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### Implementing the MAF in Niger: Opportunities and challenges in accelerating MDG 1

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### Abstract

In this paper, we look at the current state of affairs in implementing the MDG Acceleration Framework (MAF) action plan to accelerate MDG1 in Niger by the UN System and the Nigerien Government and at the opportunities that the MAF action plan offers for future progress. The first section of this paper sets out the general challenges in addressing MDG1 and the rationale of Niger's MAF. The second section provides an insight into the current state of implementation of the MAF action plan. The third section finally takes a more analytical view by looking at a number of challenges in this process in Niger and how we have turned them into opportunities. This allows us to draw important lessons for the development and implementation of new strategies beyond the 2015 MDG deadline.

Several elements are key in that respect, namely: national ownership, leadership and cooperation; a development framework that sets priorities and considers the specificities of countries and their ability to deliver on the goals set at the international level; strong and long-term partnerships and alliances based on synergies with key stakeholders; and capacity-building that ensures the delivery of quality public services.

#### **Keywords:**

MDGs, MDG acceleration framework, Poverty, Food and nutrition security, Niger.

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## 1. Introduction

Like other countries in the Sahel region, Niger is highly exposed to multiple natural hazards, such as drought, locust invasion and floods. Its vulnerability is mainly linked to its landlocked location and its Sahelian climate, with alternating droughts and floods. Droughts, in particular, have become more frequent (from one crisis every 10 years to one crisis every other year now) and severe (World Bank, 2013).<sup>1</sup> This physical vulnerability is aggravated by socio-economic and environmental factors, such as the country's dependence on its volatile rain-fed agriculture sector, which accounts for 40 percent of GDP and is the main source of livelihood for 80 percent of the population, and a high poverty rate. Additional constraints include high population growth (7.6 children per woman, the highest in the world), poor access to basic services, low rates of education, poor governance and weak state institutions. As a result, poverty is widespread, food insecurity is persistent, acute malnutrition crises are recurrent, human development indicators are among the lowest in the world – in 2013, Niger ranked jointly last with the Democratic Republic of Congo on UNDP's Human Development Index – and most MDGs are off-track. At the current rate of MDG progress in Niger, only the goals of reducing infant and child mortality and controlling the prevalence of HIV/AIDS will be achieved in 2015.

### Box 1. Basic indicators:

1. Niger covers an area of 1.267 million square kilometres.
2. The population is about 15.7 million and the fertility rate stands at 7.6 per woman – the highest rate in the world.
3. The annual population growth rate is 3.3.
4. People younger than 35 years old represent 70% of the population.
5. 80% of the population depends on agro-pastoral activities.
6. Ranks jointly 186th of 187 in UNDP's Human Development Index (2013).

In the face of persistent food and nutrition insecurity, Niger has chosen to focus its efforts on MDG1 ("eradicate extreme poverty and hunger") and, more specifically, on its targets 1.A ("halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than a dollar a day") and 1.C ("halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger"). Both targets show alarmingly poor prospects of reaching the 2015 goals (see Box 2).

### Box 2. Overview of MDG1 progress:

MDG	Indicator	Baseline	Recent level	Trend (2015)	Target
<b>1A-Halve the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1/day</b>	Proportion of population living below poverty threshold	63% (1993)	59.50% (2008)	53.80%	31.50%
<b>1C-Halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger</b>	Percentage of underweight children <5	36% (1992)	33.70% (2009)	29.80%	18%

<sup>1</sup> The World Bank (2013) study *Agricultural sector risk assessment in Niger: Moving from crisis response to long-term risk management* provides an excellent overview of the different agricultural risks in Niger and their relative importance. It clearly shows that droughts are the main risk facing the Nigerien agricultural sector.

Given the knock-on effect of the population's vulnerability to food crises on the achievement of the other MDGs, such as those relating to health, education and environment, progress on MDG1 is expected to have a catalytic effect on economic and social progress in Niger. Moreover, with agriculture being the main source of livelihood for 80 percent of the population, the development of the agricultural sector is strategic to accelerating poverty reduction in Niger (IFPRI, 2007). Indeed, the importance of the rural sector in improving the living conditions of the overall population is supported by a study conducted by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI, 2007) that shows that agriculture is likely to remain the main source of growth and the lever for poverty reduction in the next 10 to 15 years.

In this paper, we look at the current state of affairs in implementing the MDG Acceleration Framework (MAF) action plan to accelerate MDG1 in Niger by the UN System and the Nigerien Government and at the opportunities that the MAF action plan offers for future progress. The first section of this paper sets out the general challenges in addressing MDG1 and the rationale of Niger's MAF. The second section provides an insight into the current state of implementation of the MAF action plan. The third section finally takes a more analytical view by looking at some challenges in this process in Niger and how we have turned them into opportunities. This allows us to draw important lessons for the development and implementation of new strategies beyond the 2015 MDG deadline.

## 2. MAF: Addressing the challenges of MDG 1

### 2.1. Why is MDG1 harder to achieve than other MDGs?.

Rural development is key to economic and social development strategies in Niger, as evidenced by Graph 1, which shows the potential impact of just a 1 percent increase in agricultural output on poverty. However, the study emphasizes that reaching MDG1 (i.e., halving poverty rates) by 2015 is quite a challenge, as it would require an average growth rate of 11.5 percent in agricultural output, compared to an average agricultural growth rate of 4.5 percent from 2002 to 2007 period.<sup>2, 3</sup> This is all the more the case in a country like Niger, where agriculture is the main source of livelihood for most of the population.

This goal faces many financial and non-financial constraints. First, public funding for agricultural policies has long been too low to enable successful rural development policies. While, under the African Union's Maputo Declaration, governments have committed to increase public investment in agriculture by a minimum of 10 percent of their national budgets, investments in agriculture have been at about 3 percent to 4 percent of national budgets.

Second, the rural sector is characterized by high levels of inequality and skewed control over resources and access to opportunities. As a result, recurrent bottlenecks retard progress toward reaching MDG1. These are mainly related to (i) high levels of rural poverty, poor access to inputs, water, extension services and equipment, and low yields; (ii) inadequate social safety nets; (iii) high vulnerability to natural hazards and malnutrition; and (iv) shortcomings in the functioning of agricultural value chains, including high levels of farmers' indebtedness, heavy exposure to price volatility and low levels of farmers' organization.

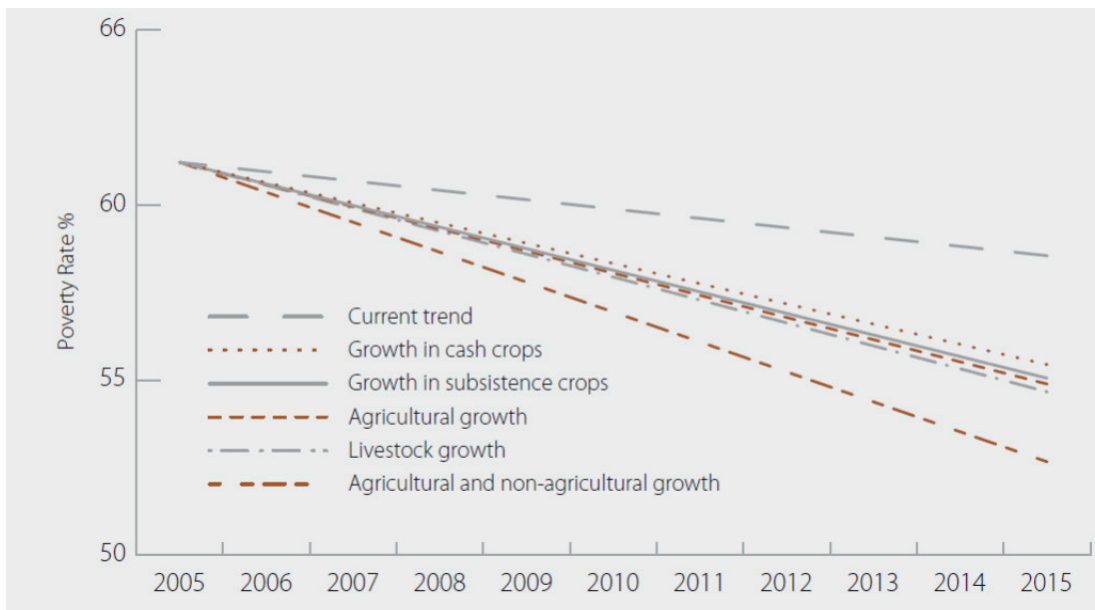
Third, proper frameworks to address the root causes of food insecurity have not been in place; these causes include lack of strong leadership in the midst of a series of socio-political crises, weak institutions, and misguided policies that have undermined the response to crises. These challenges are further compounded by complex and severe humanitarian and security challenges. Spillover effects of crises in some of its neighbouring countries like Algeria, Nigeria, Libya and Mali have raised the insecurity level.

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2 The baseline scenario assumes an agricultural growth rate of 4.4 percent. Current agricultural growth rates, though, are lower, due notably to recurrent droughts and floods.

3 The baseline scenario assumes an agricultural growth rate of 4.4 percent. Current agricultural growth rates, though, are lower, due notably to recurrent droughts and floods.

## Graph 1. Impact of rural production growth on poverty rates



Source: Extract from MAF Niger, 2010, according to IFPRI Study, 2007

## 2.2. MAF—The UN System’s response to reduce poverty and hunger

The MAF action plan is the UN System’s main strategy document to reduce poverty and hunger through rural development. It is in line with the policy orientation of the Nigerien authorities, most notably its new food security initiative, ‘Nigeriens Nourish Nigeriens’, better known as the ‘3N Initiative’. The MAF approach starts with the identification of five key interventions that are needed to improve the development of the agricultural sector:

- 1) Improvement of access to inputs and to equipment and techniques of sustainable management of land and livestock
- 2) Advice and support for small-scale producers and evaluation of the results of research
- 3) Protection of vulnerable agro-pastoral households and livestock
- 4) Diversification and improvement of the quality of food consumption
- 5) Improvement of access to foodstuffs in rural and peri-urban areas

The interventions take into account longer-term development needs and urgent crisis responses to production- or nutrition-related crises. They pay particular attention to measures to increase measures against recurrent droughts, such as improvement of access to water, provision of adequate inputs, sustainable land management, and advice and support.

After identification of the bottlenecks to successful implementation of these interventions was made, an action plan consisting of 20 acceleration solutions from 2011 to 2015 was laid out (see Annex A). In the first two years (2011-2013), the implementation strategy focused on a combination of the continuation of existing projects and programmes and the launch of new pilot initiatives and partnerships. The experiences of this first phase allowed for increased advocacy and the engagement of the Chief Executive Board (CEB) of the UN System in April 2013. The UN System, and especially the World Bank, has engaged itself to scale up existing activities and to provide the necessary funds for MAF implementation.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> For more information, see [www.pnud.ne/CEB\\_madrid.html](http://www.pnud.ne/CEB_madrid.html).

### 3. Implementing MAF: Key facts and impacts

By launching the MAF action plan, the UN System has been catalytic in supporting the government to accelerate MDG1 achievement through three complementary approaches, all in close cooperation with national authorities. First, the MAF action plan has helped to set food and nutrition security at the centre of the national development agenda and has proven instrumental in supporting the Nigerien Government's effort to develop the '3N Initiative' to provide greater food security. Second, increased UNDP advocacy, partnerships, resource mobilization initiatives, and efforts to coordinate actors on the ground have addressed bottlenecks. Third, various UN agencies have implemented targeted projects under the MAF action plan. Finally, at its CEB meeting in April 2013, the UN System resolved to scale up its efforts to implement the MAF and to widen the approach to domains (including demography and decentralization) that indirectly affect rural development.

#### 3.1 *Assisting national authorities in developing the national food security strategy (3N Initiative)*

The MAF identifies bottlenecks and gaps to food security and prioritizes the policies, reforms and initiatives needed to overcome them. Thanks to its endorsement by the transition government in March 2011, the MAF strategy document placed food security issues at the core of Niger's development agenda. The transition government agreed to support the MAF being implemented in Niger by committing to spend US\$6 million a year from 2011 to 2015. However, in order to allow advocacy and to secure political buy-in on the part of the new government, the official signature ceremony of the MAF was postponed to October 2011.

#### **Box 3. Implementation of the MAF—key facts**

Three complementary approaches were used to implement the MAF:

- **Assisting national authorities in developing the national food security strategy (3N Initiative)**  
The experience, methodology and human resources of the MAF were capitalized during the development of the 3N Strategy Document to which the MAF is linked.
- **Assisting the coordination of 3N Initiative implementation efforts**  
Besides coordinating the implementation of the MAF action plan itself, the UN System, and UNDP in particular, are assisting the Nigerien authorities with technical assistance to the High Commission for the 3N Initiative at the policy coordination level, as well as through advocacy, partnerships and resource mobilization initiatives.
- **Implementation of the 20 solutions identified in the action plan by different UN agencies**  
A large number of well-selected projects with short- and long-term structural impact are being implemented in the framework of the MAF (see Annex A for the action plan). An optimal use of funds and capabilities is ensured by focusing on activities under the five key strategic intervention areas of the MAF. The UNDP Country Office is ensuring coordination of these activities along the lines of the MAF action plan and their coherence with the 3N Initiative.
- **Enhanced engagement of the UN System following the April 2013 CEB meeting**  
In April 2013, the different UN agencies and the World Bank committed themselves to scale up their activities to achieve MDG 1 through the implementation of the MAF action plan. They also widened their approach to include four domains that indirectly affect MAF implementation: (i) reducing demographic pressure; (ii) supporting the decentralization process and local development; (iii) promoting support of the private and financial sectors for rural development; and (iv) strengthening statistical capacities.

## Implementing MAF: Key facts and impacts

When the new Nigerien government of President Mahamadou Issoufou took office in April 2011, it recognized food security as one of its main priorities and decided to launch the ambitious 3N Initiative, the new national strategy for food and nutritional security. The MAF played a key role in inspiring the development of the 3N Initiative strategy document and its adoption in April 2012. The 3N Initiative is an integral part of the Economic and Social Development Plan (PDES) 2012-2015, which represents the key development strategy of the Nigerien Government and forms the Nigerien branch of regional initiatives such the Detailed Programme for Rural Development in Africa of ECOWAS.

In developing the 3N Initiative strategy document, the Nigerien authorities used the experiences and methodologies of the MAF and agreed that it could be an important part of implementing the 3N programme in 2011. The expertise and experience in developing the MAF as well as the networks developed within the UN System and with the national government, NGOs and other stakeholders in the field of food and nutritional security have been capitalized by the 3N Initiative.

As a result, the 3N Initiative largely reflects the same strategic considerations as the MAF (see Box 4). Through their integration into the 3N Initiative, the MAF objectives and strategy have become an integral part of Nigerien national development strategies. This has firmly set MDG1 at the centre of priorities of national authorities and the international development community.

### 3.2 Facilitating the coordination of the 3N Initiative implementation efforts

With the strategic policy documents to address structural issues in place, the support to the 3N Initiative is taking further shape through continuous interaction between the UN System and Nigerien authorities. As the food sector is no narrow issue for one line ministry or specialized agency alone, UNDP has increased efforts to coordinate actors on the ground, providing direct support

#### Box 4. MAF as a source of inspiration for the 3N Initiative

##### Strategic intervention areas of the MAF action plan:

A. Improvement of access to inputs, equipment and sustainable land management techniques.

B. Supervision of small-scale producers and dissemination of research findings.

C. Protection of vulnerable agro-pastoral households and livestock.

D. Diversification and improvement of the quality of food consumed.

E. Improvement of access to foodstuffs in rural and peri-urban areas.

##### The five axes of the 3N Initiative:

I. Raising and diversifying productive capacity.

III. Improve resilience of the population in the face of crises and catastrophes.

IV. Improve nutritional health.

II. Regular provision of foodstuff to rural and urban markets.

V. Governance reform in the rural development and food security sectors





## Implementing MAF: Key facts and impacts

where it can be most effective. In this regard, support is oriented mainly for the 3N High Commission. This institution was installed in September 2011 and is responsible for the implementation of the 3N Initiative by ensuring coordination among the different ministries involved and international development partners. The UN's support for the coordination mandate of the 3N High Commission takes the following forms:

- **Dialogue:** UNDP, FAO, WFP and the World Bank represented the UN System in the ad hoc working group between Nigerien authorities and the international development community. The group is chaired by the High Commissioner and serves as a forum to coordinate financial and technical support in the framework of the 3N Initiative and the construction of the institutional framework for its implementation. The working group aims to ensure an efficient and well-coordinated implementation of the government's food security initiative. In mid-2013, UNDP was formally designated as vice-chair of the coordinating body of the 3N, representing donors. Moreover, UNDP is co-chair of the OECD/DAC committee in Niger, consisting of key development partners.
- **Technical assistance (coordination):** UNDP provides technical assistance to the 3N High Commission through the facilitation of the ad hoc working group mentioned above. The facilitator's role is to enhance the efficiency of the group's proceedings by performing substantive work, monitoring the implementation of the MAF action plan, proposing and/or coordinating working methods, identifying points of priority action, etc.
- **Technical assistance (capacity-enhancing):** Several experts are being recruited by UN agencies and donors to the 3N. Regarding UNDP, the support consists of: (i) an international expert in rural development planning; (ii) a national expert in monitoring and evaluation in rural development; and (iii) international consultants in specific areas of rural development to strengthen the 3N's internal capacities to implement the MAF. Furthermore, a representative of the REACH Initiative holds office within the 3N High Commission to provide technical assistance in nutrition. A technical assistant from Denmark also supports the 3N.
- **Advocacy and resources mobilization initiatives:** Several high-level and broad actions have been taken. These include presenting a comprehensive package of short- and long-term interventions to donors that facilitate advocacy and increase financial support for traditionally underfunded activities. In this regard, the PDES 2012-2015 Donor Conference co-organized by the authorities and UNDP has allowed the recording of commitments for more than 100 percent of the financing gap of priority action plan of the government (US\$4.8 billion compared to a gap of US\$4.7 billion). Other initiatives supported by UNDP include a high-level side event on the 3N and the MAF during the Rio+20 summit, the presentation of the 3N and the MAF at the July 2012 Ecosoc meeting and other forums, US\$37.5 million mobilized from the EU MDG Initiative for the implementation of the MAF, a technical and financial partnership with JICA for the implementation of the MAF action plan, and more. Other partners also provide support.

### 3.3 Implementation of targeted projects by different UN agencies

The last and most substantial element of the implementation of the MAF rests on the 20 well-targeted solutions identified in the MAF action plan (see I-1). Given the coherence between the MAF and the 3N Initiative, these activities generally contribute to MAF and 3N implementation.

The MAF action plan has proven effective in establishing a problem-solving approach that brings actors together across sectors, draws from existing plans and evidence and generates new types of partnerships. Despite important progress in all intervention areas of the action plan, though, significant gaps remain in regional coverage and depth of intervention, which hamper the achievement of the MDG targets. Scaling up activities in the years to come is currently being worked on to improve the overall impact of the activities.

The actions foreseen under intervention area A, 'Access to inputs and sustainable land management', are being implemented by UNDP, UNCDF, FAO, the World Bank and WFP. While these actions are currently being addressed, many of them are pilot projects

## Implementing MAF: Key facts and impacts

or are too limited in geographical coverage. While achieving highly satisfying results at the local level, these projects will require significant scaling up in the near future. Looking, for example, at UNDP's projects, COGERAT is active in four communes of one region (Agadez), while the country consists of eight regions – including Niamey – and 255 communes. PLECO is active in two regions (Zinder and Diffa) and eight communes. PADEL and the foreseen scaling-up of Community-based Adaptation (CBA) are or will be active in eight communes of the region of Maradi.

The actions under intervention area B, 'Improvement of advice-support and access to water for productive means for small-scale producers', are being implemented by FAO, WFP, IFAD, UN Women, the World Bank, UNDP and UNCDF. The same general comment about the need for scaling up applies to intervention area B. One example of a pilot project under intervention area B is the 'trial field project' (UNJP/NER/053/UNJ), which is financed by UNDP and being executed by the FAO. Through the installation of trial fields and the training of agricultural advisors in 29 villages in the regions of Dosso and Tillabéri, the project has achieved excellent results in putting research results into practice. Scale-up of these activities and integration with other projects can allow this pilot project to widen its impact to the national scale. Another example is the 'MDG1 Acceleration project: development of small dams for the detention of water for productive means', which is funded (US\$4 million) and implemented by JICA on the basis of a Memorandum of Understanding with UNDP. This project started in July 2012 with a pilot project in Niamey and aims to develop 17 sites in two target regions (Tillabéri and Maradi) by the end of 2014. It relies on the farmers' field school approach and aims at enhancing irrigated food production. At the end of April 2013, infrastructure works started on five different sites, while the trial field approach has already reached 165 farmers (including 65 women) on eight different sites. The MAF framework has also inspired JICA, FAO and UNDP to compare experiences of their trial field projects.

Intervention area C, 'Strengthening of social safety nets and creation of income-generating activities for vulnerable households', is being implemented by UNDP, the World Bank, FAO, WFP and UNICEF. Again, in order to structurally increase the resilience of these most vulnerable populations, these programmes need scaling-up. It is important to continue strengthening the effectiveness and implementation of safety net programmes for recovery and livelihood restoration programmes for the most vulnerable. They will require the continuous strengthening of monitoring mechanisms to support vulnerable households, the creation of common targeting mechanisms and databases, and the further development of the package of complementary interventions and services for building resilience of vulnerable communities.

The actions currently being undertaken under intervention area D, 'Fight against malnutrition and access to clean water', by UNICEF, FAO, WFP and UNDP have generated encouraging results, but important unmet needs still exist. The scaling-up of such interventions is critical for the reduction of child malnutrition, which is a major obstacle to the improvement of public health and development in Niger. This requires a specific focus on prevention of child malnutrition, particularly of chronic malnutrition. Therefore, there is a need to scale up nutrition interventions targeted at the most vulnerable women and children under two years of age, whose health is critical to preserving future human capital in Niger. This will include scale-up of a preventive package of 10 to 12 interventions<sup>5</sup> plus the treatment of severe acute malnutrition.

The same general comments apply for intervention area E, 'Strengthening of the prevention and intervention mechanism for crisis situations and natural disasters', where actions are being implemented by UNICEF, FAO and UNDP.

In all intervention areas, the limited capacity of local communities, decentralized state institutions and producer organizations hamper the development of 'permanent' structures around supply and demand interventions in food security. There is a need to strengthen the stewardship capacity for policy development and coordination, which requires institutional and organizational development.<sup>6</sup>

5 Such as vitamin and mineral supplements, deworming, child growth monitoring and promotion, protection and promotion of exclusive breast-feeding for children up to six months of age, etc.

6 Examples of such support are assistance for the development of Communal Development Plans (Plans de Développement Communaux — PDC), Regional Development Plans (Plans de Développement Régionaux — PDR) and the National Territorial Planning Policy (Politique National d'Aménagement du Territoire — PNAT).

## Implementing MAF: Key facts and impacts

In addition to work with UN agencies, many of these actions are being implemented in partnership with external partners, such as the EU and its Member States (a €25 million commitment to improve nutrition and access to clean water) and JICA (through projects to enhance irrigation production). An important step to facilitate the implementation of the MAF was taken at the Paris Roundtable in November 2012, where resources were sought for the implementation of the Nigerien Government's Economic and Social Development Plan (ESDP), of which the 3N Initiative is an integral part. Development partners committed to additional funding of US\$4.8 billion, enough to fill the identified gap of US\$4.7 billion (for details, see Annex B).<sup>7</sup> As of the end of April 2013, about US\$1.5 billion had been mobilized. In addition, several regional initiatives support the objectives of the MAF, such as the National Agricultural Investment Programme (PNIA) in the framework of the African Agricultural Development Programme (PDAA) of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) of the African Union (AU); the African Development Bank's Pilot Programme for Climate Resilience; the Global Alliance for Resilience Initiative (AGIR-Sahel) and global partnership initiatives such as REACH and SUN for the reduction of child malnutrition; the Sahel Joint Planning Cell of USAID; the FAO's 'Zero Hunger' Initiative; the Islamic Cooperation Organisation's (OCI) Good Life Fund; and the UN's Sahel Strategy. The MAF plays an important role as one Niger-specific response in the UN System's initiatives to address food and nutrition security issues in the Sahel region.

### 3.4 Enhanced commitment of the UN System following the April 2013 CEB meeting

At this meeting, UN institutions such as the FAO, IFAD, WFP, ILO, UNDP and UNICEF indicated their willingness to scale up their activities to achieve MAF implementation. Following up on their commitments and in coordination with the different MAF partners at the country level, the World Bank is preparing the launch of a new large-scale US\$116 million project on agricultural risks and resilience and a US\$20 million scale up of the existing Social Safety Nets Project; IFAD is currently scaling up its different interventions with funding of US\$160 million over the next six years; and UNICEF and the WFP are currently preparing a new US\$18.3 million initiative, the 'Prevention of Malnutrition Project', with EU funding. Other actors such as UNDP, FAO and the ILO are also making concrete commitments to scale up their participation in MAF implementation.

The discussions at the CEB meeting also led to a widening of the MAF approach. Four domains were identified as having an indirect impact on the achievement of MDG1 and will receive additional attention: (i) reduction of demographic pressure; (ii) support for the decentralization process and local development; (iii) promotion of support for the private and financial sectors for rural development; and (iv) strengthening of statistical capacities. A number of institutions have indicated their intent to dedicate particular attention to these domains; these include the World Bank, UNFPA, UNDP, UNCDF, FAO, WFP, IFAD and UNICEF.

## 4. Turning challenges into opportunities and lessons for the post-2015 agenda

As demonstrated in Section One, a variety of complementary actions have been undertaken to implement the MAF. Throughout this process, we dealt with various challenges by turning them into opportunities. In an effort to learn from the experiences with the MAF, several lessons can be drawn to contribute to the debate on post-2015 development goals that has recently started in Niger.<sup>8</sup>

- (i) **The relevant strategies and approaches must be in place** to break free of persistent poverty and accelerate human development in the face of a multitude of stresses that occur with varying degrees of frequency, predictability and intensity. The multifaceted challenges at hand in Niger and the persistence of the crisis point to the need to address

<sup>7</sup> The US\$4.7 billion gap that was estimated is the number for the PDES in its entirety. The gap for its axis 3, the 3N Initiative, was estimated at US\$1,467,304,000 (US\$1.5 billion).

<sup>8</sup> National consultations took place from February to May 2013. For more information, see [www.pnud.ne/ateliervalidation\\_rap\\_post15.html](http://www.pnud.ne/ateliervalidation_rap_post15.html).

not only the immediate, but also the structural dimensions on the crisis by better articulating key priorities, notably in the humanitarian, early recovery and development realms. This must result in more coherent and integrated responses that address the underlying causes of food and nutrition by going beyond relief to building long-term resilience for vulnerable or crisis-affected people. This aspect has been taken on board in the development of the MAF and the 3N through the simultaneous inclusion of sustained, integrated short-, medium- and long-term efforts captured in integrated, multi-year programming of humanitarian and development assistance so as to respond to immediate needs and the structural causes of hunger, regardless of the levels of food insecurity in a particular year.

- (ii) **Actions should focus on managing risks (through prevention and mitigation strategies) instead of responding to crises.** This requires reducing overall risk and vulnerability by strengthening the skills, resources and capabilities needed to anticipate, resist, absorb and recover from the effects of future shocks, trends and stresses. In this regard, and while addressing those needs, the capacity of the National Food Crises and Catastrophe Early Warning and Management System is also being enhanced. Overall, the capacity to deliver quality public services also needs to be strengthened from the national to the communal levels.
- (iii) **Good coordination between different actors within the field of rural development was and remains vital for the success of the MAF within and outside the UN System.** This is also related to issues of scale of different initiatives and reporting requirements under different frameworks. Much progress has been made in creating synergies between complementary initiatives of different development actors, as is demonstrated through the many partnerships and complementary actions that have been set out in Section One. The engagement of the UN System's leadership at the CEB meeting in Madrid in April 2013 provided an opportunity to enhance coherence at the global level and to confirm and strengthen the engagement of the UN agencies involved. The resident coordinator and UNDP, as the coordinating agency, have also assumed a particularly important role in ensuring the participatory nature of the implementation of the MAF towards actors outside the UN System.
- (iv) The Niger MAF **facilitates the implementation of the Maputo Agreement** to increase public investment in agriculture by a minimum of 10 percent of countries' national budgets. Thanks to its adoption alongside the 3N, investments in agriculture have doubled and now reach 7 percent to 8 percent of GDP in the 2013 Finance Act.
- (v) **Government endorsement of the MAF framework is essential.** Political transitions typically endanger the continuity of an encompassing action plan that has been agreed upon. In Niger, this risk has been limited by securing the political buy-in of the new government embedding the MAF strongly as a technical tool within the 2015 MDG framework and by presenting it as supportive of, but separate from, national strategies such as the 3N Initiative or the preceding Rural Development Strategy (SDR). As the MDG framework enjoys broad adherence on all sides of the political spectrum, this approach has allowed the MAF to play a guiding role during and after the difficult transition period. Furthermore, familiarity with the MAF at the technical level has been assured through the collaborative process during its development, in which all relevant institutions and stakeholders have taken part.
- (vi) **Building strong and long-term partnerships and alliances among all actors** is critical. These efforts should include CSOs, the private sector and local communities, with the government having the leading and coordinating role. Despite difficulties in playing this role due to its limited capacities, the 3N High Commission and its coordination platforms provide an opportunity to make important progress in this field.
- (vii) **The international development community must deliver on its aid commitments.** The MAF has been a significant effort to overcome the limits facing the Gleneagles scenarios, which mapped out and tried to mobilize the resources required to accelerate progress on the MDGs. However, the last evaluations of the MDGs have shown

meagre results, with one of the reasons being the weak mobilization of necessary resources. By supporting the 3N and the Economic and Social Development Plan 2012-2015, UNDP has facilitated the recording of substantial commitments covering over 100 percent of the financing gap of the government's priority action plan<sup>9</sup> by presenting a comprehensive package of short- and long-term interventions to donors.

- (viii) **The option to target efforts at a single MDG, i.e., the fight against hunger and poverty, has the potential to accelerate achievement of the other goals** relating to health, education, environment, etc. This raises the question of the relevance of the MDG framework for a country like Niger. The capacity of development countries to deliver on these international commitments should be at the heart of debates on development goals for post-2015.
- (ix) **Realistic timeframe to deliver.** Food crises in Niger and in the Sahel as a whole have been structural and recurrent and malnutrition among vulnerable groups, mainly among women and children, is endemic, regardless of natural disasters. Addressing this structural phenomenon also requires having a realistic timeframe as well as holistic and participatory approaches.
- (x) **Addressing growing security threats in Niger is necessary.** However, this will draw from resources initially budgeted for development actions.

## 5. Conclusion

While an assessment of progress made so far also points out that much work is still to be done to break the prevailing cycle of agricultural crises and vulnerability in Niger, this paper has shown that UNDP Niger has made substantial progress in implementing the MDG Acceleration Framework (MAF) action plan to accelerate MDG1 in Niger. Specifically, the MAF has: (1) helped to support the Nigerien government develop its own encompassing food security policy; (2) served as a useful strategic tool to map, coordinate, create resource mobilization opportunities and target development assistance in the field of food security; and (3) provided an encompassing framework to intervene in specific intervention through a multiplicity of (joint) actions of UN agencies and other partners. The April 2013 CEB meeting gave an impetus for the scaling up of MAF interventions and a widening of the MAF action plan.

After setting out the progress made thus far and the road ahead towards more complete implementation, the paper emphasized various challenges in this process and how they can be turned into opportunities. This overview helps us to draw important lessons from the implementation of the MAF that could be useful in developing our strategies to meet the 2015 MDG deadline.

Several elements are key in that prospect: national ownership, leadership and cooperation; a development framework that sets priorities and takes into account the specificities of countries and their ability to deliver on the goals set at the international level; strong and long-term partnerships and alliances based on synergies with key stakeholders; and capacity-building that ensures the delivery of quality public services.

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<sup>9</sup> A US\$4.7 billion gap that was identified is the number for the PDES in its entirety. With engagements for US\$4.8 billion this gap was filled. The gap for its axis 3, the 3N Initiative was estimated at US\$1,467,304,000 (US\$1.5 billion). For more details on the commitments, see Annex B.

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## Annex A. The MAF Action Plan

Interventions	Bottlenecks	Solutions for accelerating progress
A. Improvement of access to inputs (seeds, fertilizers, plant health, zootechnical and veterinary products) and equipment and sustainable land and livestock management	A.1.1 Poor financial access by small-scale producers to inputs and equipment	A1.1.1. Extension of the scope of appropriate mechanisms for the partial or full subsidy of inputs and equipment, rotating credit arrangements and the guarantee system for small-scale producers (farmers, herders, fishermen, foresters)
	A.1.2 Poor physical access by small-scale producers to inputs and equipment	A.1.2.1. Increase in the number of input shops and equipment, paying due attention to the importance of spatial distribution in line with the needs of small-scale producers
		A.1.2.2. Promotion of local input production (improved seeds, fertilizers, plant health, zootechnical and veterinary products) and equipment
	A.2.1 Low productivity and extreme vulnerability of agro-pastoral production due to climatic conditions	A.2.1.1. Extension and support for the adoption of crop diversification and association techniques (secondary crops, fertilizing crops, cereals and legumes, forage crops) for the CES/DRS (demi-lune banquettes, zai) and adaptation to climatic conditions (short-cycle crops, drought and pest-tolerant crops)
		A.2.1.2. Safety and improvement of sustainable animal management in rural and peri-urban areas against climate hazards (stocking techniques, strategic destocking, development of resistant and productive local species)
	B. Improvement of advice/support and access to water for productive means for small-scale producers	B.1.1 Inadequacy of means (human, material, financial and technical) to support small-scale producers and their organization
B.1.1.2. Mobilization and training of young rural, uneducated girls and boys (National Volunteer Agency, National Participatory Service, community Development Training Centre) on advice/support issues		
B.1.1.3. Improvement of the technical capacities of small-scale producers and producers' organizations: planning, update of technical manuals and dissemination of their contents through different channels (rural radio, television, listening groups, translation into national languages, etc.)		
B.2.1 Low capacity of agricultural producers to access and use irrigation and cultivation techniques		B.2.1.1. Extension of the implementation of small-scale irrigation projects for agricultural purposes
B.2.2 Poor networking of water points for livestock in pastoral areas		B.2.2.1. Increase in the number of water points for livestock in pastoral areas
B.2.3 Low capacity of small-scale producers for acquiring equipment and installations needed for their activities around water points		B.2.3.1. Establishment of suitable financing mechanisms at the community level for small-scale producers

## Implementing MAF: Key facts and impacts

Interventions	Bottlenecks	Solutions for accelerating progress
C. Strengthening of social safety nets and creation of income-generating activities for vulnerable households	C.1.1 Inadequacies in the identification and targeting of vulnerable groups, insufficient traceability of allocated funds and coordination of interventions in their favour	C.1.1.1. Harmonization, coordination and implementation of targeting and intervention methods for vulnerable groups, and traceability of resources allocated to them (improved mapping of vulnerable areas, identification of vulnerable households, coordination of interveners, etc.) through the use of surveys and participatory assessments
	C.1.2 Poor adaptation of social safety nets to the needs of vulnerable households and insufficient viable IGA capable of sustainably securing vulnerable households	C.1.2.1. Strengthening and implementation of recovery and livelihood restoration programmes for the most vulnerable, particularly, women, youth, the elderly, the disabled, nomads and transhumant groups, through the use of adapted social safety nets (cash/food for work for the creation of rural infrastructures, movement corridors, targeting distribution of free food, cash/transfers, vouchers)
D. Fight against malnutrition and access to clean water	D.1.1 Ignorance of the nutritional value of foodstuffs and persistence of sociocultural influences unfavourable to proper nutrition	D.1.1.1. Scaling-up of IEC/CCC local programmes aimed at promoting proper feeding practices for infants and young children (breastfeeding, hygiene, nutritional value of local foodstuffs, cooking methods); use of preventive health services
	D.1.2 Poor access by vulnerable groups (children between 0-5 years, pre-school children and pregnant/breast-feeding women) to adequate nutrition	D.1.2.1. Promotion of fortified locally/community produced foods for malnourished preschool children and children of school age
		D.1.2.2. Improved access to prenatal screening and promotion of maternal nutrition through free health care and proliferation of CRENAS, CRENAM and CRENI
	D.1.3 Poor access to clean water	D.1.3.1. Sinking and rehabilitation of cemented wells, boreholes, pastoral pumping stations and mini clean water supply systems (AEP) in rural and peri-rural areas; promotion of treatment of drinking water in the home
D.1.4 Low capacities for small-scale stocking, preservation and processing of agro-pastoral and fishing products (cowpeas, tubers, bulbs, legumes, fruits, milk, meat, eggs, fodder, fish)	D.1.4.1. Application of adapted stocking technologies, preservation and processing of agro-pastoral products; (solar kiln, silo conservation of green fodder, construction of suitable village community warehouses, hand-operated machinery)	
E. Strengthening of the prevention and intervention mechanism for crisis situations and natural disasters	E.1.1 Shortcomings in the functioning and intervention of the 'National Hazards and Food Crisis Prevention and Management Mechanism' (DNPGCCA) local management committees	E.1.1.1. Capacity-building for the functioning, intervention and recovery of local DNPGCCA management committees
	E.1.2 Lack of a national contingency plan for exceptional natural disasters	E.1.2.1. Formulation of a national multi-risk contingency plan



## Annex B. Financial commitments made at the Paris Round Table (November 2012)

Partner	Financial commitments	
	€ in Millions	US\$ in Millions
UEMOA Commission		50
Germany	72	93.6
France	200	260
Belgium	66	85.8
Investment and Development Bank of the CEDEAO (BIDC)		208
World Bank		800
African Development Bank (BAD)		530
Islamic Development Bank (BID)		800
Denmark	56	72.8
Spain	21	27.3
Worldvision		30
European Union	430	559
Switzerland	72	93.6
United Nations System		340
Islamic Development Cooperation		1
Italy	25	32.5
International Monetary Fund (IMF)		121
West African Development Bank (BOAD)		500
Arab Coordination Group (OPEC Fund for International Development—OFID, Kuwait Fund for Economic Development—FKDE, Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa—BADEA)		150
Saudi Development Fund		49
<b>Total</b>		<b>4803.6</b>

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