program led a mission to Zinder in March with a company specializing in WASH technologies, known as Tech INNOV SARL irrigation and WASH, to investigate suitable technologies for the target area to improve access to potable water and sanitation.

IR 1.2: Appropriate nutrition practices and healthy timing of first pregnancy adopted by adolescent girls and their partners

Activities under this intermediate result focused on knowledge transfer to adolescent girls within IR 1.1 activities, and the continuation of adolescent girl Safe Spaces weekly discussion groups.

Adolescent girls were able to gain a stronger understanding of healthy nutrition practices and health timing of first pregnancy through community volunteer-led awareness raising events. Specifically, health promoters and Leader mothers were trained in ENA (see IR 1.1) in order to build community ownership of project approaches that aim to change key behaviors related to ENA and reproductive health. Program staff observed community enthusiasm for the program objectives, especially combating malnutrition, through the commitment of community volunteers. Awareness-raising sessions and cooking demonstration activities detailed under IR 1.1 contributed to improved understanding of appropriate nutrition practices.

Discussions held weekly in Safe Spaces continued to provide an important vehicle for adolescent girls to discuss ENA and reproductive health-related themes with their mentors. During this quarter, 1,305 adolescent girls from all 72 Safe Space groups participated in a total of 368 weekly discussions on topics related to early marriage, appropriate spacing of births and nutrition practices.

IR 1.3: Counseling and care appropriately provided by health centers and other community actors

To respond to the demand for health, nutrition, and family planning services created under IR1.1, the program is working to strengthen the GoN’s capacity to supply quality health services. Actions under this IR concentrate on community and department-level service provision, while at the same time involving the regional and national levels to ensure they support program’s activities.

Program staff (nutrition and M&E staff) carried out routine supervision of community health structures, including 25 care groups and 340 care units in order to assess progress in the health and nutrition activities in the 62 target communities. A total of 522 supervising visits were conducted during this quarter. Also, during this quarter, 15 health promoters and 209 care units (groups of 10 to 15 pregnant and lactating women), previously established by Sawki in Droum, participated in supervising and monitoring program activities. These health promoters assisted in monitoring the following activities: awareness-raising on health nutrition-related themes, cooking demonstrations, and Leader mother home visits to pregnant and lactating women in care units.

Joint monitoring visits were also conducted with government health services staff including district head nurses in the following villages: Magaria Tounkour, Kourko and Koundou Wage. The joint visit provided an opportunity for the health center (CSI) officers to better understand the project's activities and the accompanying achievements in terms of preventing malnutrition and improving health services. Joint activities between Sawki and government health district staff members have created a functional link between the CSI and community health groups in villages. Prior to the program, the public health system relied heavily on CSIs to provide care and health-related information; however, these were not always able to have a broad reach in local communities. Sawki created care units of pregnant and lactating women (PLW) at the community level and helped train health promoters, who represent these care groups, and have linked these community actors to CSIs. The relationship established between CSIs and community health groups (care units etc.) have helped bridge the care gap between higher-level government structures and local communities.

SO2: Local availability and households’ access to nutritious food increased

To achieve this objective, *Sawki* implements activities to improve agricultural productivity and incomes by building farmer and Government of Niger (GoN) extension capacity to understand the value of nutrient-rich crops and apply good agricultural practices and appropriate use of inputs, including fertilizers; train herders on appropriate animal husbandry and increasing access to veterinary services; increase access to agricultural inputs and equipment to increase farm productivity; diversify income sources from agriculture; and link farmers to competitive markets. By the end of Year 2, 21,905 individuals will have benefited directly from these interventions.

Program Achievement during reporting period (SO 2)

Description of Activities	Achievement			Quantitative and Qualitative Description
	Achieved	Ongoing	No	

SO2 Local availability and households' access to nutritious food increased				
IR 2.1: Household consumption of diversified nutritious food increased from agricultural and pastoral production				
Distribution and multiplication of orange-fleshed sweet potato to improve HH production/consumption of micro-nutrient rich foods		X		Sweet potato production slowed by pest infestations, currently 20% sites are harvesting. Will promote further production next quarter during the rainy season.
Agricultural trainings for 135 women per village by Garden Coordinators during production cycle	X			2,425 women in gardening activities were monitored and mentored by agricultural extension services and program staff to improve production.
Demonstrations/learning events for community members on value of new production and food preparation techniques	X			Planting of 6,264 <i>Moringa olifera</i> plants, benefitting 1,234 female gardening group members.
Provide vouchers for key inputs or services to women's garden participants		X		Preparation for input distributions took place, and vouchers will be distributed next quarter, benefitting 2,425 women.
Establishment of gardening wells user committees and maintenance plans			X	Water committees will be established in the next quarter, in order to supervise rehabilitation of well sites.
Rehabilitation or construction of gardening wells and rainwater harvesting techniques		X		20 well sites were identified, and tender process and rehabilitation work will over the next quarter.
IR2.2: Land and Livestock productivity increased at household and community levels				
Establish learning plots for improved agricultural technique trainings on volunteer farmers' land		X		33 new Farmer Field School (FFS) sites identified, which will benefit 545 participants.
INRAN to provide 5-day training to GoN extension services/STA/etc., refresher training in Year 3	X			13 program staff and 8 livestock government extension service agents trained in herd management and milk production.
Training of farmers by agriculture value chain coordinator (AVCC) on production techniques	X			2,087 people (700 men, 1,387 women) benefitted from trainings on conservation techniques for cowpea and other crops, using the PICS triple sack storage and other methods.
Training on preserving the quality of crop by-products and storage of dry-season feeding (during cropping season and after harvest in Sept/Oct)		X		10,800 m ² of forage planted in the pilot project covering 18 sites was monitored this quarter, including cowpea, luzerne and bourgou.
Livestock value chain coordinators will train 15 herders or animal owners	X			117 people trained in poultry management, including 34 adolescent girls and 10 para-vets
Training for 150 para-vets at GoN veterinarian training center in Maradi (10 days)		X		22 para-vets previously trained conducted sensitizations with producers on animal health and vaccinations, reaching: ✓ 3,614 people (1,530 men and 2,084 women) in Zinder on animal health

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 240 people (140 men and 100 women) in Maradi on animal health ✓ 47,862 poultry (39,261 Zinder and 8,601 Maradi) identified for para-vet vaccination services against New Castle disease in Zinder
Develop sustainable supply models for quality agricultural and livestock inputs and services. This quarter activity: Training for animal producers (breeders) (Year 2)			X	Program prepared for distribution next quarter of improved male animals for breeding: Rams : 30 villages (20 Zinder, 10 Maradi) Goats : 62 villages (41 Zinder, 21 Maradi) Poultry : 30 villages (20 Zinder, 10 Maradi)
Cross-cutting IR: Household and community resilience to shocks improved through community development and good governance				
Identify gaps in collection and sharing of data related to Early Warning Systems	X			Evaluation of program villages revealed no fully functioning community Early Warning Systems (SCAP/RUs) in place
Contests to recognize greener villages (yearly grants of \$2,000) for up to 10 winners to implement soil and water improvement projects (Year 2)			X	Planned further along in FY14
FFA activities (Year 2)		X		Identified 7 sites of 500 ha for FFA to be conducted April-May.
Mother Leaders led hearth sessions and conducted home visits				Reported in IR 2

IR 2.1: Household consumption of diversified nutritious food has increased from agricultural and pastoral production.



Adolescent girls participating in gardening activities

Aïcha of Kourko, harvests vegetables for the evening meal of her household

Vegetable garden in Bakoum

During this quarter, IR 2.1 activities focused on supporting women's gardening groups through training and technical supervision. A total of 2,425 women in 31 sites benefited from training on best practices in production and crop protection. Training themes included planting methods (land preparation, weeding etc.) as well as methods of protecting crops against weeds, insects and plant diseases. Program staff and technical service agents of the Ministry of Agriculture conducted supervision of these women's gardening sites. Moringa cultivation was introduced in the gardens of 1,234 women, who benefitted from the distribution of 6,264 Moringa plants. An evaluation conducted two months after the Moringa distribution reported that 73.5% of seedlings survived the transplantation into beneficiary gardens. The program also organized information sessions on agricultural product conservation techniques, reaching 2,087 farmers including 700 men and 1,387 women.

IR2.2: Land and Livestock productivity increased at household and community levels



Lucerne production site at Banima



Bourgou production site at Banima

For the extension of farmer field school (FFS) activities, 33 new sites have been identified in addition to the 25 FFSs previously established. These new sites will benefit at least 545 new participants. In the next quarter, these new sites will undergo a diagnostic evaluation to identify the constraints farmers face in crop production, which will determine the training topics for each FFS. This diagnostic will be conducted in collaboration with local research institute partner, INRAN.

To increase livestock production Sawki conducted training for communities on herd management and milk production. Thirteen Sawki program staff and 8 technical staff of the Ministry of Livestock received a three-day training on fodder production from INRAN. They were also trained in herd management, animal husbandry (poultry breeding, etc.) and milk production from the Ministry of Agriculture over five days. These trainings will enable the program staff and government partners to then train livestock value chain coordinators (LVCC) in the next quarter.

In addition, each of the 18 pilot program sites participating in improved fodder production techniques benefitted from a monitoring visit by INRAN, Ministry of Livestock service agent and Sawki technical staff. Specifically, monitoring visits focused on technical advice related to improved irrigation practices and optimal green manure use for their luzerne, bourgou and cowpea fodder crops.

117 people including 34 adolescent girls and 10 para-vets received a two-day poultry production training from Sawki program staff and Ministry of Livestock technical agents. As a result of this training, many poultry producers are now trying to professionalize an activity once considered marginal.

In terms of animal health, the 22 para-veterinarians previously trained and equipped conducted a series of information campaigns on animal health services and best practices. These campaigns benefitted 3,854 producers including 1,670 men and 2,184 women. During this quarter, 156 cattle, 323 sheep, 264 goats and 701 chickens were treated and/or de-wormed in the Maradi region. In addition, producers in beneficiary communities identified the need for vaccination services for 47,862 poultry, and will be linked to the 22 para-veterinarians to provide these services.

As part of the livestock genetic improvement activity, villages were selected to receive male reproducers next quarter, including: 30 rams in 30 villages (20 in Zinder and 10 in Maradi); 62 male goats in all 62 villages of the program (41 in Zinder and 21 in Maradi) and 60 roosters in 30 villages (20 in Zinder and 10 in Maradi). Participating villages were selected based on the following criteria: the scarcity of male

reproducers, total number of animals in the village and community willingness to improve the genetic value of herds.

IR 2.3. Household incomes increased through their integration into value chains offering significant nutritional value and strong potential for income

Activities under this IR will begin next quarter.

Cross-cutting IR: Household and community resilience to shocks improved through community development and good governance

Food For Asset (FFA) activities: During the reporting period, the program completed the selection of beneficiary villages and internal preparations for starting food for assets (FFA) activities. The activities focus on the rehabilitation of approximately 500 hectares of degraded land in seven sites (four in Zinder and three in Maradi). The work will include the completion of 139,560 half-moons with the participation of over 2,650 community members for a period of one month. The food ration for FFA beneficiaries will be a total of 2.266 kg of food for each beneficiary, which includes: 1.67 kg of bulgur; 0.416 kg lentils; and 0.18 kg of vegetable oil per working day per person. Communities will collect and cultivate local plant species (*Cenchrus biflorus*) in the completed half-moons. This activity will not only enhance the natural resource base, but also increase the productivity of pastoral activities as the reclamation of land will permit the increase of arable land for agricultural purposes, as well as provide livestock herds with green and dry fodder.. A village development committee will manage the reclaimed land. The community will contribute the land that will be rehabilitated.

Land Tenure Commissions and Early Warning Systems and Emergency Response (SCAP/ RU):

According to the Agriculture Departmental Services of Mirriah and Guidan Roundji, there are no functional community-level early warning systems (SCAP /RU) in the two departments. In contrast, in the department of Dakoro, there is a sub-regional early warning structure (CSRPGCCA) because of the presence of commune-level early warning committees (OSVs) in the department but not in the Sawki area of intervention. Sawki is assessing the needs in terms of early warning systems, in order to understand how to engage or support the capacity building of these structures. The program strategy will be further defined in the following quarter.

There are 10 community-based land tenure commissions (COFOB) in the commune of Dogo including five in the Sawki intervention villages. There are five COFOBs in the commune of Zermou including four in the Sawki intervention villages. However, there are no functional COFOBs in the communes of Mirriah, Koléram and Droum. In contrast in Guidan Roundji and Dakoro there are department-level (COFODEP) and commune-level (COFOCOM) land tenure commissions, but these are in need of capacity building. Sawki will establish and train the COFOBs in these program areas, starting next quarter.

Under the “green village operation”, the program has already identified four communities for the installation of community nurseries in Mirriah and six in the departments of Guidan Roundji and Dakoro. Varieties of plants native to local forests will be grown from seedlings in the nurseries under the ownership of the garden coordinators who can sell the seedlings to be transplanted in farmers’ field for reforestation purposes. Farmers are interested in buying plants/trees with multiple uses and that can produce consumables such as Moringa, Zizphus and fruit trees. This income generating activity for garden coordinators will not only provide additional income but also help restore the community resource base, for example, by reducing soil erosion and improving the soil’s capacity to absorb water.

IV. Gender Integration

Gender Analysis: This study conducted jointly with CRS and Save the Children covered 5 communes, 11 towns and 39 villages in the region of Maradi and 2 communes, 11 towns and 27 villages in the region of Zinder. The goal of the gender analysis study is to conduct a desk review and collect primary data that will help identify the causes and manifestations of gender inequality in the target areas, especially in terms of access to and control over resources, as well as participation in decision-making. This analysis will inform program strategies and activities that aim to contribute to gender equality, including through addressing barriers to women and girl's access to and control over resources. The study utilized household interviews and focus groups in the sampled villages. In addition, the study conducted interviews with heads of district and provincial level government, local elected officials, government technical representatives including agriculture, health, environment, water and women's group representations at the regional, departmental and municipal levels. The first draft of the preliminary report was delivered to the DFAPs by the external consultant on March 31.

Safe Spaces: Safe Space activities continued for all 26 "Year-1" communities, and all 52 groups are fully functional. Under the supervision of mentors trained by the program (three per village), adolescents who participate in the Safe Space activities continue to receive information on early marriage, ENA and the importance of education. Discussions with adolescents show that those out of school regret not having the chance to benefit from a formal education, and that they support the program in working with parents and communities to improve girls' access to school. Participants have expressed the importance of ENA, as well as combating early marriage. However, there remain serious obstacles in practice to reducing rates of early marriage and increasing girls' access to education, and the program will focus efforts in the coming quarters on creating an enabling environment for behavioral change through working with influential local and religious leaders. In order to support girls' livelihoods, all 1,305 participating adolescent girls were trained in financial literacy, including the savings and loan principles. Following this training, in some villages, staff has observed that older adolescents have begun establishing informal savings and credit associations.

In year-2 communities, the following Safe Space related activities took place: 1) meetings were held with community leaders (village chiefs, religious leaders, leaders of women's organizations and other important authorities of the village) were organized in all year-2 villages to explain and gain support for safe space activities; 2) adolescent girl Safe Space participants were identified; and 3) mentors were selected. Thus far, 500 girls and 30 mentors from 10 communities in Maradi have been identified. This process will continue throughout the month of April in order to complete the creation of Safe Spaces in the remaining year-2 communities of the program.

'Husband's schools': The Husband's School is a concept developed by UNFPA in Niger to improve men's involvement in the management of reproductive health at the community level. In addition to that, male involvement will be sought in particular on gender equity related issues such as: decreasing women's workload, improving women's access to land, increasing women's participation in decision-making, and reducing forced or early marriage. During the reporting period, the program created 46 Husband's Schools in 23 villages. To facilitate discussion on sensitive topics by age group and ensure peer education, two schools of nine people each were established in each of these villages; one consists of village elders (local and religious leaders) and a second composed of young men considered youth leaders in the community. April will be dedicated to establishing two Husband's Schools in each of the remaining 39 communities.

Reducing women's workload: Nigerian women in general, and those living in rural areas in particular, have a heavy daily workload that leaves them little time for themselves, their children or the opportunity to further engage in income generating activities. Although women play an important role in the household and local economies, their participation is constrained by the gender division of labor that

confined them to certain types of activities including cereal threshing, hand processing of grain, and fetching wood and water. During this quarter, Sawki began the process of evaluating the needs for timesaving equipment, in order to inform identification of beneficiaries in the next quarter. Based on the needs expressed by the target communities, Sawki will provide equipment intended to reduce women’s workload in select villages such as: grain mills, millet threshers and groundnut oil press. These tools will help reduce time spent on laborious activities, allowing women to utilize the time gain to improve or enlarge their income generating activities. The groundnut press oil will not only provide oil for the family and the market but also provide good quality groundnut oilcake for animal feed.

V. Commodity Management

Commodities received during the quarter: During the quarter 16,650 kg of CSB+ (bill of lading ADS 205299) were announced by the vessel owner and received into the program warehouse in Maradi. The last shipment of the year from ADS 206372, shipped “Through Bill of Lading” has been partially received by the program in the Zinder warehouse. A total of 291,575 kg of CSB+ was declared in the bill of lading ADS 206372; an amount of 255,075 kg was announced by DAMCO the inland transporter but a quantity of 253,616 kg actually received in the Zinder warehouse. The difference of 1,459 kg is recognized by DAMCO as an inland transport loss. In total during the quarter, 271,725 kg were declared and 270,266 kg received with a difference of 1,459 kg, which is a loss to the carrier. The difference of 36,500 kg between the 291,575 kg on BL ADS 206372 and the 255,075 declared by DAMCO is in transit and should be received during the month of April.

Commodities distributed during the quarter: Food distributions were carried out by the program staff in collaboration with communities represented by a village management committee. In total 12,297 people were reached: 226 leader mothers and health promoters, 1,320 adolescent girls and mentors, 2,635 pregnant women, 1,630 lactating women and 6,486 children ages 6-24 months. The food was distributed in the following manner: 5,650 kg of bulgur and 86,096 kg of CSB+ for pregnant women, lactating women and children 6-23 months; and 33,000 kg of lentils for adolescent girls and safe space mentors. All 62 villages received their planned food ration. The individual rations distributed are as follows:

- Pregnant or lactating women receive 8kg of CSB+ every two months;
- A child between 6-23 months receives 8kg of CSB+ every two months;
- An adolescent girl member of a Safe space group receives 25kg of lentil every six months;
- A Lead mother received 25 kg of bulgur every six months.

Table 1: Food commodity balance for the ending quarter (kg)

Items	Bulgur	CSB+	Lentils	Vegetable Oil	Total
Opening balance for quarter	294,114	564,989	256,522	29,941.09	1,145,566
Quantities received during quarter	-	270,266	-	-	270,266
Distribution during the quarter	5,650	86,096	33,000	-	124,746
Quantities borrowed by Save The children	-	11,650	-	5,489.21	17,139.21
Ending balance quarter	288,464	737,404	223,522	24,451.89	1,273,842
Difference	-	105	-	0.00	105

Note: The difference of 105 kg of CSB+ is a program loss consisting of 75 kg of inland transport loss supported by the carrier and 30 kg loss at distribution centers. The quantity of food in the warehouses will be utilized in distributions during the next quarter to adolescent girls and leader mothers of the 36 villages of the year-2 communities and distribution under Food for Assets activities next quarter.

VI. Monitoring & Evaluation

Development of data collection sheets: In January, the M&E team designed, with the participation of health and agriculture technical teams, six data collection tools for the systematic monitoring of program implementation. These forms allow the monitoring and documentation of program activities including: food distributions, cooking demonstration activities, awareness-raising events and training activities. A total of 30 Sawki agents, government services agents and community members involved in the implementation of the program were trained in the use of these data gathering tools. The 30 agents include 8 women and 22 men. The team also developed a database using Microsoft Access that captures data collected every month by field staff. This system has improved accuracy and timeliness of reporting on program activities.

Classification of households by vulnerability status: During the reporting period, the M&E team classified 14,942 households in the 62 target villages according to their vulnerability status, based on the Household Economic Assessment (HEA) approach. The overall results show that the majority of households are very poor (51%) or poor (30%), with a total of 81% of households exhibiting below average income. Households classified as well-off or average income were 19% in total, specifically with 4% of households classified as well-off and 15% as average. Female-headed households are nearly three times more likely to be “very poor” than those headed by men. All well off households and almost all average income households are headed by men. Of those households headed by women, 75% are classified as very poor and 27% as poor. This classification helped prioritize the targeting of female-headed households for activities such as Food for Asset (FFA), vegetable market gardening, and investment in technologies that decrease women’s workload.

Post distribution monitoring: In order to evaluate and further improve food distribution activities, the M&E team carried out a post distribution monitoring during the quarter. The M&E team developed the scope of work, designed the data collection tools and supervised the data collection process. A team of four surveyors per region was trained and supported over five days to collect data related to the efficiency, effectiveness and community experience of the food distributions. The report and recommendations will be available at the beginning of the next quarter.

Field Visits: The M&E team continued to monitor program activities in the program target villages. In Maradi, visits this quarter focused on women’s vegetable gardens in Katare Moussa in the municipality of Guidan Roudji. In Zinder, M&E visits focused on fodder production and vegetable market gardening activities in the villages of Kourko, Banima 1 and Fotoro Hausa. At the end of each visit, a report was produced in which it was clearly stated what needs to be improved for optimal implementation of the program activities, including the need to accelerate certain activities such as the planting of fodder crops.

VII. Coordination

Coordination meetings: During this quarter the program organized weekly, monthly and quarterly meetings to measure the progress of the program and update action plans. The quarterly coordination meeting, which is extended to external program partners (representatives of ministries of agriculture, livestock, health, planning, INRAN and 3N), provided the opportunity to make joint decisions around key issues related to program implementation.

Supervision missions: Supervision missions by program staff, in some cases with partners, include the program management unit (PMU) field visits that look at the coordination among program activities in the two regions and the progress made in implementation of these activities. This quarter, the supervision missions focused on field activities such as women’s gardening, and the supervision of training activities in the target villages. The supervision team also attended the launching of certain activities such as the husband schools, creation of centralized community structures, and evaluation of potential WASH technologies.

Other activities

Additional activities related to coordination include the following:

- Sawki program staff participated in the workshop on environmental regulations organized by USAID January 13th-16th for the DFAPs in Maradi;
- Program Coordinator travel to Dakar to participate in the Sahel Learning conference organized by OFDA. This trip was coupled with a study tour to learn from other organizations with experience in biogas production and use in Senegal at the community level;
- Team participation in the workshop organized in Burkina Faso on the Coalition for Resilience in the Sahel, organized by USAID in collaboration with the governments of Niger and Burkina Faso;
- Sawki program staff participated in a workshop on the Cowpea value chain, organized by Save the Children;
- Sawki program staff participated in cluster meetings at the national and regional levels related to Food Security and Nutrition.

VIII. Challenges

Staffing: Staff turnover and subsequent recruitment challenges, particularly in the Zinder office, have been the biggest challenge for the program implementation this quarter. As a consequence, there were some delays in activities, including the delay in the creation of centralized community structures in Zinder, which coordinate program activities under SO1 and SO2. For health and nutrition, the resignation of the head of the component (SO1 team leader) and other departures created serious problems in the implementation of the program for both Zinder and Maradi. Staff turnover has been identified as a challenge for all three DFAPs, in part due to competition for qualified staff with other NGOs/ government/ private entities, and for personal reasons such as preferring to relocate to Niamey.

However, we pleased to report that the program has been able to replace key staff. During this quarter, the program recruited the following new employees: a gender officer and five nutrition field agents for Zinder, as well as a nutrition officer and an agriculture officer in Maradi. These employees replaced staff that departed the program for personal and professional reasons (see section VIII on Challenges). The program filled the SO2 team leader position, following the promotion of the previous team leader to Program Coordinator. This will help provide critical support to agricultural and livestock activities. In addition, the program is in the process of recruiting three program field staff and one driver for Maradi.

In response to the challenges in staff turnover, Sawki has taken internal and external measures. Sawki has held discussions within the consortium to explore opportunities to improve staff retention, notably Mercy Corps’ Country Director, Human Resources (HR) Manager and Sawki senior staff conducted a workshop with all Maradi staff to better understand the challenges and potential responses to improve staff retention. The findings included the need for improved communication between certain supervisors and junior staff, the lack of which had caused frustration at the lack of consultation on program and operational decisions. In response, the team has implemented regular team meetings (minimum monthly, at certain times weekly) where supervisors, field agents and junior staff are able better able to coordinate decision-making and communicate the rationale for certain managerial decisions. In addition, Mercy

Corps led an internal gender taskforce meeting, including Sawki staff, to develop an action plan for improving gender balance in staffing. Key actions planned for FY14-15 include a review of human resource policies, coordination meetings with peer organizations to share challenges and lessons learned. Sawki consortium members are also active in the US Embassy-led HR network. Both of these initiatives can further help Sawki to recruit and retain a diverse and qualified team in the future.

Water resources: For agriculture related programming, especially irrigated crop and fodder activities, water was a limiting factor during this quarter. There is insufficient irrigation water due to lower water levels than normal for this time of year at certain water points. As a solution, the project provided practical instructions to save crops by favoring crops close to the terminal stage, encouraging creation of canals to bring water to the field from ponds located near production sites and by requiring producers to deepen wells. A longer-term answer to this problem lies in the construction of garden wells close to production sites and in the development and management of water reservoirs as planned in the PREP.

WASH: Sanitation-related activities have experienced delays due to the time necessary to finalize terms with the local contractor, DEMI-E, and difficulties in recruiting a WASH officer. The program faced challenges in finding a suitable candidate for the WASH officer position, and even once a candidate was found, they eventually declined the offer due to personal reasons, after which the program re-opened the hiring for the position. The program completed interviews and anticipates finalizing the recruitment of this position in April.

Agriculture: This quarter, pest infestations negatively affected the planting and growth of irrigated vegetable gardens. The Sawki program responded by promoting pest control measures among participants, such as such using neem juice, tobacco juice, ash, trenches, and intercropping. The Sawki program also helped mobilize agricultural extension service and INRAN technical staff to support participants to implement these pest control methods. Environmental issues such as pests have likewise affected fodder production, delaying harvest and therefore yield estimates will not be available until next quarter. In working with farmers, the Sawki program realized that many participants lack basic tools, and the need is higher than originally assessed. The distribution of agriculture tools is in preparation and will be undertaken in the following quarter. However, the demand for tools is above program capacity to respond, and the program is currently considering how to modify its response.

Distributions: In relation to food distributions this quarter, finding reasonably priced transportation for commodities to distribution centers was a challenge. In some cases, the program had to coordinate the use of its own vehicles, despite their need for other program activities. In addition, the oil stock in distribution warehouses had a “best if used by” date of May 30th, 2014. The program distributions would continue past this date, posing a problem for commodity management. In response, Mercy Corps negotiated with Save the Children to exchange additional stock for their own, with a “best if used by” date of January, 2015.

Dimagi partnership: During this quarter, two Dimagi staff visited the program to conduct staff and volunteer trainings to test the CommCare application in Sawki health programming. However, the visit revealed the need for further technical support from Dimagi to be able to adapt the application and troubleshoot software issues, which the visiting staff were not qualified to complete. Therefore, another mission is planned for additional training and adaptation of the CommCare application.

IX. Lessons learned

At this stage in the program, the key lessons learned include the following:

- ✓ Further measures need to be explored in order to prevent and respond to high staff turnover, which has been shown to cause delays in programming. The program has already taken some

steps to address this including: fact-finding visit led by Mercy Corps and Sawki senior managers in Maradi to discuss challenges and solutions for retention with program and support staff; adjusting salary and position requirements, etc.

- ✓ The program will need to continue to assess innovative solutions to spurring sustainable engagement of community volunteers and structures. Volunteers have recently been requesting further support from the program for their involvement, despite the clear messaging from the beginning that their role is purely voluntary.
- ✓ Support for irrigated vegetable gardening and fodder production have been identified as critical program activities by beneficiaries. Despite participants' limited resources (tools, money to invest in crops etc.), they are maximizing efforts in adopting new techniques such as natural fertilizers.
- ✓ Beneficiaries have witnessed a deeper integration of program activities under the two strategic objectives. This is evidenced by testimony from a Garden Coordinator participating in the program at a recent general meeting held on March 13th, 2014 at her group's garden site in Falki. The female beneficiary expressed appreciation for the layering of support for livelihoods in agricultural/ livestock production, nutrition and health: "Sawki trained us on good practices on health and nutrition, in animal breeding techniques, trained and equipped para-veterinarians for better animal health services, and as you can see Sawki supported us in garden production, and the conservation of vegetable produce. Sawki even taught us various recipes to use in our households for improved nutrition for our households and especially for our children."



Women in Falki presenting a sample of products harvested from vegetable gardens to Sawki supervisory mission

X. Success stories

Success Story 1: Vegetable gardening and group solidarity



Hadiza Abdou, 40 years old, is a vegetable garden coordinator in the village of Makokia of the Commune of Dogo, who was selected by her fellow gardening group members to represent them as their group spokesperson. During a program monitoring visit, Hadiza engaged Sawki field agent Abdoul Salam Manzo in a conversation on the additional benefits of gardening groups. According to Hadiza, her gardening group has become more than a way to increase revenues and improve household nutrition. The women in her group support each other in their daily lives. They share their experiences in dealing with challenges and their strategies to overcome these difficulties,

and support each other during hardship and special occasions. The group solidarity found here is an important aspect to building the social capital necessary for more resilient communities. In Hadiza's own words: *Before the vegetable garden activities started by Sawki, it was more difficult for women to meet and discuss our common interests and community affairs. Now, thanks to this activity we can meet more frequently. On top of agricultural production, this has created a group dynamic that was not possible before. Now we can exchange on many topics and help each other during important times, like the support and gifts were contributed for member who gave birth.*

Success Story 2: Fodder production



Malam Abdou, 68 years old, lives in the Koukouya Village in the Sawki program area. On a large inland valley, the community produces varieties of crops such as cabbage, onion, tomato and maize. The crop byproducts are used for animal feed, which helps makes this area well known for the quality of its fattened livestock.

It is in this context that the Sawki program is piloting a fodder production project to support farmers to grow alfalfa, cowpea and fodder bourgou. The farmers benefit from trainings in the program's Farmer Field Schools. In the village of Koukouya the Sawki Project is in the process of conducting a culture test on a particular type of fodder, bourgou. Sawki field agent, Malam Abdou, witnessed the planting of bourgou by community members. Malam noted that the program participants were not the only ones to plant the bourgou cuttings. More than a hundred other people in the village used the test field's cuttings to plant the crop, in order to improve access to animal feed in the lean season. Already, the crop is showing signs of success, and many of the villagers are convinced that the bourgou plant is well suited to the environment. The village is already in favor of preparing nurseries locally for scaling up fodder production. From a few cuttings used by individual farmers, the village will now have enough cuttings to scale up the production. This fodder production may be a viable alternative to the challenges in using cabbage and onion for animal feed.

End of report