CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES – UNITED STATES CONFERENCE
CATHOLIC BISHOPS (CRS)
Niger Program

FINAL REPORT
BONBATU

Project Number: AID-OFDA-G-13-00044
Project Period: March 25, 2013 to March 24, 2014
Submitted: June 10, 2014

Beneficiaries of *habanaye* leave the fair at Bonfeba (Tillabéri).
Photo by Mrs. Haoua Ibrahim for CRS/Niger

Project Overview

Title: Bonbatu

Commune Locations: Departments of **Tillabéri** (Sakoira, Dessa, Anzourou, and Kourteye communes) and **Ouallam** (Simiri and Ouallam), Tillabéri region

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Goal: Vulnerable households and communities habitually affected by crises have restored livelihoods and strengthened capacity to resist future shocks in the Tillabéri region of Niger

- **Objective 1:** The livelihoods of chronically vulnerable households have been reinforced
- **Objective 2:** Vulnerable households have supplemented their household income through Cash Grants and CFW activities

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Partners:

- Implementation Partner: SOS Sahel International
- The Government of Niger (GoN) Department of Agriculture, to promote Moringa
- The GoN Department of Livestock, for *habanaye* breeding
- The GoN Department of Environment and Combating Desertification and the Department of Rural Engineering, implicated in the identification of sites and structures built in accordance with the strategy of accelerated rural development. These departments are also partners in training team leaders and leadership teams as well as monitoring during the execution of the activity
- Administrative authorities, for their advice and coordination support in the implementation of activities as well as in community mobilization
- Private providers: livestock merchants, cattle farmers, and seedling production groups
- Beneficiary communities

Targeted groups: Village households identified as vulnerable by the Early Warning System (known as SAP for *Système d'Alerte Précoce* in French) following the 2012 crop year in the communes mentioned above.

Beneficiaries

• 4,176 households benefitted from the distribution of Moringa seedlings
• 2,400 beneficiaries implemented recovery of degraded land recovery activities via Cash-for-Work (CFW) and received Cash Grants (CG) for two months at the peak of the lean season
• 2,000 women benefited from *habanaye* (distribution of small ruminants)

I. Background

West Africa's second largest country (1,267,000 km²), the Republic of Niger, is home to over 16 million people, with 62% of the population living below the poverty line. Niger is characterized by environmental degradation exacerbated by droughts and floods, and structural poverty aggravated by inflation of basic food commodities. The majority of the population (90%) depends on rain-fed agriculture production for its nutritional needs. Yet, cyclical droughts and dependency on traditional cultivation methods leave much of the population prone to food insecurity.

For over thirty years, Niger has suffered drastic repercussions from the gradual onset of more droughts, locust invasions and other pests, and the 'desertification' of land which, compounded by abusive farming techniques, causes soil degradation. Other factors that increase vulnerability that have been at play for decades include: the third-highest population growth rate in the world, dependence on natural resources, lack of economic alternatives, poor governance, inequitable markets, and lack of access for many to education, financial institutions, and health care.[1]

Communities have become increasingly exposed to risks due to their vulnerability and high levels of poverty. Many have little means of recovery after a difficult year. Because of the volatility of Nigeriens' livelihoods, variations in rain and changes in the environment easily threaten food security and lead to significant loss of household and community assets, jeopardizing the development process and increasing poverty levels even more. Low levels of education[2], gender inequality, and the persistence of preventable diseases and malnutrition[3] compromise the people of Niger's ability to meet their basic needs.

During Niger's 2011 harvest, late and irregular rains and the incidence of pests negatively impacted crops and pasture throughout the country, exposing millions of Nigeriens to food insecurity. The national cereal production deficit was 519,639 metric tons (MT), which was approximately 14% of annual consumption needs. At 164,146 MT, the Tillabéri region had the greatest overall deficit in 2011, representing 31.5% of the national total deficit. The region produced only 61.9% of its 6-year average (2005-2010).[4] In the Tillabéri region of Niger, 90% of land is degraded or eroded[5], 80% of the population is considered poor[6], and annual rainfall is 200-300 mm compared to 541 mm nationally.[7] The Tillabéri region has the highest rate of acute malnutrition (14.8%) in Niger. Within the Tillabéri region, the Tillabéri department was the hardest hit in 2011 after producing only 16% of its annual consumption needs.[8]

On the whole, Niger's 2012 harvest was significantly better than the previous year's. Findings from the Bureau of Agricultural Statistics' 2012 harvest assessment estimated Niger's cereal

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[1] Human Development Indicators: Niger, http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/NER.html
[2] UNICEF: At a Glance: Niger, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/niger_statistics.html
[3] UNICEF. State of the World's Children 2009
[4] The average from 2005-2010 was 721,991MT; in 2011, the region produced 446,899MT according to GON.
[5] SIG du projet PASP, GTZ 1998
[6] PDES, 2000-2004
[7] http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=NIGER
[8] PDES, 2000-2004

production at approximately five million metric tons, with a surplus of over 800,000 MT.[9] However in spite of the nationwide production surplus, certain areas again saw below-average harvests, including in the Tillabéri region, where an estimated 700,000 people were unable to meet their food needs as early as January or February 2013.[10] In addition, poor households had higher than usual levels of debt due to the 2011-12 crisis. Thus, the repayment of household debts through unpaid work or from household reserves may further reduce household food security.[11]

Food security statistics reveal that Ouallam has experienced agricultural production deficits every year for the past thirteen years, while Tillabéri has experienced food deficits for ten of the past thirteen years. This data indicates a chronic deficit in food production in these two departments. The results of the 2012 agricultural season evaluation indicated many villages and communes in the Tillabéri region that would again be food insecure. CRS therefore proposed to intervene in six communes in the districts of Ouallam and Tillabéri through an emergency food security project called Bonbatu to help chronically at-risk communities avoid food insecurity in 2013 and build their resilience to face future shocks.

II. Project Implementation

2.1 Meeting with the administrative authorities of the area

An information and dialogue meeting was organized for March 23-24, 2013 with the commune heads and Department heads of Technical Services. The meeting with the administrative authorities covered the results of the government rapid assessment, its plan to support the population, and its call for partners to support the GoN Support Plan. The meeting was an opportunity to present to the authorities CRS' intentions to contribute to the realization of their Support Plan with the funds received from the US Government through OFDA. The meeting was also an opportunity to seek advice and support the active participation of members of the Committee on Regional Prevention and Management of Food Crises (CSRP/GC/CA) according to their field of expertise.

2.2 Identification of actors and stakeholders

Various actors and stakeholders were involved in implementation to ensure the success of the project, including: decentralized GoN Technical Services (Environment, Agricultural, Rural Engineering, and Livestock), private actors (traders, farmers, specialty groups, NGOs), and the communities themselves. To facilitate coordination and participation of different actors, the role of each participant was clearly defined in signed technical partnership agreements.

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[9] FEWS NET, Niger Food Security Outlook Update, *Good cereal harvest and significant food security improvements*, November 2012
[10] Ibid.
[11] FEWS NET, Niger Food Security Outlook, *Sharp reduction in the scale and magnitude of food insecurity*, October 2012 through March 2013

Table 1: Stakeholder roles and responsibilities.

Actor	Form of partnership	Key responsibilities
SOS Sahel (NGO)	Sub-recipient	- Monitoring of implementation of activities in the field
GoN Environmental Service	Technical collaboration agreement	- Identification of work sites - Start-up and implementation training - Supervision and verification of work - Technical support
GoN Rural Engineering Service	Technical collaboration agreement	- Start-up and implementation training - Supervision and verification of work - Technical support
GoN Livestock Service	Technical collaboration agreement	- Start-up and implementation training - Supervision and verification of work - Technical support
Traders and breeders	Registration forms	- Re-stocking small ruminant markets during the fairs - Service
Site Teams	Community participation	- Keep attendance records - Monitor work completion - Monitor site and tools - Support technical work - Supervision of payments

2.3 Beneficiary targeting

- *Targeting villages within targeted communes*

This targeting was based on the degree of the village's cereal deficit in conjunction with the CSRP/GC/CA. In selected communes, villages whose degree of deficit varied from 80 to 100% were targeted, with priority to those villages suffering from a 100% deficit.

- *Socio-economic categorization at the village level*

This classified all households in the village in terms of their living conditions, on the basis of criteria established in a village general meeting. During this activity, field staff played a facilitating role. Each household was categorized according to the target community, and the criteria and characteristics of the socio-economic class within the village. The criteria were:

- Household food supply
- Means/tools for production within the household (cropland, farm tools)
- Animal ownership
- Whether the household provided or hired labor
- Type of residence
- External household support and/or remittances

After defining the criteria for vulnerable households, focus groups were organized with key informants chosen by the community. With the support of project staff, they identified and classified households according to the defined criteria. All village households were classified by socio-economic class, and this list was then validated by the community. Based on these criteria, three classes of vulnerability were identified:

- A: "rich" (vulnerable);
- B: "moderately well off" (moderately vulnerable) and
- C: "poor" (high risk);

The C-class households constitute priority households for the intervention, followed by Class B households, depending on the number of households to be supported by the village.

The needs are enormous but only a limited number of households could be supported. C-class households were prioritized and then supplemented with B-class. The size of households and children under-5 are other factors weighed to decide on the number of households to be supported.

Thus, **4,176** households were identified to receive Moringa seedlings, of which approximately **75%** were class C and **25%** Class B. Of those 4,176 households, the 2,400 most vulnerable (all from Class C) were identified for CFW and CG activities.

2.4 Implementation

Sector: Agriculture and Food Security

Sub-Sector: Livestock
Activity: Habanaye

Livestock fairs are an approach that CRS has developed to respond to pastoral crises that rehabilitates and strengthens the agro-pastoral system. A livestock fair mirrors a market setting, but is instead organized by the project and the community and, in lieu of cash, utilizes vouchers for payment; target households receive vouchers, attend the livestock fair, and purchase animals and sometimes livestock food. Fairs were organized between October and November, after the agricultural harvest, so that pasture and fodder would be readily available.

Two thousand small animals (1,669 goats and 331 sheep) were distributed during the months of October and November in order to provide a sustainable response to the chronic vulnerability faced by project beneficiaries. To preserve community solidarity mechanisms, the distribution was undertaken through a traditional system of rotation known as *habanaye*.

As part of this project, beneficiaries also received training on health and nutrition of animals. Inspired by the tradition of *habanaye*, goats and sheep have been made available to women in vulnerable households, who in turn will pass them along to other (pre-identified) women once they have reproduced. This principle of rotating donated animals is designed to trigger a “chain of solidarity” and has been used traditionally in Niger.

a) Fair Organization and Preparation

First, CRS field staff informed local stakeholders, including partner NGOs and local administrative and traditional authorities of the schedule of activities. Then, fair implementation teams were established and trained. Team members included field agents from CRS and the local partner SOS Sahel International; monitoring and evaluation personnel from both CRS and SOS; accountants; and government livestock/veterinary agents.

b) Animal Vendor Identification

To recruit potential animal vendors, CRS, SOS, and local authorities publicized the livestock fairs on local radio stations and by word of mouth. Any commercial or local vendor with a sufficient quantity of healthy, appropriate animals was eligible to participate.

Beneficiaries receiving vouchers to purchase goats and sheep in Ouallam.

c) Awareness Campaigns

Approximately three weeks prior to the fair, CRS, SOS, and local authorities carried out information/awareness missions in participating villages in order to:

- Remind beneficiaries and vendors of the date and location of the fairs;
- Register vendors;
- Explain to participants the concept and operational aspects of the fairs, from the planning to the monitoring and evaluation phase;
- Remind participants of the correct use of vouchers and price negotiation;
- Provide vendors with additional instruction on rules governing the fairs;
- Explain that all animals for sale must be counted at the beginning of the fair, and the remainder must be counted at the close of the fairs;

- Explain that vouchers were the only form of acceptable payment;
- Avoid excessive price mark-up (prices cannot exceed 2% of local market price);
- Deliver quality animals in terms of weight, age, and breed.

d) Vendor Registration

On the day of the fair, CRS and SOS staff verified vendor identification and registration. Once verified, the vendors' animal types, varieties, and quantities were recorded along with the unit prices of their animals. If they were selling livestock food, the food variety, quantity, and unit price were also recorded. Recording supply and unit price allowed CRS and SOS field staff to verify the accuracy of sales at the close of the fair.

During registration, ten percent (10%) of the participating vendors were asked to participate in a follow-up evaluation.

e) Voucher Distribution

Before the fairs opened, CRS and SOS staff distributed vouchers to beneficiaries based on the registration lists from the awareness campaigns. Beneficiaries of livestock fairs received 33,000 CFA in vouchers (approximately $69) upon presenting an official form of identification or, in the absence of an official form of identification, having their identity confirmed by the village chief. Upon receiving their vouchers, five percent (5%) of beneficiaries were asked to participate in a follow-up evaluation.

f) Secured Entry

Once the market area was designated in the host community, the area was roped off, creating one entrance and one exit. Beneficiaries were divided into two groups for entry into the fair; female and elderly beneficiaries were given priority. Once the fairs opened, CRS and SOS field staff monitored voucher exchanges and assisted beneficiaries and vendors when necessary. At some fairs in locations with minor security issues, local armed forces were also present to ensure security. After purchase, veterinary professionals vaccinated and dewormed all animals.

g) Site Closure and Vendor Payment

Fairs closed when all vouchers had been used. At the end, vendors collected and counted their remaining animals. That number was subtracted from their total at the beginning of the fair in order to verify the real numbers of animals sold. This number was then compared to the total value of beneficiary vouchers and the sale price recorded on the sales receipt to ensure no foul play. In the case of animal food, the remaining food was counted against original food stocks and then checked against the vouchers presented and the value established on the sales receipt. Once sales were verified, the vendor's information and transactions were recorded on a payment form, which the vendor then submitted to the CRS accountant in order to receive the cash equivalent.

h) Results Achieved

CRS Niger implemented nine small ruminant fairs in Tillabéri and Ouallam Departments with the financial support of OFDA. In total, 14 vendors participated in the fairs, which served **2,000** direct beneficiaries (100% female) and indirectly assisted their families, consisting of a total of 10,918 men and 9,890 women for a total of 20,808 people.

Sub-sector: Improving Agricultural Production/Food Security
*Activity**:** Purchase and distribution of Moringa plants*

The Bonbatu project also introduced the distribution of Moringa seedlings to beneficiaries to strengthen the resilience of communities. The Moringa seedlings were more expensive than anticipated, and the production of these seedlings was entrusted to the only major nurseries operating in the two departments. The nurseries expressed doubt that they could produce the number originally planned for (85 seedlings to 6,000 households, for a total of 510,000) so for practical and financial reasons, CRS/Niger instead distributed an average of 55 seedlings to 4,176 households in the villages in the targeted zones most adapted for their planting. The distribution was undertaken at the start of the rainy season to help beneficiaries avoid fetching water for the plants at this early stage. In total, **230,812** Moringa plants were distributed to 4,176 households.

The SOS Sahel agents were trained by the GoN Environmental Technical Services on Moringa planting and care, production, transformation, conservation, and commercialization. The agents subsequently held educational sessions with demonstrations for the communities on how to plant, produce, transform, conserve, and commercialize Moringa.

Beneficiaries taking Moringa plants, Tolkoboye, Ouallam.

Sector: Economic Recovery and Market Systems (ERMS)

Sub-Sector: Livelihoods Restoration
Activity: Cash Grants

To support vulnerable households during the lean period, two monthly unconditional money distributions were organized. Payment was made by a microfinance institution with a good deal of experience in the area, Asusu-SA.

Each vulnerable household received the sum of 18,000 FCFA (approximately $36) per month, totaling 86.4 million FCFA distributed in July and August 2013. These 2,400 households benefited from CFW activities just prior to these Cash Grants, so this continuation of funds reinforced their ability to overcome food shortages and meet other basic needs during the lean season when they needed to remain at home to farm their fields.

From monitoring interviews with a sample of beneficiaries to analyze the use of the CFW and CG funds, the majority of recipients have devoted their earnings to the health needs of their family, buying clothes for their children, and supplementing their meager food supply, all of which reflect the strong humanitarian need for this project.

Regarding the impact of the intervention, beneficiaries unanimously said it:

- Helped unemployed heads of household return from migration, improving their living conditions during the very hard 'lean season' and especially giving them the ability to stay in village to farm the land.
- Permitted the target villages to improve, even a little bit, their situation in terms of households buying food and clothes for women, children, and the elderly.

Sub-Sector: Temporary Employment
Activity: Cash-for-Work (CFW)

i) Identification of activities

A joint mission with the GoN Technical Services was organized on April 24-26, 2013 for:

(1) The selection of Water Conservation/Defense and Restoration of Land (CES/DRS) sites. This included the technical confirmation of sites to rehabilitate, identification of what work would be carried out, and evaluation of the areas to focus on.
(2) The selection of socio-economic infrastructure work to be carried out (feasibility of rehabilitation, taking into account internal and external constraints).

This identification process was participatory and involved different communities. Beneficiaries proposed activities that were in the collective interest of the village. Government service agents provided technical advice so that community members could make informed decisions (technical feasibility of activities, appropriateness of the activities in the given area, and community-level opportunities).

The following activities were identified and validated:

- Land reclamation of degraded land in grazing areas marked by the Departmental Land Commission for the completion of forestry half-moons or berms.
- Land reclamation by planting trees for communal economic benefit in some villages (*Acacia Senegal*) and planting grass to improve the plant cover and availability of pasture (*Andropogon gayanus* and *Chencrus biflorus*) in other villages.
- The deepening of ponds (to at least 25 cm deep) that typically did not retain water for long because of their silted nature. The goal of this activity was to make water available to animals and for the construction of houses for a longer period.

ii) Technical Training for project staff and community teams in project site management

In order to create a self-sustaining network of skilled human resources at the community level, team leaders were identified by the population to participate in management training in order to ensure the completion of work under the supervision of the GoN technical services.

Team leaders were responsible for driving technical components of the work within the community and for keeping a log of worker participation which was used to determine participants' payment. Team leaders were selected based on their level of schooling or literacy and trust within their communities.

At each site, the project began with a two-day training on accepted technical practices for the selected community works projects, an essential step for implementation and local capacity-building.

iii) Acquisition of small equipment and tools

Most CFW activities required the acquisition of certain types of equipment for the sites, including:

- Picks and crowbars to work the degraded land and pull out clay,
- Hoes to dig into softer places,
- Shovels to pick up clay and soil,
- Compass markers to measure and construct half-moons,
- Water levels used to reflect contour when creating half-moons, and
- Machetes to prune shrubs.

iv) Execution of CFW activities

CFW activities began with training/demonstration sessions organized for the 2,400 beneficiaries under the guidance of GoN Technical Officers.

With each beneficiary working a total of 15 days, these activities recovered an area of **153.56** hectares in the Ouallam department and **231.20** hectares in the Tillabéri department, for a total of **384.76** previously degraded hectares recovered in May-June 2013. Beneficiaries received the

standard rate of 1,300 FCFA per day of work; total payments added up to **$94,929.01** given to CFW participants.

2.5 Coordination

In the execution of CFW, Cash Grants, Moringa distribution, and *habanaye* in each department, SOS Sahel acted as CRS/Niger's implementing partner, assisting in every phase of the activities from community sensitization to beneficiary selection to implementation. Prior to their participation in activities, key CRS/Niger personnel conducted trainings or refresher trainings for SOS Sahel staff who were new to the activity. CRS/Niger and the SOS Sahel staff in turn worked closely with the GoN's specialized technical service agents in all phases of programming. Technical service agents, familiar with the communities and activity programming, provided indispensable technical knowledge to the programs and encouraged community participation and cooperation. Project activities were monitored in close collaboration with GoN technical services. On the ground, close monitoring was undertaken by an SOS field agent in charge of each site, along with local volunteers trained to frame the site and trace the half-moons and berms.

2.6 Monitoring and Evaluation

As part of monitoring activities, the Bonbatu project has an M&E system that permits the real-time collection of data for both project activities and living conditions of households. This monitoring system is built on monitoring forms, supervision reports, and regular surveys conducted with beneficiaries. This system was able to generate information that allowed the project to enhance the overall satisfaction of households with project activities. Supervision visits were conducted jointly by CRS and GoN technical service authorities to assess project implementation progress and discuss any challenges or difficulties. A final evaluation was conducted in January-February 2014 by an external consultant to assess the impact of the project on the lives of beneficiary households. The final evaluation utilized both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to address three main objectives: 1) to evaluate the achievement of CRS' Bonbatu Project objectives; 2) to assess the satisfaction of beneficiary populations with regard to the project's resilience strategy; and 3) to provide recommendations and lessons learned for future projects.

2.7 Results

Sector: Agriculture and Food Security

Sub-Sector: Livestock

Result 1: The 33,000 CFA (approx. USD 69) coupon received by *habanaye* beneficiary households was sufficient to obtain a young breeding animal (sheep or goat) which was de-wormed and vaccinated by the seller, plus a small amount of livestock feed (grain) for almost 100% of households. The feed amounts varied from 25 to 70 kg according to beneficiaries, depending on how much "change" they were left with after negotiating the price of the animal. Recipients most commonly chose goats, which grow much faster than other animals and allow farmers to establish sufficient capital to generate income within a short period of

time (6-18 months), while providing savings that can later be used to purchase cattle. Other advantages are that goats are stronger than sheep; they are better able to provide milk for the family, especially during the dry season; and children are better able to tolerate the milk (reduced diarrhea).

Result 2: Organic manure is now a means of maintaining soil fertility and improving yields accessible to the majority of farm households in Niger. Very few external inputs are used, given the low financial capacity of farmers and the risks posed by chemical fertilizers during years with low rainfall. The animals received through *habanaye* have enabled households to fertilize their fields with dung (mixed with soil and plant debris) and compost made from straw, animal manure and other components. This is now a comparative advantage of producers who have been trained by CRS.

Result 3: Of the 2,000 animals distributed, 461 have produced live calves, while there are a further 419 pregnant females. Losses due to death and theft total 87 (31 in Tillabéri and 56 in Ouallam.)

Result 4: Animals distributed either came from the same area or from relatively close areas, avoiding the problems of disease, adaptation to different pasture conditions, or overburdening local pasture. This strategy has had a major effect through distributing animals within the same area while not substantially increasing the overall number.

Interviews with beneficiaries also sought to gauge participants' appreciation of the awareness-raising efforts conducted ahead of time. The results were as follows:

- 94% of farmers and 83% of vendors thought sensitization activities were good;
- 5% farmers and 15% of vendors thought sensitization activities were average;
- 1% of farmers and 2% of vendors thought the sensitization activities were poorly conducted.

Sub-sector: Improving Agricultural Production/Food Security

Result 1: The majority of beneficiaries receiving Moringa plants have harvested leaves that are used for consumption or sold for income.

Result 2: Moringa promotion was more successful than foreseen. In some cases, women have created groups to sell their Moringa leaves together in nearby markets. Profits were used to purchase even more Moringa seedlings to plant near their homes.

Sector: Economic Recovery and Market Systems (ERMS)

Sub-Sector: Livelihoods Restoration

Result 1: The sale of productive assets (including land and animals) – a common practice in difficult economic times that undermines long-term resilience – was reduced through cash distributions.

Result 2: Very poor households typically isolated within their communities have become more socially integrated as a result of their increased participation in the local economy thanks to cash transfers.

Sub-Sector: Temporary Employment

Result 1: Cash-for-Work, according to participants in village assemblies, has alleviated household insecurity by giving participants a livelihood and a source of revenue, which in turn has allowed them to begin tackling problems (paying debt, meeting household needs). In all, around 86 million CFA was distributed in the area to boost the incomes of beneficiaries. The money received by beneficiaries was used to purchase condiments (salt, oil, sugar, spices), food, health care, and clothing, and to observe ceremonies (weddings, baptisms, funerals) and religious celebrations of Ramadan and Tabaski.

Result 2: The impact of land reclamation and planting through CFW activities on the local environment is tangible. A total of 384.76 hectares of land have been reclaimed and seeded through CFW activities. Direct observation from sites as well as from interviews with technical services and villagers has helped to compile a list of indicators that act as predictors of short- and medium-term environmental impact (provided that reforested land and structures are maintained). At first sight, across the ten sites visited, a marked change has occurred. Everywhere, hectares of sloped and flat earth have given way to a succession of half-moons and berms covered with good vegetation growth. Catchment basins located at work sites are now characterized by stone walls arranged at regular intervals.

Result 3: At formerly swampy pools where weeds have been removed, water for animals remains available. This was not the case before the intervention, when pools would be dry by the month of November.

Result 4: A self-managed network of trained farmer experts is available at the village level. These experts were trained in techniques for leveling, plotting and construction of berms, half-moons, and bunds. With these experts, qualified human resources are now available across the villages through a self-managed community network.

Result 5: Thanks to the visible impacts of CFW activities on agricultural productivity, several of the beneficiaries began independently making structures (such as half-moons and berms) without payment for the coming agricultural campaign in their fields.

III. Success story

The village of Tolkobeye Fondobon lies around 87 kilometers north of Niamey in the Department of Ouallam. The village population is estimated at 780 inhabitants, most of whom are Zarma. Sixty year-old Hamadou Abdou, along with his wife Moumai Nouhou and three children, is a beneficiary of Project Bonbatu.

The effects of drought and crop infestations on last year's harvest had left the village's residents facing a severe food shortfall. Income opportunities were almost non-existent in Tolkobeye Fondobon, which had been badly affected by successive years of food crises. After months of trying to meet exorbitant prices for basic staples in local markets, many households had been forced into indebtedness.

The severity and persistence of the crisis led Hamadou to consider a range of strategies for survival, including splitting up his family and sending children to live with a friend in another village. The community of Tolkobeye Fondobon was selected for participation in Project Bonbatu, however, and Hamadou and his household were identified by the community as being vulnerable to food insecurity, with the result that he was registered to benefit from Cash-for-Work. His face is full of emotion as he overcomes his usual reserve to describe the effects of Project Bonbatu on his family's situation:

"The day I received my first Cash-for-Work payment, my wife and I spent many hours joyfully praying to God, giving thanks for CRS and the donor. I was able to ensure the needs of my household, paying back loans from money-lenders and traders and paying medical and school fees for my children."

IV. Lessons learned

1. Cash transfers are an appropriate means of providing a safety net for a community; they provide a boost to the local economy, strengthen the purchasing power of households, strengthen social cohesion (by allowing families to remain together and reducing the dependence of the less fortunate on the more affluent), avoid the irreversible effects of some coping strategies, and reduce impacts on the local environment (through avoided tree-felling), among other benefits. Transfers also provide a platform for raising awareness and educating the population through training sessions – as part of Project Bonbatu, women were trained by community volunteers on topics related to environmental protection and animal husbandry.

2. As a result of typical migration patterns during the lean season – men typically leave the area to search for work – the participation of women in Cash-for-Work activities was high, providing an opportunity for the project to have a major impact on the empowerment of women:

    - Women had an active voice in the project, including in the processes of selecting beneficiaries and choosing CFW activities.
    - Women have proven to the community as a whole that they were able to participate in physical activities due to the possibilities offered by the project.
    - "We have purchasing power in our hands" said one woman participant - women were able to meet their domestic needs independently without seeking husbands' approval.

- In general, women felt more respected within their communities because they were able to work and earn money.

3. CRS learned from the distribution of Moringa for cultivation that this activity is both more costly than originally envisaged and requires the existence of established nurseries for widespread propagation of seedlings. Future projects will incorporate these findings, with targets adjusted according to local production capacity.

V. Sustainability

- The key to the project's sustainability has been the participatory approach used throughout implementation, including in the selection of beneficiaries and the identification of CFW activities.
- Community liaisons trained by the project were selected from within beneficiary communities, contributing to the sustainability of the project. Messages presented during trainings have been reflected in feedback from surveys and the final evaluation. In addition, the self-evaluation exercise conducted with communities has potential future applications.

Bonbatu Results, March 2013 – March 2014

Sector/Sub-Sector	Indicator	Performance Targets	Achievement	Comments
Agriculture and Food Security				
Sub-Sector: Livestock	Number of animals benefiting from or affected by livestock activities	2,600	2,000 Goats: 1,669 Sheep: 331	The animals were more expensive than expected, so no one was able to purchase two animals
	Number of people benefiting from livestock activities, by sex	14,000	20,808 Men: 10,918 Women: 9,890	Exceeded target because households on average were larger than the national average (7)
	Number of veterinary interventions (e.g. treatments, vaccinations, etc.)	2,600	2,000	
	Number of animals treated	2,600	2,000	
Sub-Sector: Improving Agricultural Production/Food Security	Projected increase in number of months of food self-sufficiency due to distributed seed systems/agricultural input for beneficiary households	1 month	3 months	
	Number of people benefiting from seed systems/agricultural input activities, by sex	42,000	29,232 Men: 17,590 Women: 11,642	The number of Moringa beneficiaries was reduced for cost and feasibility reasons
	Total cash value of seed and agricultural inputs purchased	USD 35,785	USD 34,525	
Economic Recovery and Market Systems (ERMS)				
Sub-Sector: Livelihoods Restoration	*Number of people assisted through livelihood restoration activities, by sex*	16,800	24,193 Men: 12,377 Women: 11,826	Exceeded target because households on average were larger than the national average (7)

	Percent of beneficiaries reporting their livelihoods restored within three to six months after receiving support	70%	93%	
	Total USD amount channeled into the program area through sub-sector activities	USD 171,769	USD 179,681.14	
Sub-Sector: Temporary Employment	*Number of people employed through CFW activities, by sex*	2,400	2,400 Men: 1,998 Women: 402	
	Average total amount per person earned through CFW activities	USD 38.77	USD 39.55	Slight fluctuations in exchange rate
	Total USD amount channeled into the program area through sub-sector activities	USD 93,042	USD 94,929.01	Slight fluctuations in exchange rate
	Number of hectares reclaimed and protected for agro-pastoral use through CFW activities	130	384.76	Interest in CFW activities led beneficiaries in some villages to organize a “week of community land restoration”, during which voluntary efforts helped to exceed the project target
	Number of households trained in the implementation of natural resource management (NRM) techniques	2,400	2,400	