

Wadata Makiyaya
(Thriving Pastoralists in Hausa)

Final Report

June 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014

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



VSLA meeting in Louma (Filingué commune)

COUNTRY CONTACT	HEADQUARTERS CONTACT	PROJECT SUMMARY
Thierno Samba Diallo Niger Country Director Address: Quartier Issa-Beri, Rue IB28 BP: 10632, Niamey, Niger Telephone: +227-2073-9633 Email: tdiallo@ne.mercycorps.org	John Stephens Senior Program Officer Address: 45 SW Ankeny Street Portland, OR 97204 Telephone: +1 503 896 5028 Email: jstephens@mercycorps.org	Award No: AID-OFDA-G-13-00047 Start Date: June 1, 2013 End Date: May 31, 2014 Report Date: September 30, 2014 Total Award: US \$1,000,363

Overview

Wadata Makiyaya was designed as a follow-on to the USAID/OFDA award-winning DRR program *Projet d'Appui à la Sécurisation des Terres et Ouvrages de Réhabilitation des Aires Locales* (PASTORAL) (AID-OFDA-G-11-00067). Recurring, repeated food crises, particularly the poor harvests in the 2011/2012 growing season, had systematically weakened the ability to meet household needs in the Tillabéri region of Niger. While PASTORAL met immediate needs in past crises and strengthened the recovery of vulnerable populations in the the region, Wadata Makiyaya continued to solidify recovery gains in 18 communities in the Filingué commune (20% of the total commune population) and 12 communities in Abala commune (15% of the commune).

Programming under Wadata Makiyaya in 2013/2014 was critical to capitalizing gains from previous projects and to solidifying the ability of these populations to rebuild their lives and weather future shocks. The program aimed at protecting and reinforcing the livelihoods of vulnerable communities in the Filingué and Abala departments through a community led, market driven approach to recovery. Specifically, the program helped households maintain animal assets by;

- Rehabilitating 7 wells;
- Constructing 9 animal crushes;
- Training 40 Community Animal Health Workers in business;
- Rehabilitating 113 hectares of land through Cash for Work;
- Training 417 people in herd management; and,
- Training 900 people in pasture harvesting and conservation.

Wadata Makiyaya also worked to strengthen the economic base of vulnerable households through financial management training for target households to encourage savings and sound investments as positive coping mechanisms (such as creating cereal or fodder banks). Wadata Makiyaya provided financial and governance training to 50 newly created VSLAs with a total of 1,413 participants (1,412 women and 1 man) to achieve this. The program helped communities better manage natural resources and minimize risks by improving access to fertile land and water resources and embedding more community-based land and water management committees in existing government systems.

- Cumulative Beneficiaries Targeted: 28,000 (4000 households)
- Cumulative Beneficiaries Reached: 35,487 (5,069 households)

1. Performance Summary

Program Goal: Vulnerable pastoralist and agro-pastoralist households along the international transhumance corridor are food secure and less vulnerable to shocks.

In a region continuously challenged by drought and other climate change impacts, Wadata Makiyaya was able to significantly increase the food security of beneficiary households. Three goal-level indicators were selected and measured at the project's baseline and endline to demonstrate changes, which were all positive and trending in the expected direction. See data and interpretations for each indicator below.

INDICATORS	Baseline	Endline
1. Average household coping score (CSI).	43	24
2. Average household diet diversity score (HDDS).	4.4	5.7
3. Percentage of households with moderate or severe hunger (Household Hunger Scale).	36% ¹	30%

Table 1: Wadata Makiyaya Program Goal Indicator Results

1. Average household coping score (CSI).

CSI scores range from 0 to 126 and measure both the frequency of the use of specific coping strategies and the severity of those coping strategies. Lower scores mean that fewer, less severe coping strategies are used thus indicating better food security. At the project's baseline, the average score among respondent households in both Filingué and Abala departments was 43² (anything over 28 is typically considered critically food insecure). The endline score of 24 represents a 44% decrease in the use of household coping strategies. This indicates that on average Wadata households have moved from critical to moderately food insecure. Figure 1 presents the type of coping strategies used at the baseline and end-line and the percentage of surveyed households. See endline evaluation for more detail.

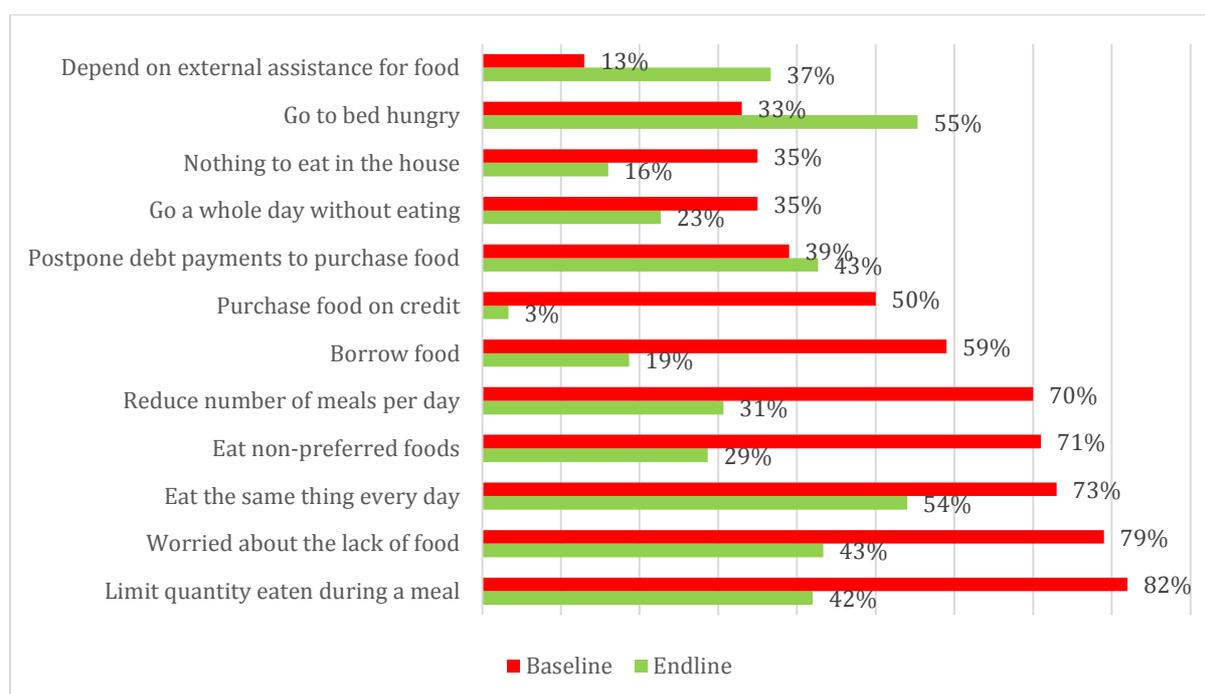


Figure 1: Percentage of households using different coping strategies at baseline and end-line

2. Average household dietary diversity score (HDDS).

For this indicator respondents are asked to recall their food consumption within the last 24 hours within 12 possible food groups (cereals, fish and seafood, root and tubers,

¹ Based on recollection of 7 days food intake rather than 30 days.

² On the CSI a score of <12 is considered food secure; between 12-28 is moderate food insecurity, and over 28 is considered critically insecure.

pulses/legumes/nuts, vegetables, milk and milk products, fruits, oil/fats, meat/poultry/offal, sugar/honey, eggs, and miscellaneous). As HDDS scores increase, nutrition improves with more diversified foods. At the baseline, average household dietary diversity was 4.4 different food groups; by the endline, average HDDS increased to 5.7 different food groups (see endline evaluation for more detail).

Table 2: HDDS - Household food diversity score breakdown at baseline and endline

Commune	Abala Baseline	Abala Endline	Filingué Baseline	Filingué Endline	Total Baseline	Total Endline	% change
Number HHS	40	34	110	107	150	141	
Very weak	10	0	18	0	28	0	-100%
Weak	17	15	42	16	59	31	-47%
Average	6	13	28	65	34	78	+129%
Above Average	7	6	22	26	29	32	+10%

Households are categorized as *Very weak* (0-2), *Weak* (3-4), *Average* (5-6) or *Above average* (7+). There is a similar positive trend in each category and both departments for the most critically food insecure. Within specific categories:

- *Very weak* was completely eliminated across both departments;
- *Weak* decreased slightly in Abala but showed a large (- 61%) decrease in Filingué;
- *Average* showed 129% increase and has absorbed movement from the *Very weak* and *weak* categories; and
- *Above average* was fairly stable with a slight 10% increase.

3. Percentage of households with moderate or severe hunger (Household Hunger Scale).

The Household Hunger Scale (HHS) consists of three questions and three frequencies (e.g., rarely, sometimes, often) that, when administered in a population-based household survey, allows for estimating the percent of households in three hunger levels: 1) Little to no household hunger; 2) Moderate household hunger; and 3) Severe household hunger³. The three questions are: 1) No food in the house due to lack of means; 2) Need to go to bed hungry; and 3) The need to go a day without eating.

Table 3: Household Hunger Scale scores

HHS Profile	Number of Households Baseline	Number of Households End-line	% Baseline	% Endline	% Change
Little or no household hunger	95	98	64	70	9%
Moderate household hunger	14	41	9	29	222%
Severe household hunger	39	2	27	1	96%
Total	148	141	100	100	
Severe and Moderate combined	53	43	36%	30%	17%

³ http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/wa_workshop/docs/HH_Hunger_Scale.pdf Accessed Aug 27, 2014.

At the project's endline, the percentage of households in severe or moderate hunger had decreased by 17% (from 36% to 30%). This masks a huge reduction in the severe household hunger category from 26% of the sample to 1% (a 96% change). Most of the movement was into the moderate category. This went from 9% to 29% of the sample; the little or no hunger category saw a 9% change – improving from 64% to 69.5%.

a. Achievements by Objective / Sector

SECTOR #1 Agriculture and Food Security <i>Subsector: Livestock</i>		<i>Objective: Strengthened production of targeted agro-pastoralists and pastoralists.</i>		
Geographic Area (s)	Along the international transhumance corridors in the Filingué and Abala Departments, Tillabéri Region, Niger			
Beneficiaries Targeted (this sector)	28,000 individuals (4000 households); 0 IDPs			
Cumulative Beneficiaries Reached (this sector)	35,487 individuals (5,069 households)			
\$ Amount budgeted	\$772,594			
\$ Amount spent	\$658,363			
Subsector: Livestock				
INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Baseline	Cumulative Value Targeted	Cumulative Reached
Number of animals benefiting from or affected by livestock activities	N/A		52,650	35,487
Number of animals treated in livestock activities	N/A	N/A	0	0
Number of people benefiting from livestock activities, by sex	Male		2000	17,744*
	Female		2000	17,743*
Number of veterinary interventions (e.g., treatments, vaccinations, etc.) in livestock activities	N/A	N/A	0	0
SECTOR #2 Economic Recovery and Market Systems <i>Subsector: Microfinance</i>		<i>Objective: Increased access to financial services and savings for targeted communities</i>		
Geographic Area (s)	Along the international transhumance corridors in the Filingué and Abala Departments, Tillabéri Region, Niger			
Beneficiaries Targeted (this sector)	8,750 individuals (1,250 households) for VSLAs			
Cumulative Beneficiaries Reached (this sector)	9,891 (1,413 households)			
\$ Amount budgeted	\$136,437			
\$ Amount spent	\$189,100			
Subsector: Microfinance				
INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Baseline	Cumulative Value Targeted	Cumulative Reached

Number of people, by sex, or MSEs newly receiving financial services or continuing to receive financial services due to USAID/OFDA support	Male	0	0	1
	Female	0	1,250	1,412
Percentage of financial service accounts/groups supported by USAID/OFDA that are functioning properly	N/A	0	100%	100%
Total USD amount channeled into the program area through microfinance activities	N/A	0	N/A	N/A
SECTOR #3 Risk Reduction Policy and Practice Subsector: Capacity Building and Training	<i>Objective: Sustainable management of environmental and conflict-related risks by pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities</i>			
Geographic Area (s)	Along the international transhumance corridors in the Filingué and Abala Departments, Tillabéri Region, Niger			
Beneficiaries Targeted (this sector)	230 individuals (30 members of surveillance committees plus 200 COFOB members)			
Cumulative Beneficiaries Reached (this sector)	3,054 (includes awareness raising)			
\$ Amount budgeted	\$91,331			
\$ Amount spent	\$68,784			
Subsector: Capacity Building and Training				
INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Baseline	Cumulative Value Targeted	Cumulative Reached
Number of people trained in disaster preparedness, mitigation and management, disaggregated by sex	Male	0	205	90
	Female	0	25	20
Number of trainings conducted	N/A	0	2	4
Number of people passing final exams or receiving certificates, disaggregated by sex <i>(will not be measured, as there are no relevant activities)</i>	Male	0	N/A	N/A
	Female			
Percentage of people trained who retain skills and knowledge after two months	N/A	0	85%	97%

*This figure is based on an average of seven animals per household (based on the Agricultural and Livestock Government Survey – RGAC), and is an estimation of the number of pastoralists benefitting from the five livestock crushes during the government-led vaccination campaign, during which 35,487 animals were vaccinated. Because the estimated household size in the target area is also 7, the total number of people benefitting from vaccination and other livestock activities is estimated at 35,487.

Performance Summary

b. Sector 1 – Agriculture and Food Security

(Subsector) Livestock

Five main activities characterized the program in this subsector:

- Construction of 9 livestock vaccination crushes;
- Rehabilitation of 7 wells;

- Nutrition diagnosis, training, and demonstrations;
- Fodder conservation and storage demonstration units, and
- Training on herd and micro-business management.

Construction of livestock vaccination crushes

Livestock crushes were identified as a priority by communities, herder associations, and local authorities benefiting from the PASTORAL program because they could decrease time spent on vaccinations and minimize human and animal health risks. Initially five crushes were planned; late in the program, four more were planned and constructed.

The five initial livestock vaccination crushes were constructed in the following villages: Louma, Sabon Gari, and Tanfadara in the Filingué commune; and Aboyak and Hamba in the Abala commune. These sites were chosen based on an evaluation conducted with commune-level and local government officials in charge of livestock resources, which indicated more animals frequent these campaigns than other villages in the target zone. All five livestock crushes were built on community land, donated by the government and officially documented by the departmental (COFODEP) and village-level (COFOB) land tenure commissions.

Mercy Corps signed agreements with two contractors, one for each commune (Filingué and Abala), and the work was completed on time and on budget by late December before the annual January 15th vaccination campaign mandated by the government. The crushes include



Livestock vaccination crush

a corral and an alley designed to direct large animals into a confined space where vaccinations are administered safely. Each crush can hold up to 200 animals at a time, greatly facilitating the vaccination process and minimizing potential harm to humans and animals that might otherwise be injured while owners physically restrain animals for vaccinations.

Five livestock management committees (one per site), were established prior to construction of the crushes to help oversee the work and ensure the sustainable oversight of these community resources. 35 committee members (31 men, 4 women) were trained by Mercy Corps and government technical experts on infrastructure management. Communities elected seven members per site to oversee the management and maintenance of the newly constructed crushes. Committees have already identified strategies for the sustainable management of these community assets. For example, after the conclusion of the vaccination campaign, committee members have suggested removing smaller parts of the crush structure to be safely stored in their homes. This will prevent theft or vandalism of the crushes.



Livestock Crush Management committee in Aboyak Peulh

During Wadata's third quarter, the five vaccination crushes were used during the annual government-led vaccination campaign against Contagious Bovine Pleuropneumonia (CBPP) and Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPRV). Vaccination crush management committees worked with their communities (reaching a total of 890 people through awareness-raising activities) to improve local awareness about this communal asset and encourage them to use the crushes during the vaccination campaigns. A total of 35,487 animals were vaccinated in the crushes.

Type of animal	Number of animals reached
Cattle	13,400
Camels	311
Small ruminants	21,772
Grand Total	35,487

Table 4: Animals vaccinated at livestock crushes constructed by Wadata

Due to the difference between estimated and actual costs for the construction of the original five crushes, the program was able to fund the construction of four additional crushes in the villages of Talcho and Bakin Toulou in the commune of Filingué and Tamatchi and Dan Maitoka in the commune of Abala. Following the same procedure as the initial 5 crushes, the program identified and chose sites with technical service agents from the Ministry of Livestock based on an evaluation conducted with commune-level and local government officials in charge of livestock resources and set up elected livestock management committees (COGES) to oversee the upkeep of materials and to monitor against theft or vandalism of the crushes. The two contractors who constructed the initial 5 crushes were selected to construct the 4 additional crushes as they did well with the initial contract. Mercy Corps and the contractors agreed on an amendment to the original contract.

Mercy Corps and government technical experts trained 28 committee members (20 men, 8 women) on their specific role in infrastructure management, maintenance, and sensitization of pastoralists. All four crushes will be used during the next annual government mandated vaccination campaign (November 2014 to January 2015) and in subsequent years.

Rehabilitation of pastoral wells

Mercy Corps worked with the department level Ministry of Hydraulics to assess the existing wells and estimate the cost of rehabilitation, and the most important wells were prioritized. After a competitive tender process, Mercy Corps identified two companies, one per commune, to complete rehabilitation of the seven wells. The rehabilitation of seven pastoral wells was completed and included: 1) Deepening to increase the duration of water availability throughout the year; 2) Rehabilitating small walls around wells to avoid contamination; 3) Providing surface equipment to keep wells clean; and 4) Building reservoirs specifically for animals.

Table 5: Location of Wadata Makiyaya's seven rehabilitated wells

Department	Site/village
Filingué (4 sites/wells)	Garin Douté; Dan Gari ; Sabon Gari Takoussa ; Tanfadara
Abala (3 sites/wells)	Hamba Daouda; Tchintchayé; Tanchiley

Mercy Corps worked with each of the communities benefiting from well rehabilitation to establish and begin training a six person water source management committee; a total of 42 committee members (28 men, 14 women) received 3 days training. The MC extension agent

continued to work with them and train them so that they could do refresher trainings by themselves when needed. The committees will be responsible for maintenance, conflict resolution and any other issues related to oversight of the wells. After their training, management committees played an important role in overseeing the construction, informing the community of the progress towards completing the wells, and signed off on the work (alongside Mercy Corps and local authorities) once the wells were officially completed.

The rehabilitated infrastructures were handed over to the communities and well management committees after water quality testing (under the supervision of the hydraulic department and village authorities). Fees generated from fines for breaching wells' usage rules, water usage from transhumant pastoralists, and in-kind contribution of cereals from the local community at harvest will cover the costs of maintenance and replacement of small parts. An estimated 8,575 households and 10,150 animals already benefit directly from the rehabilitation of the seven wells.



Rehabilitated Hamda Douilha well, Abala

Wadata Makiyaya had a funny success story regarding a rehabilitated well. The COGES have been well trained that when someone breaks the rules, they must pay the duty for the infraction. The wells are cleaned at night and closed with a key. Usually a woman is head of the well COGES and has the key. Mercy Corps' regional director was visiting the wells and was very curious about investigating the physical characteristics but he forgot to remove his shoes and violated the cleanliness rules. The head of the COGES saw this, knew he was from Mercy Corps and really took him to task for breaking the rules. She levied a 500 FCFA fine and insisted he pay it!

Nutrition diagnosis, training, and demonstrations

15 of the 30 target villages were identified for culinary demonstration activities to raise awareness on malnutrition based on the following principle criteria: 1) communities without health centers, and/or who are not benefiting from other nutrition interventions and 2) whose baseline research indicating higher food insecurity levels than in other Wadata Makiyaya target villages. Site selection was done in collaboration with the Filingué-based hospital, public health and nutrition authorities and the departmental nutrition focal point. 242 children (183 girls and 59 boys) were identified using the Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) to measure moderate malnutrition.



Anthropomorphic Screening in Tamagorjet Village

23 cooking demonstration centers were established in these 15 villages, and Mercy Corps held monthly trainings over six months and provided the ingredients and materials for the

demonstrations. They varied recipes according to seasonal changes in ingredients' availability to maximize access. 75 *Maman Lumieres*⁴ and 15 male community volunteers were trained on culinary demonstrations using local ingredients so they can use the demonstration examples and expand into more communities. Male volunteers, for example, were chosen in part for their respected roles in their communities and were crucial in gaining the support and understanding of the village men for nutritional activities through informal sensitizations and conversations in mosques and other public places, with village leaders, and in their daily lives.

Each month three culinary demonstrations were held in each cooking demonstration center for a total of 414 demonstrations. The Wadata project field agent conducted a session for the mothers of the 242 identified moderately malnourished children and another one for the *Maman Lumieres* (mother leaders). The third session was offered by the *Maman Lumieres* and male volunteers (monitored by MC field agents) to ensure that everybody in the village understood the practice. Each month for six months the same system was followed. Each month the mothers of the 242 children participated in all three of these sessions, their children receive an allotted portion of the demonstration cooking as a supplementary feeding.

In addition, male and female volunteers relayed health and nutrition messages through informal channels; a total of 2,679 people (2,358 women and 321 men) benefitted from these awareness-raising activities to prevent malnutrition. Each month, health center nurses from the nearby area worked alongside the mother leaders and male community volunteers/health promoters to conduct at least two mass sensitizations per month in each of the 15 communities. These focused on some of the essential Nutrition Action (ENA) practices targeting pregnant and lactating mother and children under five, including: family planning, exclusive breastfeeding during the first 6 months, the different local food groups, community-based prevention of malnutrition, hygiene promotion practices, and the importance of immunization timelines.

Fodder conservation and storage demonstration units

Initially, Mercy Corps field teams visited the projects areas, met with the pastoralists and agro-pastoralists to assess the challenges and discuss upcoming project activities. At the very beginning they involved local authorities in raising awareness of Wadata Makiyaya and its goals and project activities. This initial assessment quickly identified the need for fodder – both green and dry – and how to conserve and store it as an ongoing challenge.



Fodder Demonstration site in Toukounous Station

Based on this initial assessment, Mercy Corps, in partnership with government livestock agents, developed two training programs on fodder harvesting and storage. The first one was offered towards the end of the rainy season when the pasture was green and the second was offered during the dry season when the fodder was dry. These trainings were held in each of Wadata's 30 communities; 30 trainees were selected in each community with the expectation

⁴ Leader mothers.

that they would share and disseminate their learnings with others in their community. Households chose a member of the family to attend the trainings and receive instructions. In some cases a different family member attended the two trainings. See the table below.

Table 6: Fodder Management Training Beneficiaries

	Quarter 1		Quarter 2		Total # Households
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Rainy	330	180	260	130	900
Dry	0	0	600	300	900

In both trainings, techniques emphasized cutting, conserving, and preserving the maximum nutritional value of fodder. The objective of the first training was to raise awareness and increase capacity on cutting and conserving wet silage in storage for a long period without it deteriorating in quality. This training covered:

- Which types of pasture or shrubs to harvest
- What vegetation stage is suitable for mowing
- What time of day and what time of year to mow
- How to conserve it
- How to dry hay
- When to feed it to animals
- The advantages and disadvantages of silage in animal production

The objective of the dry season training was to improve harvesting, storage and conservation techniques for hay and dry season crops. Pastoralists and agro pastoralists were taught simple techniques to use available pasture to prevent potential crises and, even in difficult times, to increase livestock productivity (milk, meat, etc.). Techniques associated with storage barns created from locally available materials allowed pastoralists and agro pastoralists to have a sustainable strategy to dispose of good quality hay during the lean season. The dry season haymaking training covered:

- How to collect dry pasture
- Which type of dry pasture to collect
- How to conserve it in a grange
- The processing of hay to add nutritional value
- The multi nutritional block
- How and when to feed animals hay
- The types of animals to be fed hay
- The advantages and disadvantages of hay

The trainings covered good and bad storage practices including:

- Making clay silos to store silage underground
- Conserving fodder by cutting it green, putting it in a silo, adding salt to absorb moisture and increase fermentation which maintains the nutritional value and conserves fodder for 4-5 months
- Keeping hay out of the sun (which decreases its nutritional value) and inside a grange/ demonstration unit

After the trainings, Wadata Makiyaya identified sites and planned the construction of fodder granges (demonstration units) that served as models for improved fodder storage techniques

to help promote best practices to other community members. The community identified sites and the materials needed to rehabilitate an existing structure or construct a new one. 34 sites targeting the localities of the 900 fodder management training participants were identified. Wadata constructed 34 demonstration units using local materials and expertise. Beneficiaries contributed local materials (e.g., bricks, sand and clay) for construction and Wadata purchased the remaining materials and contracted with local builders to rehabilitate or construct the fodder demonstration units.

The fodder demonstration units were managed by fodder training participants. Hay is purchased or cut in November-December and stored in the fodder storage units to be used over the subsequent animal lean season in April, May and June. The 22m³ structures preserve the nutritional value of fodder, unlike the common practice of storing fodder outside or on the roofs of homes. The leaders of VSLA groups in each village were also sensitized and involved in the units' construction so they will promote fodder storage unit construction within their respective associations and help members build their own units by offering loans.

Eight households in six villages in the Filingué commune initiated the construction of their own fodder storage units using locally available materials for their personal usage and/or shared between several community members. This was observed in Toukounous Station, Tarkassa, Toukounous Arzika, Sabon Gari, Banguir Kourfeyawa, and Louma.



Hamachi (outside and inside roof views) and Banguir Bare Bari fodder storage demonstration units

Training on herd and micro-business management

Mercy Corps trained 417 pastoralists and agro-pastoralists (66 men and 351 women) in a 2 day ToT workshop on herd management and animal fattening. The beneficiaries of this training included members of five vaccination crushes and seven water sources management committees, 75 mother leaders and 15 male community volunteers involved in culinary demonstration and nutrition activities during previous quarters, and 250 VSLA members. Trainees made a commitment to promote the practices learned and to provide advice and mentoring to a minimum of 10 other pastoralists in their communities, thus expanding the impact to indirect beneficiaries. The two-day training held in seven villages of the Filingué commune and two of the Abala commune was led by technical service agents of the Ministry of Livestock and included the following themes: 1) Goat and sheep selection for fattening; 2) Sheltering small ruminants; 3) Feeding practices; 4) Animal health and hygiene practices; and 5) Business-minded herd management.

In addition, Wadata held a two-day training for 40 community animal health workers (all men) in micro-business management. A local private veterinary service provider and Mercy Corps' field agents delivered training on the following modules:

- Financial literacy and micro-business management;
- Quality of animal health services and vaccination dosage recommendations;
- Stock management of veterinary products; and,
- Responses to potential animal disease epidemics.

c. Sector 2 Economic Recovery and Market Systems

(Subsector) Microfinance

This subsector was focused on creating and supporting 50 Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) and included Cash for Work activities at the end of the program.

Creating VSLAs

In partnership with ASUSU CIIGABA and a departmental representative of the Ministry of Planning and Community Development, 50 VSLAs with a total of 1,413 beneficiaries (1,412 women and 1 man) were created. These groups are from 30 villages in the communes of Filingué and Abala. All members had affinities with existing social or informal mutual assistance groups that made it easier for these individuals and groups to adopt a more formal VSLA structure. To minimize challenges in the training and group organization, groups were encouraged—though not mandated – to hold to the membership limit to 25.

All 50 VSLAs received instruction on nine training modules:

- Organization (i.e. creation of positions, elections)
- Leadership and good governance
- Internal regulations and legal registration
- Savings, contributions and solidarity funds
- Credit and conflict management
- Interest, penalties and reimbursement
- Partnership and negotiation
- Monitoring and evaluation of activities
- Income generating activities

Later in the program, all 50 VSLAs benefitted from an ASUSU-led compliment to the VSLA training on managing income-generating activities, including how to: choose or adapt an activity based on the market (avoid market saturation, price inputs etc.); market your products; and calculate profits and losses. This training was aimed at building the capacity of group members to invest in their livelihoods activities.

In addition to training, each VSLA group received a start-up kit with the following materials: pens, a ruler, a calculator, a stamp, a cash box and locks/keys, 2 different colored sacks for the savings/credit and solidarity funds, and savings and credit notebooks for each member and the group's secretary.

Each VSLA group met weekly and established a schedule for contributions. For example, one group in Louma village required weekly participation in their economic development fund, as well as a one-time contribution for social solidarity, which could be used to assist members in an emergency (e.g., unexpected medical expenses). Throughout Wadata Makiyaya, program staff and ASUSU field agents supported the VSLA groups in their weekly meetings and prepared them to complete their first cycle of savings and loans.



VSLA group doing final capital distribution in Louma (Filingué commune)

At the end of the first cycle, groups shared the capital they had accumulated and interest gained on loans between members based on the number of shares each held. The program supported all groups to establish their legal status with local authorities; further strengthening member cohesion and commitment in pursuing their activities. All 50 VSLAs gave very positive feedback about the VSLA process and expressed interest in initiating a second cycle at the end of the agricultural campaign in September/October. At the end of their first cycle, the results from the 50 VSLAs are in the table below.

Table 7: Wadata Makiyaya VSLA results

# Villages	VSL As	# members	Total Saving	Total members receiving loan;	Total Loan amount	Total Raised for Emergency
30	50	1413	\$7,573	469	\$3,663	\$843

In order to sustain and support the 50 groups beyond the program life and promote the sustainable growth of savings and credit groups in the target areas, Mercy Corps and ASUSU CIIGABA identified 12 community volunteers (11 men and 1 woman) to promote the replication of VSLA groups and activities in the communities. These volunteers were chosen based on their respected roles in their communities, communication skills, level of literacy (which explains the number of men), and availability and commitment. They received a 7-day training by the service agents of the Planning Ministry with the support of ASUSU CIIGABA and were given a sample kit. They worked alongside Mercy Corps and ASUSU agents as local trainers for new VSLA groups and have been provided with the tools needed to form and train additional groups.

During the selection and training process, the village agents' confidence was built as well as their capacity in VSLA training; they are now ready to offer fee-based services to their communities. They build on their experience in microfinance activities and train new groups or support existing groups for a small fee contributed by the groups seeking the training or continued support.

The program has seen steadily increasing demand to participate in VSLA activities after communities observe the gains made by existing groups. The village agents will provide this service, thereby increasing further access to financial services and savings for targeted communities. These 12 volunteers will work with the existing VSLAs and create others in coordination with the governmental office of Planning in both Filingué and Abala. It will be the responsibility of the office of Planning to ensure this activity continues. Mercy Corps will

also be able to monitor this during the implementation of the ongoing USAID/OFDA Madara project, which includes financial inclusion activities in partnership with ASUSU.

Cash for Work activities

Though Cash for Work (CfW) was not included in the original proposal, when it became clear that some activities cost less than budgeted and thus Wadata had a surplus and also that many of the Wadata villages experienced a poor harvest in 2013 season, Mercy Corps submitted a no cost extension request which was granted and implemented Cash for Work activities. \$47,595.30 was spent on Cash for Work activities.

Mercy Corps organized CfW activities in eight villages of the Filingué commune for 700 beneficiary households (584 men and 116 women) selected as the most vulnerable (based on the HEA method) for 25 days. The rehabilitation of grazing land to improve the availability of and access to natural fodder was the primary focus of CFW projects; this helped vulnerable households meet immediate needs during the lean season. The daily rate was 1,300 FCFA based on Government of Niger's standards. Beneficiary households received about \$68 over the five weeks of CFW activities.

113 ha of communal pastureland were rehabilitated by constructing 35,000 half-moons as advised by the government technical extension services of environment and livestock. These structures capture rainfall and slow its run-off to prevent erosion, increase soil moisture, and promote plant growth. Communal sites to be rehabilitated were identified and selected by the sub-regional committee on the management and prevention of food crisis (CSRPC/GCA) in collaboration with communal authorities. CFW participants received training on the techniques to be used and safety guidelines when using the tools; they were supervised by local technical services (Departments of infrastructure and environment and CSRPC/GCA). The constructed structures will be seeded as part of the CFW activities conducted under the Madara program and aimed at protecting animal assets and increasing dairy production in the department of Filingué.



Half-moons constructed in rangeland near the transhumance corridor

c. Sector 3 Risk Reduction Policy and Practice

(Subsector) Capacity Building and Training

Two main activities were completed in this subsector: creation and training of twenty COFOBs (community level land tenure committees/commissions) and general community level awareness-raising.

Creation of, Training and Support to Community-Based Land Tenure Commissions (COFOBs)

As the village-level land tenure commissions, COFOBs play an important role in managing land transactions and mitigating potential conflicts, especially between herders and agro-pastoralists. The target communities were selected because they lacked formally trained COFOB organizations, unlike other villages that had already established COFOBs through past programs. Mercy Corps worked with the COFODEP at department level and communities to select COFOB members, with a minimum of one woman per commission. COFOBs typically have 9 to 11 members including the village chief, a secretary, and representatives of pastoral, agricultural, and women's and youth groups. COFOBs are trained on conflict mitigation and management, conflict resolution, land tenure issuing, negotiations, leadership and financial management, etc.

Mercy Corps worked with the departmental COFODEP to train 80 new COFOB members (60 men, 20 women) on conflict mitigation and management, conflict resolution, land tenure issuing, negotiations, leadership and financial management. Key members of each COFOB (President, Secretary-General, one women's organization and one youth representative) were selected to participate in the training, and share what they had learned with the remaining general COFOB members. Including existing COFOBs, monitoring visits revealed a total of 110 active and registered COFOB members (90 men, 20 women), down from a total of 180 due largely to migration of some members.

Mercy Corps worked with COFOBs to establish and strengthen ties to the resources' surveillance bodies established under PASTORAL and Wadata, including water, livestock crush and grazing land management committees (COGES). Mercy Corps also supported the 20 new COFOBs through periodic follow-up visits to monitor their activities, discuss issues and provide organizational guidance.

Together with department (COFODEP) and commune-level (COFOCOM) land tenure commissions representatives, Mercy Corps completed two larger monitoring missions per COFOB, a total of 40 visits. These visits were an opportunity for local authorities and program staff to verify the land transactions and completion of other COFOB roles (conflict management), as well as learn from COFOBs about their challenges and progress including that community members still struggle to understand local laws governing land use, and thus hesitate to register land transactions.

By the project's 2nd quarter, 13 of the 20 COFOBs had already been quite active, with a total of 10 conflict resolution efforts recorded and 29 meetings held:

Table 8: COFOB Activities

Activity	Number	COFOBs involved
----------	--------	-----------------

Conflicts registered	10	7
Conflicts resolved	8	5
# COFOB meetings	29	19

Most of the conflicts that the COFOBs face happen during the harvesting period when the herd owners are coming back from the North towards the cultivated land in the south and hoping to benefit from post-harvest crop residues. After this peak migration period, conflicts are very rare because farmers have already harvested all their crops. Six of the 20 COFOBs recorded cases of rural-type damage conflicts. They documented 27 agreements, including 11 conflict resolutions and 16 land transactions. All conflicts were resolved except one that is still being processed. 100% of the new COFOBs conducted at least one meeting since their creation, 24% had two meetings and 3% had 3 meetings.



COFOB meeting in Louma (Filingué commune)

Toward the end of the Wadata program, Mercy Corps conducted a two-day refresher training for the 20 COFOBs with an action planning session to ensure a smooth transition at the program closeout. The training focused on the main challenges and activities facing the COFOBs (e.g., community outreach and continuing to raise community awareness about the COFOBs role and to promote transparency and accountability in engaging with communities). Topics covered included:

- Consistently recording land transactions and revenues generated;
- Organizing monthly COFOB meetings, facilitating members' active participation, and giving regular feedback to COFOCOM, local authorities and communities;
- Annually identifying communal pastureland prior to the rainy season;
- Sensitizing communities on closing pastureland at the start of agricultural season; and
- Recording conflicts reported and mitigated to Ministry of Agriculture for support in resolution.

Awareness-raising and Community Outreach

A "Caravan for Peace" information/communication campaign was carried out in the target area, focusing on herd management and conflict prevention and management. The activity brought key department and commune level land-use management authorities into direct dialogue with each of the project's 30 target communities through a series of community meetings, conducted over several days, with local media coverage. 3,501 people attended these meetings (2,032 males and 1,469 females). It was done after the COFOBs were

established and the messaging referenced the role of COFOBs in the broader legal framework of sustainable natural resource management.

Wadata also supported mass awareness-raising campaigns on the roles and responsibilities of land tenure commissions, laws governing land use, conflict resolution around natural resources, and to promote transparency and accountability of the COFOBs to their communities. Campaigns also covered disaster risk reduction measures such as prevention and mitigation measures concerning brushfire. These campaigns were completed in collaboration with local authorities and members of the COFODEP and COFOCOM such as the mayors of Filingué and Abala communes, the Filingué and Abala Department permanent secretaries, and technical service representatives from the Ministries of Livestock and the Environment. The sensitization activities used local radio coverage, as well as community gatherings to reach a total of 3,054 people (1,643 men, 855 women and 556 youth/children) from all 30 villages.

10 key stakeholder meetings with pastoralists' associations, village leaders, religious associations, women's associations, COFOB members, and the village chief were held near markets and rehabilitated wells. Local drummers passed the message announcing the meeting. These stakeholder meetings were coordinated at the department level COFODEP and lasted 4 or 5 hours. The purpose was to sensitize communities about the relationship of their conflicts with natural resource management and to encourage them to solve community level problems with their COFOBs. These meetings were successful in conveying this message; they were measured after the meeting with Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM). More than 60% of those questioned had heard and understood the message.

d. Other Program Impacts, Lessons Learned, and Challenges

Other Program Impacts

In addition to the program goal indicators and OFDA's indicators, Mercy Corps' project staff identified additional positive impacts of Wadata Makiyaya on the targeted communities. With the passage of time, it should be easier to observe the impact of Wadata Makiyaya and whether the changes have been sustained. What follows are a few observed positive changes not mentioned previously:

- The 5 vaccination crushes, which were completed in time for the government's scheduled vaccination campaigns (November – January), increased the number of vaccinations by 50%. There will be 9 crushes used in the next vaccination campaign, which will increase the number of vaccinations even more.
- The biggest challenge for most villages is water and the lack of it is an ongoing source of conflict. In addition, obtaining water is mainly the duty of women and girls and can absorb a large part of their day. The seven rehabilitated wells made a significant positive difference in their surrounding communities. We anticipate that the new wells will reduce conflict, provide water for both human and livestock consumption in a cleaner, more hygienic and sanitary way, reduce distances for women fetching water and allow women to pursue other productive activities for the time they saved. We hope to observe this positive change in the years to come.
- Participating communities have shown an increase in awareness of sanitation and hygiene, particularly related to their water resources. They know how to ensure hygiene around their wells and they keep them clean.

- The culinary demonstrations gave people several opportunities to practice; the information was shared throughout the community so it was well reinforced, and post demonstration monitoring showed they were practicing what they had learned.
- One of the big nutrition learnings was the use of groundnuts; villagers were unaware of how good it was as a protein. They learned that they didn't have to rely on Plumpy Nut but could use their own available local food differently to have better nutrition.
- Wadata linked the *Maman Lumieres* with their health centers and some are now acting as traditional midwives. They obtain birth certificates, orient new mothers to breastfeeding, and encourage them to go to the health center.
- The 900 direct beneficiary households involved in fodder conservation and storage saw their annual income improve during the difficult lean season (March to June) by using the conserved fodder for fattening and dairy production.

Lessons Learned

- Creating simple fodder demonstrations using inexpensive locally available materials increased adoption and dissemination of the techniques amongst the community.
- Carefully selecting participants who were willing to learn and try new practices for the fodder trainings and demonstrations had a strong benefit when it came to dissemination. The participants were very enthusiastic about what they learned and made sure all others in their communities learned about fodder.
- People had heard about new fodder conservation and storage practices and they could see the difference in animals that were fed with conserved fodder. The increase in livestock's body weight and milk production convinced others to quickly adopt improved fodder practices.
- Developing and sharing tasty, simple recipes using local products (e.g., millet, groundnut, cowpeas, monkey bread, etc.) increased malnourished children's consumption of local products.
- The VSLA approach gave women increased independence in managing finances and pursuing income-generating activities.
- The selection and training of village-based VSLA agents has already shown promising results, as community members express interest in seeking the support of these individuals to continue their activities and to form new savings groups.
- Early in the program, monitoring showed that COFOB groups were facing challenges to perform their function in regards to conflict management, as many in their communities were still unaware of their role. The peace caravans and community outreach campaigns helped to promote the COFOBs, which led to an increase in community members seeking their assistance. We observed that in most cases, community members prefer to resolve conflicts locally rather than involving regional or national authorities, and with the support of the program, the COFOBs are starting to fill that needed role.

Challenges

- The COFOBs need a motivation to continue to hold regular meetings when there is no conflict (e.g., after the harvest).
- As mentioned above, we learned the community based organizations, including COFOBs, often require support and encouragement over a longer term period before they can stand on their own. Not all of the 20 COFOBs were functioning by the time the project ended, due partly to the migration of many members. Mercy Corps should monitor the COFOBs created under WADATA while implementing the current USAID/OFDA Madara program and continue the sensitization. Continued contact

with and support to COFOBs that were formed under PASTORAL has already helped improve results for those groups.

- In a One-year implementation period, it can be difficult to observe the impact of the program. Nonetheless, Mercy Corps is helping communities adopt positive mechanisms for recovery and development that will lead to more sustainable results, including through our current program in the region, Madara, which will continue over 22 months.
- Conducting the final evaluation and measuring some of the indicators (i.e. HHS, CSI) during the lean season didn't provide a good indication of what the program has achieved.

a. Monitoring and Evaluation

Wadata Makiyaya benefited from a rigorous, well planned monitoring and evaluation effort. Frequent, regular, and varied monitoring identified quickly whether or not project activities had accomplished their goals and allowed project staff to adjust activities when they were replicated in other communities. This section touches briefly on Wadata's project monitoring. Information on the baseline and endline surveys are available in separate documents.

Monitoring Wadata's activities continued throughout the project and was essential to Wadata's success for several reasons; it helped project staff know which activities were well received and understood; it helped project staff tweak and improve activities that were replicated; and it identified when and where further support was needed. The program team developed an indicator plan and designed monitoring tools to be used throughout the project cycle (e.g., a set of one-page monitoring questionnaires). The tools will be used to confirm the relevance and retention of training subjects 60 days after training sessions. Questionnaires were administered by Mercy Corps field agents (for fodder trainings, VSLAs, or culinary demonstrations) or site management committees (for wells and vaccination crushes) with the M&E team ensuring quality control in terms of data collection (timing and technique) as well as data analysis. Mercy Corps had a high levels of community participation in monitoring, particularly related to community assets such as wells and vaccination crushes.

Vaccination crushes - Mercy Corps infrastructure supervising agent worked closely during this time with the vaccination crush management committees in each of the five locations. All five committees were visited six times over the three-month period. For the four additional vaccination crushes which were completed near the end of the program and after the national vaccination campaigns were completed for the season, Mercy Corps established and trained the crush management committees.

Nutrition and cooking demonstrations - The program team conducted a small survey with the mothers participating in cooking demonstrations to assess their understanding of the monthly recipes. In total, 18 focus groups in 12 of the target villages were completed on a monthly basis. On average, there was an 85% correct response rate suggesting mothers understood the majority of concepts in the cooking demonstrations. It also identified when there was less clarity and the staff held refresher sessions.

Program monitoring also showed that the *Maman Lumieres* had been informally engaging other women on key nutrition and infant health subjects in VSLA groups, water management committees, baptism ceremonies and other social interactions.

COFOBs - In December 2013, the M&E team evaluated the COFOBs supported under the previous PASTORAL program. The findings informed the implementation strategy for Wadata's work developing 20 new COFOBs. Mercy Corps supported the 20 new COFOBs with frequent visits to participate in activities and meetings, discuss issues, and provide organizational guidance. Together with department (COFODEP) and commune-level (COFOCOM) land tenure commissions representatives, Mercy Corps also completed two monitoring missions per COFOB, a total of 40 visits.

In addition, the program continued to gather information in focus groups on a sampling of 12 out of the 20 Wadata COFOBs to assess the progress of these new structures. Among the 12 COFOBs that were monitored, there were six community meetings conducted by four COFOBs and six land transactions registered by three COFOBs. Of the 310 community members who participated in 12 focus group discussions (one per village), 52.5% were satisfied with the work of the COFOBs. Some of the reasons participants were not satisfied included a lack of understanding around the roles of COFOBs.

c. Overall Cost Effectiveness

Wadata activities were generally implemented in line with the approved program budget which was more likely to be underspent than over because of the difficulty in estimating certain program costs. For example, the project benefited from economies of scale in our relationship with ASUSU who implemented VSLA activities in this project as well as PACT II. In addition, we received an exemption from paying VAT on the well construction materials purchased so the wells also came in significantly under budget.

Cash for Work was not in the original Wadata proposal but as it became clear that Wadata would be underspent, it also became clear that there was a strong need for cash support due to the poor 2013 harvest during the lean season in some of Wadata's communities. A NCE request was approved by USAID/OFDA and the targeted communities rehabilitated 113 hectares of range land by creating 35,000 half moon-shaped anti-erosion barriers which were later seeded with fodder.

d. Sustainability, Ownership, End of Project Transition

From the beginning, Wadata Makiyaya was designed with an eye towards graduating beneficiaries from receiving aid and creating ownership of constructed infrastructure to ensure that improvements are sustainable. The program started with an exit strategy that would ensure the sustainability of program activities, by emphasizing the transfer of knowledge and building the capacity of local leaders, structures and beneficiary communities.

To this end, the program team coordinated with relevant local government entities to ensure ownership, participation and a full understanding of our work during the implementation. Collaboration continued with key stakeholders, including GoN technical services (e.g., Ministries of Livestock, the Environment, Planning and Community Development, Rural Engineering, and Hydrology), NGOs working in the same area, the departmental land management commission (COFODEP), the sub-regional committees on the management and prevention of food crises (CSRGPCA), and traditional and administrative authorities. An example of how coordination added value to project interventions was working with the IRC and the nutrition cluster to avoid duplication and harmonize approaches in regard to site selection and methods for nutrition awareness raising activities.

Mercy Corps worked to ensure a smooth end-of-program transition at the program closeout both internally as well as scheduling hand over meetings for the rehabilitated wells and vaccination crushes and a close collaboration with partner ASUSU CIIGABA for the continued mentoring and support of VSLA groups and village agents. We also continued to coordinate with community members, local actors, private partners, and government to ensure ownership and sustainability after the program close-out.

Conclusion

The Wadata Makiyaya program, concluded June 30th, 2014, demonstrated continued success in strengthening livestock production and increasing access to financial services and savings of targeted pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in the Filingué department, thus equipping them to weather future shocks and stresses. From the beginning, Mercy Corps created an exit strategy that would ensure the sustainability of program activities, by emphasizing the transfer of knowledge and building the capacity of local leaders, structures and beneficiary communities.