

# PERCEPTION OF THE IMPACT OF THE CRISIS AND SANCTIONS ON WOMEN AND GIRLS IN NIGER

GENDER ALERT NO. 1



SEPTEMBER 2023

## SUMMARY

Under the leadership of UN Women and in collaboration with the Gender in Humanitarian Action Thematic Group, a perception survey was conducted between 23 August and 19 September 2023, one month after the coup. A total of 8,933 people from the eight administrative regions of Niger responded, including 1,386 women. Here are the key results of this survey:

**Political participation:** Women observe a deterioration in their representation in the new political configuration. Women have been disadvantaged in the recent de facto federal and provincial governmental nominations. The fact that has most crystallized women's civil society is the absence of a gender-focused ministry in the de facto government.

**Gender based violence:** One-third of respondents confirmed the crisis has increased the level of violence against women and girls. Women living in rural areas and those in the interior of the country are more affected by an increase in violence. It is worth noting the crisis' significant impact on the population's psychological state of mind and stress level. Since the crisis, nearly one-quarter of Nigeriens (men and women) feel less safe. The deterioration of security has weakened communities, resulting in poor protection for the most vulnerable, including women and girls. Survey participants reported experiencing banditry and livestock theft, attacks by armed terrorists and kidnappings, particularly of women in several border localities since the start of the crisis.

Women no longer have the same freedom to travel to carry out their activities, such as trade, especially in the informal sector (where more than 75 percent of women work).

**Access to essential services:** Respondents also reported increased difficulties in accessing basic social services, such as access to drinking water, electricity, reproductive health, and education. These challenges are greater for women living in rural areas than those in urban areas (45 percent compared to 35 percent of respondents).

**Livelihood and economic empowerment:** More than half of the female respondents mentioned a deterioration in their living conditions and impact on their economic activities (including access to finance) one month after the crisis. Women living in urban areas seem to be the most affected by this crisis. Most respondents were impacted by border closures, reduced access to cash, price increases and power cuts. Most respondents buy or eat less food than before the crisis, especially in the rural areas. A large majority of participants affirmed that the prices of foodstuffs had increased, particularly for cereals and oil.

### Key messages

1. The role of women in the resolution of the crisis as agents of change, mediators and negotiators must be asserted. Advocacy must be carried out with national and international actors to ensure **proper implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325**.
2. International and national actors must work together to safeguard gender equality in the country. In particular, they must **support the advocacy of women's civil society organizations**, the effective implementation of the quota law and a meaningful representation in the political landscape set up by the de facto authorities.
3. **Violence against women and girls must stop and be denounced ,and appropriate measures must be put in place to assist survivors.** The increase in cases of gender-based violence (GBV) just one month after the crisis is unacceptable. While monitoring the risks of gender-based violence, actors must raise awareness of the immediate needs of the most vulnerable groups and take the necessary actions to end this violence.
4. Advocate national and international actors to guarantee viable mechanisms that will ensure **continued access for women and girls to essential services in education and health—including access to essential medicines, psychosocial support and reproductive, prenatal and child health**—and the maintenance of vital services, such as the protection against and assistance for survivors of gender-based violence and access to humanitarian aid.
5. **International and national actors, including donors, must intensify initiatives and funding** to strengthen community resilience and reduce the impact of the food crisis, which is expected to worsen, especially among rural women. The implementation of an ambitious initiative focused on the economic and climate resilience of women and young people must be launched to enable women to gain/regain their financial autonomy and rebuild their lives.
6. **ECOWAS regional actors and development partners must first assess the impacts of their sanctions on communities.** Advocacy must continue to call for exceptions to the sanctions for the most vulnerable groups, especially women, girls, and pregnant and breastfeeding women, and to ensure the establishment of humanitarian corridors.
7. **The management of community stress levels is essential to guarantee social cohesion and build resilience** in this difficult context. Community awareness raising and communication initiatives must be conducted to mitigate the risks and alleviate the suffering, especially of those living in rural areas, far from decision-making centers. Civil society organizations can play a key role in providing this information and providing appropriate support.
8. **Partners must consider increasing funding for civil society organizations**, especially women-led organizations, to enable them to take an active part in conflict resolution, peacebuilding and the promotion of women's rights. Priority must be given to women and their networks/associations in rural areas and in the localities that are most affected by multiple climate, humanitarian and security crises.
9. International and national actors must **continuously document the impacts of the crisis in general on vulnerable populations**, particularly women and girls, to inform humanitarian and development programming. Civil society organizations representing the voices of women, girls and people from various vulnerable and at-risk groups in the conflict must be involved.

## I. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

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On 26 July 2023, a military coup by the National Council for the Safeguarding of the Fatherland (CNSP) led to the overthrow of the democratically elected government in Niger. Following this event, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Monetary and Economic Union (UEMOA) implemented a series of sanctions, and several development partners ceased their financing. **The sociopolitical crisis in Niger following the coup comes when the country was already facing a serious security and climate crisis**, affecting all of its 26 million inhabitants (50.3 percent of whom are women) and nearly 3 million people in need of humanitarian assistance.

Niger is now facing three crises: the political-military crisis, which gave rise to ECOWAS sanctions; the climate crisis with floods; and armed conflict in the country's border areas. Indeed, the military coup took place in a country ranked 189 out of 191 countries in the Human Development Index in 2022, and in terms of climate, Niger ranked the fourth-most vulnerable country out of 173 countries in 2021. The humanitarian situation remains worrying as Niger is currently experiencing multiple crises along its borders with Mali, Burkina Faso and Nigeria. Since 2015, the country has also faced recurring attacks perpetrated by non-state armed groups.

The combination of these factors means that the number of extremely poor people (mainly women) has increased from 9.8 million to 10.5 million. The economic and political sanctions and the suspension of foreign aid (which represented 40 percent of the national budget, according to our national sources) have put an end to key national socio-economic programmes with dramatic consequences for the most vulnerable groups, half of whom were already living on less than \$2.15 per day.

**Women and young girls, the first victims of this socio-political crisis, require particular attention.** Before the current crisis, Niger was ranked 189 out of 191 with a score of 0.42 for the Human Development Index.<sup>1</sup> The promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls remain major issues at the heart of the country's development priorities and prospects. However, we are already witnessing a progressive feminization of poverty in a context of an increasingly acute climate and humanitarian crises due to several factors, including the meagre funding allocated to gender issues and women's empowerment. In 2019, the gender development index (GDI) was 0.321 for women compared to 0.443 for men.<sup>2</sup> The graphs below summarize the main indicators of the state of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls before the military coup.

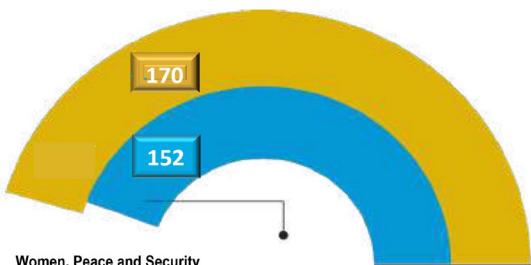
**Considering the situation of women and girls before the onset of the current crisis, there is reason to fear a worsening of and a setback to the advancement of gender in the country.** This Gender Alert aims to raise community awareness about equality issues between women and men, girls and boys, and to promote respect for the diversity of gender identities and expressions. It is also an advocacy tool for taking gender into consideration in response plans and mechanisms for the current crisis using a Humanitarian Nexus approach (humanitarian, development and peace). The resulting recommendations will contribute to a better application of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, in particular the participation of women in Niger in the current peace consolidation process, the preservation of achievements in gender matters, and women's role as agents of change and conflict resolution.

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<sup>1</sup> UNDP, Human Development Index Report 2021/2022.

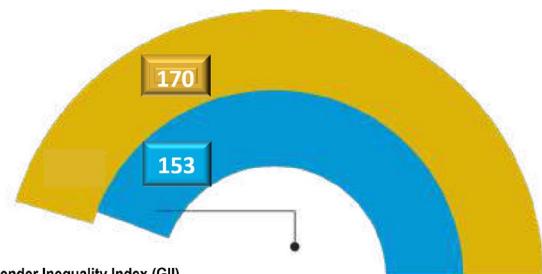
<sup>2</sup> UNDP, 2020.

## Overview: Statistics on gender equality in Niger



**Women, Peace and Security**

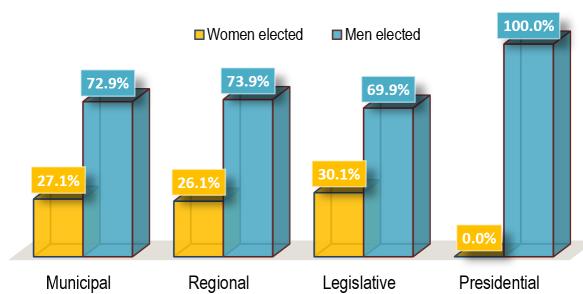
In 2021, Niger was ranked 152 out of 170 countries in the "Summary Women, Peace and Security Index" report.



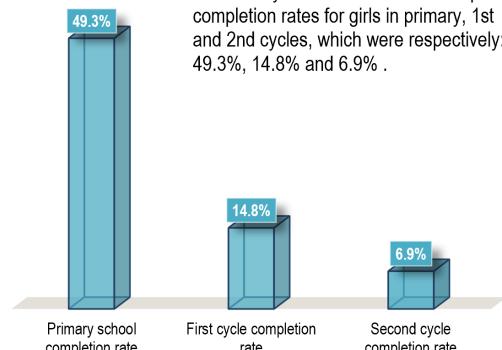
**Gender Inequality Index (GII)**

According to the UNDP 2021/2022 Human Development Report, Niger was ranked 153 out of 170, with a value of 0.611.

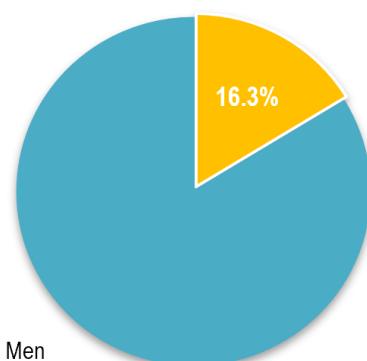
Municipal, regional, legislative and presidential elections in 2020 recorded respectively 27.1%, 26.1%, 30.1% and 0.0% of women



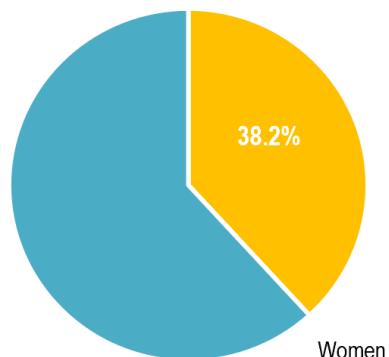
In 2020/2021 the Statistical Yearbook of the Ministry of National Education reported completion rates for girls in primary, 1st and 2nd cycles, which were respectively: 49.3%, 14.8% and 6.9% .



Overall, women remain the most affected by GBV

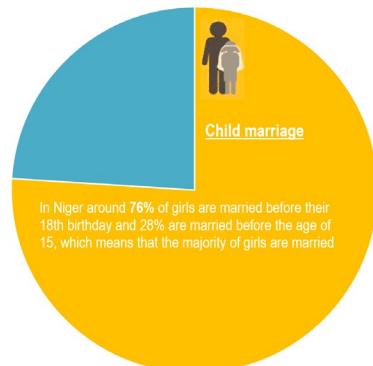


Men



Women

In addition to the significant drop in the fertility level (which went from 7.4 in 1992 to 6.2 in 2021), women in Niger's urban areas have a lower fertility level than those in rural areas (5 children per woman compared to 6.5 in 2021).



EDS-1992      EDS-1998      EDS-2006      EDS-2012      ENAFEM-2021

— Urban    - - - Rural    - - - Both

## **II. OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY OF GENDER ALERT**

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This Gender Alert aims to highlight the effects of the military coup on women and girls in an environment already weakened by multiple crises. It is based on the results of a community survey and secondary data on the state of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in Niger before the coup.

In methodological terms, the implementation of this survey required collaboration between UN Women teams, members of the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group (GiHA) and the social enterprise firm Viamo. The survey was carried out through the 325 call service, using an automated platform that allows communities to access a variety of information through a simple call from an Airtel SIM (via any type of phone). It was carried out over the period from 23 August to 19 September 2023, i.e., one month after the military took power. The survey collected the perceptions of various people from the eight regions of Niger and focused on their perceptions about the impact of the current crisis, the measures taken on various aspects of their lives (e.g., food security, access to financing, security and violence), and the role and place of women in the process of consolidating peace and security. This survey included a qualitative part with open-ended questions and a quantitative part.

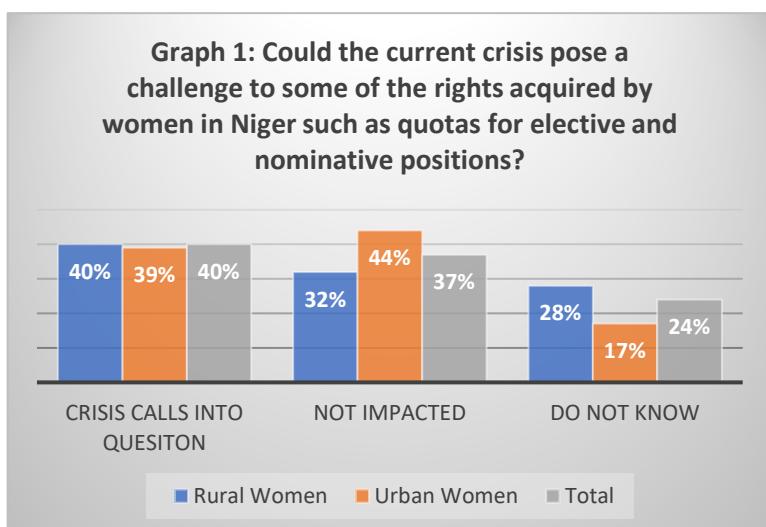
In total, 8,933 people agreed to participate in the survey. Of these 4,781 people answered all questions, including the open-ended questions. This report focuses on this last category with an emphasis on the responses provided by 1,386 women and girls, 34 percent of whom live in Niamey and the remaining live in other regions. We note that 61 percent of respondents are from rural areas and 37 percent were under 25 years old.

The aim was to have an idea of the respondents' perception of the impact of the crisis; it is not representative of the opinion of the entire country. Like any other information system, interactive voice response (IVR) technology has limits despite its performance in terms of efficiency, confidentiality and objectivity. The main limitations demonstrated during this survey were as follows: (i) access to the 325 call service was only possible for subscribers of a mobile telephone company in Niger; (ii) the use of the IVR technology can be restrictive for participants who are not necessarily familiar with the use of mobile phones; and iii) the vast majority of mobile phone owners are men as are the majority of people who regularly contact the 325 call service.

### III. ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS OF THE PERCEPTION SURVEY ON THE IMPACT OF THE CURRENT CRISIS ON WOMEN AND GENDER PROMOTION

#### 1- FROM ADVANCES IN GENDER MATTERS TO INITIATIVES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS FOR PEACEBUILDING

In crisis situations, we most often observe a decline in achievements in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The perception survey showed that 2 out of 5 women compared to 1 out of 3 men confirmed that the recent political-military crisis could pose a challenge for some of the rights acquired by women in Niger, such as quotas for elected and nominated positions.



The analysis of the respondents' testimonies made it possible to identify two aspects of the crisis which could pose a challenge to some of the rights acquired by women in Niger.

**Political decisions:** There are four women out of the 21 ministers (19 percent) in the military government and the National Council for the Safeguarding of the Homeland (CNSP); no women appointed out of the eight regional governors (zero percent) and only five women out of the 63 appointed prefects (7.9 percent). Thus, at the level of nominal command positions, women have been disadvantaged. The fact that has most crystallized women's civil society is the non-existence of a ministry responsible for the promotion of women in the government set up by the CNSP. This emerged in the survey when respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the political decisions of the new authorities. One respondent said, *"We have several reasons, starting with the Ministry for the Advancement of Women, which no longer exists! It is as if this ministry is no longer a priority for the government. This ministry has existed since independence to protect women's rights. We also have the quota law, this law also is suspended following the dissolution of the constitution."*

**The right to move and carry out activities freely:** A number of survey respondents say that women no longer have the same freedom to move to carry out their activities, such as commerce. However, before the crisis more than 75 percent of women worked in the informal sector, especially commerce. Some informants said, *"It is obvious that women's rights are being called into question, because they cannot move freely to look for money. Because of this lack, they leave their studies to marry or work in the fields"* and *"There are other women who sell food at night and they are forbidden to go out."*

**The kidnappings of populations, particularly women in several border areas of the country,** were also highlighted by participants. One said, *"What we heard in other countries has happened in our country now. Women are often kidnapped now."*

For several speakers, the participation of women in peacebuilding and social cohesion could guarantee them greater consideration in the Niger of tomorrow. Toward this, women, young people and other members of the community are called upon to increase awareness of peace and the

effects of the crisis, as one participant from Tessaoua pointed out, “In my opinion, girls and boys should form awareness groups on the effects of the conflict.”

Other participants highlighted the role of women in mediation and negotiation at the national level and regional level with ECOWAS: “I think that women can play an important role in this crisis, because they are our mothers, our sisters and also our wives. Often, they are directly involved with their daughters and their sisters. To this end, they have a great influence in affecting change, in increasing advocacy and in discussions to seek solutions to end the crisis. Women are heard when it comes to advocacy at all levels, including at the ECOWAS level, which could enable an exit from this crisis as quickly as possible, because they are also affected by this crisis. Men are always in the lead in every situation, but I think that women have a lot of power and that we must listen to their proposals for ending the crisis, which can be very relevant.”

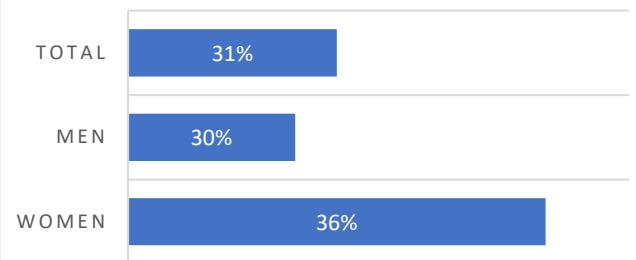
From a perspective of sustainability of actions and maintenance of gender gains, several participants highlighted the need for girls to continue their studies. Indeed, before the crisis, access and retention in school remained problematic, and the situation deteriorated further in secondary school with a middle school completion rate of 20.4 percent for boys and 14.4 percent for girls (18.5 percent overall). In high school, this rate is 7.3 percent for all and 5.3 percent for girls. Under-and/or no schooling is even more significant in places of forced population displacement. Despite there being 758 primary schools and 34 secondary schools, there are 33,089 out-of-school girls in the three border zones alone. These two statements confirm these concerns: “Their contribution is to study and work to be able to help the development of the country.” and “For women, we want to see them educated so that they can have a job, a healthy life full of abundance.”

Aware these issues are linked to the protection of their rights, women and girls have mobilized since the start of the crisis to lead several initiatives. Calls from several women's groups and organizations were made, and then women organized a Women's Dialogue to establish a movement for the respect of their rights. And finally, a ‘NigerFemmeFillePaix’ (or ‘NigerWomanGirlPeace’) campaign is underway to call for the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and 11 United Nations resolutions, including UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. Most recently in September, more than 30 women's organizations gathered under the leadership of the non-governmental organization Femmes, Actions et Developpement ('Women, Actions and Development' or FAD) for the creation of the Movement for the Respect of Women's Rights in Niger (MRDFN) as part of the Women's Dialogue, bringing together women from each of the eight regions and the capital Niamey. In solidarity with the women of Niger, women in other parts of Africa are also mobilizing to support dialogue and mediation.

## 2- VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IS INCREASING SIGNIFICANTLY: THE NEED TO PROTECT WOMEN AND GIRLS

Before the crisis, Niger had a high proportion of early marriages for females (with a prevalence of 53.4 percent for girls compared to only 0.04 percent for boys) and gender-based violence (38.2 percent among women and 16.3 percent among men).<sup>3</sup> In the survey, when asked whether the crisis has increased the level of violence against women and girls, nearly one-third of participants responded in the affirmative (36 percent of women/girls and 30 percent of men). Women living in rural areas and those in the interior of the country are more affected by an increase in violence.

Graph 2: % of respondents (men and women) having indicated an increase in cases of GBV since the crisis



Some participants believe that rape and other forms of violence against women and girls are the fault of the women or girls for various reasons ranging from their dress to prostitution or other reasons as evidenced by the following comments: “Everything that happens to women/girls is their fault; the way they expose their bodies, anything can happen to them.” And “It is the girls themselves who sell themselves to men to get money given the situation we are in. There is no money or food, life has become very expensive.”

With the high level of violence, economic challenges and a change in living conditions, more than 2 out of 5 respondents (women and men) said the crisis had impacted their psychological state and level of stress. Three participants from within the country and from Niamey said, “What scares us is when ECOWAS talks about war”; “People traumatize us by thinking that there will be war in Niger”; and “My fear is the war they want to start. If that happens, what do we poor people do?”

The box below highlights certain statements from women and men demonstrating an increase in

### Testimonies from some participants in the perception survey

“Since the crisis, we have noticed that some women are violently punched. We saw riots, we saw families attacked, and some women hospitalized, injured and their cars burned. And we think that these are things that do not reflect our society. It doesn’t reflect our habits, and all of these are consequences of the crisis.”

“Since the start of this crisis, women have suffered violence. We were coming back from the forest when we met nine boys on our way. We were victims of rape. There was a girl who was raped by four men and another girl was raped by two other men.”

“We are not safe. Recently, a procession of women accompanying a bride was raped on their way home. Really, these kinds of things are not good.”

“When men are frustrated after looking for money and work in vain, they vent their anger on their wives by insulting them. This is the reason for their violence, especially since women are everywhere.”

<sup>3</sup> Study on the extent and determinants of gender-based violence in Niger, June 2021.

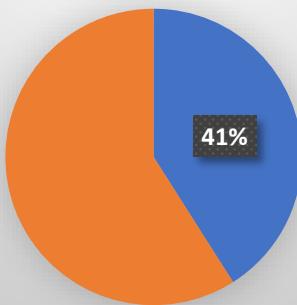
violence since the start of the crisis.

It should also be noted that the deterioration of security weakens communities and results in poor protection for the most vulnerable, women and girls. The survey showed that since the crisis, nearly one-quarter of Nigeriens (men and women) feel less safe. Survey participants said they had experienced cases of banditry and livestock theft since the start of the crisis. Another subgroup of respondents claimed to have been attacked by armed terrorist groups. Some participants said, “[There is really no security here, because terrorists attack people even during the day. They can kill you if you try to intercede](#)” and “[Various cases of theft are very recurrent among us. The theft of sheep stopped a short time ago.](#)” Security is very important for Niger, which faces internal attacks at its borders, generating displacement. Even before the crisis, more than 4.3 million people had humanitarian needs, the majority of whom were women and children. In addition, 698,000 displaced people and refugees depended on humanitarian aid. We can only think that this situation has worsened since the end of July.

### **3- HEALTH, PARTICULARLY WOMEN’S REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH, IS GREATLY IMPACTED BY THE CRISIS**

Asked whether the crisis has affected “access to basic social services such as access to drinking water, electricity or health”, 46 percent of respondents (41 percent of women, 49 percent of men) indicated that they had encountered difficulties. These challenges in accessing basic social services are greater for women living in rural areas than those in urban areas (45 percent compared to 35 percent). Even before the current crisis, access to these basic social services was a significant challenge for many populations, particularly the overwhelming majority of women who live in rural areas.

**Chart 3: More than 2 in 5 women said that basic social services have been affected by the crisis**



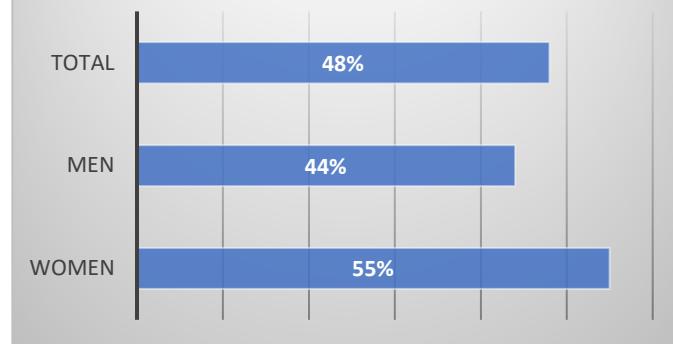
The analysis of qualitative information collected from people who mentioned difficulties highlighted the major challenges to health, particularly reproductive health. One participant said, “[I think that the first social service impacted by the crisis is health, with a shortage of pharmaceutical products that cannot be imported and pregnant and breastfeeding women no longer have access to care. We think that this is a great concern for the communities.](#)” Participants highlighted difficulties in accessing health services. One said, “[It's only the money to go to the hospital that we lack. That's our problem and the price of medicines, which has increased.](#)” And another concluded, “[The difficulties we now encounter in hospitals are a lack of medicines, lack of water, and lack of electricity. We really need help.](#)” Even before the crisis, the maternal mortality rate was one of the highest in the world, with 520 deaths per 100,000 live births. The crisis and the challenges mentioned by the participants risk worsening this if urgent action is not taken.

#### 4. A GENERAL DEGRADATION OF LIVING CONDITIONS, PARTICULARLY OF WOMEN'S

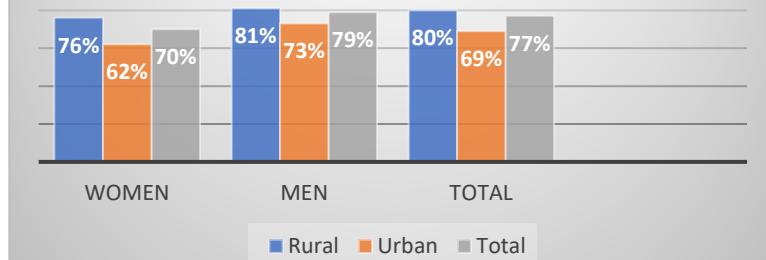
The crisis that Niger has been experiencing since 26 July 2023 will certainly have consequences on the living conditions of communities, particularly for women. According to the survey, more than 55 percent of women (compared to 44 percent of men) mentioned a deterioration in their living conditions, one month after the crisis. Over 76 percent of respondents live in regions outside Niamey (the capital), and it appears that women living in rural areas are more affected by the crisis than those living in urban areas. The majority of respondents were impacted by border closures (38 percent), reduced access to cash (23 percent), price increases (18 percent) and power cuts (17 percent). One woman said, "Among cereals, rice has a high price. Oil and imported foods are more expensive, but local products are affordable." And another added, "The closure of borders is the cause of our problems. There is not enough food and the price has increased."

The effects of the crisis and the sanctions put in place by ECOWAS and UEMOA are beginning to be felt by the 26 million people in Niger, 50.3 percent of whom are women. On the question of whether "the current crisis had disrupted their eating habits", the majority of respondents (70 percent of women and 79 percent of male respondents, or around 77 percent of the whole) buy or eat less food than before the crisis. People (men or women) living in rural areas are more affected by the lack/reduction of food rations (80 percent of respondents from rural areas compared to 69 percent of those from urban areas).

Graph 4: % of respondents (Women, Men) having noticed a change in their general living conditions since the start of this crisis



Graph 5: % of respondents by gender, area of residence who buy or eat fewer quantities than before the crisis



A very large majority of participants affirmed that the prices of foodstuffs have increased, particularly for cereals and oil, as illustrated by some testimonies: "Food is getting more and more expensive. Now with 300 CFA, you can't eat even a dish." Another said, "What led to this food problem is that it is expensive. Normally a cup of millet costs 1000 francs. Before we paid 1250 francs for a cup of rice but now it's 1600 francs. Things have changed." Another group respondents said they encountered financial difficulties in meeting their food needs. One said, "The first thing is the lack of money, it is the lack of money which is my problem. Money is my worry; we need money to eat."

It should also be noted that if this crisis and the sanctions continue, the food crisis, which already affects more than 3.3 million people (the majority of whom are women and children), will quickly worsen. One respondent said, “[There is no money and there is no food, and it is also very expensive. Starvation will kill us. They don't know the situation we are in. All the avenues we use to get money are closed. Please help us with bags and open the borders.](#)”

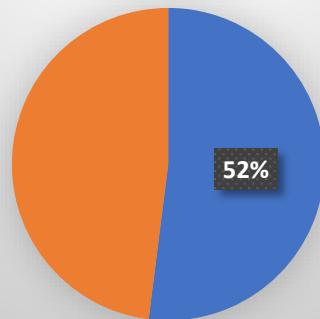
This cry of alarm is likely to receive very little response given the suspension of a significant portion of aid from international partners. In 2023, external donations amounted to 427 billion CFA (\$821.2 million), with budget support and loans of 342 billion CFA (\$657.7 million). One survey participant said, “[We think that access to financing has been greatly undermined with many donor countries, many financial institutions suspending their aid. International organizations and national organizations that carry out the activities will lose their funding, leading to widespread unemployment. We hope that the crisis will end soon to allow donors to release funds and allow organizations to continue their activities, particularly women-led organizations, which are most affected.](#)”

In addition, the reduced capacity of the state to honor its commitments and deal with the void created by the cessation of international aid will worsen the economic and food crisis in the country. The closure of economic community borders, particularly the corridors with Nigeria and Benin, will impact customs revenues, as well as the supply of the local markets. Côte d'Ivoire is Niger's main partner in terms of imports, accounting for 39 percent of imports over the period and reaching 40.8 percent in 2022. Togo is Niger's second-largest import partner, accounting for 23 percent in 2022, followed by Burkina Faso at 14 percent. In terms of exports, Africa remained Niger's leading export destination, accounting for 55.5 percent of all exports, followed by Europe (34.4 percent). At the African level, exports are largely directed towards the ECOWAS region, which accounted for 83.8 percent of all exports in 2022. One female survey respondent said, “[Since the crisis, women teachers have had two unpaid salary arrears. Some of them do craft work. They are really scared and praying for things to change.](#)”

## 5- ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AND ACCESS TO FINANCING: WOMEN, PARTICULARLY RURAL WOMEN, MOST IMPACTED BY THE CRISIS

On a global scale, Niger is ranked 189 out of 191 countries in the 2022 Human Development Index. The slightest external shock negatively impacts the country's economy and the living conditions of the population. The deterioration in living conditions, as well as poor access to food and resources, will have a greater impact on women who are on the frontlines to meet food needs and who constitute the majority of the poorest people in the country. Even after one month, more than half of respondents (53 percent) indicated that the recent crisis has impacted their economic activities (52 percent of women and 53 percent of men).

*Graph 6: 52% of women and girls respondents indicated that their economic activities or work was impacted by the crisis*



In addition, more than 57 percent of women and men who responded to the survey indicated that they have encountered difficulties accessing financing due to the current crisis in Niger. A lack of financing in banks was highlighted by the majority of respondents. To summarize the economic situation, one respondent said, “[Things are getting more complicated day by day, since there is no money in the country. Even if we have money in the banks, we could not access that, and no one even gives us credit. There needs to be a change since we are suffering.](#)”

According to the World Bank, in 2021, the level of extreme poverty stood at 41.8 percent in Niger, affecting more than 10 million people. The survey confirms that the economic impact of the crisis and the lack of financing are more pronounced among rural women and those from other regions (outside of Niamey). Indeed, 62 percent of rural women compared to 50 percent of women living in urban areas indicated that the crisis has impacted their access to financing with banks or any other financial institutions.

#### Extract from ECOWAS/Uemoa Sanctions

1. Closure of land and air borders between ECOWAS countries and Niger;
2. Institution of ECOWAS no-fly zone on all commercial flights to and from Niger;
3. Suspension of all commercial and financial transactions between ECOWAS Member States and Niger;
4. Freeze of all service transaction including utility services;
5. Freeze of assets of the Republic of Niger in ECOWAS Central Banks;
6. Freeze of assets of the Niger State and the State Enterprises and Parastatals in Commercial Banks;
7. Suspension of Niger from all financial assistance and transactions with all financial institutions, particularly, EBID and BOAD.

SOURCE : Final communiqué – Extraordinary Summit of the Conference of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government on the political situation in Niger, Abuja on 30 July 2023.

## **IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This survey, conducted a month after the coup d'état in Niger that led to ECOWAS sanctions and the cessation of several funding, raises the alarm about general living conditions of people in Niger, particularly women and girls. Although levels of violence against women and girls were already high before the crisis, this survey highlights a progressive worsening of cases of violence against women and girls, as well as an increase in the level of stress in communities. The reduction in economic activities and more pronounced lack of access to financing among women will further intensify the feminization of poverty. Despite this less than rosy picture, respondents (both men and women) highlighted the strategic role that women can play for peacebuilding and a return to lasting peace. It should also be noted that women fear the decline of their rights and are mobilizing to make their voices heard at the local, national and regional levels.

The results of the survey's quantitative and qualitative data and the evolution of issues related to gender equality and the empowerment of women in Niger before the crisis challenge us to sound an alarm. There is a need to place gender priorities, women and girls at the heart of all responses to the current crisis. To do this, some recommendations are necessary:

- 1. The role of women as agents of change, mediators and negotiators must be valued and supported for the resolution of the crisis in Niger.** Advocacy must be carried out with national and international actors to ensure proper implementation of the Women's Agenda for Peace and Security, in particular United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (RSC 1325), and ensure that women, particularly young women, are significantly represented, included and consulted in the political reconfiguration process. Civil society, particularly women and youth groups, must be supported in their mobilization so that they have the means to represent their interests and make their voices heard.
- 2. Intensify advocacy for safeguarding gender gains in the country.** Like any acquired right, the rights of women and girls must be safeguarded. National and international partners must support women's civil society organizations, which very quickly began to mobilize for these achievements. The conclusions of the Women's Dialogue held in September 2023 must be implemented and supported both at the national and international levels, particularly for the effective implementation of the quota law between men and women in Niger. **"Granting positions of responsibility to deserving women is an effective way to promote their involvement in governance and promote women's education. This sends a powerful message about gender equality and encourages other women to aspire to leadership positions. By investing in women's leadership, we strengthen diversity and inclusiveness in government, which contributes to more balanced decision-making and a more equal society."**
- 3. Violence against women and girls must stop and be denounced, and appropriate measures must put in place to assist survivors.** The increase in GBV cases just one month after the crisis is unacceptable. Actors must mobilize to guarantee respect for women's rights, punish all forms of violence and protect survivors. It is therefore important to ensure a progressive assessment of the risks of gender-based violence. This monitoring is necessary to identify security problems, ensure the continued protection of women in general, and raise awareness, particularly of the immediate needs of groups most vulnerable to the humanitarian and climatic crises that preceded the political crisis. This concerns all women, particularly those at risk of abuse and physical and sexual exploitation, such as migrants, refugees, internally displaced people, separated and unaccompanied people, and young people.
- 4. Access to vital and essential services must be ensured in situations of peace, conflict and development for everyone, particularly women.** To do this, it is important to advocate to national and international actors to provide the means to put in place viable mechanisms to ensure

continued access for women and girls to essential services in education and health (including access to essential medicines, psychosocial support and reproductive, prenatal and child health) and the maintenance of vital services (e.g., protection from and treatment of gender-based violence and access to humanitarian aid). When sanctions of all kinds are applied in a crisis, there must above all be an exception for the most vulnerable groups, such as women and girls, particularly pregnant and breastfeeding women.

5. **Intensify initiatives promoting community resilience to reduce the food crisis, especially among women.** Data show that if nothing is done, poverty will become more feminized in the country, especially among rural women. The implementation of an ambitious initiative focused on the economic resilience of women and young people is a crucial aspect in the current management of the crisis. This may involve the creation of professional training programmes, access to microcredits, agricultural and agro-phytopastoral production, support for business creation, etc. The objective is to enable women to regain their financial autonomy and rebuild their lives after having been affected by difficult circumstances.
6. **ECOWAS regional actors and development partners must analyze the impacts of their sanctions on communities before taking them.** Indeed, the consequences of democratic ruptures and the sanctions that follow are more evident on civilian communities, particularly women, especially those living in rural areas. It is important to ease or even lift sanctions and establish humanitarian corridors.
7. **Develop community awareness initiatives about security risks to manage stress levels and create conditions for social cohesion.** In the context of sudden crisis like that in Niger, which involves a military intervention and resultant sanctions, it is important to communicate positively with the public in order to mitigate the risks and alleviate the suffering, especially with those living in rural areas, far from decision-making centers. Civil society organizations can play a key role in providing this information and providing appropriate support.
8. **At the general level:**
  - a. **Increase funding for civil society organizations, especially women's organizations, to enable them to take an active part in resolving the conflict, defend their rights, and above all, strengthen livelihoods and food security.** Priority must be given to women and their networks/associations in rural areas and in the localities most affected by multiple crises and attacks by non-state armed groups.
  - b. **Continuously document the impacts of sanctions and the crisis in general on vulnerable populations, particularly women and girls, to inform humanitarian and development programming.** It is essential that the humanitarian response is based on a solid gender analysis that identifies these different vulnerabilities and responds to them appropriately in budgeting, programming and implementation. Civil society organizations representing the voices of women and girls from different vulnerable and at-risk groups in the conflict should be involved as much as possible to enable needs assessments and better understand the distinct perceptions, priorities and capacities of women, girls, boys and men.