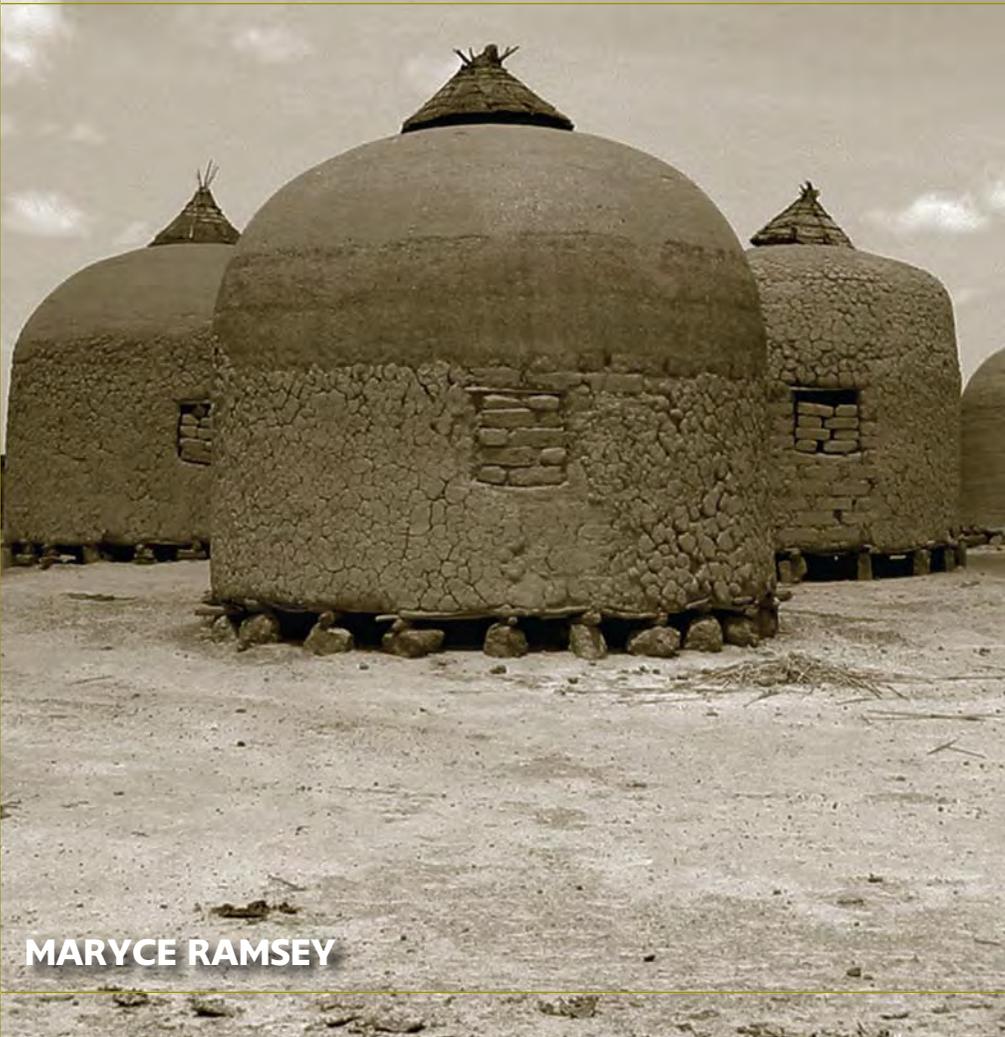


Strengthening Organizational Capacity to Enhance Community Food Security

CRS Partnership with Caritas Développement Niger

PARTNERSHIP



MARYCE RAMSEY

CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES PARTNERSHIP CASE STUDIES NUMBER 2



USAID
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SOLIDARITY WILL TRANSFORM THE WORLD

Partnership is fundamental to how CRS sees itself in the world. We believe profoundly that change occurs through our Catholic Church and other local partners, that by sustaining and strengthening local institutions we enhance a community's ability to respond to its own problems. Catholic Relief Services puts its approach to development, emergency relief, and social change into practice through partnerships with a wide array of organizations: local churches and nonprofits, host governments, international agencies, and others.

Our belief that solidarity will transform the world inspires a commitment to right relationships with those we serve, in collaboration with the Catholic Church and other faith-based or secular organizations closest to those in need. We strive for partnerships founded on a long-term vision and a commitment to peace and justice. For more than sixty years, CRS has worked side-by-side with our partners to alleviate human suffering, promote social justice, and assist people as they strive for their own development.

OUR PARTNERSHIP PRINCIPLES

- 1.** Share a vision for addressing people's immediate needs and the underlying causes of suffering and injustice.
- 2.** Make decisions at a level as close as possible to the people who will be affected by them.
- 3.** Strive for mutuality, recognizing that each partner brings skills, resources, knowledge, and capacities in a spirit of autonomy.
- 4.** Foster equitable partnerships by mutually defining rights and responsibilities.
- 5.** Respect differences and commit to listen and learn from each other.
- 6.** Encourage transparency.
- 7.** Engage with civil society, to help transform unjust structures and systems.
- 8.** Commit to a long-term process of local organizational development.
- 9.** Identify, understand, and strengthen community capacities, which are the primary source of solutions to local problems.
- 10.** Promote sustainability by reinforcing partners' capacity to identify their vulnerabilities and build on their strengths.

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In Niger, Catholic Relief Services is engaging in a partnership process with Caritas Développement Niger (CADEV Niger) that illustrates important principles of CRS partnership. Both CADEV Niger and CRS are development agencies, part of the Catholic Church, and founded on Catholic Church doctrines putting into action the call to serve the poor. CRS prefers to partner with the local Catholic Church, usually through social action agencies such as CADEV Niger, because of a shared commitment to justice as an active and life-giving virtue that defends the dignity of all persons. This is key to achieving CRS' first principle of partnership:

CRS bases partnerships upon a shared vision for addressing people's immediate needs and the underlying causes of suffering and injustice.

The shared vision and values of CADEV Niger and CRS reinforce partner relations between the two organizations.

In Niger, the immediate needs of the population are compelling. Nigeriens are threatened by chronic and transitory food insecurity, a result of inadequate physical and economic access to food and the inability to



CRS PHOTO

Sixty-one percent of Nigeriens live in poverty.

CRS PHOTO



Children are among the most vulnerable.

Country (LIFDC) and a Title II priority country.³ CRS, in light of the realities in Niger, committed to strengthen the capacity of its partner, CADEV Niger, to address the undeniable challenges facing communities in Niger.

CRS PHOTO



CRS is committed to helping its local partners meet the community's needs.

of responsibility for decision-making and implementation to a level as close as possible to the people whom decisions will affect. CADEV Niger was selected as a partner for, among other things, its commitment, and ability to work with communities in a spirit of subsidiarity. CADEV Niger is made up of twenty Solidarity and Development Committees serving seven of the eight regions of Niger. Volunteers, working through these committees, carry out the church's development activities in their communities.

utilize food properly. In addition, drought, crop-damaging insects, epidemics, ethnic conflicts between nomadic and settled populations, and the limited capacity of Nigerien civil society all have a negative impact on development initiatives. The United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI¹) consistently ranks Niger as one of the poorest countries in the world. With 63% of all Nigeriens living below the poverty line² and 41% suffering from malnutrition, the U.S. Agency for International Development classifies Niger as a Low Income Food Deficit

Subsidiarity

Niger is a vast country with vulnerable populations scattered across it, far from the capitol city of Niamey or other urban centers. Yet there are few local development agencies with the capacity to implement large and often complex relief and development programs.

CRS is committed to helping its local partners meet the volume and diversity of community needs. CRS, dedicated to the poor and vulnerable of Niger, is working with local partners in the spirit of subsidiarity, which is the *assignment*

¹ http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_NER.html

² Enquête Budget Consommation au Niger, 1993. www.nigerpauvrete.org.

³ Thanks to Niger/CRS FY07-FY11 MYAP Proposal Revised September 2006, Martin Hartney and Lisa Washington Sow

Caritas Développement Niger

Established in 2005 as the local development arm of the Catholic Church in Niger, CADEV Niger works in partnership with a number of national and international humanitarian organizations to support the poor and needy in Niger. Its main projects focus on emergency assistance, rehabilitation and development, provision of medicines, capacity–development, and technical support. Its programs, carried out by 20 paid staff and 280 volunteers, reach approximately 720,000 people across Niger.

CADEV Niger programs include:

- **Literacy.** Supporting poor communities by offering literacy training with a view to increasing educational levels, competence in languages and employment skills.
- **Health for all.** Improving health services by rehabilitating infrastructures, providing medicines and transport, organizing health and hygiene training and enhancing communications with a view to changing attitudes to healthcare in the target populations.
- **Increasing food production.** Enhancing food security by improving crop and livestock management, diversifying crops, adding value by preparing and packaging food products and setting up marketing organizations.
- **Nonviolence and peace education.** Contributing to a peaceful and just society by promoting harmony among the various ethnic and religious groups and advocating for the rights of the poorest people.
- **Fighting HIV and AIDS.** Working with partners to halt the spread of HIV and AIDS.
- **Refugees.** Supporting the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in assisting those seeking refugee status.
- **Prisoners.** Helping with the rehabilitation and social adjustment of ex-prisoners;
- **Children in difficulty.** Seeking solutions to the problems of children from broken families, street children, orphans and sick children.

Source: www.caritas.org/worldmap/africa/niger.html (November 5, 2008).

However, an extensive network of community volunteers is not enough to achieve subsidiarity, especially when those volunteers may have limited development experience or training. CADEV Niger is a young organization, established in August 2005 as the development wing of the Catholic Church in Niger. Based on a shared vision and the organization's potential to serve communities, CRS partnered with CADEV Niger very early on, through a USAID Food for Peace Multi-Year Assistance Program (MYAP). CRS worked with CADEV Niger as it managed and implemented the portion of the program in the Zinder and Dosso regions.

Recognizing that CADEV Niger would need support to successfully carry out the MYAP, CRS collaborated in an assessment of CADEV Niger's institutional capacities. Together CRS and CADEV Niger assessed its human, material, and financial resources, its institutional framework, and its access to and use of management tools. Based on the assessment and identified strengths and weaknesses, they developed a capacity building plan for the first year of the program, during which time CRS shared management of MYAP activities in Zinder and Dosso. Throughout the year, CRS supported CADEV Niger with staff training, material resources, monitoring and reporting support.

CRS PHOTO



Beneficiaries of an emergency cash-for-work program, Oullam.

Mutuality

This partnership, in which CRS is able to achieve subsidiarity through CADEV Niger's community Solidarity and Development Committees and CADEV Niger is able to strengthen its management systems with CRS support, nicely reflects CRS' principle of complementarity and mutuality in partnerships, which is to *recognize and value that each partner brings a set of skills, resources, knowledge, and capacities to the partnership in a spirit of mutual autonomy*. Each partner in Niger has

strengths to share with the other: CRS has solid management and programmatic systems and worldwide experience providing technical assistance in building partner organizational capacities; CADEV Niger has a vast network of volunteers with roots in communities across Niger, able to articulate both the needs and the assets of the communities in which they work. Together these two organizations, rooted in the Catholic Church, are able to bring their complementary strengths together in mutual service to the poor.

Accompaniment

At the end of the first year of the MYAP, another institutional capacity assessment was carried out to measure CADEV Niger's progress and determine whether they were ready to manage the Zinder and Dosso activities on their own. While CADEV Niger demonstrated the institutional capacities needed to manage the project activities satisfactorily, further support was needed in order to build the capacity of field agents, volunteers, and community members, as well as to enhance community ownership, all critical to subsidiarity. Basically, as CADEV Niger developed confidence in their management capacities and demonstrated new strengths, CRS adjusted its support accordingly. This flexibility in the scope and length of partnership demonstrates the CRS principle of accompaniment, which is critical to seeing a partnership through to fruition. *The engagement of CRS and a local partner in capacity development involves a long-term commitment to complete a mutually agreed-upon process of organizational development. This commitment is characterized by a spirit of accompaniment, i.e., a close relationship that is flexible and responsive.*



CRS PHOTO

Water source development is one focus of CRS' food security efforts in Niger.

Equity

Although CADEV Niger and CRS share a vision and values, it is important that there is clarity in terms of the outcome of their partnership. Reaching clarity requires that each partner be open and willing to share its perspectives in order to reach consensus on what success will look like. In addition to openness and a willingness to share, productive partnerships are founded upon a spirit of respect of differences, a commitment to listen and learn from each other, and a mutual willingness to change behavior and attitudes.

Many development organizations enter into contracts or agreements detailing expectations on the part of the organization carrying out programming in exchange for payment. These agreements establish a clear donor/grantee relationship in which one organization sets the terms, pays for activities and the other carries them out. However, CRS approaches a partnership recognizing and valuing the autonomy of each organization. This is captured in a formal agreement, known as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), that details not only the responsibilities of the partner, but also CRS' responsibilities and actions that must be taken to

ensure success. *CRS fosters equitable partnership by engaging in a process of mutually defining rights and responsibilities, in relation to each partner's capacity, required to achieve the goal of the partnership.*

Sustainability

Given that partner capacity building can be a long undertaking requiring intensive financial and human resource investment, why make the investment? CRS believes this up-front investment has a twofold outcome over the long term: an individual institution capable of addressing community needs and a stronger civil society able to address structural inequalities. By partnering with CADEV Niger and investing in that partnership, CRS is taking important steps towards sustainable development. This is based on CRS' commitment to *facilitate and promote the strengthening of partner' abilities to identify, build on, and address their vulnerabilities, strengths, and specific capacity building needs through a process that leads to sustainability.*

Not only will CADEV Niger be able to independently meet the needs of the communities it serves but also, over time, it will be able to join with like-minded organizations to advocate for changes in structures that impede or slow communities' progress. Strengthening civil society is an important partnership outcome for CRS, which is pursued by *encouraging partners to engage in dialogue and action with other members of civil society, in order to contribute to the transformation of unjust structures and systems.* A strong CADEV Niger, linked with like-minded organizations, can amplify the voices of its communities in the national and international arenas to bring about change for a more just and equitable world.

All of CRS programs are based upon operational relationships that capitalize on complementary capacities to achieve the optimum benefit for the poor and marginalized people. At their best, these relationships reflect the concept of partnership—embodying essential principles of Catholic social teaching, such as respect for human dignity, the life of the person in community, and the people's ownership of their own development process. CRS believes that investing in a partnership with CADEV Niger and basing that partnership on mutual trust and accountability will result in a stronger CADEV Niger better able to assist communities to solve their own issues.



Since 1943, Catholic Relief Services has had the privilege of serving the poor and disadvantaged overseas. Without regard to race, creed, or nationality, CRS provides emergency relief in the wake of natural and manmade disasters. Through development projects in fields such as education, peace and justice, agriculture, microfinance, health, and HIV/AIDS, CRS works to uphold human dignity and promote better standards of living. CRS also works throughout the United States to expand the knowledge and action of Catholics and others interested in issues of international peace and justice. Our programs and resources respond to the U.S. bishops' call to live in solidarity—as one human family—across borders, over oceans, and through differences in language, culture and economic condition.

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This study, the second in the Catholic Relief Services Partnership Case Studies series, demonstrates the practical application of CRS' partnership principles. CRS Niger and CADEV Niger (Caritas Niger), with the support of USAID's Food for Peace program, worked together to identify areas of CADEV Niger's organizational strengths and limitations. CRS assisted CADEV Niger to develop an organizational strengthening plan for CADEV Niger's human, material, and financial management, its institutional framework, and its access to and use of management tools. CADEV Niger, with CRS support, also worked to increase the capacity of field agents and volunteers, while simultaneously increasing the involvement of community members. Both the partnership between CRS and CADEV Niger and the capacity-strengthening efforts continued after the initial project, demonstrating CRS' and CADEV Niger's commitment to local ownership and sustainability.

The Catholic Relief Services Partnership Case Studies series highlights the work of CRS and its partners, working in solidarity to increase local ownership, strengthen organizational capacity, and combat poverty, hunger, and injustice.

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