**Niger Impact Evaluation Plan**

**Updated October 2016**

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8. **Impact Evaluation Overview**

This document provides an overview of the strategy and action plan for AidData’s monitoring and evaluation (M&E) component of USAID’s Participatory and Responsive Governance (PRG) program in Niger. The overarching goal of the PRG project is to strengthen the collective responsiveness of the Nigerien government and its citizens to priority public needs in order to help mitigate what Nigeriens call a ‘*crise de confiance’* or ‘crisis of confidence’ between citizens and the state and ultimately bolster stability and governance in one of the world’s most fragile states. The project aims to strengthen collective responsiveness through three channels: 1.) political party campaigns; 2.) collective engagement and coordination of multiple stakeholders (government, non-government, donors) to undertake reforms that address citizen priorities; and 3.) capacity-building of local think-tanks, media, NGOs, and civil society to promote participatory governance.

This impact evaluation will focus on evaluating USAID’s Participatory, Responsive, Governance - Principal Activity Program (PRG-PA). The PRG is designed to be a principal contributor to the achievement of Development Objective 2 under the Niger Operational Framework: *Citizen Confidence in the state increased among target populations.*

Post-electoral activities focused on targeted citizen priorities under Phase 1 will provide initial contributions to results under IR 2.2: *Equitable access to public sector services increased in target areas* while continuing to contribute to the participatory processes under IR 2.2, including civic engagement in governance.

Our impact evaluation will focus on the post-electoral activities and IR 2.2. Our objectives for the impact evaluation follow those stipulated in the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan provided in the PRG Program Description (PD) (p. 28), which states in part that:

“Given the innovative nature of this proposed project, the project design team recognizes the value of also developing an external impact evaluation to test the fundamental hypotheses and theory of change embedded in the project design, and to determine whether changes in outcome measures are directly attributable to the project. This aligns with the USAID Evaluation Policy, which requires new and innovative or pilot projects to be subject to impact evaluation and thus the counterfactual analysis needed to determine causality. We also recognize the particular importance of being able to show attributable results in USAID governance programming, and see evaluation of this project as an opportunity to try to prove intervention efficacy. Lastly, an impact evaluation of aspects of the PRG principal activity in its Phase 1 would allow for findings to be applied to improved project design and implementation in the anticipated Phase 2 scale-up. In this way, the impact evaluation will also play an important formative assessment role for the project.”

**2. Treatment: PRG-PA Implementation**

USAID selected Counterpart International to implement the Participatory, Responsive, Governance - Principal Activity Program (PRG-PA). This five-year initiative funded by USAID seeks to increase the capacity of stakeholders – including Civil Social Organizations (CSOs), traditional and religious leaders, government and political parties, the media, and private sectors. The program’s goal is to improve government and citizen responsiveness to priority public needs.

CPI’s treatment plan includes conducting government systems mapping to inform collective action initiatives (activity 2.1), building a set of master dialogue facilitators (activity 2.2), brokering commitments around targeted citizen priorities through local partner dialogues (activity 2.3), and supporting media production of reliable information that supports collective action (activity 2.4).

CPI plans to accomplish activity 2.1 by identifying individuals who can influence government priorities and can champion and create advocacy campaigns. These individuals will be pulled together in a systems map that will improve the understanding of the different networks of influence within the government. The mapping exercise will help towards the understanding of how to negotiate and who to negotiate with within the government systems, especially those who might seem to be unlikely allies.

In partnership with activity 2.1, CPI will also train six sub-grantees from civil society groups and the private sector to run multi-stakeholder dialogs that will cover topics that emerge from local election debates and conversations such as service delivery problems and gaps in education, health, and security (activity 2.2). Two individuals (one man and one woman) from each selected sub-grantee will receive training on “asset-based community mobilization; cross-cultural communication; socially inclusive, participatory facilitation methods and dialogues for social, political, and policy change.”

The trained ‘Master Dialogue Facilitators’ will lead local partner dialogues as part of activity 2.3. These dialogs intend to create a forum where different community members will be able to build partnerships, utilize resources, and identify common goals. The dialogues will include municipal leaders and regional councilors, community groups, private sector actors (such as business based in regions), *fadas,* CDCs, women’s cooperatives, and other local groups. CPI also intends to train media partners to cover these events as part of activity 2.4. This will include holding workshops for media actors to train them on effective interviewing techniques and how to discuss important priority issues with stakeholders and citizens. These media actors, which will include radio stations, televisions, and print partners (local and national stations), will then cover the dialogues to insure public transparency and encourage action around dialogue outcomes.

**3. Summary of Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy Impact Evaluation Design and Implementation**

AidData will implement the M&E strategy and impact evaluation (IE) in collaboration with USAID Niger, DRG, and the PRG implementing partners. AidData staff and affiliated researchers will conduct the impact evaluation. The co-Principle Investigators (PIs) on the project include: Ariel BenYishay (AidData Chief Economist, Assistant Professor of Economics at the College of W&M), Philip Roessler (Assistant Professor of Government at the College of W&M), and Lisa Mueller (Assistant Professor, Macalester College).

The PIs envisage that the impact evaluation will focus on the second project outcome of the PRG: improved collective responsiveness through increased multi-stakeholder contributions to public goods provision, or public goods (PG) reform implementation, for short. In particular, the IE will assess the degree to which the PRG’s strategy for increased multi-stakeholder coordination and collective action leads to change in the coverage and quality of public goods that meet citizen priority needs.

We envisage that the other project outcomes of the PRG—responsiveness of political parties and local capacity-building to promote participatory governance—will not be *directly* evaluated in this impact evaluation, though the interactive effects of party responsiveness and capacity-building with PG reform implementation will be assessed.

The evaluation will employ an experimental design to test whether the PRG project on PG reform implementation leads to the theory of change motivating the intervention, in which research, dialogue and local action catalyzed by improved multi-stakeholder coordination and contributions lead to improvements in the coverage and quality of the targeted public goods that Nigerien citizens consider top priority. We propose the IE will employ a randomized roll-out design that entails the staggered roll-out of the PG reform implementation program across different clusters in Niger, in which the sequencing of the geographic clusters is randomly assigned.

This randomized design will allow us to causally estimate the effect of the PRG project intervention using panel surveys and changes in objective measures of public goods provision and access. We propose collecting the following data to allow us to identify the impact of the intervention:

Proposed Two-Year Evaluation Data Collection (2015-2017)

1. Baseline survey and qualitative analysis at individual and cluster-level on socio-economic and socio-cultural indicators; political attitudes and engagement; strength of informal and formal institutions; multi stakeholder coordination and contributions; public goods provision and access; citizen preferences for public goods.

2. Baseline collection of administratively-measured behavioral data that reflect confidence in the state, including birth registrations, infant mortality, or tax compliance

3. Midpoint checks for compliance and change across key indicators for admin and community-level data.

Optional Third-Year Evaluation Data Collection Component (2017-2018)

4. *Option*: Endline survey and qualitative analysis at individual and cluster-level indicators and administratively measured behavioral data.

A timeline for the evaluation is described below, but the key aspects of the randomized roll-out is that only the clusters assigned to the treatment group will be the targets for the PRG PG reform program for the duration of the evaluation, currently expected to last approximately two years.

The cluster-level randomization will be stratified by region and matched pairs (with pairs formed on basis of socioeconomic, political, and ecologic characteristics). Statistical tests for the cluster-level randomization will be made using randomization inference techniques to maximize statistical power.

In addition, we also envision that a key program feature may entail eliciting participation by households in program activities. Randomizing the households who are targeted by these invitations/encouragement and comparing the changes in their attitude and behaviors to those not encouraged would provide a second dimension of evidence on the program’s household-level effects.

This rigorous research design and comprehensive data collection strategy will allow us to evaluate the degree to which the PG reform implementation program produces change in the the coverage and quality of public goods that meet citizen priority needs and strengthen citizen confidence in the state.

In addition to the analysis produced for USAID, the researchers will have the right to use the data to publish in academic and policy outlets. Drs. BenYishay, Roessler, and Mueller, together with USAID, will be solely responsible for keeping and maintaining versions of the data that contain identifiable information about subjects. All data will comply with USAID research and open data policies. Other parties will have access to anonymized data 6 months after the completion of the final evaluation report. This 6-month embargo period will allow the PIs to finalize their report. The data will be fully anonymized and secured before sharing with any third-party researchers.

**3a. Randomization process and sampling frame**

48 Communes were provided by CPI as fitting their requirements for treatment but they only were able to treat 24 communes. 24 Communes were randomly sampled by AidData.

AidData completed the randomization of communes for Activity 2 of the Niger PRG - PA program to be led by Counterpart International (CPI). The sample frame for the randomization included only communes that were selected by CPI based on criteria that reflected the security conditions and existing organizational connections by CPI’s sub-awardees. CPI identified 48 communes that fit these criteria. CPI has project funding and capacity to administer Activity 2 in 24 of these 48 eligible communes. Given this constraint, in order to distribute the Activity’s benefits fairly among these 48 communes and to better evaluate their impacts, AidData randomly selected the 24 “treatment” communes.

Out of the communes provided by CPI, AidData stratified the randomization based on three factors: region, urban or rural, and whether or not they are part of CPI’s initial Activity 1. This created 10 sets of communes, each of which shared identical values for these factors (i.e. belonged to the same region, were similarly urban/rural, and will experience/not experience Activity 1). The numbers of communes within each set varied: some sets contain as few as three communes, while others contain as many as nine. The aim was to select approximately half of the communes within each set to be in the treatment group (In cases where the number of communes within each set was odd, the number of communes to be selected for treatment was randomly rounded up/down).[[1]](#footnote-1) This procedure ensured that equal number of Activity I communes were randomly selected into treatment and control groups, and that approximately half of each region’s urban communes and approximately half of each region’s rural communes.

The final randomized assignment was conducted using the STATA statistical software on September 16, 2016.

**3b. Theory of change (Phil)**

**3c. Sampling design power calcs instruments (Ariel)**

**3d. Commune level official interview details (Lisa)**

**3e. Government Official Interview details (Lisa)**

**4. Activities and Deliverables**

Scoping study Fall 2015 and Spring 2016: Lisa Mueller traveled to Niger to engage and discuss with USAID-Niger on results of Political Economy Analysis (PEA), design of PG Reform Implementation Program, and design of impact evaluation. Professor Mueller submitted trip readouts for both.

Draft Impact Evaluation Design, Fall 2016: Drawing on Program Description document, PEA, and scoping trip, PIs draft design of impact evaluation. The PIs will work together with the implementing partner M&E specialist to tailor the impact evaluation approach based on their implementation strategy. Once the scoping study is complete, the impact evaluation design will be provided to USAID/ Niger and USAID/DRG within three months. We will solicit USAID feedback on the draft impact evaluation design and then revise to produce a final evaluation design within one month of receiving USAID feedback. There will also be an independent peer review of the impact evaluation design, described in greater detail below.

Workshop Impact Evaluation design with DRG at Learning Conference or in Washington, Winter 2015/2016: Two PIs travel to Learning Conference.

Baseline Data Collection and Pre-program Implementation Fall 2016: Once the evaluation design is finalized, we will begin the process of developing the baseline data collection including the set of questions for the surveys and the qualitative analysis protocol (including interviews and focus groups). We will work together with the implementing partner M&E specialist to customize the baseline data collection questions and approach based on their implementation strategy. Data collection tools will be reviewed by the USAID Niger Office and its implementing partner (NORC) who will be tasked with local data collection. A PI might have to make himself or herself available for travel to Niger for enumeration training. Alternatively, or in conjunction, a staff person from NORC will likely travel to Niger to facilitate enumeration training. The team will coordinate with the PG Reform Implementation Program on randomization strategy. Once the baseline evaluation is complete, a draft report will be provided to USAID/Niger and USAID/DRG within three months. We will solicit USAID feedback on the draft report and then revise to produce a final report within one month of receiving USAID feedback.

PG Reform Implementation Program, Late Fall 2016: At least one PI travels to Niger to monitor program roll-out.

Midline Analysis, Summer 2017: PIs travel to Niger to coordinate on midpoint analysis. The midpoint analysis, which we expect to occur during summer 2017, will directly follow up on the baseline and also include new information not anticipated in the baseline. Once the midpoint analysis is complete, a draft report will be provided to USAID/Niger, HESN and DRG within three months. We will solicit USAID/Niger and USAID/DRG feedback on the draft report and then revise to produce a final report within one month of receiving USAID feedback and submit to USAID/Niger, HESN and DRG.

*AidData, USAID/DRG and USAID/Niger may continue to collaborate on an Endline Data Collection and Analysis in Summer 2018. Such activity would be outside of the HESN Cooperative Agreement, utilize separate funds, and be governed by a separate agreement between these parties unless Niger buys into the cooperative agreement. This work would cover the following activities:*

*Endline Data Collection and Analysis, Summer 2018: We will conclude with an endline analysis in summer 2018 that directly follows up on the baseline and midterm evaluations. Once the endline evaluation is complete, a draft report will be provided to USAID/Niger, USAID/DRG and USAID/Global Development Lab within three months. We will solicit USAID feedback on the draft report and then revise to produce a final report within one month of receiving USAID feedback.*

**5. Reporting Requirements**

As previously mentioned, AidData will adhere to reporting requirements of HESN, USAID/DRG and USAID/Niger. USAID/DRG has a primary interest in ensuring the quality, rigor, and policy and academic relevance of its impact evaluations. Broad standards for co-funding include a focus on programs that are: 1) untested; 2) have the potential for replication in other contexts; 3) are strategically important for the Mission; or 4) are innovative in design or substance.

Meeting such standards is built into USAID/DRG’s reporting requirements. As such, USAID/DRG requires a peer review of the draft evaluation plan by other academics before co-funding is applied and research activities occur. The evaluation design document should be thought of a pre-analysis plan that outlines the theory of change behind the evaluation and evaluated experimental interventions, specific hypotheses to be tested, data collection tools planned along with data collection strategy (sample sizes, power calculations, geographic locations, etc.) This document should be approximately 30 pages in length, and initially prepared after the PIs complete their scoping trips. (There is further guidance on the format available.)

The peer review of the evaluation design can be facilitated formally through the Experiments in Governance and Politics (EGAP) group at Columbia University, of which USAID/DRG is an institutional member. Members of EGAP have signed full non-disclosure agreements to allow them to comment on in-design evaluation plans. The peer review will focus both on the technical soundness of the evaluation design as well as addressing USAID/DRG’s own strategic criteria regarding impact evaluations. The comments from EGAP should be incorporated into or addressed in the final evaluation design document, and will be used by USAID/DRG to make final determinations regarding co-funding. This peer review is in addition to the review and commenting period by HESN, USAID/DRG, and USAID/Niger described above.

USAID/DRG aims to have its comments and those of the peer review back to the PIs within a month of the submission of the evaluation design. USAID/Niger also expects that AidData will submit a draft evaluation design to the Mission for the same one month comment period. On USAID’s part, NORC will consolidate feedback from USAID/Niger and USAID/DRG and provide to AidData one single set of comments/questions from USAID, in a timely manner.

In regards to the HESN award, AidData will be required to meet all obligations as previously outlined in its award, including but not limited to: financial reporting, HESN M&E indicators, annual reports, etc.

AidData will also share with its HESN AOR any draft or final report shared with USAID/Niger and USAID/DRG so that the AOR can track its progress towards final deliverables and ensure that AidData is meeting its benchmarks in a timely fashion.

USAID/Niger and USAID/DRG also require that AidData submit an analysis report upon completion of each phase of the evaluation (baseline and midline). These reports will also have a commenting period of a month to allow USAID/Niger and USAID/DRG to provide feedback. In addition to these reports, USAID/Niger requests that AidData share with the Mission POC the biannual reports required by HESN, for information purposes.

Regarding the analysis reports for each phase of the impact evaluation, USAID/Niger expects that a draft report be submitted to the Mission POC for Mission comment as well as to the USAID/DRG POC, followed by a final report, due one month after receiving the Mission’s comments. AidData’s Program Manager will receive and consolidate feedback, comments, and questions from USAID/Niger and USAID/DRG on submitted reports.

The format for the Baseline and Midline Analysis Report is as follows:

• Executive Summary—salient findings and recommendations, concisely stated (2 pp)

• Introduction—purpose, audience, and synopsis of task (1 p)

• Background—brief overview of the program, and purpose of the evaluation (2 pp)

• Design—data collection methods, including limitations and gaps (2 pp)

• Findings/Conclusions/Recommendations—evaluation findings discussion with understandable data visualizations for non-technical readers and broader policy findings & recommendations (31–33 pp)

• Issues—list of key technical and/or administrative concerns, if any (1–2 pp)

• References---including bibliography and other references as appropriate (as needed; not included in page count)

• Annexes—methods, schedules, interview lists and tables will be pertinent and readable. The evaluation SOW and instruments will be in the annexes. The final version of the report will be submitted to USAID/Niger in electronic format.

• Quantitative and qualitative data files will be submitted electronically, to the extent this can be done without revealing confidential identifying information. Qualitative data can be submitted in French, as the language of most respondents. As most respondents will prefer to use Hausa or Zarma, translation services will be necessary to process some of the qualitative data for dissemination. The field coordinator will handle all necessary translation tasks.

The report will not exceed 40 pages, excluding table of contents, acronyms list, executive summary, references and annexes. This format is consistent with the 2011 USAID Evaluation Policy.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

Research Team:

Ariel BenYishay, Phil Roessler, and Lisa Mueller will serve as co-principal investigators for the project. BenYishay, Roessler, and Mueller will be responsible for the planning and execution of all phases of the impact evaluation. They will develop the evaluation design and coordinate with a survey firm to carry out the baseline and midline evaluations.

AidData:

AidData will be responsible for the reporting requirements of HESN, USAID/DRG, and USAID/Niger. In regards to the HESN award, AidData will be required to meet all obligations as previously outlined in its award, including but not limited to: financial reporting, HESN M&E indicators, annual reports, etc. In regards to USAID/Niger, AidData is responsible for coordinating with BenYishay, Roessler, and Mueller on the evaluation design report and analysis report at the completion of each phase of the evaluation, as well as for sharing with the Mission the reports required by HESN. AidData will review any reporting documents or any modifications to the scope of work prior to approval.

Implementing Partner (Counterpart International):

AidData will work with the selected implementing partner to ensure the success of the evaluation. At least one of the PIs will meet with the implementing partner to ensure the roll out of the program will coincide with the evaluation design. It is anticipated that this first meeting will take place during the initial scoping trip at the end of 2015. As the evaluation design is carried out, the PIs will keep the implementing partner informed of the progress.

USAID/Niger:

The primary point of contact (POC) for AidData and for USAID/HESN will be Krista Desgranges, Evaluation Specialist. A secondary POC for AidData will be [COR for PRG mechanism], primarily for project-related technical concerns. The primary POC will be responsible for ensuring that communication is maintained between the Mission, HESN, DRG, and AidData, including through the required reporting listed above. Regarding reporting requirements, the primary POC will have final approval of the three required evaluation reports, and will review for information purposes, the reports required by HESN. The technical POC will be available to serve as liaison with the implementing partner and with any technical/field-based issues that may arise. The technical POC will be included in the Mission’s approval of the three evaluation reports, and will also view the interim reports required by HESN. The primary POC, however, has the responsibility of sharing these documents and soliciting the feedback and approval of others in the Mission, including the technical POC, as well as soliciting feedback from the primary POC in USAID/DRG.

USAID/DRG:

The primary POC for AidData and for USAID/HESN will be Morgan Holmes, Evaluation Specialist for USAID/DRG. The primary POC will be responsible for ensuring communication is maintained between the Mission, DRG, HESN, and AidData. The POC will also facilitate the peer review of the draft evaluation plan. The POC will be included in the Mission’s approval of the three evaluation reports, and will also view the interim reports required by HESN. NORC will also have the opportunity to review the three evaluation reports. Final approval of all reports is held by the primary POC for USAID/DRG. The primary POC will also be responsible for liaising through NORC that will provide the sub-contracting and management for data collection activities.

USAID/HESN:

USAID/HESN will be responsible for the day-to-day project management for this research project until the end of the HSEN cooperative agreement to AidData. This means that the AOR for the HESN award to AidData will comply with reporting requirements under the award. He/she will also conduct periodic M&E on the progress of AidData’s PRG work to ensure that AidData is meeting its delivery timeframe on schedule. As necessary, the AOR will periodically communicate to USAID/Niger the status of AidData’s progress, as well as immediately notify the Mission if any problems arise during the course of this impact evaluation project.

**Updated Timeline**

**Scoping study Fall 2015**: One PI will travel to Niger to engage and discuss with USAID-Niger and PRG implementing partners on results of Political Economy Analysis (PEA), design of PG Reform Implementation Program, and design of impact evaluation.

**Draft Impact Evaluation Design, Fall 2015**: Drawing on Program Description document, PEA, and scoping trip, PIs draft design of impact evaluation. The PIs will work together with the implementing partner M&E specialist to tailor the impact evaluation approach based on their implementation strategy. Once the scoping study is complete, the impact evaluation design will be provided to USAID/ Niger and USAID/DRG within three months. We will solicit USAID feedback on the draft impact evaluation design and then revise to produce a final evaluation design within one month of receiving USAID feedback. There will also be an independent peer review of the impact evaluation design, described in greater detail below.

**Workshop Impact Evaluation design with DRG at Learning Conference or in Washington, Winter 2015/2016**: Two PIs travel to Learning Conference.

**Baseline Data Collection and Pre-program Implementation Late Spring/Early Summer 2016:** Once the evaluation design is finalized, we will begin the process of developing the baseline data collection including the set of questions for the surveys and the qualitative analysis protocol (including interviews and focus groups). We will work together with the implementing partner M&E specialist to customize the baseline data collection questions and approach based on their implementation strategy. Data collection tools will be reviewed by the USAID Niger Office and its implementing partner (NORC) who will be tasked with local data collection. A PI might have to make himself or herself available for travel to Niger for enumeration training. Alternatively, or in conjunction, a staff person from NORC will likely travel to Niger to facilitate enumeration training. The team will coordinate with the PG Reform Implementation Program on randomization strategy. Once the baseline evaluation is complete, a draft report will be provided to USAID/Niger and USAID/DRG within three months. We will solicit USAID feedback on the draft report and then revise to produce a final report within one month of receiving USAID feedback.

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Theory of change (Phil, Lisa):

Timeline (includes data collection, etc.):

Sampling design power calcs instruments (Ariel)

Commune level official interview (Phil and Lisa)

Government Official Interview (Phil and Lisa)

1. It is important to note that there need not be exactly equal numbers of communes in the treatment group and control groups within each set. What is important is that the assignment of a commune to the group is random. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)