

CRISIS IMPACT OVERVIEW

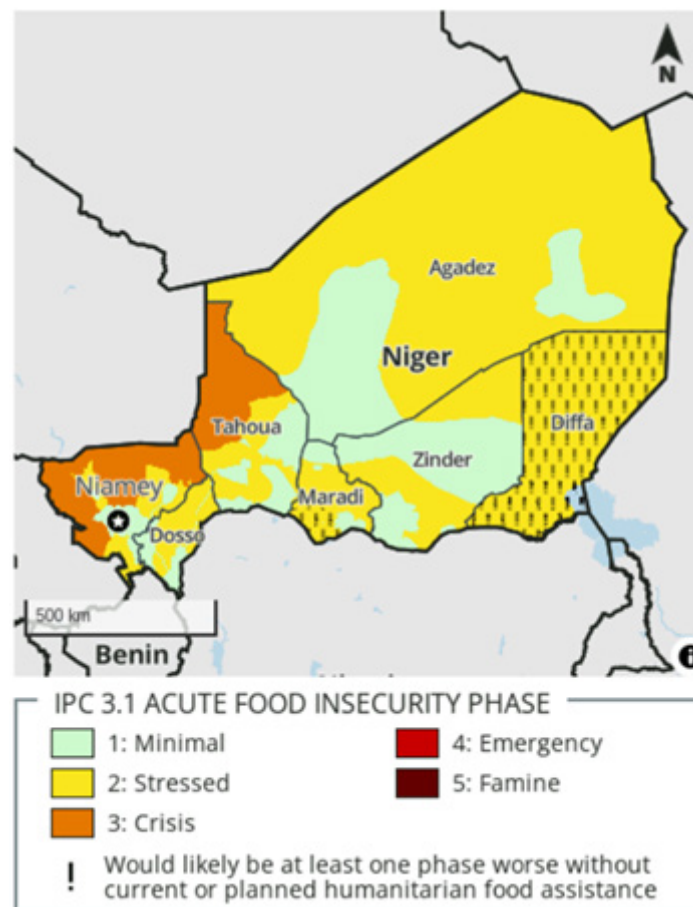
Since the beginning of the 2023 rainy season in Niger in June, heavy rains and floods have been recorded across the country, with above-average rainfall recorded since May. As at 25 August, the floods had caused 32 fatalities (9 from the collapse of their houses and 23 from drowning) and over 30 injuries. By 21 August, the General Directorate of Civil Protection had registered approximately 88,000 affected people across over 10,000 households (BBC accessed 25/08/2023; IFRC 20/08/2023; The Independent Ghana 25/08/2023; ANP 21/08/2023). According to the Ministry of Humanitarian Action and Disaster Management, the floods in Maradi, Tahoua, Tillabéri, and Zinder regions have affected over 50,000 individuals since mid-July (UNICEF 22/08/2023).

The regions with the highest number of fatalities are Tahoua (12), Maradi (10), and Zinder (6). The General Directorate of Civil Protection has also reported the loss of 3,169 cattle, the collapse of 7,864 houses, and the loss of 3.55 tonnes of food along with the destruction of health centres, shops, and other infrastructure (BBC accessed 25/08/2023; The Independent Ghana 25/08/2023).

In March 2023, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance increased by 14% in comparison to the year before because of population movements in Diffa, Maradi, Tahoua, and Tillabéri regions (OCHA accessed 23/08/2023). These have been the same regions most affected by the floods.

The floods are likely to extend the lean season, increasing the risk of food insecurity. In 2022, the extension of the lean season resulted in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity levels among poor households. In 2023, people will likely experience Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse food insecurity levels, as the coup, food price inflation, import/export challenges, and lost livelihoods and remittances further constrain food availability in the coming months (UNICEF 22/08/2023; FEWS NET 09/2022).

Map 1. Projected food security outcomes in Niger, June – September 2023



Source: FEWS NET (20/07/2023)

88,000

PEOPLE AFFECTED

34,500

DAMAGED OR DESTROYED HOUSES

High risk

OF DISEASE OUTBREAK

7.3

INFORM CLIMATE CHANGE RISK SCORE

FUNDING AND RESPONSE CAPACITY

• UN agencies (WHO, UNICEF, UNHCR, IOM)

• National Red Cross

Anticipated scope and scale

Weather predictions for 2023 anticipate the heaviest rainfall in late August or early September. According to the Ministry of Humanitarian Action, flooding will affect approximately 300,000 people between June–September 2023 (IFRC 20/08/2023). The situation will likely persist, and humanitarian needs will likely increase.

Based on data from 2020,2021 and 2022, floods in the regions of Niger at high risk of flooding affect an average of 250,000 people yearly. In 2023, considering seasonal forecasts and with flooding already occurring in historically more low-risk areas, such as Dosso, Maradi, Tahoua, and Zinder, the impact of floods is estimated to surpass that of previous years. This means that the number of people affected could surpass the average in past years. The recent coup in July 2021 is also expected to affect the Government's ability to respond.

The rainy season in Niger is known to cause deadly floods. In 2022, 195 people lost their lives in the floods. Analysis of historical data anticipates that people will suffer property and home damage and agricultural losses. The losses in agricultural fields could worsen the already dire food security situation in Niger (YNA 20/08/2023; IFRC 20/08/2023).

Humanitarian constraints

On 10 August, humanitarian responders in the region reported low supply stocks because of the impact of the border and airspace closure. The Government announced the border closure on 26 July with the removal of President Mohamed Bazoum from power. Some borders were later reopened but mainly in remote desert areas, meaning access challenges will likely persist (OCHA 10/08/2023; Al Jazeera 02/08/2023). Niger's airspace has been closed since 6 August until further notice (Reuters 07/08/2023).

As at 25 August, land borders and airspace had been closed since 6 August as a result of sanctions by the Economic Community of West African States (Crisis24 25/08/2023; Al Jazeera 08/08/2023). These sanctions aggravate the precarious situation for flood-affected communities, likely increasing staple food and commodity prices and limiting humanitarian aid further.

Widespread infrastructure damage has also been reported, adding to the current humanitarian crisis. The extent of the damage challenges the emergency relief activities of local authorities (BNN 20/08/2023).

CRISIS IMPACTS

Displacements

With close to 8,000 homes destroyed and more than 88,000 people affected, tens of thousands of people are currently displaced. OCHA field assessments indicated that heavy rains affected over 85,000 people in Zinder and over 80,000 in Maradi. In Dosso region, floods also affected 146 people in July (IFRC 20/08/2023; ANP 21/08/2023). The exact number of people lacking shelter and the areas where displaced people are currently staying are unclear, but shelter needs are high.

Livelihoods

The size of farmland destroyed and the number of people whose livelihoods have been directly affected by the floods are unknown. The loss of over 3,100 cattle and the destruction of farmland have likely affected many people in the inundated areas, as the agricultural system in Niger employs nearly 85% of the population and accounts for almost half of its GDP, while nearly 87% of the population practises animal husbandry (ANP 21/08/2023; Feed the Future accessed 23/08/2023; FFILLS 2021).

Food insecurity

Most of northern Tahoua region is expected to experience IPC 3 food insecurity between June–September 2023, while the central and southern parts of the region will likely experience IPC 2 or Minimal (IPC Phase 1) levels. The floods have affected crops and livestock. Host and displaced communities in the regions of Diffa, southwestern Maradi, northern Tahoua, and Tillabéri are facing conflict and civil insecurity, which affect food consumption and livelihoods (FEWS NET 20/07/2023). The lean season usually ends in August, but the floods will likely extend it until September. In 2022, the extension of the lean season caused IPC 2 food security outcomes among poor households in Tahoua (FEWS NET 09/2022).

Before the start of the rainy season and flooding, 13% of the population (over three million people) was already predicted to be severely food-insecure between June–August 2023. 28% of the population was estimated to be moderately food-insecure and likely to fall into severe food insecurity (WFP 13/08/2023). The current floods are likely to affect people's lives given the importance of agricultural land and livestock, which have already been affected. The further loss of land and cattle will leave many in dire need because of the lack of food sources. Civil unrest has also resulted in a limited supply of livestock, lower food product flows, and the closure of the borders with Burkina Faso and Mali, collectively worsening food access for communities (FEWS NET 20/07/2023).

Health/WASH

The floods create a high risk of the contamination of water points, which is likely to spread waterborne epidemics and other diseases (such as cholera, acute diarrhoea, malaria, etc.). These risks are even higher for the most vulnerable groups, such as women, individuals with disabilities, displaced people, and children (IFRC 20/08/2023). Currently, Tahoua region is facing a measles epidemic that has already affected 17,095 children six months to 14 years of age (UNICEF 22/08/2023). There is also a high risk of a cholera outbreak, which is already endemic in the country. In September 2022, the Niger Ministry of Health confirmed cholera cases reported in Zinder and Maradi regions. In 2021, there were 5,591 cases, including 166 deaths, in southern Niger (IFRC 20/08/2023; ECHO 07/09/2022).

Only 56% of the population countrywide has access to a source of drinking water, and more than 71% of the population practises open defecation, increasing the risk of diseases and contamination (UNICEF accessed 23/08/2023; UNICEF 20/03/2022).

Education

Flooding and security issues will likely disrupt the incoming school year in Maradi, Tahoua, and Tillabéri regions (UNICEF 22/08/2023). Over 32 schools have closed because of insecurity in Tahoua, affecting over 2,600 children (OCHA 26/07/2023). The flood-affected areas also face high risks of recruitment and use of children by armed groups, family separation and gender-based violence, and negative coping strategies that could lead to child marriage and child labour, all because of the active presence of armed groups in the regions (UNICEF 10/08/2023).

Impact on critical infrastructure

Floods and heavy rains have affected almost 8,000 houses, as well as roads and infrastructure, some of which were already damaged from the 2022 rainy season (ANP 21/08/2023; FEWS NET 09/2022; FloodList 19/07/2022).

DRIVERS OF THE CRISIS

Rainy season

Annual rainfall in Niger occurs between June–September, but in 2023, above-average rainfall has been recorded since May (WB accessed 23/08/2023). The 2022 rainy season produced 195 casualties and affected 400,000 people, including 256,000 people who lost their livelihoods after over 100,000 hectares of land were destroyed. Based on data from 2020, 2021 and 2022, the rainy season affects an average of 250,000 people yearly (ANP 21/08/2023; IFRC 20/08/2023).

COMPOUNDING/AGGRAVATING FACTORS

Political crisis

Niger has been in a political crisis since the overthrowing of President Mohamed Bazoum in July 2023 by mutinous soldiers led by Abdourahmani Tiani. The coup is likely to increase insecurity, with the loss of the Government that ensured stability in the capital and had the support of international forces. An effective government response to the floods is unlikely. The decision of the military leaders to close the country's airspace and keep key border-entry points closed will further hamper the ability of humanitarian organisations to effectively deliver lifesaving humanitarian aid (Reuters 03/08/2023; OCHA 10/08/2023). Niger's new leadership is also likely to move away from its Western allies and closer to Russia; the new leader Tiani has demanded external powers to refrain from interference, which could affect future international aid access in the country (ICCT 04/08/2023; BBC 27/07/2023).

Attacks by armed groups against civilians, security forces, and self-defence militias increased by 108% in the regions of Tillabéri and Tahoua from September 2022 to April 2023. The most affected region is Tillabéri, but a mixture of Islamic State Sahel militancy and banditry also affects central Tahoua region (FEWS NET 20/07/2023; ACLED 03/08/2023).

Economy

As a result of the coup, different international sanctions have been imposed on Niger. The Economic Community of West African States and the West African Monetary and Economic Union have suspended all commercial transactions with Niger, frozen its state assets in the regional central bank, frozen the assets of the State and state enterprises in commercial banks, and suspended all financial assistance with regional development banks. The EU has also suspended its financial support and cooperation on security with Niger, and the World Bank has suspended disbursements. The African Union has also suspended Niger from all its activities (Reuters 22/08/2023 and 08/08/2023).

Displacement

As at 30 June 2023, over 706,000 people were in a situation of forced displacement in the country, 403,974 of whom were IDPs, 251,760 were refugees, and 50,377 were asylum seekers (OCHA 15/08/2023). Since 2015, the main reason for displacement has been insecurity. In 2015, Boko Haram activities, intercommunal conflicts, and the small-scale activities of other armed groups increased in the Mali-Niger border and Diffa region, triggering displacement (ECHO 18/11/2015). Since then, displacement because of insecurity has persisted and has recently increased as a result of civil unrest from the coup in July and the presence of armed groups in some regions. Armed group activities often target civilians, causing the forced displacement of communities (OCHA 26/07/2023; ICCT 04/08/2023).

The regions that continuously receive an influx of people because of violence and conflict are Diffa, Maradi, Tahoua, and Tillabéri. Most IDPs come from border villages, where there has been an incursion of armed groups. Tahoua hosts Malian and Nigerian refugees and IDPs from border areas, particularly Ménaka in Mali (UNHCR 14/08/2023). Maradi, Tahoua, and Tillabéri have also been the regions most affected by the floods during the current rainy season. Since the beginning of July, Tillabéri region has experienced an upsurge in attacks, aggravating the situation for communities and IDPs (OCHA 15/08/2023).

Poor infrastructure

Most houses in the affected regions were not built with durable or solid materials because of a lack of resources. In 2020, heavy rainfall reached 105mm and caused extensive damage, while in 2021, the cumulative total for ten days (from 10–20 July) was 145mm, leading to a significant number of collapsed houses (IFRC 20/08/2023). From July–September 2022, the rains and flooding severely damaged roads and public buildings, including schools and health centres, and destroyed around 23,000 homes across all regions (mostly in Diffa, Maradi, Tahoua, and Zinder regions) (FEWS NET 09/2022; FloodList 19/07/2022).

FUNDING AND RESPONSE CAPACITY

- There is a lack of information on funding for the current flood crisis.
- As at 31 July 2023, there was a funding gap of 57% for the response for IDPs, refugees, and asylum seekers in Niger (UNHCR 14/08/2023).
- The Protection Cluster is underfunded. As at June 2023, only 7% of the targeted people in Tahoua and 9% in Tillabéri had received aid (UNHCR 23/08/2023).

LESSONS LEARNT

- Cholera risks increase during rainy periods, and the distribution of vaccines has proven effective in mitigating the spread of the disease. In Tahoua, awareness-raising activities have been conducted, and in the recent floods in 2022 and 2023, no cases have been reported in the area (IFRC 02/09/2022).
- Cash assistance has also proven useful and efficient for families mostly for immediate needs, such as evacuations to their relocation sites (IFRC 20/08/2023).