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List of Acronyms/Glossary

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| AVCC | Agricultural Value Chain Coordinators |
| CAHW | Community Animal Health Worker |
| CDF | Community Development Funds |
| CLTS | Community-led Total Sanitation |
| CoFoB | Community-level Land Tenure Commissions |
| CoFoDep | Land Tenure Commission at the department level |
| CoP | Chief of Party |
| CSB+ | Corn Soy Blend Plus |
| CSI | Integrated Health Center/Centre de Santé Intégré |
| DFAP | Development Food Aid Program |
| DRSP | Direction Régionale de la Santé Publique |
| Ecole des Maris | Approach developed by UNFPA and used by a number of NGOs in Niger |
| ENA | Essential Nutrition Actions |
| EWS | Early Warning Systems |
| FFP | Office of Food for Peace |
| FFS | Farmer Field Schools |
| FP | Family Planning |
| FY | Fiscal Year |
| GoN | Government of Niger |
| HKI | Helen Keller International |
| IEC | Information, Education, Communication |
| IMCI | Integrated Management of Childhood Illness |
| INRAN | National Institute of Agronomy Research |
| IYCF | Infant and Young Child Feeding |
| LVCC | Livestock Value Chain Coordinators |
| MC | Mercy Corps |
| MUAC | mid-upper arm circumference |
| PLW | Pregnant and Lactating Women |
| REGIS-ER | USAID-funded Resilience and Economic Growth in the Sahel, Enhanced Resilience program |
| RRA | Rapid Rural Appraisal |
| SO | Strategic Objective |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| WFP | World Food Program |
| WMC | Water Management Committee |

A. Introduction: Annual Food Assistance Program Results

During fiscal year 2015, significant progress was made under the USAID-funded Sawki DFAP Program. Through two interconnected strategic objectives, *Sawki* is designed to respond to the food security needs of more than 92,000 beneficiaries based on the criteria of social vulnerability, economic opportunity and agro-pastoral linkages. In 2015, *Sawki* started scaling up its pilot tested practices that have proven to contribute to community livelihoods and improved health and nutrition. *Sawki* implemented all program activities in the 62 villages in year 3 targeting 92,092 beneficiaries. The 62 villages, divided between three communes in Maradi (21 communities) and five in Zinder (41 communities), were selected for their chronic food insecurity, high rates of chronic malnutrition, human and economic potential, and contiguity and strong community cohesion. These areas are also easily accessible in all seasons.

Specific to Strategic Objective 1 (SO1), improving health and nutrition, the program moved from the initial teaching/awareness raising phase to the fieldwork phase where we are starting to see outcomes. An emphasis was placed on the widespread adoption of best practices for essential nutrition actions (ENA). To support this enhanced capacity, material support was provided to community structures through hands-on training of diverse stakeholders in various sectors. These activities and training programs focused on intensified mobilization and promoted community ownership, design and dissemination of messages and behavior change communication outreach and adoption of best practices. A key activity of the program is the distribution of supplementary food, linked with cooking demonstrations using local foods and follow up through home visits. An important intervention linked with the food support and home visits is the work *Sawki* and stakeholders did this year to improve the quality and access of potable water through the rehabilitation of water points, a focus on health and safety and Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) activities. For ongoing support and expansion of the coverage of health services, stakeholders have received appropriate training and support in field outreach activities with communities. *Sawki's* model to ensure a more profound effect and sustainability at the community level, the project has focused on gender approaches that are integrated into all aspects of programming, but also stand-alone activities to ensure an impact – these activities include “husband schools” and the use of safe spaces for the promotion of health and nutrition and family planning among girls and women. Finally, an important model that has been established for the program’s exit strategy is the establishment of community granaries to enhance nutrition, but also to increase income, see details on pages 10-11.

Under SO2, which is focused on improving the livelihoods of producers, food diversification for families and improved income sources and resilience to shocks; the program has made considerable efforts and has begun to see encouraging results. As with SO1, this year focused on expansion and the development of sustainable strategies, ensuring a strong exit strategy, as the program comes to end in two years. The comprehensive intervention strategy of this past year showed results in all areas of the program, which are highlighted below:

- Monitoring and capacity building of community structures, including the Village Development Committees (CVD) and peripheral structures such as AVCC and LVCC;
- Consolidation and scaling up of pilot activities initiated in Y1 and Y2 of the program, specifically, irrigated crops, food crops and animal production;

- The launch of the cowpea value chain and livelihood activities with small ruminants/animals;
- Intensification of activities related to integrating agriculture and livestock livelihoods;
- Support for the development of agricultural cooperatives, mobilization of local savings through the strengthening of economic interest groups and savings and credit groups;
- The development of community empowerment activities and research on program sustainability.

Across all objectives of the program, results have been achieved this past year in ensuring implementation through a gender lens and in the adaptation of activities in response to climate change.

This Annual Results Report focuses on key accomplishments and results of the Sawki program, outlining first special topics related to the overall consortium and unanticipated events; second, results by Strategic Objective; third, accomplishments on the monitoring and evaluation plan; and finally, results on operational issues including commodities management and monetization. The Annual Results Report concludes with lessons learned from the reporting year.

Results and Accomplishments during Year 3 / FY2015: Special Topics

*RISING*¹ research initiative on adolescent girls' safe spaces - Sawki established safe spaces for adolescent girls to interact and learn safe practices regarding reproductive health and nutrition. Safe spaces provide a natural environment in which to teach about reproductive health and rights, and studies have shown clear improvements in knowledge of health issues and expanded life goals for participants². The Population Council is funding a research agenda that will help determine the impact of safe spaces on adolescent girls' behavior change that will positively influence overall improved health, nutrition and food security outcomes. Mercy Corps in particular would like to influence stakeholders to ensure future strategies include a focus on girls and young women, their overall health and well-being and reproductive health education in addition to the existing focus on health and nutrition when a woman is already pregnant. The study will last 24 months with nine months of field work starting in FY15 and an evaluation at the end of the study. Six villages were selected as control groups for the study. Now that the baseline is complete, the activities related to nutrition and agriculture are being implemented in these six villages to enable them to receive the same interventions, as all of the other villages.

Digital Green/SPRING community-video outreach approach – REGIS-ER, Save the Children and Mercy Corps have agreed to test an approach for behavior change, involving diffusion of nutrition and hygiene-related messages via video at the community level and monitoring community feedback. The objective of this collaboration is to test the feasibility of leveraging the Digital Green community video approach, originally designed for the promotion of improved agricultural practices, for the promotion of key evidence-based nutrition and hygiene-related behaviors, focused on the first 1000 days “window of opportunity.” These contextually relevant videos will be screened in groups of women in the communities using facilitated dissemination techniques. With the proposed pilot project in the Maradi region of Niger, SPRING and Digital

¹ Research Initiative for Success in Girl Programming

² Creating Safe Spaces for Adolescent Girls, Population Council, 2011

Green plan to evaluate whether or not the facilitated community video approach that was successfully tested in India can also work in the resilience context of Niger. REGIS is leading the collaboration and will be representing Mercy Corps and Save the Children. The field work started in October 2015 and the pilot project that started in Y2 has showed good results after an internal assessment. The program will identify ways to continue to integrate this innovation into programming.

SAFE Schools: Supporting Adolescent Girls' Futures through Second Chance Education - Mercy Corps is piloting the Supporting Adolescent Girls' Future through Second Chance Education (SAFE) initiative in 20 of the villages where Sawki is working. Leveraging Mercy Corps' expertise in programming for adolescent girls, Sawki's "Safe Spaces" and the Ministry of Education's accelerated learning curriculum, SAFE Schools will work directly with 600 girls. It will create a replicable model for reaching out-of-school adolescent girls, getting them (back) into school, and giving them the support they need to stay there until their graduation. The overall objective of SAFE is to improve the educational status of adolescent girls from vulnerable households in the Maradi and Zinder regions. With a \$440,000 two-year grant from Nike Foundation, which started this year (from 2015 – 2017), Mercy Corps is committed to achieving the following outcomes:

- 600 adolescent girls have increased academic readiness and opportunities to join or rejoin, and successfully complete, basic education.
- Gatekeepers (parents and community leaders) in 20 communities change their perceptions and actions linked to girls participating in SAFE schools and formal education.
- The SAFE model is adopted by the Niger Ministry of Education and local partners for increased scale and effectiveness.

Sawki Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) – At the end of Y3, the program's mid-term review took place during the month of August 2015 and was implemented by Tango International with a team of three consultants and five investigators. The Sawki team assisted in the facilitation of the study. The objective of the study was to assess the progress, using qualitative methods of Sawki thus far in the communities where it works. It included the assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the program's implementation by identifying factors associated with activities' greater or lesser performance and collecting early evidence of whether the activities are leading to change (positive or negative), in order to recommend adjustments to activities that will help maximize intended results. In addition, identified lessons learned to improve programming and future activities. The initial evaluation report is currently being prepared and preliminary results will be available in November 2015. Initial results indicate that the project is relevant and progressing, showing results related to livelihoods and resilience.

Collaboration and Coordination - To ensure better harmonization of its interventions and to synergize efforts for greater impact, Sawki has developed strong relationships and ongoing positive collaboration with other stakeholders, particularly other DFAPs in Niger and with REGIS-ER and AG. Examples of this collaboration include regular meetings with both and a program management unit meeting with both was completed and included an action plan to operationalize the collaboration. The outcomes of strong collaboration with REGIS-AG resulted in them taking responsibility for small ruminant activities in Maradi and in support of the value chain activities advocated by all stakeholders.

Coordination with other DFAPs/programs – During the reporting period, Sawki also participated in regular meetings with other Niger DFAPs, where common issues and areas of collaboration were addressed. Effective DFAP collaboration included participation in exchange meetings between Chiefs of Party in Niamey and thematic meetings of the various program components, such as the monitoring and evaluation task force, which is among the most dynamic collaborations – information and promising practices have been shared. In addition to USAID program partners, Sawki staff ensures the sharing of its strategy and progress/achievements through quarterly coordination meetings involving all the representatives of government services with which the program works. These are valuable meetings where challenges, as well as new innovations or models are discussed and where promising practices, lessons learned are shared.

Results and Accomplishments of Year 3 / FY2015, by objective

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

Almost all planned activities for Y3 have been achieved with the exception of the rehabilitation of water wells, community water purification, and the community household behavior change assessment. These activities are planned for completion in early to mid Y4.

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

Training activities - During the reporting period Sawki organized trainings for a total of 1667 individuals on various health and nutrition themes, but focused on nutrition for pregnant and lactating women, children, and caretakers of children. Training highlights of this included:

- 953 health/nutrition agents were trained on ENA, which included 7 trainers of trainers from the health districts; 18 health centers agents; 19 Sawki field agents and nutrition supervisors and 909 members of husband schools. The Sawki team planned to introduce infant and young child feeding (IYCF) training, however decided to include the family planning (FP) and WASH components into the ENA module to complete the curriculum.
- 252 leader mothers were trained on family planning and communication techniques on how to disseminate health messages.
- 18 field agents were trained on 6 recipes for cooking demonstrations.
- 215 persons trained on CLTS including 23 program staff, 40 community hygiene leaders, 30 teachers and 60 school students for school WASH and 62 masons.
- 128 members of 22 Water Management Committees (WMC) were trained on potable water well management.
- 44 health agents of health huts trained on community Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI).
- 57 health agents of health centers trained on integrated health center (CSI) management and cost recovery.

Behavior Change and Community Awareness activities - In addition to ENA training, community members were sensitized on ENA, family planning and reproductive health through 13,956 sessions performed in care units, care groups and husband schools. A cumulative 177,504

participants (including 160,505 women and 16,999 men) benefited from these awareness sessions. In Maradi, 58,223 individuals were reached and 119,281 in Zinder region.

Family Planning and reproductive health (RH) education are integral to effective nutrition and food security programming and community health workers, with Sawki's support, conducted 8,228 sensitization sessions on these topics this past year. A total of 100,437 participants benefited from the sessions including 85,785 women and in Maradi the project reached 32,875 participants in and 67,562 in Zinder. FP sessions are comprehensive and covered the advantages derived from planning births, the various modern birth control methods, myths and solutions about reproductive health, early marriage, delaying of first pregnancy and spacing of birth. Acceptance of these themes in men's groups will help women and their partners adopt safer reproductive behaviors. In care units and care group awareness sessions the Program integrates discussion about reproductive health with children and family nutrition themes, such as the benefits of fortified food with the use of nutrient-rich food in complementary culinary sessions.

Radio broadcasting messages and radio debates – To increase awareness that results in behavior change Sawki used intensive radio broadcasting to strengthen messages discussed in community structures (care units/groups, husband schools, etc.). Messages on ENA, FP and RH and hygiene have been broadcasted through 4 radio stations in Maradi and Zinder. During this past year, 1,597 radio awareness spots/diffusions were broadcast.

Another useful outreach technique utilized was broadcasting 9 radio debates that were organized on several inter-related themes (5 in Zinder and 4 in Maradi). Many health practitioners participated in these debates, including a representative from each commune health center, as well as Sawki nutrition field agents. Debate topics included ENA, FP and RH. The four radio stations aired the debates 27 times.

In addition to the awareness raising sessions and radio messaging, Sawki and the mobile phone company, Orange Niger organized outreach sensitization campaigns in Zinder Region. The contest drew in 254 people to the campaign. Themes disseminated were on exclusive breastfeeding, family planning, hand washing and attendance at health centers/pre-and post-natal care by PLW. Unfortunately, the campaign did not continue because of logistical problems Orange Niger was facing.

In addition, Sawki used local theatrical groups for its awareness campaigns in Maradi the previous year, which were effective. The groups performed in 10 villages in Zinder region this year and the same themes on ENA, early marriage, family planning were included.

Sawki also benefited from Digital Green/SPRING partnership, as mentioned above, which produced community videos that are presented to the various community structures (care units, husbands' schools, care groups and safe spaces) at night under the supervision of a community facilitator who participated in video making. These pilots paved the way for the 11 communities in Guidan Roudji in Maradi Region to scale up and provided promising practices.

Home visits - To reinforce the impact of the above mass awareness campaigns Sawki organized home visits conducted by community health workers (leader mothers and community health promoters) and Sawki nutrition field agents in all 62 villages. In FY3 25 175 households were visited in all 62 villages. A total of 69,308 persons were met including 55,165 women and 14,143 men. 27,276 persons were in Maradi and 42,032 in Zinder. Themes developed during the home visits were the standard ENA, family planning, essential hygiene actions (EHA), children and PLW complementary feeding, importance of seeking care at health centers. Action plans for each household have been developed since FY2 and were monitored by CHW and Sawki field agents this past year and will continue into subsequent years.

Cooking demonstrations – In Y3, Sawki continued to work with Leader Mothers to plan and carry out cooking demonstrations in care units and care groups focused on the use of CSB+ and locally available nutritious foods. A cooking demonstration was organized for each care unit in every community. During the reporting period Sawki organized 10,231 cooking demonstrations to train villagers on how to use CSB+ for different recipes in all 62 villages. Participation was high, with 122,405 people reached in these demonstrations, including 110,178 women and 12,227 men. Most of the recipes target feeding children under 2 years old and utilize locally available food (millet, cowpea, orange flesh sweet potato and groundnuts) to prepare healthy and nutritious recipes.

Increasing access to potable water and improving drinking water quality – Access to potable water is a major challenge in the program intervention zone. Most of drinking water comes from wells that do not guarantee the minimum environmental safety for the population, creating health hazards for the entire population, but especially for the children. For Y3, Sawki planned to rehabilitate 32 community wells and build 14 new boreholes for the population to access clean drinking water in 9 villages in Maradi and 17 villages in Zinder. The 10 community wells in Maradi were not completed last year, however, they are being completed this Y4, while the 22 in Zinder are just starting the process for rehabilitation. The implementation of the boreholes was delayed due to World Vision's schedule and administrative procedures on contracts. Through Mid-September only 6 boreholes were constructed, the remaining 8 were started in September 2015, but not completed at the time of the writing of this report – estimated completion dates are the first quarter of Y4.

Implementing community-led total sanitation (CLTS) – Sawki worked with Demi-E, a local NGO, to conduct its CLTS component. Open-air defecation and its related consequences on community health are common in the Sawki area of intervention. CLTS was launched in 20 new villages (8 in Maradi and 12 in Zinder) by Demi-E this past year. Activities are still ongoing for the 17 villages of the first batch of action plans (sensitization on hygiene, latrine and tippy-tap construction). Sawki is providing one-time support to masons for the construction of latrine caps to be purchased by community members. All masons received a startup kit. Sawki field teams and WASH Officers are monitoring the creation and maintenance of latrines in all communities. During this past fiscal year, 809 new latrines were constructed in 37 villages, in addition to the 1,742 that were already accomplished. The Sawki team is still organizing awareness sessions on latrine use in all community structures. All 41 communities in Zinder have been provided with community hygiene kits composed of wheelbarrows, rakes, shovels and gloves. 397 sessions of community cleanliness and hygiene were achieved during the fiscal year in all 62 villages. 1,314

tippy-taps for hand washing were integrated into households and a plan to certify 17 villages as not having open air defecation was elaborated and started in October 2015.

Food distribution - Sawki continued food distribution to PLW and children under 2 years old in Y3. Registration of new pregnant women was stopped in the first 26 villages the program started in 2013. This was what was planned in the proposal approved by FFP. The children of that first cohort reached 24 month in March 2015. The registration of pregnant women of the 36 villages of the second batch was stopped in July 2015, as planned. This process was well communicated across all villages in which only lactating women and children under 2 years old continue to receive food rations. Each beneficiary received a two-month ration at each distribution. Quantities of food received and number of food recipients are reported under the Commodity section.

Community granaries - To ensure sustainability of health and nutrition activities at the community level, awareness raising activities on community granaries was undertaken in Y3. Community members contributed a certain amount of millet based on their choice. The quantities collected are used to provide incentives to selected CHW at the end of the Program. During this fiscal year a pilot test in 15 villages (5 in Maradi and 10 in Zinder) was conducted. A management committee (1 woman and 1 man) of the community granaries was created in each pilot village. The members of the management committees were selected from among members of the community structures (care groups, care units etc.). Part of the stock collected this year during the pilot test was sold during the lean season with the objective to use the sale proceeds to buy more millet during the coming harvest in October/November. After the sale, 253,325 FCFA (\$506) was gained.. There remains 588 kg of millet still to be sold in 8 villages. For Y3 harvest, the Program is sensitizing the population in all 62 villages to contribute to the stock of the village granaries before the October/November harvest.

Community assessment of household behavior change, event – To reinforce all awareness activities the Program uses a one to two day event per village to identify the households that have identified as making significant changes in terms of changing their behavior. The assessment was implemented by members of the communities, leader mothers, health promoters and Sawki nutrition field agents. The contestants are selected within care units and all themes for which change in behavior were advocated are used to evaluate the households (ENA, FP, RH, WASH). The contest and selection are implemented with care and focus on the positive changes all community members have made – this event empowered and motivated women and families and did not single out or target anyone negatively. 2739 households were evaluated (1384 in Zinder and 759 in Maradi). The Program is currently conducting a follow-up/debrief meeting with the community members to thank all communities for their hard work and to announce the winners and provide the kits.

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

Sawki has setup the community structures essential to conveying social behavioral change for targeted populations in its intervention area. Early marriage and lack of access to and information about birth control count among the major factors in explaining young women's health vulnerability and infant mortality, but also long-term population growth, which hampers

the economic recovery and growth of the country. Through adolescent girls' safe spaces, husbands' schools, care units and care groups, Sawki communicates the modus operandi for a long term change.

Sensitization Campaign on family planning and reproductive health – Sawki trained health center agents, CHW in villages and its own staff on family planning. 1,235 persons were trained including 37 health hut agents and Sawki field agents and 1,198 CHW of which, 946 were members of husbands' schools and 252 leader mothers.

Discussions on family planning and reproductive health started in care units of pregnant and lactating women through their weekly meetings and in care groups for leader mothers. The same discussions occurred in adolescent safe spaces, as well. The themes discussed during these meetings ranged from contraceptive methods, advantages of family planning, early marriage and early pregnancy consequences and birth spacing. The Program significantly reached beneficiaries with 6,540 sensitization sessions conducted in care units, care groups and husbands' schools and 2,185 sessions were held in safe spaces, for a cumulative number of 33,616 attendants.

Family Planning and On-Demand Contraception for Young Couples – Sawki had several meetings with the DRSP in the intervention area and with the UNFP Regional branches in Maradi and Zinder to discuss the important involvement of husbands' schools in family planning, but to also discuss contraceptive supplies at health centers and Community-based Distributors (CBD) for villages which participate in this activity (11 villages do not have health huts and CBD, currently). Sawki and the health centers are working to create CBD in the villages that do not currently have CBDs.

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

Health facility staff delivery high quality services and messages for ENA, family planning and Community-based Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (C-IMCI) – A sustainable behavior change at the community level required the involvement of health agents at both the commune and region levels. The coordination between Sawki and the public health system at the commune and district levels included joint supervision visits and monthly outreach visits by Sawki agents and ministry of health regional agents. Sawki conducted trainings including ENA, FP, cost recovery techniques and Community IMCI to health agents at health huts, which are working directly in the villages.

Increasing outreach services in nutrition and family planning – 400 outreach visits have been organized during the reporting period (184 in Maradi and 216 in Zinder) and involved 18 CSI (11 in Maradi and 7 in Zinder). During the outreach visits the public health agents worked on the extended immunization program, family planning, pre- and post-natal medical consultations, screening of malnutrition and IEC sessions. This activity contributed significantly to improving ministry of public health indicators in the two regions this year, including the use of family planning.

Establishing an active screening and referral system for malnutrition at the community level – Monthly malnutrition screening using mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) are done in all

Sawki communities with the help of leader mothers and health promoters. During the reporting period, 49,707 children under 5 years old have been screened (15,756 in Maradi and 33,951 in Zinder). Among them, 4,665 have been referred to recuperation centers (1,026 in Maradi and 3,639 in Zinder). Among the total number of children referred, 1,184 were classified as having severe acute malnutrition (234 in Maradi and 950 in Zinder) and 3,481 were classified as having moderate acute malnutrition. This year Sawki had in place a monitoring system for post referral activities composed of leader mothers and health promoters who help in child feeding with the use of therapeutic food and locally fortified food, as well.

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

In FY15 Sawki completed the majority of its planned activities related to the second strategic objective.

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

Enhanced Household Food Production – In terms of household food diversification, Sawki conducted several activities during the reporting period. Women vegetable gardening activities took place in several communities in the Sawki intervention area. The sites were selected based on water source availability, women's access to land, and the interest and commitment of women in the community. In addition to the 31 sites created in Y2, Sawki set up 7 new sites for vegetable gardening in Y3/FY15. The 38 sites are managed by 3,139 women including 2,599 in Zinder and 540 in Maradi. The program assisted the women by providing technical support through trainings conducted by the ministry of agriculture field agents and Sawki field agents. Sawki provided also seeds and gardening/hand tools to the 7 new site members. Members of the first 31 sites bought their own seeds during the last vegetable cropping season. Sawki sampled a few vegetable gardens to evaluate the production in both Maradi and Zinder. The Maradi evaluation gave 145 kg of carrots, 2,001 kg of cabbage, 580 kg of onions, 1,952 kg of lettuce, 1,571 kg of Irish potato and 78 kg of tomato. In Zinder the average production was 774 kg of carrots, 6,704 kg of cabbage, 7,996 kg of onions, 2,218 kg of lettuce, 3,570 kg of Irish potato and 1,010 kg of tomato. Overall yield is lower than what was expected due to lack of sufficient water and insect attacks. The groups of women shared the production, which is mostly consumed at the household level. It was reported that only a small amount reached the market.

Micronutrient-Rich Product Processing and Conservation – Sawki is revisiting its post-harvest program component in light of the collaboration framework with REGIS-ER and REGIS-AG. The triple bag storage activity for cereals and cowpea conservation will not be pursued. The low production in vegetable gardens associated with small land per woman, lack of irrigation and insect attacks has still not provided enough for conservation and transformation.

IR 2.2: Land and livestock productivity increased at household and community levels

During the reporting period Sawki conducted a series of activities to help increase agricultural and pastoral production in Maradi and Zinder Regions. This assistance was completed through capacity building of farmers and agro-pastoral farmers during farmer field school sessions, awareness campaigns, support to seed producers, introduction of improved animal breeds, processing of agriculture by-products to produce nutrient-rich animal feed, irrigated and rainfed

fodder production and better animal health system with community members. The activities below have been conducted during Y3 implementation.

Efficiently Managing Soil & Water Resources – Sawki and INRAN continue their collaboration for both crop and animal production enhancement. During the period 2014-2015/Y3, Sawki and INRAN conducted 67 farmer field schools (FFS) in 45 villages for a total of 1,616 participants of which 1,081 farmers participated in Zinder including 495 women and 533 farmers in Maradi including 208 women. The 67 FFS were provided with millet and cowpea seeds and 25 kg of NPK and 25 kg of urea per FFS to conduct the trials. Sawki introduced animal traction for soil preparation during the last FFS session. The overall results of the FFS showed interesting varieties for cowpea and millet. The cowpea variety IT90K372-1-2 exhibited higher performance in all sites with an average yield of 987 kg/ha. The millet variety HKP showed higher performance with a yield varying between 1355 kg/ha. When these varieties are combined with adequate soil fertility management and crop protection methods against pests, yield reached 200% for millet and 197% for cowpea. The use of mineral fertilizers and green manure in micro-doses has shown two immediate benefits 1.) a significant increase in both millet and cowpea; and 2.) a lesser environmental impact with the use of micro-doses. The increase in yield should translate into higher income that will encourage farmers to invest in both improved seeds and fertilizers. Sawki is working with community member farmer associations engaged in crop and livestock production on ways to sustain long-term improvement of production and market insertion.

Participants to FFS have been evaluated by INRAN to assess their knowledge acquisition for the new technology duplication/replication. INRAN identified 606 farmers as outstanding (270 in Zinder and 334 in Maradi). These 606 farmers will supervise a cohort of farmers who want to adopt the new practices. In order to assist farmers to use the improved technologies they learned during Y3 FFS on their own land, Sawki provided subsidized inputs to a total of 2,603 farmers (1,350 in Zinder and 1,253 in Maradi) who adopt the new agricultural practices. Each of them received 3 kg of millet improved seeds and 2 kg of cowpea. They also received a small quantity of NPK and urea for micro-doses application. All mitigation measures for the use of mineral fertilizers combined with organic manure listed in the EMMP were applied. Average yield obtained in the fields in Maradi was 630.4 kg/ha. This yield is smaller than what was expected (more than 800 kg/ha). But this is still much higher than what farmers used to receive before the program started (around 350 kg/ha). There is still a need to improve the performance and Sawki will continue to work on this area with farmers.

Enhancing Animal Health – Sawki's objective to improve animal productivity through enhanced animal health and animal feeding started with training of trainers and training of community beneficiaries. In Y2 Sawki selected 22 para-veterinarian agents who were trained in para-veterinarian modules, poultry production and herd management. All 22 were equipped with startup kits and these 22 para-vets continue to work effectively in the target area with farmers. The para-vet sensitized community members in animal health issues including animal immunizations. During the whole reporting period a sample of 30% of para-vets who were trained by the program showed the following results: a.) 3,854 community members (1670 men and 2184 women) used the para-vets' services; and b.) 30,426 ruminants and 11,748 poultry

have been treated by the para-vets. Linking the para-vets to private veterinarians, according to plans, will certainly improve para-vets services but also sustain the system.

Fodder production activities – Sawki piloted fodder production at the community level. 18 pilot sites (3 in Maradi and 15 in Zinder) were selected to try three fodder species – burghu millet (*Echinochloa Stagnina*), cowpea fodder (*Vigna Unguiculata*) and alfalfa (*Luzerne* or *Medicago Sativa*). Each site was managed by a volunteer producer who supervised several potential fodder producers. Sawki scaled up the fodder production on 174.24 hectares with 591 participants including 234 in Maradi and 357 in Zinder. They all sowed cowpea fodder in the rainy season on 103.48 ha in Zinder and 70.76 ha in Maradi. Yield between Zinder and Maradi were significantly different due to the non-application of fertilizers in Zinder and are respectively 294 kg/ha and 1019 kg/ha of dry matter. Total fodder harvested is equivalent to 4,618 TLU in Zinder and 11,542 TLU which can feed approximately 134,666 small ruminants for one day or 1496 small ruminants for 90 days. If this fodder was produced using irrigation and all modern inputs yield would be significantly much higher. Sawki is now monitoring the use of this new source of animal feed and in order to appreciate how this can contribute to farmers' revenues. Many farmers have already concluded that there is more opportunity for income from fodder production than many traditional crops. Sawki will need to work with communities to determine an appropriate balance that will not leave behind human food crops like millet, cowpea and sorghum while taking advantage on fodder crops that not only provide animal feed when most needed, but also income from the market.

Transforming crop by-products into higher value animal feed – Sawki placed 14 straw shoppers in 14 communities. The program is monitoring the performance of this equipment to determine the gain. When the millet and sorghum straws are given roughly to the animals they are not using more than 20% of the raw material. When the straws are chopped and fortified with urea and any other fortifying substance it is a 100% enriched animal feed, which is provided to ruminants.

Animal breed improvement – Sawki distributed 2,304 reddish goats to the most vulnerable population in the program intervention area. 182 died and there were 422 births for a final number of 2,544. Out of the 227 male goats used for reproduction, 50 died. Out of 62 Balami rams, 3 died. Community members connected with the para-vets to support concerns, technical guidance, and vet services for their goats/ruminants. Sawki is currently conducting studies to assess the impact of goat distribution on recipient households.

Contributing to Improved Input Supply Chains – In order to make improved varieties available in Sawki intervention areas, the program put in place a community-based seed system for the production of improved varieties. Sawki and partners identified, trained and assisted 15 new community seed multipliers in Zinder. Each new seed multiplier received a starter subsidy including improved variety and fertilizers. After being trained by the Regional Seed Center each of them received 15 millet variety multipliers received each 50 kg of improved millet and 250 kg of urea and 250 kg of NPK. The cowpea seed multipliers received 100 kg of improved cowpea variety and 50 kg of NPK. Sawki and the ministry of agriculture agents provided supervision and monitoring of the activity. Their yield is not known at this time since harvest is planned for November. This will be reported in the next quarterly report.

Village Savings and Loans Associations – Sawki is monitoring the VSLA in Zinder and Maradi and actually identified 206 groups (102 in Maradi and 104 in Zinder) with a total of 4,446 members (2181 in Maradi and 2265 in Zinder). In Maradi the 102 VSLA collected 2045195 FCFA. 6 of the Maradi VSLA are already connected to microfinance institutions and one of the 6 contracted a 1,000,000 FCFA loan from the MFI. The others are putting together the necessary documents for a loan. In Zinder the 104 VLSA collected 1865775 FCFA. 43 of the Zinder VSLA provided loans to 509 participants for a total amount of 1383275 FCFA.

Sawki sensitized the communities with VSLA on the concept of Village Agent (VA). VAs are community members who are selected to help all village VSLAs manage their organizations. The sensitization was well received since community members of VSLA recruited 18 VA (9 in each region) who are charged with supervising the 206 credit and loan groups. The 18 VA were trained for five days by Sawki on VSLA management and supervision. The training curriculum included knowledge of VSLA systems, cashier management and activity planning. Each of the VA developed a monitoring and supervision plan to visit each VSLA to disseminate their knowledge.

IR 2.3: Household incomes increased

Community productive assets development – Sawki identified two key value chains that show competitive advantages and a strong contribution to nutrition and food security: cowpeas and small ruminants. These value chains were identified based on analysis of interviews with producer communities, government technical services and other food security programs in the intervention area. In Y2 Sawki contracted a private institution to lead a value chain study on cowpea and small ruminants. During the reporting period Sawki organized two regional workshops on cowpea and small ruminants value chains. All stakeholders (farmer representatives, cowpea sellers, input suppliers, cowpea processors, farmer organizations, Ministry of Agriculture technical staff, commune elected leaders, development projects and INRAN) were invited to participate. The objectives of the workshops were to look at the current status of value chain systems on various participants, total production, and storage facilities. Participants analyzed also strength and weaknesses of each VC and the status of women in the VC. Sawki organized a small ruminants fair with REGIS-AG during the Eid holiday in Maradi, as well, which was well received and included awareness raising activities.

Cross-Cutting Theme: Household and community resilience to shocks improved through community development and good governance

Reinforcing Community-Based Early Warning Systems (EWS) - Sawki began this activity by implementing an inventory of villages which have an early warning structure (SCAP/RU) set up in the intervention area. The recent in-depth collaboration with REGIS-ER that was strengthened during a two-day workshop recommended that REGIS-ER take the lead in land recuperation and cover all Sawki intervention sites. An MOU will be signed in the coming days on this issue.

Building the capacity of local government and community structures to mitigate the impacts of drought – Sawki conducted an important activity of pastoral land recuperation during the reporting period. After Y2 land rehabilitation Sawki assisted communities in the creation of three land management committees and three surveillance committees in Maradi. Training was provided to 78 community members and 46 technical experts in land recuperation.. In Zinder, 6 of each committee was created with a total of 105 members trained. This year, 693 hectares were rehabilitated (236 ha in Maradi and 413 ha in Zinder). In Maradi, 1,346 persons participated in

FFA (985 men and 361 women) constructing 73,899 half-moons. In Zinder, 1,715 persons participated in the recuperation of 413 ha (1,024 men and 691 women) by constructing 138,659 half-moons. Sawki and the communities identified 19 sites for planting tree nurseries to be transplanted in the half-moons. Each nursery is to produce 20,000 seedlings and is managed by 40 community members for 4 months as FFA. The 19 nurseries are already installed and each is planting 5 tree species (Acacia Senegal, Ziziphus Mauritiana, Piliostigma Reticulatum, Acacia Nolitica and Bauhinia Rufescens).

Sawki was also engaged in eradicating a weed that invades fields called “Sida Cordifolia” and 500 ha in Gouigoui (Katara Moussa) in the Commune of Guidan Roundji were plowed and sown. An additional 240 ha infested by the weed is currently being plowed in Halbawa. Prior to plowing the infested land Sawki invited all stakeholders, including representatives of neighboring villages, local authorities and Commissions Foncières Départementales (COFODEP). This meeting yielded an agreement among stakeholders for the management of the rehabilitated sites. Community members who participated in the food for asset (FFA) received food rations for the construction of 2 half-moons. Each ration was composed of 1,67 kg of bulgur, 0.416 kg of lentils and 0.18 kg of vegetable oil.

Cross-Cutting Theme: Gender

Sawki Gender Action Plan – Sawki organized two workshops (one in Maradi and one in Zinder) to discuss the action plan derived from the gender analysis. Sawki staff (31) and 25 technical agents from the GON based in Maradi and Zinder attended the workshops. The action plan was discussed and negotiated by all participants and gave an in-depth understanding of the gender issues in the target area to the implementing partners. The partners agreed to support Sawki and the communities on the implementation of the action plan and agreed on its importance.

Adolescent Girls’ Safe Spaces – During this year Sawki monitored safe space meetings and knowledge acquisition of adolescent girls in the safe spaces. The activity monitoring revealed that adolescent girls are becoming more comfortable when discussing ENA, family planning, literacy training and early marriage. According to many women members of care groups and care units, age of marriage seems to be delayed. This was reported by 4 out of 15 women who said that the age of marriage is being delayed thanks to the Program sensitizations. These results were reported from a most significant change (MSC) study conducted by the M&E team of Sawki. Sawki plans to conduct a more rigorous study to fully understand and document this question in the coming year.

During the reporting period Sawki started the literacy and numeracy training to help adolescent girls who have never attended school or dropped out too early. This training is most needed in many domains including managing their own individual and/or group activities like the VSLA. Sawki opened 36 literacy centers comprising 1,098 participants among who 1,041 have never been to school and 57 who have learned how to read in the past. Out of the group, 1,018 girls never had numeracy training compared with 80 who can only read numbers. This assessment was conducted by the GON Literacy Inspectors. This activity is on track and making progress even in centers where it had a delayed start in the Program. In addition to literacy and numeracy lessons, the girls also have training on mother and child health, children’s rights, family planning, consequences of early marriage, how to avoid malaria, neonatal consultations, malnutrition and sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. Adolescent girls find the added

topics to the literacy curriculum very interesting and have reported that being given the correct information on these topics very helpful. In addition, girls reported that they are able to now identify the names and numbers in their cellphones and to be able to dial their contact numbers with confidence, after the literacy/numeracy lessons.

Husband schools – This year Sawki extended its intervention in husbands' schools (HS) by creating action plans in a number of communities. The “main objectives” of the action plans are to identify solutions to specific constraints each community or HS is encountering in its gender and development approach. Sawki helped 18 communities develop their HS action plans. The main constraints identified by these communities are: a.) Household workload, mainly of women; b.) Adolescent girls' education (literacy/numeracy); c.) Access to resources and income generating activities for women; d.) Inclusion of women in the decision making processes; e.) General illiteracy of men and women in the community; f.) Early marriage and non-spacing of births.

Sawki will use participatory approaches to address most of these constraints with the communities through the HS. Some have already started to identify solutions, such as adolescent literacy through our villages program. One common request of selected HS is to build the capacity of their members that will allow them to better advocate and sensitize their peers in the community.

Sawki provided rickshaws and plastic containers to HS in order to ease water collection and transfer that task to men. This influenced women's time as men took on the role of collecting water – it proved successful and HS bought more rickshaws and in some cases, households procured their own equipment.

Women's workload reduction – The workload reduction for women in program intervention areas is becoming a reality. The progress has gone beyond equipment procurement, which is now reinforced by HS sensitization activities and sensitization process. Men are more often collecting water using rickshaws and more HS are procuring more rickshaws (these are rented by households who want to use to collect water) to respond to an increasing demand for rickshaw rental. As noted above, households are even buying their own rickshaws. The technology has proven its effectiveness and has been adopted beyond normal expectations. The success is the possibility to have six times more water in one turn at the wells reducing the time and the burden. In most of the villages water is now collected by men. This reduction in workload is translated into more time allocated to income generating activities (vegetable gardening etc.) for themselves, benefiting their families and their children.

During the reporting period Sawki provided additional workload reduction equipment to selected communities which did not receive any previously. 15 grain milling machines, 2 groundnut threshers, 4 dehuskers, 4 straw choppers and 4 groundnut oil presses were placed in the communities that provided a shelter for the equipment and created a management committee to care for and oversee the equipment. The Program also trained 44 operators of the equipment, including a focus on light maintenance.

Sawki assisted 6 women associations engaged in savings and loans activities, which are now specializing in groundnut oil extraction. In 2015, the women opened a shop on the main national road to sell their oil. From April to September 2015 a women's association "Hannou Gazane" produced and sold 200 liters of oil. Their VSLA has a savings of 170,000 FCFA (\$340).

Results and Accomplishments during Year 3 / FY2015: Monitoring & Evaluation Plan

Mid-term evaluation – Sawki's mid-term evaluation was conducted by Tango international. The review was qualitative and intended to gain an understanding of how MC DFAP is being implemented and if the Program is on track. The fieldwork activities applied a range of qualitative tools including questionnaires, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, large group discussions and process analysis. A sample of 10 villages was surveyed and the results will be available in November 2015 to assess changes needed to improve programming, however, there is an indication that the Program is generally meeting results

Annual Survey - Sawki conducted its annual survey to collect data from a sample of beneficiary households to determine levels of a group of annual indicators. 856 households were surveyed and more than 1,735 persons responded to the questionnaires.

The survey methodology included questionnaires directed to households and to the community. Each household surveyed was assigned a unique identifying number and responded to questions applicable to their situation (male and female household members). The data processing was completed and indicators levels were determined. Sawki revised several indicator targets following the annual survey results. The revised targets are shown in the IPTT submitted with the FY16 PREP and attached to this report.

Use of mobile technology for data collection - The M&E team began migrating from a paper-based data collection system to mobile-based data collection. The Program is now testing two software programs: Open Data Kit (ODK) and Census and Survey Processing system (CSPRO) in order to fully migrate Sawki's data. During this year both have been used during the annual survey and to measure the average land area covered with improved technologies. Both systems performed positively. The full migration of the data to mobile data collection will be completed during the first quarter of FY16, after a full training of the field staff.

Training of commodity agents on Last Mile Mobile Solutions (LMMS) - The training was conducted from 3-7 March 2015 and included 12 commodity staff. Participants now know how to register beneficiaries using the technology. Commodity distribution to PM2A beneficiaries is now completed using LMMS, which is more efficient for the distribution process.

Staff training on barriers analysis - The barrier analysis is a study to determine the factors that prevent or favor adoption of a behavior. This gives an opportunity to strengthen factors that favor adoption and at the same time minimize those preventing adoption. From April 24 to May 9, 2015 17 Sawki staff of whom 7 were field agents and 10 senior staff, were trained. After this first training, the M&E unit replicated the training with 22 staff among whom 18 were field staff and 2 were members of local NGOs (implementing partners to Sawki on CLTS activities). After the second training, data were collected by the field staff to study barriers of the following behaviors: delaying first pregnancy until 18 years old; utilization of latrines for defecation; use of

improved seeds and the use of para-veterinarian services. These data are used to elaborate the program's strategy on behavior change communication.

Internal Data Quality Assessment (DQA) Exercise - Mercy Corps headquarters-based M&E Advisor assisted the Sawki M&E Team to implement a DQA. This helped identify and address shortcomings and an action plan was developed to respond to the issues identified. One main action undertaken was to link the identification of beneficiaries of the program activities to a unique household number, as well as to the activities he or she is participating in through the Program. The database used allows the team to assign a unique ID to each person in the program for monitoring needs. This will improve the quality of the data and follow-up, as well as understanding of the Program results and impact.

Finalize and share the M&E program data quality guidelines - Following recommendations from Mercy Corps' Technical Support Unit, which trained the staff on DQA last November, the M&E team prepared M&E guidelines for the program. The guidelines describe the roles and responsibilities of each program participant on the quality control of the data generated by the Program.

Post Distribution Monitoring - The M&E team conducted a second post distribution monitoring activity. Data were collected in 16 villages with a total of 432 interviewees. The report showed that important improvements were reached on the distribution process from food dispatching, to minimum time of waiting before being served during distribution. These improvements have added to the overall program quality and satisfaction of the beneficiaries.

RISING Survey - RISING is a research project supported by the Population Council focused on adolescent girls and members of the "safe spaces" promoted by Sawki. The objective of the research project is to assess the difference in behavior change and knowledge between girls involved in safe space activities and those who are not. A sample of 829 adolescent girls were interviewed using a randomized controlled trial. The overall results showed that girls participating in safe spaces have more knowledge in health and nutrition compared to those who have not participated.³

Qualitative Observation of pregnant and lactating women and members participating in farmers' field school using the Most Significant Change approach - Sawki's M&E team initiated a monitoring activity to track early qualitative changes as perceived and described by the beneficiaries. The MSC approach was used to investigate 15 women benefiting from nutrition activities in 7 villages. Analysis of interviewee's opinions showed some changes induced by the intervention of the Program, for example, women reported anecdotally that fewer children are being referred to health centers. The same approach was used to monitor 20 members of farmers' field schools from 7 villages. Analysis of opinions showed changes - for example, 95% of the interviewed farmers mentioned an increase in the production as a result of technologies learned from farmers' field school.

DFAP M&E task force meeting - Under the leadership of Sawki's M&E Manager, the three DFAP M&E teams (Sawki; LAHIA and PSAM-TAI) held two task force meetings. During these

³ RISING Report 2015

meetings, experiences were shared on issues related to indicator tracking, specifically the four agricultural indicators. The task force helped the M&E team strengthen their understanding of these indicators. The meetings give an opportunity to DFAP M&E teams to initiate field visit inter-DFAP to share more knowledge and experiences. The first visit for the new year is projected to take place on November 15, 2015.

Results and Accomplishments during Year 3 / FY2015: Commodities and Operations

Commodities received and distributed - Commodities received and distributed - During the reporting period, Sawki received a total of 695 MT. All commodities called forward by the Program arrive in Niger on “Through Bill of Lading” status leaving the burden of inland transportation on the vessel. The Program is in charge of the custom clearance in Niger. Sawki did not receive monetization commodities - this was replaced by CDF. Overall the Program distributed 1052.011 MT for nutrition and agriculture program elements during the fiscal year.

The pipeline at the end of September shows the following quantities:

| Commodity Type | CSB+ | Bulgur | Lentils | Vegetable Oil |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------------|
| FY14 Opening balances (kgs) | 311,012 | 109,351 | 154,933 | 15,283 |
| Quantity received during the year (kgs) | 266,334 | 249,700 | 148,154 | 30,025 |
| Quantity distributed during the year (kgs) | 427,496 | 340,501 | 256,416 | 27,598 |
| Commodity loans out (kgs) | - | - | - | - |
| Commodity repayments (kgs) | - | - | - | - |
| Losses reported during FY15 | 0,042 | 0,795 | 0,028 | 0,048 |
| Other Dispatches | 0,416 | - | - | - |
| Book closing balances (kgs) | 149,390 | 17,755 | 46,643 | 17,662 |
| Physical closing balances (kgs) | 149,390 | 17,755 | 46,643 | 17,662 |
| Excess/Loss commodity reported (kgs) | - | - | - | - |

Other Operational Issues – Sawki faced a shortage of motorcycles with the increase in field activities due to more home visits to care unit members by both CHW and Sawki field staff. It took many months before this issue was solved, however, it was solved by procuring additional Metros.

IY3 Budget analysis

| Items | Monetization \$ | 202(e) \$ | ITSH \$ | CDF \$ |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Resources as per CA | 11,316,400 | 3,886,600 | 4,109,200 | - |
| Resources obligated | 1,291,943 | 2,344,911 | 640,985 | 8,000,000 |
| Resources spent | 1,237,011 | 1,902,878 | 539,580 | 5,065,476 |
| Burn rate (%) | 96% | 81% | 84% | 63% |

Expenses showed an under expenditure mainly due to many factors including Africare's delay in submitting financial reports that negatively impacted program implementation. Africare's participation in the consortium has been terminated and Mercy Corps took the necessary measures to smoothly takeover activities that were previously executed by the partner. Mercy Corps is still awaiting the final invoice of approximately \$500,000 from Africare and therefore that will be transferred to Y4. In addition, some operational challenges in procurement for the motorbikes, two vehicles and the drip irrigation work, which began in Y3 but was not completed in Y3. The recent mid-term evaluation was started, but not completed in Y3, thus the final payment for that activity will be transferred to Y4.

During FY14, FFP obligated 8 million in CDF to replace monetization proceeds for both FY14 and FY15. Sawki received an extra \$299,869 for water infrastructure in the program intervention area. A request for a budget modification is being prepared and will be sent shortly to the AOR for review.

B. Challenges and Lessons Learned

Commodities Management - Sawki has faced challenges with calling forward quantities of commodities that are aligned with the quantities needed for program activities, notably vegetable oil. Specifically, vegetable oil is only distributed in Food for Work activities, which only occur once per year at a time when farmers are not occupied in their own fields. This year Sawki will work with one of the other DFAPs in country to see if they can increase their veg oil call forward to include Sawki's needed quantity. In return Sawki can pay back with a commodity of their choice at an equivalent value of the veg oil.

Staff Turnover - The program continues to face challenges with staff turnover, which can lead to delays in some program activities. Mercy Corps HQ and Niger has initiated discussions with staff to determine ways to solve the problem and to ensure coverage of activities if staffs resign before a replacement is identified.

Setting appropriate targets for indicators - In the first two years of the program, Sawki has learned more about local realities in Maradi and Zinder and this has led to challenging many assumptions made at the beginning of the program. Thus, the program is revising its targets for many indicators. After this annual survey Sawki revised its targets which are included in the PREP of FY4.

Implementing Early Warning Systems - Following discussing with REGIS-ER and FFP recommendations to transfer or remove this program component Sawki agreed with REGIS-ER to transfer EWS. REGIS-ER developed excellent expertise on early warning systems and will scale it up in Sawki intervention communities. However, Sawki will continue developing its community-based response system in all 62 villages.

C. List of Attachments

1. Expenditure Report
2. Success Stories
3. Detailed Implementation Plan
4. Indicator Performance Tracking Table
5. Completed ARR templates:
 - a. SAPQ Indicators
 - b. Technical Sector Tracking Table
 - c. Unique and Direct Participant Tracking Table