



Integrating refugee self-reliance with environmental protection in Niger

Niger | Duration: January 2022 - December 2023 | ADKOUL, Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASB)

The Challenge

In Niger's Tahoua region, displacement-affected persons faced significant challenges as 20,631 Malian refugees and nearly 35,000 internally displaced persons co-existed with host communities already experiencing strain on natural resources. Environmental degradation, including desertification and declining rainfall, threatened pasturelands and agricultural productivity, leading to food insecurity and resource-based conflicts between pastoralists and cultivators. Security concerns from jihadist groups further complicated the situation, particularly in areas like Tillia, restricting mobility and access to services for vulnerable populations. Additionally, children in displacement-affected communities had limited educational opportunities, with inadequate school infrastructure and resources.

The Solution

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What Made This a Promising Practice?

This initiative stood out through its integrated multi-sectoral approach that simultaneously addressed immediate humanitarian needs, long-term development goals, and environmental sustainability. By adopting a consultative process involving local authorities, technical services, traditional leaders, and communities, the project ensured strong local ownership and alignment with Niger's national policies, including the 2022-2025 Economic and Social Development Plan. The cash-for-work scheme for land restoration not only created over 5,600 temporary jobs but also mobilized community enthusiasm for collective environmental improvement. The project's recognition of the interconnections between displacement, resource scarcity, and environmental degradation enabled a comprehensive response that benefited all community groups. Additionally, the initiative strengthened social cohesion by improving access to shared resources like pastureland, water points, and educational facilities that served both displaced populations and host communities.

The Response

- **Security concerns:** Rigorous security monitoring and coordination with authorities, defense forces, and CIMCORD enabled safe implementation in high-risk areas like Tillia.
- **Land management issues:** Rather than using a guardian system, the project established community management committees to oversee restored land sites, preventing livestock influx and ensuring better sustainability.
- **Economic instability:** When sanctions following Niger's government change led to liquidity issues, the project developed a contingency plan to reduce implementation costs while maintaining community entitlements.
- **Monitoring mobile populations:** The project adopted a robust methodology with smaller sample sizes and multiple data collection tools to enable triangulation and confirm findings despite the mobility of displacement-affected people.
- **Extreme weather conditions:** The project revised its budget to allocate more funds for land rehabilitation and improved livestock feed distribution, partially addressing environmental degradation by expanding activities and increasing the size of rehabilitated land.

Lessons Learned

The project demonstrated the effectiveness of applying a humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach in an insecure environment through adaptive programming. Although land restoration represented a development-oriented component, the project successfully integrated humanitarian elements by providing unconditional cash grants to wildfire victims and building firewalls to protect restored areas. The initiative highlighted the importance of involving local technical authorities in project design and implementation, ensuring market-based calculations for appropriate cash-for-work payments, and maintaining consistency in land restoration sites year after year to enhance sustainability. The establishment of management committees instead of individual guardians for overseeing restored land proved more effective for long-term resource governance. Additionally, training local craftsmen to manufacture and repair energy-efficient stoves contributed to sustainability beyond the project timeline.



Key Results

Environmental Rehabilitation & Sustainable Livelihoods:

- Restored 1,392 hectares of degraded land through community-based cash-for-work programs
- Planted 59,584 forage plants and built firewalls to protect restored areas
- Distributed 441 tonnes of livestock feed to 1,764 breeders, benefiting 8,725 animals
- Provided 6,000 energy-efficient stoves to households across 36 villages, reducing firewood usage by 50%
- Delivered unconditional money transfers to vulnerable households affected by wildfires

Service Delivery & Education Support:

- Installed 1,600 table benches in 20 schools, supporting 1,414 students
- Equipped 5 schools and 2 health centers with sanitation facilities
- Provided solar lamps to 1,000 students and 15 teachers across 10 schools
- Improved water access for over 16,000 residents through construction and rehabilitation of water points, standpipes, and inter-village connections

Protection & Social Cohesion:

- Established management committees to oversee restored land sites
- Trained local craftsmen to manufacture and repair energy-efficient stoves
- Created the Association of Public Water Service Users (AUSPE) to manage water infrastructure
- Facilitated collaboration between displaced populations and host communities through shared resource management



LiD Lives in Dignity GRANT FACILITY

The Lives in Dignity (LiD) Grant Facility was an EU-funded initiative managed by UNOPS that promoted development-oriented approaches in forced displacement settings. With €24 million allocated between 2021–2025, the Facility supported 14 innovative, multi-stakeholder projects across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Its flexible funding model empowered local actors, strengthened partnerships, and fostered integrated programming across five key areas: livelihoods, service delivery, housing and spatial planning, protection, and disaster- and climate-related mobility. The Facility prioritized community-led solutions, localization, and social cohesion, advancing sustainable development for both displaced populations and host communities. Find out more at https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/programming/programmes/lives-dignity-grant-facility_en