



Meta-Evaluation report on

**Social norms, performance and prediction of MMD/VSLA
achievements**

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Adaptation to Climate Change
ACI	Intermediary Credit Association
AEP	Drinking water supply
AFJN	Association of Women Lawyers of Niger
AGR	Income-generating activities
ALP	Learning to Adapt Programme for Africa
ANDDH	Nigerian Association for the Defence of Human Rights
WITH	Village Savings and Credit Association
BC	Cereal Banks
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
BCC	Behaviour Change Communications
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
CRS	Catholic Relief Service
CV	Caisse Villageoise
HRD	Natural Resources Directorate
DRyDEV	Drylands Development Programme
GARIC	Gender Agriculture and Climate Risk Management
GDE	Gender, Equity and Diversity
GRN	Natural Resource Management
HDI	Human Development Index
IGN	Niger Gender Initiative
IIG	Gender Inequality Index
MFI	Mico Finance Institution
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
LEFF	Leadership and Empowerment of Women and Girls
MMD	Mata Masu Dubara
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development

SUMMARY

- Acronyms and Abbreviations..... ii**
- Contents 1**
- Summary 3**
- Introduction..... 5**
- 1.1 Socio-demographic context 5**
- 1.2 Gender strategies of the state and other development partners..... 6**
 - 1.2.1 Niger State Gender Strategies6
 - 1.2.2 CARE International's gender strategies6
 - 1.2.3 MMD approach to improving the lives of women and girls6
- 1.3 Objectives..... 8**
 - 1.3.1 Overall objective8
 - 1.3.2 Specific objectives.....8
 - 1.3.2.2 Women's voice and leadership..... 8
 - 1.3.2.3 Women's economic justice..... 8
 - 1.3.2.4 Men Engaged..... 8
 - 1.3.2.5 Climate justice 9
- 2. Methodological approach10**
- 2.1 Definition of terminologies..... 10**
- 2.2 Methods 11**
 - 2.2.1 Phase 1: Interview to inform, discuss and engage partners11
 - 2.2.2 Phase 2: Primary data collection using the Outcome Harvesting approach and Meta-evaluation.....11

- 2.2.2.1 Conduct of the meta-evaluation 11
- 2.2.2.2 Primary data collection using the Outcome Harvesting approach 12
- 2.2.3 Phase 3: Validation of the report.....13

3. Results 14

- 3.1 Brief description of CARE's MMD approach14**
- 3.2 MMD networking and penetration.....15**
 - 3.2.1 Networking15
 - 3.2.2 Penetration rate17
- 3.3 Effects/impact of the MMD approach on improving the living conditions of women and girls17**
 - 3.3.1 Voice and female leadership17
 - 3.3.2 Development of women's political awareness 22
 - 3.3.3 Engaging men in reducing gender inequalities 24
 - 3.3.4 Women's social and economic justice27
 - 3.3.5 Climate justice38

Conclusion and outlook 43

Bibliography 46

AnnexesError! Bookmark not defined.

1. Annex 1Error! Bookmark not defined.

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. MMD model networking by region of the country 16

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: CARE's gender equality framework..... 12
Figure 5: Enabling framework developed by the MMD approach for social justice 27
Figure 6. Capacity building and resources for climate justice for women 38

SUMMARY

Niger has developed a legal and institutional framework to fight against discrimination based on gender, age, ethnic group and other factors by 2027. This strategy was developed in a context where all gender indicators are well below the sub-regional average. This strategy is complemented by the efforts of development partners, including CARE International in Niger. In its vision 2030, CARE International places gender equality at the center of its organizing principle. Promoting gender equality and social justice are political goals, which require speaking the truth to public and private actors and standing in solidarity with those who seek to challenge the status quo and the unjust distribution of rights, power and resources. Thus, since 1991, CARE has initiated in a co-learning approach through the MMD (Mata Masu Dubara) model for women empowerment and poverty reduction. Due to its widespread success, the approach became a gateway for most of CARE's and other development partners' activities and has expanded to other sectors of socio-economic development, politics and women's empowerment in Niger. Many studies and evaluations of the approach have been conducted and the results generated are diverse and rich in lessons learned. This report aims to document the rigorous effects/impacts of the MMD approach on the resilience of individuals, groups and institutions at all scales, while also identifying relevant areas where further field-level research is needed. The methodological approach is based first on a meta-evaluation of relevant documents and a complementary data collection using the outcome harvesting approach. Four major current themes were addressed. They are: women's voice and leadership, men's commitment to reducing gender inequality, climate justice, social and economic justice for women.

It emerges from this study that a social transformation impulse regarding discriminatory norms towards women and girls is effective and/or ongoing in the MMD approach. This is easily evident in reproductive and sexual health and nutrition, early and forced marriage, schooling of young girls, women's leadership at all levels of decision-making in societies, etc. MMD women exercise significant power at the household, community, municipal, regional and national levels, as a result of the self-esteem and skills acquired after decades of training, awareness and acquisition of resources of all kinds. This social and economic power is reflected in their capacity to advocate and lobby, to undertake and create resources through IGAs and access to credit. The consideration of their point of view and their contribution to household and family expenses still gives them a place of choice in society. Men's awareness has improved considerably, which has positively impacted the living conditions of women and girls and reduced gender-based inequalities in MMD areas. This contribution is reflected in the improvement of dialogue, the lightening of household chores, collaboration in the transformation of certain discriminatory social norms (early and forced marriage, keeping young girls in school), participation in political life and entrepreneurship, etc. In terms of climate justice, MMD women have distinguished themselves in the protection and securing of productive capital that are natural resources through their involvement in all the management and prevention of conflicts related to the use of these resources. The same applies to their involvement in the multiplication of community vigilance in conflict zones. With the support of several CARE programs, MMD women have adapted their agriculture to the context of climate change and variability in several areas of the country through the use of improved seeds, adapted cultivation techniques, and the multiplication of seeds and the dissemination of good practices, sensitive to the climate. Faced with recurrent food deficits, MMD women anticipate, sometimes on the fund of their cash to purchase food to constitute cereal banks available and accessible to their members and, to some extent, the community. Finally, they have been more active in civic actions for a responsible climate justice taking into account the most vulnerable segments of society. Due to its success, the MMD approach has spread widely in Niger, with a national penetration rate of 13.75%

among women aged 15-64 by the year 2022. It is clear that the MMD approach has made an impact in all areas of women's lives in Niger. Some of these impacts are perceptible and quantifiable. But others, not the least, remain on the testimonies of those who have lived. It is necessary to conduct quantitative and complementary studies on major themes such as the voice and leadership of MMD women in Niger in order to weight the impacts and understand the scope of the movements. Also, a randomized evaluation would be necessary for a reliable comparison of the evidence of MMD women versus those not associated with the grouping such as MMD in order to better formulate future policies.

Keywords: MMD model, gender, social transformation, evidence, perspectives

INTRODUCTION

1.1 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CONTEXT

Niger has been characterized for several decades by strong demographic growth. The population of Niger, which was 17,138,707 in 2012 (RGP/H, 2012), is estimated to be 24,118,328 in 2021 with an intercensal population growth rate of 3.7% per year, one of the highest in the world. The average population density is 13.5 people/km², the majority of whom live in the southern part of the country, which is favorable to agro-pastoral activities. The Nigerien population is extremely young and rural. In 1991, 81% of the population lived in rural areas and depended mainly on agriculture. The profile of the population has not changed today: in 2020, 80% of the population live in rural areas and agriculture contributes about 40% of GDP and 90% of livelihoods (UNDAF, 2019). However, natural disasters, recurrent droughts and lean periods have affected agricultural production and caused numerous food crises over the past decades, so that Niger is now considered a structurally food insecure country with an undernutrition rate that reaches more than 40% among children under five.

Indeed, Niger's slow economic growth, which is heavily dependent on agriculture, cannot offset a population explosion of this magnitude. According to the Human Development Report, 60% of Niger's population currently lives below the poverty threshold. Niger's Human Development Index (HDI) value for 2019 is 0.394 - placing the country in the "low human development" category. However, it should be noted that Niger has made some very significant progress between 1990 and 2019. For example, Niger's HDI increased from 0.220 to 0.394 (an increase of 79.1%), life expectancy at birth in Niger increased by 18.9 years, the average length of schooling increased from 1.4 to 1.7 years in 2015, and the expected length of schooling increased (school-age children) by 5.4 years (2015).

Socioeconomic indicators since 1991 show that the situation of structural poverty is worsening for women, especially those living in rural areas. The 2010 Human Development Report introduced the Gender Inequality Index (GII), which highlights gender-based inequalities in three dimensions: Sexual and Reproductive Health, Empowerment and Economic Activity. Niger has a GII of 0.642, which ranks it 154th out of 162 countries in the 2019 index. In Niger, 17.0% of parliamentary seats are held by women and 4.7% of adult women have attained a secondary education, compared to 9.0% of men in 2017 versus 30.12% in 2021.

In terms of access to education, in 1991 only 11% of women were literate, compared to 32% of men. The current trend shows a literacy rate of 30.11% at the national level, of which 22.10% for women and 38.64% for men, i.e. a reduction in the gap between women and men from 20 to 16.57 points. The lack of access to socio-economic services for women significantly reduces the economic opportunities to which they have access and the control they have over productive assets.

The social and religious norms that condition men's and women's perceptions also result in women's limited participation in decision-making at both the household and community levels. Aware of gender inequalities, the government of Niger signed up in 2001 to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) for the socio-economic development of the continent. Equality between men and women is considered one of the factors in the eradication of poverty and sustainable development. In 2002, the ECOWAS Gender Policy was adopted by the State of Niger. In the same year, the Niger Gender Initiative (NGI) was established to create a social, legal, institutional and political environment conducive to gender equity and equality. Through the work of the NGI, the support of external partners (notably the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions) and regional organizations, Niger adopted a ten-year National

Gender Policy (NGP) (2009-2018) in July 2008 to continue to promote gender equality and equity.

1.2 GENDER STRATEGIES OF THE GOVERNMENT AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

1.2.1 NIGER'S GOVERNMENT GENDER STRATEGIES

National policies should take into account the needs of both sexes in all areas and at different levels. The above-mentioned provisions show that Niger has established a legal and institutional framework to fight against discrimination based on sex, age, ethnic group and other factors. Thus, the National Gender Policy aims, by 2027, to "build, with all actors, a society, without discrimination, where men and women, girls and boys have the same opportunities to participate in its development and enjoy the benefits of its growth". This vision fits perfectly with that of the SDDCI Niger 2035, which is to be "a united, democratic and modern country, peaceful, prosperous and proud of its cultural values, based on a sustainable, ethical, equitable and balanced development in a united and supportive Africa. The national gender policy is structured around four strategic areas: (i) the socio-cultural environment, (ii) economic empowerment and inclusive growth and (iii) strengthening the institutional, legal and (iv) organizational coordination frameworks for the effective implementation of women's and girls' rights. Several governmental, humanitarian and international actors are involved in the implementation of this strategy. This policy aims to address all the bottlenecks that hinder the development and empowerment of women in Niger. However, findings and evaluation studies show persistent gender inequality, particularly for women, youth and people living with disabilities. For example, the Gender Inequality Index (GII) is 0.713 in Niger. This is higher than the Sub-Saharan African average of 0.537. This indicator shows that Niger still has a long way to go in the area of gender equality.

1.2.2 CARE INTERNATIONAL'S GENDER STRATEGIES

In this context, where all gender indicators in Niger need to be improved, CARE International has set gender equality as its central organizing principle for Vision 2030. It is a goal and impact area in itself, as well as a cross-cutting in all other goals, recognizing that economic justice for women, climate justice, equity in health, the right to food, water and nutrition, and equitable access to humanitarian assistance cannot be achieved without addressing gender inequalities. Promoting gender equality and social justice are political goals, requiring speaking truth to power and standing in solidarity with those who seek to challenge the status quo and the unjust distribution of rights, power and resources. This vision aligns with that of the Niger Government's gender policy strategy. So far, CARE has developed a range of approaches based on three dimensions: (i) developing women's individual capacity to act; (ii) changing structures through women's ability to influence structures at different scales; and (iii) transforming relationships in favor of equal rights between women and men. To achieve such a vision, CARE draws on its long experience in community-based adaptation and disaster risk management, sustainable agriculture and the protection of ecosystems and natural resources, and gender equality, etc. To strengthen its impact, CARE also engages, in advocacy, collaborative work with civil society including social movements and collaboration with private sector actors.

1.2.3 MMD APPROACH TO IMPROVING THE LIVES OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

In response to the precarious situation in which the vast majority of rural women in Niger have been living for several decades, CARE Niger developed the Mata Masu Dubara/MMD (which means ingenious women in Hausa) microfinance approach in 1991, a strategy that originally focused on women's economic empowerment and poverty reduction and that, over the years, has been used as a platform for more holistic women's empowerment programming.

In 1990, CARE International undertook a restructuring of its development programs in Niger with the goal of increasing the level of women's participation. This participatory approach was integrated into the MMD pilot project implemented by CARE in 1991 in what is now the Guidan Roumdji department (Maradi region).

The pilot project, which was essentially based on the practice of tontines, which had been present in West Africa for several decades, aimed to help the women of Maradi to fulfill their various responsibilities by giving them easier access to financial and technical resources through savings and microcredit. The MMD approach, born from this particularly successful experience, has been modified over the years in line with the changing needs and priorities of women. CARE's programs and thinking have adapted to these priorities. It is important to mention that several studies and evaluations carried out on the MMD approach show that this model has contributed to strengthening the economic, social and political empowerment of Nigerien women and to reducing their poverty situation. In addition to the MMD groups supervised by CARE Niger in various areas as a gateway, many have been created either by a trickle-down effect or by adopters of the MMD approach. From then on, the 'MMD label' became a distinctive sign that CARE, adopters and even groups associate or combine with other activities or actions in order to draw dividends linked to the potentialities of visibility or impact intrinsic to MMD groups. Thus MMD has become a programmatic basis for CARE. For example, it is not uncommon to hear about : MMD and Gender Mainstreaming, MMD and constructive engagement of men, MMD and GEE platforms - MMD and nutrition, MMD and CB, MMD and MFIs, MMD and RSC/RSA, MMD and land security, MMD and girls' education, MMD and women's political participation, MMD and GBV, MMD in pastoral areas, MMD and entrepreneurship, MMD and RH health, etc.).

Considering the implementation of these new policies by the government and other development partners, the indicators are improving, but Niger has increased gender inequalities, with 0.713 points, a higher index compared to the average for sub-Saharan Africa which is 0.537 (UNDP, 2015). Thus, it remains necessary for CARE Niger to assess the situation of all that has been documented on the impact of the successful MMD model in improving the living conditions of women, young girls but also households in general. Such capitalization will allow to better refine and orient future interventions with the model.

1.3 OBJECTIVES

1.3.1 OVERALL OBJECTIVE

In general, the aim is to demonstrate with tangible evidence the contribution of the MMD approach in improving living conditions at individual, household and communal levels.

1.3.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

More specifically, the study aims to :

1. Highlight and document the rigorous effects/impacts of the MMD approach on women's and girls' resilience on issues such as women's voice and leadership, social and economic justice, men's commitment to reducing social inequality and climate justice at all levels;
2. To have a better understanding of the existing knowledge base of MMD in Niger through a meta-evaluation;
3. Identify areas where further field research is needed.

Research questions

In order to achieve these objectives, the key evaluation questions are restructured thematically as follows:

1.3.2.2 Women's voice and leadership

To understand how the MMD model has contributed to improving women's voice and leadership, the following questions are asked:

1. Does MMD lead to changes in the transformation of social or gender norms? Which ones? How does this happen? How does this compare/evidence with non-MMD areas? How are social gender norms changing in MMD areas?
2. What is the capacity of MMD groups to influence policies, laws and strategies at different levels (local, national, etc.)?
3. What have been the main changes brought about by the collective actions undertaken by MMD groups or how do women engage in advocacy and public decision-making?
4. What is the capacity of MMD groups to influence access to and quality of basic social services at different scales at local and national level?
5. How is the involvement of women in community and communal decision-making bodies, and the acquisition of negotiation skills by women, done? What is the evolution of women's decision-making at different levels and scales (household, intra-community, inter-community and other settings) in MMD areas?

1.3.2.3 Women's economic justice

1. Does MMD lead to changes in social and economic justice for women - in terms of relationships and structures?
2. What is the saturation rate of MMD groups?

1.3.2.4 Men Engaged

How do male leaders engage in gender equality decisions?

1.3.2.5 Climate justice

How does the MMD approach contribute to anticipating and/or dealing with recurrent crises (climate and security)?

2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

2.1 DEFINITION OF TERMINOLOGIES

Meta-evaluation: a process seeking to 'describe an evaluative activity in terms of a set of ideals about what constitutes good evaluation' (Stufflebeam, 1974).

Climate justice: for CARE, climate justice means a future in which the poorest and most marginalised people have significantly improved their well-being and can exercise their rights through increased climate change resilience, enhanced equality and a temperature increase limited to 1.5°C globally.

Women's economic justice: CARE defines women's economic justice (WEJ) as the realization of women's basic human right to economic resources and the power to make decisions that affect their lives. This requires that women have equitable access to and control over economic resources, including the time and opportunity to engage in economic activities, but most importantly, to change discriminatory social norms and economic structures, laws, policies and practices that marginalize women.

Social justice: It is based on equal rights for all people and the possibility for all human beings without discrimination to benefit from economic and social progress throughout the world.

Women's empowerment MMD: Women have the choice, capacity and confidence to identify, pursue and fulfil their economic rights and aspirations

Relationship: women are empowered within their homes, communities and workplaces to influence, negotiate and make economic decisions, individually or collectively, in alliance with men.

Structure: Formal and informal power holders work to develop fair and equitable economic systems for women and men.

"Outcome harvesting: a method for evaluators, funders and managers to identify, formulate, verify and make sense of outcomes (Wilson-Grau and Britt, 2012).

Outcome: a change in the behaviour, relationships, actions, activities, policies or practices of an individual, group, community, organisation or institution.

Penetration rate: indicates the percentage of women belonging to the MMD group over a reference period.

2.2 METHODS

The following steps were taken to conduct this study:

2.2.1 PHASE 1: INTERVIEW TO INFORM, DISCUSS AND ENGAGE PARTNERS

Since the study is intended to be national, CARE requested the participation of other development partners in Niger. These include government structures such as the Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs and universities, as well as structures such as Plan Niger, Mercy Corps, Word Vision and CRS. A workshop was organized on May 12, 2022 at CARE with all the above-mentioned partners. In addition to informing, exchanging and engaging partners, this meeting was used to harmonize the primary data collection tool on the saturation level of the MMD/VSLA/AVEC models. These data focused on the number of women enrolled in one of the models according to the name of the structure considered in order to calculate the saturation rate by region. Also, the key questions from the literature review were reviewed, commented on and validated. Finally, the organizations agreed to provide all relevant documents related to the field of study. However, only two organizations responded to the study's expectations despite the various reminders. Thus, additional research was conducted on the Internet to diversify the sources of information.

2.2.2 PHASE 2: PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION USING THE OUTCOME HARVESTING APPROACH AND META-EVALUATION

2.2.2.1 Conducting the meta-evaluation

The meta-evaluation is an iterative process that takes into account all the evaluations made by the different organizations on the different MMD models in Niger. To conduct this meta-evaluation the following process was used:

1. **Creation of an ad hoc reference framework:** the study is taking on a national scope. A number of the above-mentioned partners have committed themselves by providing all relevant evaluation reports and regionalised quantitative data.
2. **Constitution of an evaluation corpus:** all the documents collected were grouped into different themes. In total, four major themes related to the impacts created by the models and CARE International's 2030 strategic directions were selected. These themes are: (i) women's leadership. This involves framing the synthesis on social transformation, political awareness development, social and economic justice change, advocacy and public decision-making, and influencing women's access to and quality of basic social services; (ii) women's economic justice: This part addressed all changes in social and economic justice for women in the areas of relationships and structures and the evolution of the number of women who are MMD members by locality in order to determine the saturation rate at different scales; (iii) Climate justice: this involves assessing the contribution of the different models to anticipating and/or dealing with recurrent crises (climatic and security). To this end, the analysis will look at all the issues of resilience and adaptation of women members as well as microfinance and poverty reduction, and (iv) men's engagement in the reduction of gender-based inequalities.
3. **Systematic review:** To conduct the review, a screening of initial documents received from CARE and other development partners was conducted. The aim was to select relevant published and unpublished documents, in order to reduce the possibility of bias. These documents included scientific articles, study and evaluation reports, and university

dissertations. Mission and activity reports, power point presentations or any other document deemed irrelevant were excluded. The documents selected in relation to the above themes were synthesised and analysed according to CARE's theory of change on women's leadership and economic justice based on women's capacity to act, change relationships and transform structures (Figure 1). Additional research was conducted on the internet.

Capacité d'Agir
Renforcer la confiance, l'estime de soi et les aspirations (sphère informelle), ainsi que les connaissances, les compétences et capacités (sphère formelle).



Changer les relations

Les relations de pouvoir sur la base desquelles les gens vivent leur vie au travers de relations intimes et réseaux sociaux (sphère informelle) et l'appartenance à un groupe et l'activisme, ainsi que les négociations sur le marché et entre citoyens (sphère formelle).

Transformer les structures

Les normes, coutumes, valeurs sociales discriminatoires, et les pratiques d'exclusion (sphère informelle) ainsi que les lois, politiques, procédures et services (sphère formelle).

Figure 1. CARE's gender equality framework

Cross-tabulated analysis: The assessment of the documents revealed gaps in the updated and regionalised membership numbers, process, unintended consequences as well as some limitations of the models. This data was completed and cross-referenced with the data from the outcome harvesting tool that follows.

2.2.2.2 Collection of primary data using the "Outcome harvesting" approach

a) Presentation of the "Outcome Harvesting" approach

The collection involved the identification, formulation, analysis and interpretation of results to answer usable questions. The use of this technique allows for evidence-based answers to the following questions : What happened? Who did it (or contributed to it)? How do we know? Is there corroborating evidence? Why does it matter? What do we do with what we have discovered?

b) Design of the data collection

The design of the results collection is based first on the definition of key questions for the evaluation of the impacts of the different models on the improvement of women's and girls' living conditions. To this end, key study questions were predefined by the CARE evaluation team and then submitted to the participants in the scoping meeting, phase 1 and 2 of the study. These questions were reviewed, analyzed and validated. Thus, we retain the questions presented in the research question section above.

c) Additional Data Collection

Complementary data were collected during a workshop organized on June 13-14, 2022 at CARE Niamey. The workshop was attended by all experts in the MMD approach at the regional level of the PROMEESS CSO program. Three participants per region were invited. Fairly representative criteria taking into account the mastery of MMD results, the geographical distribution, the diversity of MMD activities/results guided the choice of participants in order to collect more

quality data. The workshop was jointly co-facilitated with PROMEESS staff. The workshop served as a basis for reviewing the various key evaluation questions. The resulting findings were prioritized using the Eisenhower matrix to retain only 4-6 according to their degree of importance and urgency given the time constraints. Each major theme was addressed by answering the following questions: What are they? Who are the actors involved? How is each outcome produced? How does each result represent progress towards improving the living conditions of MMD groups? What were the intended and unintended consequences? In which locality? The answers to all these questions will help to understand the process of change brought about by MMD and the expected and unexpected results, to discover evidence of change and to communicate the results to internal and external stakeholders.

d) Report writing

The data from the meta-evaluation was enhanced and cross-referenced with the data from the outcome harvesting to produce a consolidated report. The penetration rate of the MMD model was evaluated on the basis of membership data provided by CARE Niger, broken down by intervention zone. Initially, it was planned to integrate the statistics of international NGOs working with the same model to have national statistics. Very few shared their data (2), so we were content with the statistics provided by CARE Niger. The rate is calculated on the basis of the ratio between women members of the MMD and the number of women in the region, divided by 100. However, at the national level, the rate is calculated with the number of women aged 15-64. Data by region, from NSI (2021), were used for the number of women.

2.2.3 PHASE 3: VALIDATION OF THE REPORT

The compiled report will undergo internal validation by the CARE's team. This involves the participation of all actors who have been involved in the process (CARE Norway, WEJ, Right to Health, Global VSLA, Global MEAL Cohort, Gender Cohort, etc.). This validation will take place in a webinar. All participants' contributions will be collected and the report documents will be updated to produce this final version.

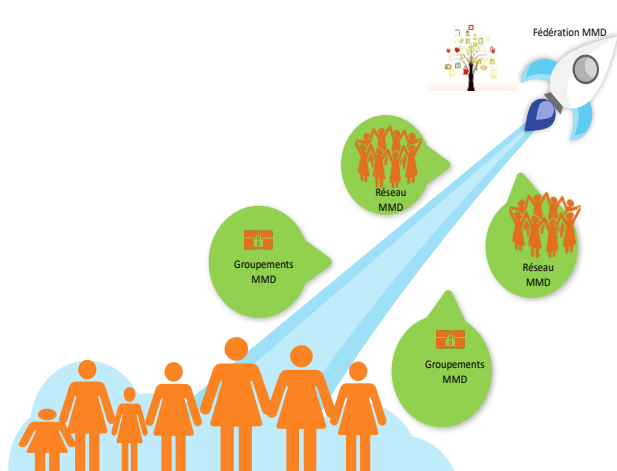
3. RESULTS

3.1 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF CARE'S MMD APPROACH

MMD is an acronym in Hausa that means Mata Masu Dubara, in English "Women on the Move" and in French "femmes ingénieuses". It is an ingenious approach of intervention in co-learning with the populations on the basis of the traditional tontine by CARE Niger since 1991. This approach aims to reach the most vulnerable segments of the population, in particular disadvantaged women in rural and peri-urban areas. The pilot phase began in Maradi in the department of Guidan Roumji and evolved with an expansion into other regions of the country, notably Tahoua and Zinder, then Diffa, Tillabéry and Dosso, transforming the traditional tontine into the so-called modern tontine with an institutional and financial organisation inspired by empirical knowledge of associative life. The expansion of the system has mainly concerned the sedentary rural agricultural environment. The FACES project in the Agadez area and PROGRES in the northern area of Maradi adapted it to semi-sedentary communities, which are often mobile and live on livestock and cash crops. Today, the MMD approach has taken on a national scope; better still, it has been replicated in a dozen countries in West and East Africa, in Asia and Latin America in countries such as Ecuador, etc. With the different four-year phases, MMD projects have integrated planning and monitoring-evaluation tools and CSM and gender conceptual frameworks. There was also a strengthening of technical supervision with the introduction of the participatory approach and various training courses according to needs, and a transfer of knowledge and techniques at local level with the introduction of local relays. From a methodological point of view, CARE has developed MMD guides and strategy and has adopted MMD as an approach in its projects in other sectors. The MMD approach aims on the one hand to strengthen women's agency (internal power), i.e. their knowledge, capacities and self-esteem, in order to give them the tools they need to achieve economic, social and political success. On the other hand, in order to address the root causes of poverty, the approach seeks to change the very structures that condition this approach. Today, in its 2030 sector strategies, CARE plans to continue to strengthen women's individual and collective agency to transform structures and relationships within communities through the enabling development of women's influences and the transformation of structural frameworks including social norms and values.

3.2 MMD NETWORKING AND OUTREACH

3.2.1 NETWORKING



The network can be defined as the formal or informal cooperation between several organisations with a common interest in achieving a common goal implicitly or explicitly formulated, hence the term social movement. The networks are strongly motivated by financial inclusion in a context of widespread poverty, the collective non-financial aspects also take precedence over the long-term vision of the networks. MMD organisations in Niger have evolved from groupings to networks and federations.

Figure 2. Networking process of MMD groups

Groups: Whether rural or urban, the profile of an MMD grouping remains vulnerable women who come together by affinity and benefit from income-generating activities (e.g., soap making, oil extraction, street food, fattening, BC and BAB), mutual and emergency assistance provided to members and, often, to non-members. They are mostly poor, illiterate women, increasingly burdened by the need to ensure household resilience. Women own and control productive resources. The achievement of this breakthrough is supported by the following hypotheses: "improved financial resources for women lead to greater consideration, community participation and empowerment of women, which would lead to women's access to and control of productive resources. It is reported in the villages of the PROMESS program intervention area that women's participation in the activities of MMD groups and networks makes them more autonomous, economically, socially and politically. They acquire and control more and more productive assets in addition to portable goods and small ruminants. More than 51% of MMD women own and control productive resources. The main resources reported are: portable assets (household equipment, furniture,) land, houses, small ruminants, agricultural production, large ruminants, jewelry and cash savings, land assets. Better still, 48% of them (women and girls) report having started or developed their IGAs through the increase in their resources and productive assets, thus contributing to the improvement of their own income level and those of their households. For this year 2022, there are 27,195 groups in CARE's intervention zones in Niger.

The networks: Since its creation in 1991, in Niger, the MMD Group model has spread to all regions of the country with a total of 712,439 members based on data from existing CARE and international NGO programmes. While the networks are strongly motivated by financial inclusion in a context of widespread poverty, the collective non-financial aspects take precedence over the long-term vision of the networks. The networks were formed in CARE's programme areas. For this year 2022, there are 723 CARE MMD networks (Table 1).

The federation: A federation consists of three or more networks from different villages or neighbourhoods in the same municipality. Membership varies from five to 18 member networks, indicating a wide variation in the size and constitution of federations. The first federation in Niamey was formed in 2005. Federations in rural areas have only expanded in the last 5 years. The federations are aligned with the municipality and their collective power enables them to

mobilise a stronger force for change to advance gender equality on a larger scale by forging relationships with other civil society actors and attracting more partners to provide technical support, training, etc. Women in the networks and federations have all played an active role in promoting women's entry into politics, including the election of women MMDs. The networks and federations have achieved remarkable results in many areas for women and girls, such as the promotion of girls' education, the fight against child marriage, participation in public affairs, access to land, collective income-generating activities, alleviation of domestic chores, waste of women's resources at social events (conspicuous spending). Whether in rural or urban areas, the profile of an MMD group remains vulnerable women benefiting from income-generating activities (e.g. soap making, oil extraction, street food) , mutual and emergency assistance provided to members and often to non-members. The resources generated benefit the household (food, health and education) and help to overcome difficult times. Membership varies from five to 18 member networks, indicating a wide variation in the size and constitution of the federations. While the first federation in Niamey was formed in 2005, federations in rural areas have only expanded in the last two years. The federations are aligned with the municipality and their collective power enables them to mobilise a stronger force for change to advance gender equality on a larger scale by forging relationships with other civil society actors and attracting more partners to provide technical support, training, etc. Women in the networks and federations have all played an active role in promoting women's entry into politics, including the election of women MMDs. The networks and federations have achieved remarkable results in many areas for women and girls, such as the promotion of girls' education, the fight against child marriage, participation in public affairs, access to land, collective income-generating activities, alleviation of domestic chores. For this year 2022, there are 36 CARE MMD federations in Niger (Table 1).

Table 1. MMD model networking by region of the country

Regions	Groupings	Networks	Federations
Agadez	105	0	0
Dosso	293	21	0
Maradi	6230	50	6
Niamey	3509	418	10
Tahoua	5343	93	5
Tillabéri	5770	86	7
Zinder	5945	55	8
Total	27195	723	36

These data are specific to CARE International Niger

3.2.2 PENETRATION RATE

The national penetration rate under CARE's various programs is 13.75% among women aged 15-64. However, when we take the number of women in the CARE Niger MMD regions without taking age into account, the national rate is 2.27%. By region, Niamey has the highest rate (12.68%), compared to all other regions of Niger (Figure 1). It is worth mentioning that Dosso did not experience PROMEESS II, which explains the absence of MMD federations that started during this phase. Also note that PROMEESS is not currently active in Diffa and Agadez.

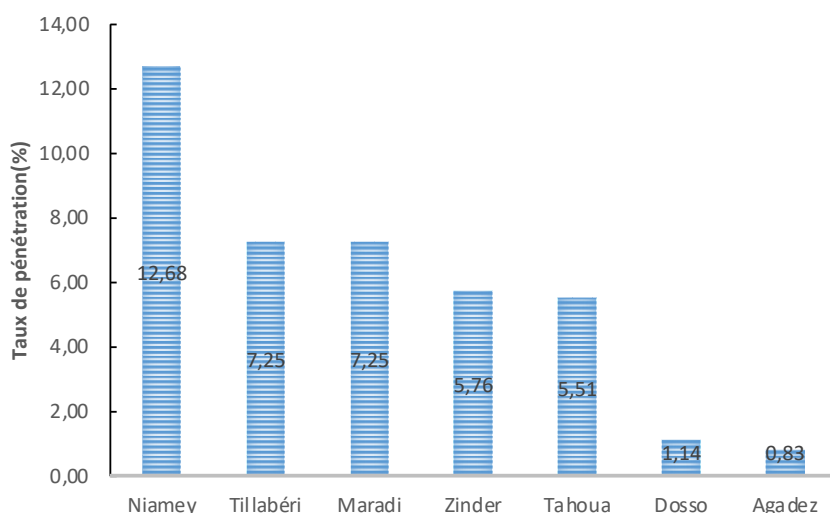


Figure 3: Penetration rate of the MMD approach in Niger based on CARE Niger data.

3.3 EFFECTS/IMPACT OF THE MMD APPROACH ON IMPROVING THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

In writing the report, we focused our analysis first on the development of women's self-esteem, aspirations, knowledge and skills. Finally, the evidence of women's developed capacity to transform social norms and values inherent in gender inequality and women's empowerment as well as to change institutional power relations, citizenship and activism at all levels of life was addressed.

3.3.1 VOICE AND FEMALE LEADERSHIP

The process and effects of the MMD approach on the theme of women's voice and leadership are described in the following figure 4. Details are given in the following sections.

a) Process for women's leadership

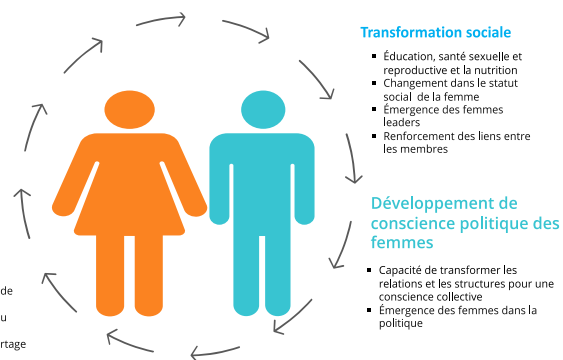
The process for strengthening women's leadership was based on the following key points

Développement de pouvoir individuel et collectif

- Grandes mobilisations et sensibilisation
- Formation des femmes MMD
- Activation du réseautage et la mise en collaboration des femmes avec d'autres acteurs de développement
- Parrainage des femmes MMD
- Renforcement de cadre institutionnel
- Inclusion de tous les acteurs

Engagement des hommes

- Allègement des tâches ménagères
- Accès aux ressources économiques et l'autorisation de fréquenter les centres de santé
- Prise en compte de l'avis de la femme au sein du ménage / communauté
- Accès aux espaces de dialogue et de partage



Transformation sociale

- Éducation, santé sexuelle et reproductive et la nutrition
- Changement dans le statut social de la femme
- Émergence des femmes leaders
- Renforcement des liens entre les membres

Développement de conscience politique des femmes

- Capacité de transformer les relations et les structures pour une conscience collective
- Émergence des femmes dans la politique

Figure 4. Process and evidence of the MMD approach to women's voice and leadership

The major mobilisation and sensitisation: The major mobilization and sensitization: This stage takes the form of major meetings in the different regions of the country in order to initiate social dialogue. An internal evaluation conducted by CARE Niger in 2008 reported that during 2007, 15 social dialogue forums were organized in four regions of Niger: Dosso, Maradi, Tahoua and Tillabéri, with a total of 1,749 participants. The links established through social dialogue, networking and other community activities under the MMD program have also contributed significantly to strengthening social cohesion. In particular, a survey of 606 households conducted as part of the 2011 Impact Monitoring System Report reveals that MMD women generally have a more positive perception of their level of social inclusion than non-MMD women. Indeed, many women have developed a relationship of trust with community leaders, to whom they can turn in case of need. In addition, the weekly group meetings and forums organized by MMD networks also give women the opportunity to meet and discuss their personal situation. Group members offer moral support to women in difficulty and can help them in seeking help in matters of sexual health, nutrition, education and legal rights. The 2011 System and Impact Monitoring Report cites a few examples where MMD women have helped other MMD women who have suffered from domestic violence. In addition, the 2013 Global Monitoring Report on Released Groups estimates that MMD structures have contributed to strengthening social ties among MMD women, including providing childcare services to their sisters.

Training of MMD women: trainings have focused on everything that creates self-esteem, skills and knowledge of women. Thus, capacity building trainings are organized in order to better guide MMD women on topics related to social power, including law, health, nutrition, STIs/AIDS. To this effect, it has become clear that MMD women have a shared collective political agenda based on an action plan that aims to eliminate barriers for women and girls that are common to several villages, for which they can then advocate at the national level in the context of the MMD Congress. These strategies include micro-projects at the community level, community service, social support to MMD members and their families, lobbying and advocacy, raising public awareness on women's rights issues through targeted channels, and running for political positions.



Activation of networking and collaboration of women with other

development actors: from a structural point of view, MMD women have a well-structured and fairly representative network from the local to the national level. The participation of women in the activities of MMD groups and networks, makes them more autonomous, they acquire and control more and more productive assets in addition to portable goods and small ruminants. However, this is only possible due to the actions carried out by CARE. These include capacity building of institutions in gender and masculinity for the

benefit of the leaders of certain institutions which are the village/neighborhood chiefs, teachers, husband's school, communes, technical services, peer educators, partners, platform/network; creation of strategic gender alliances (GCC, platforms, networks, communes, sultanate); celebration of the national women's day on May 13 of each year; Keeping girls in school; lightening women's workloads and involving them in decision-making; strong commitment from customary and religious leaders; alliances created with other CBOs and synergy with the communes; existence of functional community support mechanisms for the protection of vulnerable women and girls, and increased attendance at health centers. They are strongly motivated by the returns on social capital that help build their social status through the power of their presence and mobility.

Sponsorship of MMD women: With the aim of fostering the social integration of MMD women, CARE Niger has notably supported an activity based on social dialogue by creating discussion

spaces for MMD groups/networks and other community actors in order to foster dialogue between the different stakeholders and improve governance at community level. The most prominent case of sponsorship was illustrated in the political participation of women. Indeed, a 2008 evaluation on networking revealed, among other things, that the relationships forged by MMD networks have increased the political participation of MMD women, notably by organizing preparatory trainings and by supporting women's candidacies during elections.

b) Social transformation

Education, sexual and reproductive health and nutrition: this section shows that MMD women are generally in favor of schooling for young girls and are also more inclined to adopt behaviors favorable to their sexual and reproductive health than non-MMD women, since the former generally have more knowledge in this area than those who have not received training. However, in terms of concrete results, the survey reveals that only 37.6% of women surveyed in 2011 were making informed choices about their sexual and reproductive health, an increase of 2% compared to 2009. A clear improvement was found in the 2018 PROMESS evaluation report. With ZIP, 6563 women were educated on SRH in 2021. By age group, SRH awareness is less strengthened among youth under 18 regardless of gender. For example, 65% of females 18 years and older said they were aware of SRH services compared to 32% of females 15-17 years old. The same is true for males, where 47% of those aged 18 and over were aware of SRH services compared to 32% of those aged 15-17. There is a gap of at least 15% between female members of organizations and non-members; and a gap of 20% between male members and non-members.

Overall, respondents do not have a good knowledge of SRH practices. Indeed, among those who are aware of reproductive health services, slightly less than half (46% of women and 49% of men) could name at least three good SRH practices. There was no significant difference among men. Women aged 18 and over (52%) were able to cite at least three good SRH practices than girls aged 15-17 (33%). The same is true for men, with 50% of men aged 18 and over and 40% of boys aged 15-17. Women's participation in associations increases their knowledge of SRH services. Of the women and girls who heard about SRH services and could name at least three good practices, 50% are members of associations and 39% are not members of any association.

The decrease in maternal and infant mortality was expected to be the result of improvements in a number of conditions, including (i) access to and quality of health services, (ii) women's economic empowerment, and (iii) the balance of roles and responsibilities of men and women in the household. There is a clear improvement in women's participation in decision-making about their sexual and reproductive health. Already in 2014, the final evaluation of PFF noted an increase of 23.32% in the proportion of women who reported making informed choices about their sexual and reproductive health. This proportion had increased from 35.58% at the baseline study in 2009 to 58.9% in early 2015. This is strongly linked to the increase in their level of influence in the household, and demonstrates a change in relationships within couples in the regions of Tillabéri, Dosso, Maradi, Tahoua, Zinder and Niamey. The commitment of men to support health-nutrition actions and the alleviation of women's tasks has become a reality in the PROMESS programme areas.

In view of these efforts, even if at this stage quantitative data is almost non-existent, women's testimonies have shown that in many MMD villages, there is a reduction in early marriage of young girls by keeping them in school. This is a considerable change compared to the past perception where a girl excluded from school is celebrated with festivities. Nowadays women have become aware of and actively participate in the daily monitoring and needs of their school children. Women organized in groups have acquired powers to successfully attack cases of early marriage. If necessary, the women manage to make both families of the brides aware of the

delayed pregnancy so that the girl reaches physiological maturity. This is an important transformation of social norms when we know that in many Nigerian societies, a couple without early pregnancy is interpreted as "impotence in the man" and the latter is despised by his peers and the young woman is disturbed by her family and friends. With the MMD dynamic, late pregnancy among young married people is no longer considered a problem.

Change in social status: Change in social status: the mid-term review of the "Girls' and Women's Leadership Program" reveals, among other things, that the IGAs undertaken by MMD women have enabled them to acquire and control productive assets usually owned by men. MMD women see themselves as less poor, cleaner, more enlightened, sometimes literate, respected in the community and able to speak in public. In short, the open-mindedness of women and the dynamics impelled by MMD has made women even more eager for knowledge and capital to satisfy their economic ambitions on the one hand, and to satisfy interests of a much more strategic nature on the other. Indeed, a survey of 606 households conducted as part of the 2011 Impact Monitoring System Report indicates that 45% of MMD women surveyed report having participated at least once in a community decision-making body, compared to 30% of non-MMD women. Most recently with the intervention of the WLiE project, there has been a clear improvement in the role of women in decision-making bodies. Initially women were absent in these instances. But now, 96% of women are actively present in formal meetings in various roles. Through the acquisition of these skills, it can be said that in CARE Niger's program areas, women are accumulating resources and increasingly enjoying their right of ownership, holding more valuable resources whose use they decide. The existence of MMD demonstrates that the approach has significantly strengthened economic empowerment among some MMD women, as it has contributed to increasing their access to economic resources.

The MMD approach has created capabilities (economic and financial skills, social skills, educational skills, etc.) that are subsequently used in improving well-being: food, living conditions (housing, EHA, etc.), education, health, etc. Increased financial and economic opportunities and diversification of income opportunities further strengthen financial capabilities, especially in the form of increased income. The use of income subsequently improves well-being.

Because of all the skills acquired and the relevance of women, in some villages, certain meetings that affect people's lives cannot be held without the presence of MMD women leaders. We are witnessing the emergence of women chiefs of the village or interim of the village chief. This is a step forward when we know that in most of our societies in the past, women have very little right to speak, especially as village chief.

Emergence of women leaders: MMD women have succeeded in transforming social norms by consensus and in gaining a support base in their respective local contexts so that they can continue to work collectively. By coming together as networks and federations, MMD members have further consolidated their collective power. The number of MMD candidates running in the 2011 municipal elections increased to 279, of whom 140 were elected as municipal councillors. From 2004 to 2011, the number of women candidates in municipal elections increased by 2.4 times and the number of elected women by 3.1. As a result, the National Assembly of Niger passed a law in October 2014 that raises the quota for women in elected positions from 10 to 15%. For the February 2016 legislative elections, out of the 171 elected titular deputies, 25 are women, which is 14.61%. However, there has been an improvement from 14 elected women in 2004 representing 12.38% to 15 in the 2011 elections (13.27%). In 2008, in the report of the MMD and Leadership Program, in order to develop partnership relations, MMD women invited communal authorities to take part in weekly meetings of the associations. In return, these leaders have invited women to participate in commune meetings. Indeed, a survey of 606

households conducted as part of the 2011 Impact Monitoring System Report indicates that 45% of MMD women surveyed report having participated at least once in a community decision-making body, compared to 30% for non-MMD women. MMD groups, which initially responded to women's immediate need for savings and credit, have, with their expansion and the evolution of their structuring (networks), enabled women members to reach elective positions as early as 2004. Since then, the growth of MMD structures has continued to focus on the empowerment of women and girls in general, rather than focusing exclusively on their financial needs. With the current legislature, there are 265 women MMD advisors in Niger and 3 deputies, one each in Tahoua, Zinder and Niamey.

Thus, the MMD programme has contributed significantly to improving the level of representation of women in elected bodies at local, regional and national level. First, at the local level, the survey carried out in 2014 reveals that on average 67% of elected women in rural areas are MMDs and some have emerged as mayors and vice-mayors. One of the great successes noted is that the MMD programme has strengthened leadership and equipped elected women with a background that increases their chances of running for a second term. This is the case of the councillor of Tchadoua in the region of Maradi who is the only elected woman to run for a second term out of 15 elected in the first term. She says she was successful due to the MMD programme. Apart from her, there are several other cases in the Tahoua region. Then at the regional level, the programme has allowed the emergence of women leaders up to the regional councils. The mission met several cases where committed MMD women have managed to break through to this level. The level of representation of MMD women on regional councils can be estimated at 20%. Finally, at the national level, it is a remarkable success to know that a member of the national assembly is an MMD leader. Indeed, if the success of the program is more or less weak in terms of national representation, it is worth remembering that more than 70% of the MMD elected women interviewed in the survey have serious ambitions to become members of parliament. Some are already preparing for the next elections.

Apart from the political representation of these women, we note great success in the number of women who fully assert their leadership by assuming responsibilities at the level of their groups, federations, commissions, etc. Of the 4,453 MMD women accompanied in the Tillabéry region, 266 have become leaders and are assuming positions of responsibility in their groups and federations as president, general secretary, treasurer. In the region of Tahoua, there are more than 253 women out of the 33,123 accompanied who have not only affirmed their leadership in the functions they assume but have distinguished themselves in many other ways.

It is also worth noting that the programme has created a particular political dynamic among the women supported. They have become aware of the need to get involved and take an interest in politics, as this will improve their level of participation in decision-making. Indeed, the women of the MMD group support other candidates and the number of women who apply for election is growing. The programme has also enabled the establishment of networks and federations of MMD groups, which has improved their visibility and bargaining power. The women leaders are beginning to engage in community activities and are beginning to exercise citizen control. Finally, the elected women have succeeded in introducing an advocacy plan to the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Child Protection.

Strengthening ties between members: MMD structures have contributed to strengthening social ties between MMD women, who offer childcare services to their sisters (Global Report, 2013; CARE, 2017). These assets, whether individual or collective, primarily serve the woman and her household. They can be used to cover social expenses (naming ceremonies, weddings, health costs), but in Niger it is mainly in the area of food security that women's contribution has been crucial. MMD networks have also enabled women to establish strategic relationships that allow

them to be more active in the socio-political arena and to increase the level of solidarity among them. The federations are aligned with the municipality and their collective power allows them to mobilise a stronger force for change to advance gender equality on a larger scale by forging relationships with other civil society actors and attracting more partners to provide technical support, training, etc. Women in the networks and federations have all played an active role in promoting women's entry into politics, including the election of women MMDs.

3.3.2 DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL AWARENESS

a) Capacity to act for political awareness

The enabling conditions that have fostered the development of political awareness among MMD women can be summarized in three main points:

(i) From a structural point of view, MMD women are organized in networks and work in synergy with development partners. Indeed, the period from 2001-2009 was characterized by the development of partnerships and strategic alliances between MMD women's groups and actors from the community, civil society and international organizations. The MMD movement maintains relationships with the Association of Women Lawyers of Niger (AFJN) and the Nigerien Association for the Defense of Human Rights (ANDDH). MMD structures currently have strong collaborative links with local NGOs working on gender equality and women's empowerment. Collaboration with political parties has been essential in advancing gender equality in access to political rights, despite instances of patriarchal attitudes and partisanship. MMD members also maintain a good collaboration with local authorities to influence their development plans and make their demands heard. All these relationships aim at diversifying economic activities as well as actions and interest in politics. Moreover, as for social empowerment, the links established between MMD women and other partners in the framework of the networking activity have strongly contributed to women's political empowerment. It should also be noted that the relationships built up by MMD networks have helped to increase the political participation of MMD women, while organizing preparatory training, particularly on advocacy and communication techniques, drawing up communal development plans and putting together micro-project applications, and providing support for women's candidacies during elections. In addition, the mid-term review of the "Girls' and Women's Leadership Program" reveals that the IGAs undertaken by MMD women have enabled them to acquire and control productive assets usually owned by men, which have been a spearhead for convincing their peers.

(ii) From a situational point of view, on the basis of law N°2000-008 of June 7, 2000, the MMD program has been advocating since 2010 for the upward revision of elective and nominative quotas for women because women's political participation remains very low in Niger, with barely 13% of the seats in the National Assembly occupied by women in 2011. Aware of this problem, CARE Niger has emphasized women's participation in civic life in its MMD program "Leadership of Women and Girls 2009-2013" aiming, among other things, to change social norms and perceptions regarding women's participation in the political arena.

(iii) From an operational point of view, the workshops organized on women's leadership, decentralization and good governance have "opened the minds" of MMD women. Thus, the mid-term review of the "Leadership and Empowerment of Women and Girls" or "LEFF Program", intervening in the regions of Dosso, Tillabéri, Maradi, Tahoua, Zinder, Niamey and punctually Diffa and Agadez, reveals that sensitization campaigns in this regard have been carried out by MMD women with the support of CARE Niger, reaching approximately 3,265 men aiming at the empowerment of women and girls and their full participation in the socio-political and economic life of the country at various levels. For a better representation of women in elected positions, CARE Niger has organized a series of training workshops to prepare and accompany elected

women and potential candidates for elections. Dialogue spaces have been created to encourage the reflection of the different actors (MMD women, elected officials, decentralized administration, community support organizations, etc.) to come up with concrete innovative proposals for a consensual approach allowing a citizen dialogue between the commune and MMD women. These training workshops involved the different actors: mayors, councillors, MMD women, technical services, civil society organizations for their adhesion and to define the operational approach for the conduct of dialogue spaces.

b) Ability to transform relationships and structures for collective consciousness

Empowered in organized structures and by knowledge and skills to act, MMDs are engaged in defending common interests on one hand. Indeed, several meetings in the regions of Maradi, Tahoua and Tillabéry have been organized and have served as a platform for women to question the leaders of the communes on several concerns and to denounce certain forms of discrimination experienced by women in politics, the silence of the communal authorities regarding to the school dropout of girls, violence against women and the issue of women's access to land. Thus, we note as an improvement, the ability of women from MMD groups to influence local politics and to change certain social norms. This is the case of the law on the quota in Niger and some positive discrimination. On the other hand, MMD women have a shared collective political agenda based on an action plan that is in line with their vision statements and objectives. The action plans for the federations aim to eliminate barriers for women and girls that are common to several villages, for which they can then advocate at the national level as part of the MMD Congress. These strategies include micro-projects at the community level, community service, social support to MMD members and their families, lobbying and advocacy, raising public awareness of women's rights issues through targeted channels, and running for political office.

The program has created an extraordinary political momentum among the women that are coached. They have become aware of the need to get involved and be interested in politics because it is by doing so that they can improve their level of participation in decision-making. Women are supporting other candidates and the number of women running for office is increasing. The program has also enabled the establishment of networks and federations of MMD groups, which has improved their visibility and bargaining power. Women leaders are beginning to engage in community activities and are beginning to exercise citizen control. Elected women have succeeded in introducing an advocacy plan to the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Child Protection.

c) Emergence of women in politics

The emergence of women in politics in Niger is reflected in the statistics on their participation in political life at different levels. Supported by MMD groups and networks, 112 women presented their candidacies in the 2004 local elections, 45 of them were elected as municipal councillors. The number of MMD candidates in the 2011 municipal elections increased to 279, of which 140 were elected as municipal councillors. From 2004 to 2011, the number of women candidates for municipal elections has multiplied by 2.4 and the number of elected women by 3.1. As a result, the National Assembly of Niger passed a law in October 2014 that raises the quota for women in elected positions from 10 to 15%. For the February 2016 legislative elections, out of the 171 elected titular deputies, 25 are women, that is 14.61%. But there has been an improvement from 14 elected women in 2004 or 12.38% to 15 in the 2011 elections (13.27%). During the last legislature in 2021, the rate of elected women was 30.12%. The results of a survey carried out in 2015 show that the elected women who are not with the MMD program have shortcomings that are not found in those who are with the program. Between women outside the MMD network (HR/MMD) in rural and urban areas, the difference is great due to the level of education.

Women in rural areas are generally less educated, which limits their full participation in political life. While women who are with the (SP/MMD) program are different from others. The gap between rural women with the program and urban women with the program is beginning to narrow because even if these rural women do not have an acceptable level of education, the various trainings they have received, literacy and sensitization have galvanized them and strengthened their capacity to assume political responsibilities.

3.3.3 MEN'S ENGAGEMENT IN REDUCING GENDER INEQUALITY

a) Interventional Setting

With the aim of reducing gender inequalities and achieving sustainable change in the structures that condition the environment in which women live, in particular the legislative framework and social norms, CARE considered it necessary to promote a change in the power relations between men and women. Thus, for its part, CARE Niger has progressively engaged men in the MMD program, particularly through awareness campaigns carried out by MMD structures, the platform, fadas, listening clubs and male role models. The "Engaging Men" initiative, emanating from the MMD program "girls and women's leadership 2009-2013", is a testimony of CARE's will to involve men in the empowerment process of Nigerien women. The goal of this initiative is to promote positive attitudes among men with regard to respect for gender norms, as well as a better sharing of decision-making between men and women. As an example, we can cite the case of the male-dominated youth laboratories that were set up by CARE in agricultural and pastoral areas and the ICHs, which played an important role in the development of women and girls and the questioning of traditional norms. Indeed, with the support of men, the MMD funds have enabled women to access credit in order to meet their immediate needs or to invest in income-generating activities (IGA). However, the visibility that MMD women have gained within their community over the years through their economic activities and alliances with various social actors (especially through networking) has helped increase their credibility in society. Behavior Change Communications (BCC) consists of organizing sensitization caravans, training, field trips, the opening of listening centers and the implementation of any other communication activity deemed effective for behavior change in favor of the most vulnerable. Men were invited, as well as women, to participate in this activity which took place in the regions of Tahoua, Maradi, Tillabéri and Dosso. As far as men's perception of gender-based violence is concerned, the Global Monitoring Report on Liberated Groups notes the beginning of social awareness of gender-based violence. Men's perception of women's participation in decision-making processes, both in the public and private spheres, is changing. With the aim of promoting the social integration of MMD women, CARE Niger has supported an activity based on social dialogue by creating discussion spaces for MMD groups/networks and other community actors in order to promote dialogue between the different stakeholders and improve governance at community level

b) Men's participation in reducing gender-based inequality

Several evidences have been illustrated on male participation in the reduction of gender-based inequalities (Annex). These include:

Lightening of household chores: This involves men taking over certain household chores such as water, firewood, sweeping the yard, etc. This results in saving time to take care of other concerns such as being regular in the literacy centers, cash operations of MMD structures, the health center, etc. The commitment of men to support health and nutrition actions and the lightening of women's tasks has become a reality in the PROMESS program areas.

Access to economic resources and authorization to attend health centers: in this area, women

mentioned changes on the part of men by allowing them to integrate MMD structures, to conduct IGAs, to inherit and develop land, to carry out pre- and post-natal consultations, etc. Indeed, the strengthening of women's capacities, especially in entrepreneurship and IGA management, has enabled them to increase their income and contribute more to household expenses. In many cases, this has had a positive impact on the power relationship that MMD women have with their husbands and has contributed to increasing their role in decision-making within the household. Indeed, 93% of the 596 MMD women surveyed for this report believe that, in general, IGAs contribute to meeting their basic needs and those of their families, including clothing, food, participation in religious and social ceremonies and payment of weekly contributions to MMD funds, thus giving them much more autonomy in the household and in the community. According to the 2013 Global Monitoring Report on Liberated Groups, MMD structures have contributed to the strengthening of social ties among MMD women, who offer childcare services to their sisters.

Taking into account the woman's opinion within the household/community: men have improved dialogue within the household which has improved the enrollment and retention of girls in school, increased women's attendance in adult literacy and apprenticeship centers, reduced forced youth marriage, etc.

Access to spaces for dialogue and sharing: it was noted that the capacity building of women has enabled them to have self-confidence and be more eloquent and enhanced their active participation in women's associations, meetings, political parties, etc.

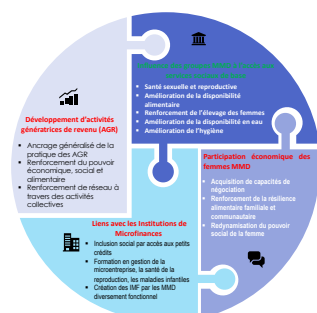
On the other hand, with regard to men's perception of gender-based violence, the overall monitoring report of the liberated groups notes the beginning of social awareness with regard to gender-based violence, as evidenced by the 316 denunciations made by women to the authorities in relation to acts of violence of which they were victims. Violence against women restricts one of the fundamental human rights, which is the right to security. Violence threatens freedom of movement, expression, etc., undermines self-esteem and self-worth, and demeans human dignity. It limits choices and prevents women from participating equally with men in the development of their country. There is also a causal link between gender-based violence and teenage pregnancy. Young women are prone to early and closely spaced pregnancies because they cannot control their fertility. Adolescent deliveries are often difficult and involve caesarean sections. Sexually transmitted diseases including HIV-AIDS, miscarriages, low birth weight, neonatal mortality and maternal mortality are also visible consequences of violence against women. It has immediate and long-term consequences on mental and physical health, including severe pain, heavy bleeding, risk of tetanus, infection, cysts and abscesses, and sexual dysfunction, etc. Violent behaviors tend to be repeated from one generation to the next, and children who witness violence in the home are more likely to be ill, have social difficulties and perform poorly in school. These future adults see their future challenged and become involved in delinquency (drugs, prostitution, theft, etc.).

However, equitable structures of relationships, especially between women and men, are an important element in the empowerment of women. The IST presented CARE with a spectrum of men's attitudes towards women and women's participation in MMD. Men's views and reactions to women's empowerment are incredibly diverse. In some cases, men respect women because of their contributions to the household. In others, women's participation in projects only adds to their household obligations, as men are reluctant to take on "women's work." Other studies

found that men either abandoned their responsibilities or felt threatened as women's power increased in the home. In order to build alliances between men and women, the IST emphasized the importance of open dialogues between the two genders to discuss and reflect on issues of gender and power in their lives. In India, women's groups strongly recommended that staff members sensitize men on women's issues. In Niger and Burundi, CARE brought women and men together to work on different initiatives to encourage them to work together and dialogue more openly with each other. In these countries, couples increasingly consulted with each other to make decisions, husbands were reported to have become more gender-sensitive, and domestic violence was reported to have decreased.

3.3.4 WOMEN'S SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Several project and programme interventions through the MMD model have helped to illustrate the evidence on social and economic justice. The following figure 5 presents the framework created to build the dynamics of social and economic justice. The details will follow in the next sections.



a) Favourable framework

Women's membership of an organised structure, such as MMD, **ALSO FAVOURS THE ACQUISITION OF** social power, made visible through the role of networks and collective activities. This visibility is an element that strengthens the social position of the woman and the household within the community (NER evaluation report⁵⁵). This strengthens women's leadership, which in turn will have the impact of giving women the ability to influence household decisions.

Figure 2. Enabling framework developed by the MMD approach for social justice

This has a positive impact on the schooling of children, especially young girls, thus avoiding early marriages of young girls which are very frequent in Niger. This was well illustrated by the women participating in the "outcome harvesting" workshop, where they affirmed that self-confidence has made it possible for women to speak up in assemblies and defend their point of view, have developed leadership skills that allow them to advocate for their empowerment and the well-being of the community, etc.

On the one hand, the 2011 Impact Monitoring System report states that the percentage of women surveyed who are able to make viable economic choices has increased from 55.56% in 2009 to 78% in 2011. According to a survey of 9,136 MMD women conducted as part of the 2013 Global Monitoring Report of released groups, 86% of them are engaged in individual income-generating activities including small businesses, agro-processing, animal breeding and fattening, storage and sale of agricultural products, sale of harvested products and mat weaving.

In 2015, CARE Niger made significant efforts to create the conditions for the effective inclusion of the GED (Gender, Equity and Diversity) dimension in MMD's everyday programs, attitudes and behaviors. At the beginning, the pilot project was based on the idea of tontines, with the aim of helping women to face their numerous responsibilities by facilitating their access to financial and technical resources through savings and microcredit. Given its importance, over the years, CARE Niger's MMD program has contributed to the creation of several MMD funds that have enabled thousands of Nigerien women to save money. This has opened their window of opportunity for investment, allowing them to make better use of the money they save in the future. The credit borrowed through the program, along with the return on weekly dues, has allowed participants to finance their own IGAs. Entrepreneurship is an important tool for women's financial empowerment through the building of self-esteem within their household and society. More than 70% of MMD women are active in IGAs and contribute to preserving household and community dignity through the provision of food, care and education for children.

The networking of MMD groups and the partnerships established under the MMD program from 2001 onwards have been essential to the economic empowerment of MMD women, especially at the collective level. The networking activity aimed at strengthening inter-group relations and promoting economic activities between them. In addition, the various partnerships established between MMD networks and civil society organizations/international organizations through networking have enabled women to diversify and strengthen their economic activities.

Networking has also been essential for the development of partnerships between microfinance institutions and women who wish to undertake larger-scale IGAs. However, the visibility that MMD women have gained within their community over the years through their economic activities and alliances with various social actors (notably through networking) has helped to increase their credibility in the eyes of microfinance institutions. This is also illustrated by the involvement of women in decision-making bodies at all levels.

Within the context of the Linkage Project implemented in 2004-2005, the MMD program has facilitated contacts between these institutions and MMD groups and networks wishing to obtain additional loans, in addition to providing them with training in microfinance (e.g. on credit application and assembly, mobilization of guarantee funds, risks of overindebtedness, etc.).

An important group of producer organizations is able to influence strategies by creating an environment that protects producers in their production and marketing activities. The innovation for the year 2015 was the strengthening of the GATANCI confederation and its 8 federations with the support of FAO and the establishment of Innovation Platforms in 5 Communes with structuring at the village, village cluster, and communal level with the DRyDEV program. Also, 578 local development committees, including SCAP/RU, OSVs, COFOs, MMD women's groups, management committees (CDGs) for cattle feed banks, cereal banks, warrantage, small-scale livestock farming, complaint committees, etc., have been set up. These committees have received training to improve the management of their activities. We also note support to MMD Groups and Producers' organizations, in the conduct of collective fields in 25 communities in the Maradi zone with the GARIC initiative and capacity building of organizations and their structuring in networks and/or platforms to conduct advocacy actions at local, national and international levels with the ALP initiative.



b) Development of income-generating activities (IGAs)

According to the same previous study, at the community level, 36% of the MMD groups surveyed carry out collective income-generating activities with the objective of generating significant profits on the capital saved in the savings boxes, which will later be distributed among group members or used to purchase common goods. Market gardening, fattening, agri-food processing and storage are the main collective IGAs being conducted by MMD groups.

Other IGAs are also conducted collectively, including cereal banks, groundnut oil extraction, cosmetics manufacturing, livestock breeding and others. The existence of women's mutuals proves that the approach has significantly strengthened the economic power of some MMD women as it has contributed to increasing their access to economic resources. However, the "outcome harvesting" workshop revealed that: one mutual is functional in Niamey; the one in Say is no longer functional; a mutual project in Bagaroua has been aborted. The cumulative amount granted to MMD groups through projects and Micro Finance Institutions for the conduct of Income Generating Activities (IGAs) was two hundred and forty-nine million eight hundred and forty thousand eight hundred and ninety-five (249 840 895) CFA francs between 2002 and 2012. The amounts granted in 2006 and 2021 were the highest and represented 67% of the total. The IGAs allow for an increase in the economic power of the women in the group and "the improvement of women's financial resources leads to greater consideration, greater community participation and improvement in the level of women's empowerment, which in turn leads to access to and control of productive resources by women" (Annual Report, 2015), confirmed at the workshop. Indeed, IGA activities coupled with the cereal bank and livestock farming allow for gradual sustainable resilience. Families can engage in IGAs in addition to agriculture and livestock to ensure income and food supplements throughout the year. Gradually, there is an evolution in the value of IGAs, so the purchase of food supplements the first year will give way to

the purchase of small ruminants the following year, then large ruminants, then land, etc. (CARE International Niger, 2015).

As mentioned in the previous section, the majority of MMD women engage in individual IGAs, while more than a third of MMD groups and networks engage in such activities collectively. According to the 2013 Global Monitoring Report of released groups, the working capital of IGAs practiced by MMD women has shown a positive evolution over time. On average, the current fund of IGAs has more than tripled compared to the starting fund (i.e. 47,371 FCFA versus 15,189 FCFA), which indicates that most IGAs have been relatively profitable. Indeed, 93% of the 596 MMD women surveyed for this report consider that, in general, the IGAs contribute to satisfying their basic needs and those of their families, particularly in terms of clothing, food, participation in religious and social ceremonies and payment of weekly dues to MMD funds. In addition, the mid-term review of the "Girls' and Women's Leadership Program" shows that the IGAs conducted by MMD women have enabled them to acquire and control productive assets usually owned by men. Indeed, 51.9% of MMD women surveyed now claim to own productive assets such as land, crop units and large ruminants. In addition, the 2011 Impact Monitoring System report reports that the percentage of women surveyed able to make viable economic choices increased from 55.56% in 2009 to 78% in 2011.

c) MMD and Microfinance Institutions

The different components of the financial sector (banks, MFIs, EMEs, Post Office) each have a role to play in improving the living conditions of the rural population. In CARE Niger's evaluation report on Adaptation, Gender and Women's Empowerment, it is mentioned that "studies show that income is more easily spent on human development when women control the finances. Microfinance is targeted at people who cannot provide guarantees and therefore do not have access to traditional lenders such as banks. According to the literature, there is a range of specific loans for women such as the Savings and Credit with Education Program (SCSEP), which allows very poor women in rural areas to benefit from small loans without first having to build up savings. In addition to this financial service granted to these women, they benefit from education sessions on a certain number of themes such as microenterprise management, reproductive health, infant diseases, etc. When a woman evolves in the Caisse Villageoise (CV), she can access the Association de Crédit Intermédiaire (ACI) which allows her to obtain larger amounts of credit. As for urban women, they benefit from the Credit to Women Traders (CFC) which allows them to carry out Income Generating Activities (IGA). It is also emphasized that the source of financing for the start-up of the activity and the amount of credit received shows that when women traders start their IGAs with their husband's contribution as a source of financing, they take out the largest amount of credit (500,000 FCFA). In fact, 64.30% of women who received their husband's contribution to start their IGAs contracted the sum of 500,000 FCFA. In addition, women who start their economic activities on the basis of their own savings (personal savings + tontine) also take out the largest amount of credit. Thus, 67% of women traders who started their IGAs based on their own savings also took out the largest amount of credit, which is 500,000 FCFA (Lobbezoo, 2012). A study conducted by Joy Keiffer in 1998 noted that women in MMD groups have acquired social capital through weekly groupings in credit savings activities and their organizational capacity needs to be strengthened. In December 2000, CARE International in Niger initiated an iterative process for the design of a new MMD program, based on MARP diagnoses conducted in 40 villages with MMD groups and a gender impact analysis on women in MMD groups and their households. A consultation was held to integrate all the results of the process in order to give a new direction to the MMD system. In order to get an idea of the positive impact of MMD, households belonging to a well-managed fund in CARE Niger's intervention zones were assessed. This impact was first observed at the level of the woman and her household. Thus, the strengthening of their capacity on savings had allowed them to

undertake new activities and to participate in the support of her family (Meta-Evaluation MMD Projects, CARE-Niger, 2006). As the 2004 CARE SCVM report reported on the cash box: "The cash box remains a strategy of vulnerable women to feed their children during the eight months of the year, and thus allows vulnerable households to access food regularly based on the benefits of women's economic activities. Even the most vulnerable women are reached. The same is reported in regard to community stocks: "Community stocks protect women's livestock assets, which were used before the project as " seed insurance " during the lean season. Networking has also been essential for the development of partnerships between microfinance institutions and women who wish to undertake larger-scale IGAs, but for whom the internal credit provided by MMDs is insufficient. Indeed, the advantage of external credit is that women have access to a larger amount of money with a lower interest rate than with internal credit, and the repayment period is usually longer. In the past, MMD women did not have access to this kind of credit, partly because they were considered by microfinance institutions as insolvent due to their particularly precarious economic status. However, the visibility that MMD women have gained within their community over the years through their economic activities and alliances with various social actors (notably through networking) has helped to increase their credibility in the eyes of microfinance institutions. The increased demand of MMD women for external credit has even pushed some networks to create their own micro-finance institution. Thus, the first mutual exclusively managed by MMD women was created in 2004 in Yantala (commune 1 of Niamey), serving 9 networks and 792 MMD women with a capital of 750,000 CFA francs; followed by the one in Say created in 2007 and then, in 2010, the one in Bagaroua, located in the region of Tahoua, an isolated area that is difficult to access by conventional micro-finance institutions. The existence of women's mutuals demonstrates that the approach has significantly strengthened the economic empowerment of some MMD women, as it has contributed to increasing their access to economic resources. 15,000 MMD groups set up in Niger between 2011 and 2013. More than 300,000 women involved.

d) Women's economic participation MMD

It is also important to remember that the empowerment of women has allowed a better well-being for women and their households and has granted them economic and social power. Another aspect concerning women is that of their labor force, Bonnassieux (2014) says that it is an important factor of sustainability of production systems in Africa? in the south of the Sahara. Indeed, women have always occupied a prominent place in the rural economy in most African countries. It was raised by Isabelle Gu erin in 2011 that while improving the role and economic power of women is not a sufficient condition for their emancipation, due to the considerable weight of social and cultural norms, it is a necessary condition. Economic power allows women to access a very important social status. Moreover, women are more open to advice and more willing to change their strategies when faced with new information/more reluctant to take risks, so they can positively influence household decisions when their social status allows them to do so. Before the arrival of the MMD program, it was found that women's main occupations were housework and accompanying the husband in his activities. A woman from Bamo - Maradi says that "Spending the day elsewhere is not something I used to do", women also work for their own account because of the opportunities for awareness, openness and solidarity among them. But it is also because it benefits them and their families. For example, belonging to a credit union is a source of easy financing for women and gives them the power to help out their husbands or a member of the community in case of need. For example, in the Tahoua region, a decrease in the exodus of men has been noted, due to the fact that seeds are made available by the women (MMD II 04 cost accountability report). According to a study carried out within the context of the

Maradi Joint Program of the United Nations System in Niger, the contribution of women to household expenses is significantly positive in improving the well-being of the household. Between 20,000 and 50,000 CFA francs, it improves the well-being of the household by 15%, and above 80,000 CFA francs, by about 58%, compared to women who spend less than 20,000 CFA francs. The women's contribution is therefore not only positive within their household, but also proportional to the nominal amount of their participation. At the same time, although not significantly, the primary orientation of these expenditures towards education and health improves the well-being indicator by 10%, while it decreases it by 2% for other expenditures, all this relative to food expenditures. Receiving assistance to practice an IGA improves (not significantly) the poverty level of the household of the woman concerned by nearly 13% relative to that of the woman who does not practice one. The negative effect (not significant) of practicing an IGA related to agriculture (farming, livestock) is linked to the added value of these activities, combined with the imperatives (time, work, less childcare for the woman, etc.) required to practice them. Finally, the possession of a productive resource by the woman increases, not significantly, the well-being of her household by about 9%. It has been illustrated in the same study that MMD women contribute significantly positively to the household expenses and in the improvement of the household welfare. According to an article written by William and Hugh (2002) on the Mata Masu Dubara approach, MMD is an extremely promising microfinance approach since the return on savings is very high compared to other savings programs. With a standard program, an individual could earn up to 76% in annual returns. According to the authors, this rate of return could increase to 250% with the MMD approach. Beyond being a promising approach because it allows for considerable annual returns, the importance of the MMD approach also lies in the fact that it has allowed for the creation of groups of women with basic skills (notably in finance and management) and personal qualities (self-esteem, sense of solidarity, etc.) with whom CARE Niger, as well as other local and international actors, have been able to develop programming aimed at reducing poverty and empowering women.

e) Influence of MMD groups in accessing to basic social services

Sexual and reproductive health

The decrease in maternal and infant mortality was expected to be the result of the improvement of a number of conditions, including access to and quality of health services; women's economic power; and the balance of roles and responsibilities between men and women in the household. These results were observed both during the review and during the "outcome harvesting" workshop. There is a clear improvement in women's participation in decision-making about their sexual and reproductive health. Already in 2014, the final evaluation of PFF noted an increase of 23.32% in the proportion of women who reported making informed choices about their sexual and reproductive health. This proportion had increased from 35.58% at the baseline study in 2009 to 58.9% in early 2015. This is strongly related to the increase in their level of influence in the household, and demonstrates a change in relationships within couples, in the regions of Tillabéri, Dosso, Maradi, Tahoua, Zinder and Niamey.

Improved food availability

A decrease in vulnerability is observed in communities that participate in IGA activities. On the flip side, vulnerability increases every year in non-VSLA communities, especially in northern Niger and Mali where natural resources are dwindling. In some cases, because of the difficulties related to the crises, some VSLA groups refuse to integrate new members, or to share the associated benefits (ex. cereal bank). This closed dynamic has less effect on the community level. However, the majority of the groups support the non-member households with credits or indirect seed purchases. This solidarity encourages the creation of new groups, reducing the number of non-VSLA households to a few dozen. It is therefore undeniable that the VSLA funds improve not only the food security of the households, but also that of their surrounding community. Indeed, the redistribution of the benefits of the market gardening activities, the distribution of seeds, credit and others by the women of the networks or groups affect the whole community. As the VSLA networks develop and mature, the assistance to the most vulnerable is strengthened and the community as a whole becomes more resilient. The VSLAs are considered as a strategy to get out of food insecurity by the women and men of the concerned communities. This explains the growing enthusiasm for new memberships, as well as the choice of some men to form VSLAs to multiply the impacts in their household. Many VSLAs are created spontaneously in the communities, multiplying the effects produced by the development projects. The access to various financial opportunities (cash and credit in kind in the communities, and cash at the level of the Micro-Finance Institutions/MFIs) and to the reinforcement of management capacities have an invaluable impact on the food security of rural households. Access to cash credit: This allows group members, and through them, members of their household, to develop IGAs, to engage in livestock production or to migrate. In a cultural context where giving money is rarely part of the norms of assistance, small savings allow the most vulnerable women to take out credit at an early stage. Thus, many of them were able to have an average of 3,000 to 5,000 CFA francs to start an economic activity. In the area of food, access to credit, seeds and cereal banks reinforces food security in the households that participate in the VSLA program and marks a clear difference with non VSLA households. Through the VSLAs, women increase their supply of grain, purchased either through savings or credit, or exchanged for ruminants. Over the years, as the VSLAs increase their savings, the women also manage to lend or rent rice plots to increase their production. The development of income-generating activities, market gardening, etc. also completes the food supply. Overall, the interviews show a decrease in the prevalence of malnutrition in communities that have received nutritional security support from various development programs. The effects are more significant within the VSLAs, as many women mention the good nutritional status of their

children, as well as the decrease in the number of cases of malnourished children identified in the community or referred to the health centers: "In our community the number of malnourished children has dropped significantly, with 20% of cases in non-VSLA households and none in VSLA households which are much more resilient. This is due to the reinforcement of the women's capacities, to the solidarity they maintain, as well as to the arrival of other development projects (attracted by the VSLAs) whose synergy is beneficial for food security (market gardening, food aid...). The women of the groups benefit from advice on how to feed their children better (exclusive breastfeeding, food hygiene, salted sugar water in case of diarrhea, enriched food for the children, etc.) and today the cases of malnutrition are rare in the village", reports Mrs. Saraou in Mountchéré, Tahoua region, Niger.

CARE's activities through its projects have made it possible to put thirty-three thousand, seven hundred and nineteen (33,719) tons of foodstuffs in the groups' cereal banks (CB). The cereal banks were supplied with more food in 2004 and 2009. In food resilience, the CBs are effective means because they ensure the availability, the price stability and to some extent the quality of food. The CBs play various roles, including (Annual Report, 2007; 2008; 2011): (i) Supporting households in managing the lean season; (ii) Responding to the food security problems faced by women because of their status; (iii) Helping to improve the availability of and access to food in communities, thus contributing to the improvement of household food security

In total, these banks benefited 26,842 women members and their families. At the end of 2007, MMD cereal banks had a total of 2,883,657 tons of cereals in stock, in addition to having a liquidity of 113,923,540 FCFA to their credit. As far as collective assets are concerned, cereal banks, livestock feed banks, cash registers, mills, etc., but also associations or groups in which women participate, were listed. This allows these women to hold a special position in the household, the community and even in the decision-making circle, where previously only men had access. The training of several women as local skills has had a multiplier effect in terms of impact within the household, the community and at the level of the trained women. Networking has had positive impacts on the dynamics of the MMD groups and has raised a lot of hope among women. The most visible effects are: the reinforcement of inter-group solidarity, the new position of the interface between the village and the outside world, which gives them the capacity to deal better with administrative officials, the structural reinforcement of the group which is also increased, in the sense that dislocations of groups have become very rare. The enthusiasm of women to join groups to integrate the networks has become greater because it is a sure way for women to position themselves in the village and local arena, if the actions carried out are well targeted. Thus, while enabling households to access food, women's resources also allow them to protect the family's agricultural production. The 2004 MMD program evaluation report states: "the different cereal stocks of the groups essentially protect the production of the family 'gandu' field, which in turn protects the women's and youth's granaries, which can be used during the lean season.

Women MMDs strengthen household food and nutrition security, while households that do not participate in savings activities find it difficult to diversify their resilience strategies and see their vulnerability increase. Women who participate in MMD activities have access to credit, grain from cereal banks and seeds to strengthen food security, and show a clear difference from non-MMD households. In households that do not participate in MMD activities, family members try to respond to crises through various methods according to their capacities. Women tend to buy seeds with money earned as agricultural workers, selling wood, herbs, bricks often even against household goods (clothes, utensils...). This accelerates the cycle of poverty and often leads to begging.

Strengthening women's livestock farming

From 2002 to 2021, CARE Niger has distributed thirty-five thousand four hundred and seventy-one (35,471) animals to members of the MMD group, including small ruminants, donkeys and camels. The distribution of animals was more important in 2004 and 2006 with 48% of the total number. These distributions were carried out in the Diffa and Bermo areas of Maradi, as well as in agricultural areas during the 2006 food crisis. The objective of the distribution is to reconstitute the livestock in the pastoral zones, the Habbanayé in the agricultural zones and the IGAs in Diffa with the provision of donkeys to women. The possession of animals generally improves the living conditions of the population. The animals allow women to have productive capital. For example, the provision of donkeys by CARE to women in the Diffa region has led to a change in living conditions through (i) the improvement of the social status of poor women by becoming animal owners; (ii) the increase in cash income from the various IGAs in which the donkeys are used; (iii) the reduction of the burden of poverty on the poorest women; and (iv) the improvement of the quality of life of women; (iii) the reduction of the drudgery of the women's domestic tasks (transport of water and wood, water drainage), (iv) the increase of the social capital of the poor woman who can bring her donkey in the actions of solidarity and mutual aid within her community (Annual Report, 2013).



Improvement of water availability

CARE has accompanied the communities (for example, the villages of Tambeye, Jan Dodo, Arewa, Dama, Gandassamou in the department of Madaoua and Ediri Mahaman, Batan Warka and Kouroutou Yamma in the department of Bouza) through the construction of boreholes and mini drinking water conveyances, the organization of communities into associations of users of public water services, training of users on the water code in force in Niger, on communal project management and the delegated management of the works.

This allowed us to observe that the mini-WATER supply systems are totally under the control of the actors and ensure the coverage of the population's water needs; a strong influx of people at the standpipes, which translates into an acceptance of the established regulations; a knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of the management structures and also a proactivity with the communes and the technical services of the water authority; regular payments are made either by the users themselves in bank accounts or by the delegates who are under contract with the mayors' offices; and a water exploitation agreement has been ratified between two villages that were historically antagonistic.

Improvement of hygiene

1007 latrines have been built and are used by 18,721 people. 71.35% of these beneficiaries are women and girls. On the sites where the latrines have been built, intensive hygiene BCC activities have been carried out, including sanitation sessions and reduction of open defecation in the villages. In these villages, women and men are adopting good hygiene and sanitation practices; women say that the latrines are a "sutra" (protection) and give them more (+) dignity; bacteriological analysis reports from the Tahoua HRD confirm a steady decline in fecal coliforms.

In the educational sector

MMD members mention the use of part of the money they get from their associations (loan or assets) in the payment of school expenses (contribution for the teachers' salary, purchase of school materials at the beginning of the school year, etc.). The level of awareness of the need to keep girls in school has improved. In the region of Tahoua in Badaguichiri, through the active role that the MMD woman leader plays, she has been able to positively influence the retention of girls in school through systematic monitoring of enrollment at school level. During the school

year from 2013 to 2014 the number of girls enrolled in middle school has evolved by 23% from 344 enrolled to 424 out of 952 boys. Due to its offensive the situation of the girl's schooling has improved. She is even in contact with the inspectorate and the parents to settle in real time issues related to the early marriage of the young girl and the dismissals. She succeeded in cancelling some marriages and even 14 young brides continue to attend school today because she opposed the refusal of the school directors. Some elected officials in the Tahoua region (Malbaza (Guidan Ider)) use social events (weddings, naming ceremonies) to sensitize parents about keeping girls in school. They have initiated a system of close monitoring and even summon parents who try to resist. In the region of Maradi, the elected women have become real catalysts who are fully committed to improving the retention of girls in school. In the region of Tillabéry, with the support of the NGO IDEES Dubara, the theme has been integrated into the exchanges and advocacy plans at the level of MMD Federations and networks in the region. Elected women ensure that the issue of girls' schooling is taken into account in the PDCs developed for their commune and those being replanned. In the Tillabéry region, there has always been social dialogue in Gantchi and Say with the involvement of religious and customary leaders. A commitment plan has been put in place. In the same line, the gender platform of Gantchi has integrated this component in its action plan. Community assemblies were held on the subject and a large petition was made by young girls in certain communes so that their situation could change. At this level, the elected women have succeeded in establishing a good partnership with the school administrations and at the time of the report cards, they are invited to award prizes to the students (young girls) who have distinguished themselves during the school year by their academic performance.

f) **Development of women's negotiation skills**

Women's negotiation skills development

Changes in women's decision making

Acquisition of capacity to act: Women's open-mindedness and the dynamics driven by MMD have made women even more eager for knowledge and capital to satisfy their economic ambitions on the one hand, and much more strategic interests on the other. These findings from studies and other evaluations of MMD projects and the data collected in this study have been translated into activities in response to the needs expressed by women. The MMD Networks, which are associations of several legally recognized MMD funds or groups, have emerged as a response to the needs expressed by women. The networking of the MMD groups is an opportunity for women to meet their information and training needs, to meet their economic ambitions through the implementation and realization of micro projects, to create a partnership framework between women or the organizations created in this way and other local development actors and finally to create solidarity between women and between the member groups of the networks. The networks also maintain partnership relations among themselves through exchanges of experience during study trips or meetings initiated and organized by the program. The program ensures the supervision of networks through training themes based on the MMD guide and other so-called strategic training themes such as: STI/AIDS, IGA technique, gender, women's leadership, advocacy, political issues, etc. We can thus see an evolution from the satisfaction of practical needs to the consideration of strategic needs, with the possibility for each type of intervention (food security, health, microfinance, etc.) to build on the dynamics of MMD groups either by using them as a gateway to reach women or as the main targets of the intervention. At the same time as the MMD strategy has evolved in line with new priorities, the MMD program has fostered the creation of conditions for structuring a national women's movement. To support this movement and this spirit of belonging to the MMD, the program has supported the organization of an MMD Women's Congress every year since 2007, and since the

4th Congress in 2010, every two years. The objectives of the congress are to support the MMD movement, to create a platform for exchanges between the different MMD structures in the rural and urban areas, thus strengthening the MMD movement and promoting the active participation of MMD women in the public and political life of Niger in a context of decentralization. From 2007 to 2017, 5 congresses have been organized on various and rich themes; The Congress aims to create a platform for exchange between the different MMD structures.

Creating a women's offensive in political life: In its new approach, CARE has envisaged creating conditions for better participation of women in public life at local and national level. MMD women's groups are supported to influence decisions at the community and communal levels in favor of the promotion of women's rights. Through this strategy, there is a better understanding of the power dynamics between different social categories, a development of skills in citizenship, decentralization, laws and national policies. This has given women candidates a better chance to be elected and elected women a better understanding of their role as local councillors so that they can participate appropriately in political life. There are currently 265 women MMD members in Niger, 3 women parliamentarians, including one in Tahoua, Zinder and Niamey. This reinforcement has enabled political parties to create more space for women in decision-making bodies.



Strengthening family and community food resilience: Strengthening family and community food resilience: It is mainly through the use of their resources that women actively and effectively participate in the management of their household and, more broadly, in community management.

These assets, whether individual or collective, primarily serve the woman and her household. They can be used to cover social expenses (naming ceremonies, weddings, health costs), but in Niger, it is especially in the area of food security that women's contribution has been crucial. The 2004 MMD program evaluation report states that: "the various cereal stocks of the groups essentially protect the production of the family 'gandu' field, which in turn protects the granaries of women and young people, which can be used during the lean season. In many cases, the resources held by women have contributed significantly to the mitigation of food crises that Niger has experienced. According to the 2005 food crisis assessment report, "interviews with men in the communities surveyed showed that MMDs women contributed significantly to mitigating the food crisis that shook the households. Indeed, all the groups surveyed have either shared or given a large sum of money to women members on loan. Thus, whether it was credit repayable after the harvest or sharing, the amount received per woman varied from 2,500 to 120,000 CFA francs, depending on the group's savings or the number of stakes per woman. And most of this money, the women say, is invested in the purchase of food. Depending on the size of the household, the contribution of each MMD woman has enabled the household to reduce its hunger gap from 4 to 33 days. As one man from Kazoé said, **"it is because of the MMDs' contribution that we stayed in our farms at some point to work"**. The assets and resources held by the women also serve the communities and beyond. As reported, cereal banks played an important role in securing living conditions in villages during the 2005 food crisis, as well as serving as seeds for most of the villages affected by the crisis. In addition, the women's funds have served in many cases as a source of loans for the communities in case of difficulties. Other relevant impacts , such as the improvement of social cohesion in the communities and between the communities, were reported, as well as

the improvement of relations with technical and financial partners, which made it possible to mobilize resources for the development of the communities. It was noted that " due to the collective activities of women in MMD groups and networks, the communities have acquired a reputation and these collective activities of women have been a factor of attraction for partners and a focus of the partnership ".

Reinvigorating women's social power: Considering the above results, women's social power strengthens social cohesion through informed decision-making within households and communities and the social safety nets that it generates. Thus, both economically and socially, social power leads not only to the empowerment of women but also to the improvement of living conditions in households and communities and, in general, to the reduction of poverty in Niger. For example, there is significant involvement of women in conflict management committees (peacekeeping) at both the communal and departmental levels through the COFOB and COFOCOM. In the same way, MMD women feel more present in decision-making bodies in the health sector, leading to the transformation of health centers into IHCs and the establishment of pharmacies in certain localities of the country. This has considerably improved certain maternal and infant indicators, notably assisted childbirth by qualified personnel, maternal and infant mortality, etc. Many of the testimonies highlighted the importance of listening to women because of their great influence. These are individual women's initiatives to initiate spontaneous movements to address requests related to the common problems of education, health, water with susses to the city hall or any other partner. A palpable example is that of the consideration of schooling for refugee children in the Diffa region by the WFP and CARE Niger following the introduction of the complaint by the women.

3.3.5 CLIMATE JUSTICE

a) Capacity building and resources for climate justice for people

CARE International began its activities in Niger in 1974. Its development has gone through three main stages that can be defined as follows: (i) From emergency aid to rehabilitation (1974-87), (ii) Diversification (1987-93), (iii) From 1993 towards a participatory approach: During these three stages, with about 15 projects, CARE-Niger specialized in the assessment and improvement of the socio-sanitary and economic conditions of rural populations and of women in particular, as well as their capacity to guarantee a better existence by themselves. To achieve these objectives CARE employs more established methodologies to ensure more in-depth analysis, as well as continuous dialogue within the targeted communities, in particular the MMD program (Mata Masu Dubara) programme.

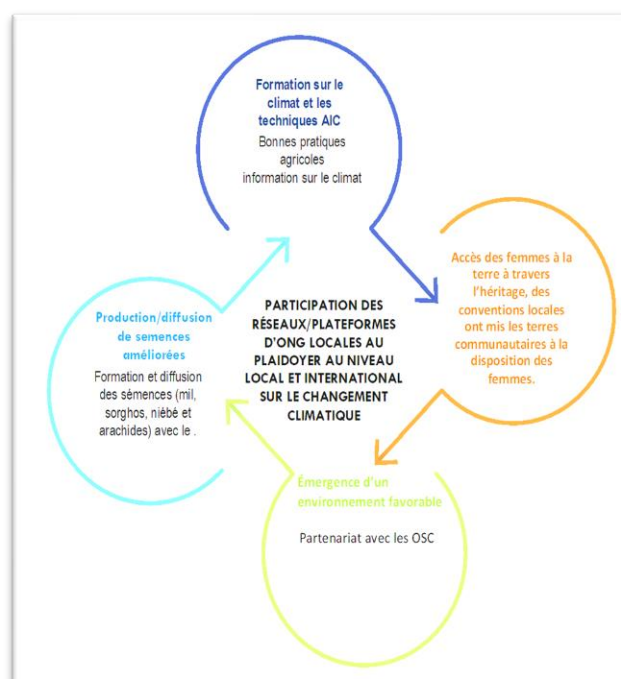


Figure 3. Capacity building and resources for climate justice for women

The recent meta-evaluation of the MMD program identified five phases in its evolution. From the third phase, the evolution moved away from the refinement of tontine operations, towards the economic and social empowerment of target populations. The operational focus in this phase was to form groups into networks to better exploit their potential and to link them to micro-credit institutions to give them more financial leverage in pursuing collective activities. To capture the roles and influences of MMD in resilience to shocks, CARE Niger believes that a community with a critical mass of MMD structures on its walls is better able to cope with periods of climatic and socio-economic shocks. Assist households and communities in collecting key evidence on the impact of MMD activities (clusters and networks) on climate resilience in specific local contexts of vulnerability at the level of the 6 communes targeted by the research in Tahoua and Tillabéry regions. To achieve these objectives, several programs have been put in place such as: (i) In 2010, the Adaptation Learning Program for Africa (ALP): the program works to increase the capacity of vulnerable households to adapt to climate change and variability. As part of its community-based adaptation process, ALP conducted a participatory analysis of climate change vulnerability and adaptive capacity in 40 communities in Dakoro in 2010; (ii) In 2011, the "Natural Resource Management, Climate Change Adaptation and Rural Conflict Prevention - NRM/ACC/PRC" program: it aims to ensure "that by the end of 2015, access, use and sustainable management of Natural Resources (NR) are ensured for fragile and disadvantaged groups through appropriate legal mechanisms of land tenure security at the national and local levels." The aim was to work on the development of a dynamic of rationalization of Natural Resource Management and Land Security practices for vulnerable and disadvantaged people and groups whose lives depend directly and closely on NR; (iii) In 2015, the "Food Security-Nutritional" program or "SAN Program" manages CARE's actions that aim to create the conditions for guaranteeing food and nutritional security by working in partnership with local CSOs. This program has implemented the Gender, Agriculture and Climate Risk

Management Project (GARIC) initiative and the Women and Land Initiative Project (IFETE) in the Maradi region.



b) Evidence of climate resilience

Through the above-mentioned programmes in the area of Food Insecurity Reduction, Natural Resources Management and Climate Change Adaptation, the following progress has been made:

- In FY 2003, in Dakoro and southern Maradi, CARE's interventions reached 20,283 people, including 12,275 women in capacity building; 8,197 people, including 2,992 women in agricultural production; 31,255 people, including 24,448 women in health and nutrition; 15,159 people, including 3,163 women in environmental protection; nearly 150,000 women in savings and credit; 83,494 people, including 37,074 women in the fight against HIV/AIDS; 4,300 people, including 3,018 women in animal production.
- To support women in fighting food insecurity, the MMD and Leadership program (NER 077) (2006-2008) supported the establishment of community food stocks with the provision of 2,775 tons of food and the construction of 282 storage facilities;
- In 2011, the programme Support for the Improvement of Household Food Security through Cereal Banks (BC) CARE Niger and its partners, including WFP, contributed to the improvement of household food security in all regions of intervention through the PARDESA BC initiatives in the Department of Dakoro, the MMD Programme in the regions of Tahoua, Maradi, Dosso, Tillabéri, Niamey and MYAP in the departments of Konni and Illéla, and the DRR initiative in the region of Tahoua. In total, there are 518 cereal banks, 391 of which are managed by women and 318 specifically by women members of MMD groups and networks. The number of direct beneficiaries (members) is estimated at 209,008 people, i.e. approximately 29,858 households. The total number of beneficiaries (direct & indirect) is estimated at 725,200 people or about 103,600 households. 9 Buffer stocks have also been set up to supply the basic cereal banks. These cereal banks have helped to improve the availability and access to food in the communities, thus contributing to the improvement of household food security.
- In 2015, with funding from the Projet de Renforcement d'Opportunités pour les Jeunes (PROJeunes) in the regions of Diffa, Zinder and Maradi). Households are systematically using early varieties and adopting better farming techniques; 1,028,589,496 CFA francs were injected into households in the form of cash transfers (138,742,500 with the emergency response initiatives in the Diffa region) and cash for work (889,846,996). Men and women in the communities get information on weather and climate before planting grain. Other results obtained in the regions of Diffa, Zinder and Maradi are: (i) the use of early varieties and the adoption of better cultivation techniques; (ii) the emergence of seed multipliers at community level; (iii) a significant increase in agricultural production;
- Taking into account the diversity and specificity of gender issues in the pastoral environment for the strengthening of climate resilience by taking into account differential vulnerabilities according to sex, age, cultures and practices, lifestyles and production, particularly in relation to mobility, among other things, by identifying specific economic activities adapted to them, by identifying the capacities (technical, human, etc.) of pastoral women to be strengthened/supported in order to secure the entire pastoral system;
- The introduction of off-farm market gardening from 2018 with the Project of the same name through PROGRES JIMIRI, this initiative has enabled the social empowerment of women in pastoral areas; women members of the groups have become gateways to the community

level and are involved with a high level of participation. It has also strengthened women's knowledge of how to carry out savings and credit activities on the basis of their own means and diversify income-generating activities, which constitutes a strengthening of women's economic power. And finally, the strengthening of women's inner power, the will and commitment to organise themselves to participate in the development of their own lives, the development of their groups and their communities.

- Support to communities in the conduct of warrantage in the ALP intervention zone (Maradi), through the provision of start-up funds and support for the structuring and formalisation of management committees: 1,927 households, comprising 6,637 men and 6,854 women, were supported for warrantage;
- The introduction and/or support to the cultivation of Moringa in households through the establishment of home gardens both in the Maradi region and in the households of refugees, returnees and host families in the Diffa region. In total, 358,661 moringa plants were planted with the support of CARE Niger in 2015;
- Households are better able to manage risk (keeping part of their production until the lean season and having income from the warrantage credit to meet their needs) and the selling off of production is significantly reduced in the villages.

In the Maradi region, in the intervention zones of the FATRe, GARIC and MASASU initiatives, the resilience of the women beneficiaries has been strengthened through

- An improvement in the nutritional status of children in particular with access to livestock by-products such as milk and moringa leaves, known for their high nutritional value;
- 9 initiatives in the Food Security, Nutrition and Climate Change Adaptation programme (including natural resource management), or FNS/CRM, for FC 11.4 billion;
- CARE's interventions in 2016 reached 505,191 people, of whom 316,023 were women (62.55%). These men and women come from approximately 72,170 households in 128 of the country's 265 communes. These figures correspond to 149,330 people, including 109,553 women, affected by the emergency response and 355,861, including 206,470 women, by the development initiatives. CARE Niger was present in 41 of the country's 63 departments.

Several programme initiatives have carried out activities aimed at the intensification and diversification of agro-sylvo-pastoral production. In rainfed production we note

- **Production/dissemination of improved seeds:** With the GARIC initiative, 721 producers, including 500 men (69.35%) and 221 women (30.65%) from 25 communities were supported in the production of rainfed seeds (millet, sorghum, cowpeas and groundnuts). In the Tillabéry region, the BRACED project provided 11,112 households with 52.12 tonnes of seed (29.53 tonnes of HKP millet; 14.52 tonnes of cowpeas and 8.07 tonnes of sesame). The ALP project trained, mentored and supported local short-cycle seed promoters (mainly millet, cowpea and sorghum), and provided improved seed to 2003 producers.
- **Seed support to women-headed households:** A special seed distribution operation involved 627 women-headed households, most of which were widows and the elderly, who received nearly 7 tonnes of improved millet and cowpea seed and more than 6 tonnes of fertiliser. This support will enable these households to meet their household needs for at least three (3) months.
- **Training of producers:** With the DRYDEV programme, more than 12,000 producers in the communes of Torodi (Tillabéry), Dogon Kiria (Dosso), Aguié (Maradi), Droum (Zinder) and Malbaza (Tahoua) have been trained in intelligent production techniques thanks to peer training. 4,858 producers are applying the three techniques (water security, RNA, fertilisation) in an integrated manner. With GARIC, out of the thirty or so people trained in composting techniques, the level of adoption is very high, as more than 150 bags of 50kg of compost were produced and used during the past rainy season.
- **Millet transplanting techniques:** tested by the GARIC project in collaboration with the University of Maradi, this technique mitigates the problem of delayed rains and is applicable to all categories of varieties (even long-cycle varieties). During the 2016 winter season, there was a farmer adoption rate of 119 farmers who volunteered and 91 actually set up nurseries and transplanted on an estimated sown area of 7,844 square metres. The adoption rate is 76.47%.
- In 2013, important advances in terms of women's access to land through inheritance, local conventions have made community land available to women. The proportion of women with access to land through inheritance increased from 4% in 2010 to 8% in 2013. More and more women have 'secure' access with the establishment of land titles and transaction documents. By the end of 2013, all land transactions by women were 100% documented and the number of women without access to land was reduced by 36%. The effects of the awareness-raising activities carried out on women's land inheritance are perceptible in the intervention area and access is gained individually or collectively through MMD structures. There is also a strong commitment from community and religious leaders to achieve these results. However, this resilience should integrate aspects such as inclusion in climate change projects and equity in access to natural resources.

c) Emergence of an enabling environment for climate justice

In 2011, the participatory and inclusive management of NR with/by a strong civil society was noted. The partnership with CSOs in the implementation of the initiatives has strengthened the local competence/expertise of the partner CSOs, including legitimacy and representativeness, by making them more visible and present on the ground, and more in touch with the communities and their constituent bases. The following main capacity building activities were carried out for the 13 CSOs of the NRM programme: (i) sensitisation of CSOs on consultation with their constituencies; (ii) support to the organisation of general assemblies; (iii) support to organisational development and facilitation of communication between the national and

regional level of CSOs, institutional support, etc.; (iv) empowerment of CSOs that have carried out entire activities under the NRM programme initiatives

In 2013, positive changes were observed at the level of communities and local civil society organisations that were supported in actions to voice their concerns for behaviour change and to influence future resource allocations for climate change adaptation. In this way, CSOs have achieved a capacity to influence decisions at national and regional levels in a way that is meaningful to the grassroots. In the search for greater impact and sustainability, CARE Niger through this programme has worked to strengthen the capacity of partner CSOs both on organisational and technical aspects as well as on strategic issues related to advocacy.

Indeed, the following changes can be noted: Local NGO networks/platforms are actively involved in local and international advocacy on climate change; the capacities of the Confederation of Niger Producers' Federations (UFPN) GATANCI and its eight non-MMD federations are strengthened and are better able to manage investments (business plans, access to credit, practical management of investments) for the benefit of members; Several clusters of the Innovation Platform organise and take charge of important gatherings for the cleaning of livestock corridors. This work improves access to quality fodder for small ruminants in the rainy season. This is an important grassroots behavioural change that is unknown in the project areas.

CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK

As a reminder, four main themes were addressed, each with sub-issues such as women's voice and leadership, men's engagement, social and economic justice and climate justice for women. The study allowed for a meta-evaluation of the following impacts of MMDs in Niger, cross-checked with data collected using the outcome harvesting tool:

- Regarding the issue of voice and leadership, MMD women have driven a dynamic of transformations in social norms that are reflected in the following points:
- Sexual and reproductive health and nutrition: an increase in the rate of women making choices about their sexual and reproductive health, knowledge of SRH, a decrease in maternal and infant mortality, a commitment by men to support health and nutrition actions and the lightening of women's workload, a reduction in early marriage of young girls by keeping them in school, etc;
- Change in social status: MMD women have increasingly come to control productive assets usually owned by men. They see themselves as less poor, more enlightened, sometimes literate, respected in the community and able to speak in public. This gives them the power to advocate successfully in most cases for common causes. Because of all the skills they have acquired, in some villages, meetings that affect the life of the community cannot be held without the presence of MMD women leaders. We are witnessing the emergence of women village chiefs or interim village chiefs. This is a major step forward, given that in most of our societies, in the past, women had very little right to speak, let alone be village chiefs. They are increasingly involved, to different degrees, in strengthening social cohesion (conflict management), political bodies, administrative and financial management levels, advocacy and negotiations with development partners and agents, etc;
- Emergence of women leaders: there has been great success in terms of the number of women who are fully asserting their leadership by taking on responsibilities in their group, federations and committees. They have become aware of the need to get involved and to be interested in politics, as this is the way to improve their level of participation in decision-making. There has been a considerable surge of MMD women in politics due to their ability to move statutory and regulatory provisions in their favour. Several MMD women have been elected as deputies, municipal councillors and hold important positions in terms of political offices;
- Strengthening ties: Through the acquisition of livelihood assets and skills, women have been able to strengthen social ties with their surroundings, establish strategic relationships enabling them to be more active in the socio-political arena and increase the level of solidarity among themselves and trust with their communities, etc.
- Men's commitment to improving women's living conditions: Due to a behavioural change mechanism centred on sensitivity (male role models) and capacity building for women in all its dimensions, women were able to assess men's commitments, which are reflected in the following: reduction of household chores; access to economic resources and authorisation to attend health centres; consideration of women's opinions within the household/community; access to spaces for dialogue and sharing; reduction of early and forced marriages; women's political participation; etc.

Regarding social and economic justice:

- Self-confidence has meant that women can speak up in assemblies and defend their views.

They have developed leadership skills that enable them to advocate for their empowerment and the good of the community, etc.

- In terms of education, MMD women have become a vehicle for improving the education of girls and boys, reducing the rate of early marriage and drug use, and raising awareness about GBV;
- The visibility that MMD women have gained within their communities over the years through their economic activities and alliances with various social actors (especially through networking) has contributed to increasing their credibility vis-à-vis microfinance institutions. This is also illustrated by the involvement of women in decision-making bodies at all levels;
- The increased demand of MMD women for external credit has even prompted some networks to set up and run their own micro-finance institutions;
- Women's entrepreneurship through IGAs is an important tool for women's financial empowerment through the creation of self-esteem within their household and society. More than 70% of MMD women are active in IGAs and contribute to preserving household and community dignity through contributing to household food, childcare and education.

On climate justice:

CARE has put a lot of effort into improving the physical and productive environment of communities. These are :

- Protecting and securing the productive capital that is natural resources: many programmes have succeeded one another in developing a dynamic of rationalisation of natural resource management practices and land tenure security for vulnerable and disadvantaged people and groups of people whose lives depend directly and closely on natural resources. De facto, MMD women are found at different levels of natural resource management in committees such as COFOs and local/community management structures;
- Capacity building of the population to anticipate the effects of climate change and insecurity: at this level, men and women in the communities are informed about weather and climate events before planting. Women actively participate in the activities of the community-based early warning and emergency response structures (SCAP/RU) in their communities by playing central roles; they are trained to be community recorders of rainfall amounts, which they communicate to producers to help them decide whether or not to plant at the beginning of the winter season. Similarly, there is increased vigilance in villages where there is insecurity by informing security agents and leaders of the slightest movement of suspicious foreigners;
- The introduction of varieties adapted to the current context of climate variability and change: women are informed and trained on the use of early varieties and the adoption of better cultivation techniques. As a result, there is an emergence of seed multipliers at community level and a significant increase in agricultural production;
- The creation of cereal banks and warrantage banks to face food insecurity: thanks to their own funds, MMD women have acquired the capacity to create their own food stock to avoid speculation during the lean season and to help each other and their peers;
- The emergence of a more enterprising civil society where MMD women enjoy legitimacy and representativeness, making them more visible and present on the ground, and more in touch with the communities and their constituent bases.

In terms of perspectives, the following two points are worth noting:

- It is clear that the MMD approach has produced many impacts in all areas of women's lives in Niger with an extension to the communities. Some of these impacts are perceptible and quantifiable. Others are still in the form of testimonies that are not always scientifically evident. It would be imperative to conduct quantitative studies on the major issue of the voice and leadership of MMD women in Niger in order to weight the impacts and understand the scope of the movements. This can be done on the apprehension of the transformation of gender-based discrimination norms, the participation and influence of MMD women in social movements at different levels of society, etc. In this respect, qualitative analyses have been made without seeing the real weight of the model in the transformation;
- Most of the literature reviewed deals with evidence of MMD in different life sectors, and the studies have focused on a sample based mainly on MMD women. To better assess the scope and evidence of models, a randomised evaluation might be necessary. Indeed, on specific questions, samples of MMD and non-MMD women, without influence between them, can be run and the evidence will facilitate decision making at different scales;
- As MMDs are changing from a cooperative character to one that takes into account the defence of women's and girls' rights (as in the case of MMD federations), the existence of an appropriate legal framework is more than necessary. The fundamental objective is to propose a formal institutional framework adapted to the legal and practical requirements, which would allow MMD structures to safeguard both the possibility of evolving in their traditional financial and economic activities on the one hand, and on the other hand, to be part of their new dynamics which aim to contribute to the social repositioning of women and girls in Niger.

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