

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR COMMUNITY PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF CRISES AND DISASTERS IN NIGER

Following the food crisis Niger experienced in 2005, 2010 and 2012, Oxfam has decided to focus on disaster risk reduction (DRR) in its humanitarian operations in Niger. One component of this strategy is to strengthen local organization capacities to preventing and managing crises and disasters by educating communities to monitor their vulnerability to food insecurity, malnutrition and other disasters in order to be able to warn, respond and provide early response. This approach aims to enable people to prepare better for recurring shocks through the collection and use of early warning information and self-analysis of their capabilities and vulnerabilities.

This Case Study was a background briefing for Oxfam Novib's 2013 Annual Review, prepared in partnership with ONG Karkara, and describes the programme in Niger. Although it is not a formal evaluation it does consider lessons learned by both Oxfam Novib and its partner organisations.

These Case Studies are shared in the form in which they were submitted, often written by partners whose first language is not English, and have not been edited since submission. We believe that the meaning is clear enough, and the authenticity of the reporting and the availability of Southern Voices on development makes their inclusion in the Oxfam iLibrary worthwhile for sharing with external readers.

Programme Partner: Karkara



AIM OF THE PROJECT

The case study discussed here is part of a project the main goal of which was to help improving the functioning of community early warning systems (EWS) and responding to emergency in a sustainability perspective.

CONTEXT

With 59.5% of people living below the poverty line, Niger ranks, according to the Human Development Index of the United Nations, among the poorest countries in the world.

In terms of food security, the country is rather characterized by food, nutrition and pastoral chronic insecurity. Between 2005 and 2012, the country experienced three food, nutrition and pastoral crises. Each year, approximately 10 to 30% of the population is deficient in more than 50 % of their cereal needs. These recurring deficits are exacerbated by poverty and continuing degradation of the natural environment (nearly 100,000 hectares are rendered unproductive each year), compounded by high population growth (3.9%) and adverse effects of the climate change.

The main victims of these crises are women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities. These chronic deficits engender recurrent, costly and often poorly adapted humanitarian responses.

Humanitarian responses are often focused on assistance in times of crisis rather than learning communities to better prepare for and anticipate crises and ultimately strengthen their resilience to future shocks. Therefore, learning from its first humanitarian response in Niger, Oxfam and partners have integrated the approach to Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) which seems more appropriate to the context of Niger. This approach aims to enable people, through the collection and use of early warning information, and self-analysis of their capabilities and vulnerabilities, to prepare better to recurring shocks. Indeed, knowing the capabilities and vulnerabilities in a community, interventions could better and faster target the beneficiaries and address their real need. Specifically, Oxfam and partners have decided to work on four (04) main axes:

- (i) Advocating, on the one hand, the decentralization of the national system of prevention and management of disasters and food crises (DNPGCCA) at the community level and on the other hand, the integration of the of disaster risks reduction in local development planning;
- (ii) Strengthening the capacity of municipalities in early warning and emergency response;
- (iii) Strengthening the capacity of local humanitarian organizations;
- (iv) Establishing a strong link between the national early warning system and local monitoring mechanisms of vulnerability (observatories monitoring vulnerability and community early warning and emergency response systems).

METHODOLOGY

The approach was to conduct advocacy and capacity building activities. Advocacy activities were conducted to the National Mechanism for the Prevention and Management of Food Crises and Disasters (DNPGCCA) to encourage its decentralization to the local level (municipalities and community levels), and the integration of local structures in its operation on the one hand and, on the other hand, to create a strong link between local structures and sub-regional committees for prevention and management of disasters and food crises (CSR/PGCCA) which are national system structures at the department level. Advocacy has been directed to the municipalities so they appropriate the local structures of vulnerability monitoring.

The capacity building activities have consisted of the training of stakeholders (government, elected local officials, staff of partner organizations, communities, etc.) and of the support to their activities. Trainings were organized by Oxfam Novib on topics such as the DRR approach, Humanitarian Charter and Sphere standards, Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS) approach, Administration, logistics and finance in emergencies, Participatory Analysis of Capacities and Vulnerabilities (APCV), etc.

RESULTS

- 23 Vulnerability monitoring Observatories (“Observatoire de suivi des vulnérabilités – OSV”); 46 Community early warning and emergency response systems (CSR/PGCA) are operational in 23 municipalities; more than 100 executives from partner NGOs, local elected officials and technical officers trained.
- 3 partner organizations have strengthened their capacities and are able to support community monitoring mechanisms of vulnerability and to provide quality response in emergencies;
- The National System for Prevention and Management of Disasters and Food Crises (DNPGCCA) was decentralized to the local level (municipality and community) thanks to Oxfam and partners advocacy work; strong links exist between local structures and the divisions of DNPGCCA to monitor vulnerability;
- Oxfam and partners interventions are leading to the integration by the municipalities of a common approach to disaster risk reduction in the local development plans (PDC) and the inclusion in their budgets of funds to ensure the follow-up of the level of community vulnerability;

The major change induced by the project is undoubtedly the institutional reform of the national system of prevention and disaster management and food crisis that is now decentralized to the local level and taking into account the disaster risk reduction and adaptation to climate change into local development planning.

LESSONS LEARNED

A major lesson learned from this experience is the efficiency of advocacy. Indeed, thanks to several years of advocacy, Oxfam and partners have finally convinced the national system of prevention and disaster management and food to integrate local structures to monitor vulnerability.

Another important lesson is probably the need to involve local partners and beneficiaries from project design to implementation if we want to increase the chance of success of our actions. Through strong advocacy, officials have agreed to support the activities of early warning structures even after the project is over.

Tips and more

Focus on community awareness, formalize collaboration with technical services to better empower them in the execution of activities. Also, must pay attention to the local authorities that can greatly assist in mobilizing communities.

HUMAN INTEREST

Testimony of the Departmental Director of Agriculture Ouallam “Since the start of the activities of community early warning systems (SCAP), we no longer have problems because the information comes from them”.



Photo 1 : Information and awareness forum



Photo 2 : Members CSR/PGCA of Gotheye



Photo 3: Population awareness meeting at the start of the project



Photo 4: Group work during the LEGS training



Photo 5: Group work during the SPHERE training



Photo 6: NGO Karkara staff explaining the results of their analysis exercise

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