



WORKING TOGETHER FOR RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Rain for the Sahel and Sahara



STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2028

FROM THE BOARD CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

The Nigerien people are coping with unprecedented challenges – a rapidly growing population, more frequent and severe droughts and floods, and increased insecurity, conflict and displacement. Fortunately, Nigeriens are resourceful and resilient people who value outside help that responds to their needs and improves their lives. It is in this context that Rain for the Sahel and Sahara has developed its 2023-2028 Strategic Plan. While our fundamental mission and vision remain the same, RAIN’s programs and the organization itself must innovate and adapt to the changing context.

RAIN’s approach of meeting people where they are and being guided by communities’ expressed priorities has been successful. Over the years, RAIN’s impact has grown significantly as documented in a recent independent evaluation. We are proud that children studying at the Agadez Learning Center outperform their peers in national exams and that women savings and loan participants have a 100% repayment rate! Building on RAIN’s core program objectives of access to education, entrepreneurship, and water and food security, this Strategic Plan explicitly recognizes and reinforces the combined effect of these programs in building communities’ resilience and ability to cope with shocks and stresses. The Strategic Plan also recognizes the value of partnering with organizations with complementary expertise, such as reproductive health and small-scale renewable energy, to be even more responsive to communities’ needs.

In the next five years, RAIN intends to strengthen its programs and reach more individuals and communities. To do so, we must reinforce our organizational capacity. RAIN is powered by an extremely dedicated and hard-working staff in the US and Niger and many loyal, generous supporters who believe in RAIN’s mission. However, RAIN must further expand and diversify its funding base, strengthen the voice and capacity of Nigerien staff to guide and manage programs, and seek partners to respond to tomorrow’s challenges.

We invite you to share our vision and participate in our partnership with the underserved rural and nomadic people of Niger.

As always, we are deeply grateful for your continued support.



Susan Fine, Board Chair



Katherine Kolios, Executive Director

NIGER: NOT AN EASY PLACE TO LIVE, NOT AN EASY PLACE TO WORK. THAT’S WHY RAIN IS THERE.

Across the country, opportunities are limited by lack of education and labor skills, poor infrastructure, and inadequate investment, leading to economic migration within and across borders.



Niger is ranked **189th of 191** countries on the UN’s Human Development Index.



28% of girls are married by 15 and 76% are married by 18 – **the highest rate of child marriage in the world.**



50% of **children under-5 are chronically undernourished** and more than half of Niger’s 27 million people **do not have access to safe drinking water.**



Fewer than 11% of women have an account with a financial institution or mobile money-service provider and 91% of the country is considered to be **in “multidimensional poverty.”**



The Nation of Niger loses an estimated **32% of GDP** due to the lack of women’s full contribution to the economy.

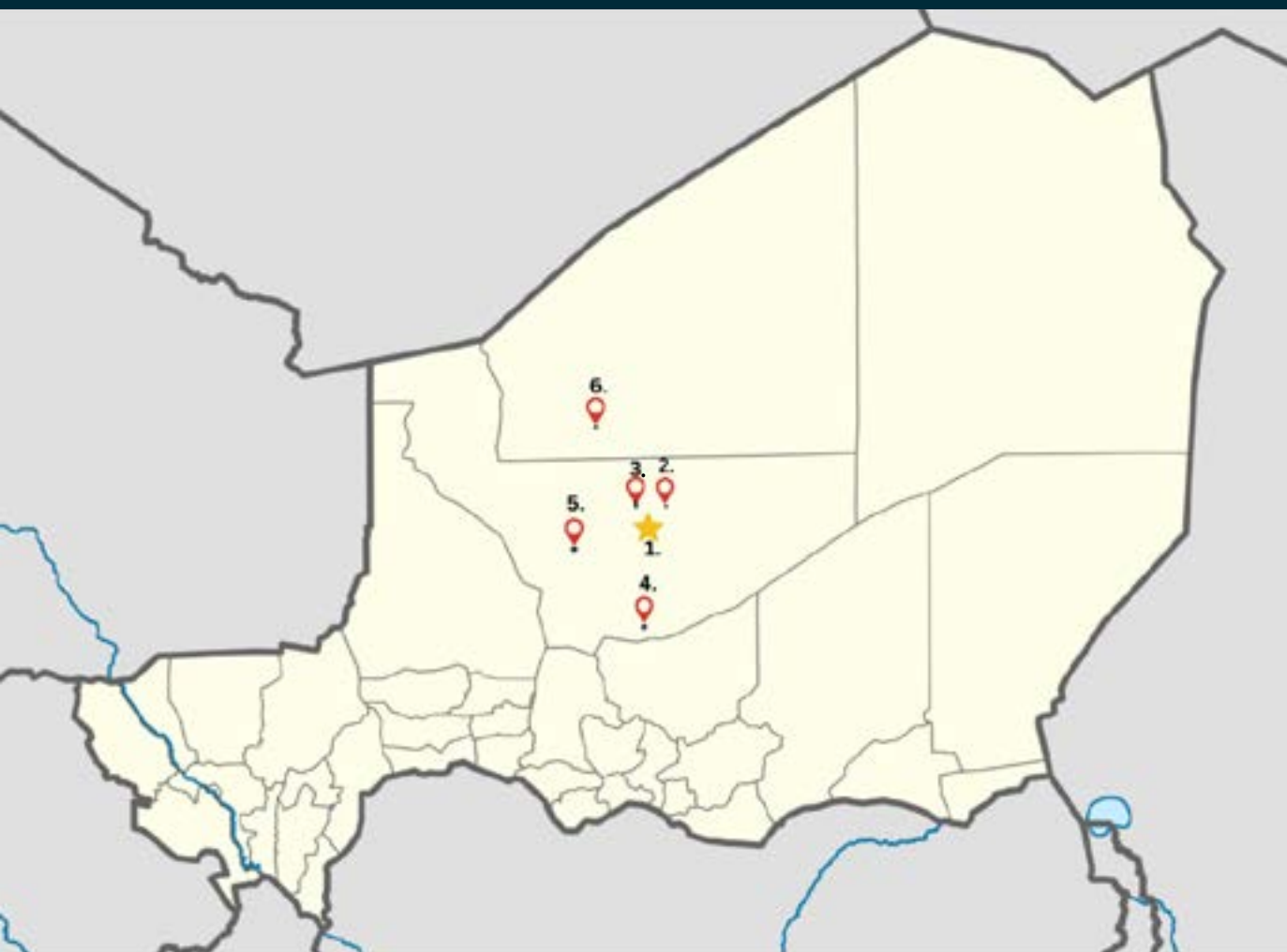


The Agadez Region:

- ◆ Encompasses more than half of Niger’s land area with a highly dispersed population.
- ◆ Is situated in the Sahara Desert, with the Air mountains rising in the north.
- ◆ Is home to nomadic and semi-nomadic populations including varied ethnic groups: Arab, Fulani, Kanuri, Dazaga Toubou, and Tuareg.
- ◆ Has gained little from foreign uranium mining in its territory and suffers from repeated droughts and famines.

The impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine were devastating as costs of staple goods rose between 40-100 percent. In addition, violent extremism and regional conflict have spilled over Niger’s southern and eastern borders, bringing the threat of instability. Though Agadez, the northern region where RAIN is currently active, has had a history of internal conflict, it has been less affected by insecurity than other regions of the country.

RAIN Outreach in Niger



KEY
Communes & Villages: **1. Agadez City;** **2. Dabaga** (Takaya, Intatate, Dabaga, Beital, Boughol); **3. Tchirozerine** (Aouderas, Betarmatas, Tegoumak, Azangala, Tsilisdag); **4. Aderbissinat** (Tillia, Bori, Tchimagrof, Tchimagrof, Barka Jabire); **5. Ingall** (Ingall, Ebrouk, Torguit, Ankaf, Kirnache, Inabezguine, Taghachert Cimiliti, Tchimagayane); **6. Dannet** (Dannet, Eris Ntagba, Dannet Village, Tchizamene)



Niger is a land-locked country in West Africa with Mali to its West, Nigeria to the South, and Chad in the East. The northern Sahara Desert is quickly encroaching on the rain-fed southern Sahelian plains. Global warming is increasing the frequency and severity of droughts and flooding in the region. **Experts predict that Niger will suffer the highest climate change-related mortality among all countries by 2050.** These effects are exacerbated by a rapidly growing population. With the highest fertility rate in the world, Niger's population grew from 3.5 million in 1961 to over 27 million today. It is projected to reach 50 million by 2041 and 100 million by 2068.

Two decades of RAIN making an impact



Since its founding in 2001, **RAIN's collaboration with Niger's nomadic communities** has:

Helped more students receive a better education.

- ◆ Increased enrollment in new partner schools by 18%, expanding opportunity for students historically left behind.
- ◆ Engaged over 150 local women annually to mentor 800 children in 28 communities.
- ◆ Daily supplemental lessons helped 1,200 students adapt to the rigors of middle school, pass the national exam, and continue their education.
- ◆ 114 students from isolated communities received room and board at the Agadez Learning Center (ALC) or through local homestays.
- ◆ Experienced exam pass rates 20% higher than the national average.

Increased access to water and sufficient nutritious food.

- ◆ Drilled 25+ wells for villages, prioritizing solar-powered submersible pumps.
- ◆ Leveraged water for irrigation, hygiene, and land stewardship for over 4,000 Nigeriens annually.
- ◆ Provided irrigation and agribusiness training resulting in tripled food production tripled and fivefold growth in household incomes.



Expanded income-generating opportunities for women.

- ◆ Equipped 500+ women annually with skills and knowledge to implement income-generating activities such as sustainable herding and gardening.
- ◆ Funded 500+ microenterprise projects a year through savings and loans groups.
- ◆ Saw 100% of participants repay their loans and gain an average return on investment of 40%.

RAIN adapted to changing needs by:

- ◆ Expanding programs during the Covid-19 pandemic to provide safe water, hygiene training, school handwashing stations, masks, and food aid. RAIN aided 3,760 Nigeriens directly and some 5,800 community members across 16 communities.
- ◆ Launching a pilot partnership with Pathfinder International to integrate reproductive health and family planning programming for women and girls in five new communities.

RAIN'S MISSION

RAIN works in partnership with underserved rural and nomadic peoples of Niger to increase educational opportunities and improve livelihoods for more resilient communities.

RAIN ENVISIONS

Nigerien communities that have the resources and opportunities to determine their own future.

RAIN'S VALUES

RAIN operates under mutual respect—the giving and sharing of knowledge, skills, and resources among our staff, partner communities, and stakeholders in Niger. We strive for diversity, equity, and inclusion in all our work, and rely on partnership and collaboration to build local ownership. Accountability is paramount at all levels of the organization.

RAIN pursues the universally accepted values of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.



RAIN’s Strategic Plan 2023-2028

RAIN’S collaborative and comprehensive approach works to establish more resilient communities. Needs in Niger remain great and there is much more RAIN can contribute. RAIN will deepen its work with current partners and expand to new communities, working together—with the full participation of women and youth—to strengthen community resilience in the face of economic and social challenges. Incorporating data from our 2022 program evaluation, we will continue to be innovative in our approach, accessing and refining best practices from the region and beyond.

PROGRAM GOALS

Goal 1: Open new doors and life pathways through education

- ◆ Expand the Agadez Learning Center to more than double student capacity
- ◆ Increase enrollment and completion rates by training new mentors and scaling supplementary classes and homestays

Goal 2: Increase access to nutritious food and expand income from agriculture

- ◆ Improve health and agricultural production with local water access and management
- ◆ Promote climate-responsive farming, including tree farming, especially the nutritious moringa

Goal 3: Raise incomes and economic security—working especially with women and youth

- ◆ Establish new savings and loan groups; ensure established groups have the capacity to sustain and grow if desired
- ◆ Encourage job-creating enterprises and youth engagement in income activities



ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS

To accomplish RAIN’s program goals and overall mission, we will strengthen and grow as an organization. Specifically, we intend to:

- ◆ Increase, diversify, and deepen individual and institutional giving
- ◆ Strengthen capacity of RAIN’s Niger team to provide programmatic leadership and accountability for results
- ◆ Seek partnerships with other NGOs to complement RAIN’s expertise and resources, and to better serve communities’ needs
- ◆ Cultivate and expand a diverse Board of Directors and Advisory Council
- ◆ Develop a longer-term plan for increasing Nigerien leadership and ownership, with RAIN US continuing financial and technical support



RAIN AND ITS WORK

RAIN'S PROGRAMS

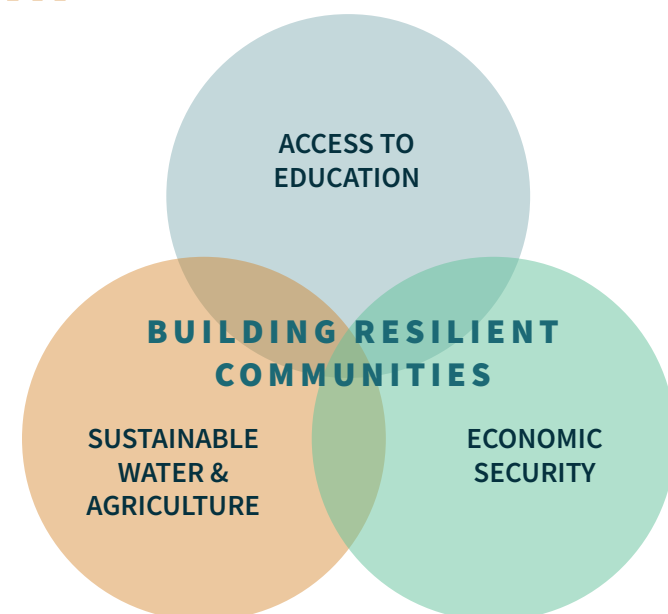
RAIN's holistic approach starts at the village level. Our **local field agents** spend days and weeks in every RAIN-supported community. Traveling over poor roads or off-road, often in grueling heat and sandy winds, these staff connect with local elders and chiefs, officials, school leaders and teachers, and village women, men, and youth to understand their challenges, needs, and desires.

The field agents bring together people from different ethnic groups and **find a common language to collaborate on solutions**. By being there, night after night, they forge stronger relationships. Our field agents identify local resources, while RAIN leadership builds regional, national, and international partnerships. It is by working together that we can best use the resources we bring to the table. RAIN's grassroots nimbleness, self-reflection, dedication to community input, and collaborative evaluation allow us to adapt our programs to best fit the evolving needs of our partner communities.



RAIN'S APPROACH

- ◆ **Locally driven and managed**, engaging those who are not always included
- ◆ **Holistic**, building resilience by recognizing the interplay between education, water and agriculture, and entrepreneurial activities
- ◆ **Innovative**, merging new technologies and techniques with local/traditional knowledge and expertise
- ◆ **Building systems, knowledge, and collaborations** that will outlast RAIN's support



INCREASING EDUCATION AND LEARNING ACHIEVEMENT

Completing more years of school opens up options for children. More educated youth tend to delay marriage, have fewer children, and are more likely to enroll their own children in school. RAIN helps children continue their education in public schools through mentors, supplemental classes, and room and board support. In the coming years, RAIN will explore ways to increase the quality of instruction and expand who has access to formal and informal education.

Rural Programming

Our mentoring program trains local women to advocate for and support students and provide resources for success. Serving as liaisons between schools and families, mentors help parents, often with limited or no education themselves, to navigate the school system. Mentors are trained to work with students in areas that impact their ability to succeed such as leadership skills, nutrition, hygiene practices, gender-based norms, and sexual and reproductive health.

RAIN organizes supplementary courses and room and board for rural students too remote to reach schools.

Urban Programming

The Agadez Learning Center (ALC) is a residential center for rural and nomadic girls who do not have access to a middle school in their surrounding communities. In addition to supervised room and board, the ALC provides extensive academic, extracurricular and social support. Solar panels installed in 2020 avoid power outages and enable students to continue their studies and evening recreational activities after sunset. The construction of a new dorm will add capacity for up to 96 students. Partnerships support continued education through secondary and higher education.



INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES (IGAs)

Income opportunities in remote communities are limited for everyone but women are twice worse off in accessing means to increase their income. Our programs train women in basic financial literacy and business practices, using familiar income-generating examples. As young men are increasingly underemployed and, therefore, at-risk, RAIN will engage more youth in income-generating activities.

Savings and Loan Groups

RAIN field agents provide training and support that enable women to survey their communities to identify needs and opportunities and, through small financing, help address those needs while providing family income. RAIN's Savings and Loan groups organize cohorts of 20 women to determine their own protocols, set the savings amount, loan duration, interest rates and fines for non-payment. Women contribute funds weekly and borrow loans from the group on a rotating basis. RAIN will expand its support and encourage women to pursue opportunities that provide needed services and products and may grow to employ others. We will continue to link groups with other rural and urban groups to share best practices, diversify materials and products, and reach broader markets.

Sustainable Herding:

Livestock herding has sustained desert communities for centuries and is an integral part of nomadic life. RAIN's program helps women establish their own herds of goats and offers training in market economics, business planning, and animal health and husbandry. We also train local para-veterinarians to provide vaccinations and additional care. As herds grow, livestock products such as milk and cheese contribute to family income. Goats can be sold once herds reach a sustainable size. RAIN is undertaking research to refine and improve this support to enable expanded income and nutrition opportunities.



SUSTAINABLE WATER AND AGRICULTURE

Frequent droughts and floods impact crop production and availability of potable water. RAIN facilitates building water infrastructure and trains communities in sustainable water, crop, and land management. This includes responsiveness to climate variability.

Water Management

We support year-round access to safe water, including building wells with solar-powered submersible pumps that improve outputs, lessen environmental impact and save women and girls hours of labor. Irrigated gardens, climate-adapted produce, and efficient systems enhance productivity. Given the expense and technical skill required for drilling, we welcome partners to jointly expand water access and train on pump and well maintenance.

Sustainable Agriculture

RAIN field agents, briefed by agronomists and climate specialists, train gardeners in business principles and practices like diversification and crop rotation. Where appropriate, field agents will introduce value-adding food processing as well as techniques to minimize post-harvest losses. Increased productivity supports household income and nutrition and contributes to community sustainability. RAIN is exploring using trees, with an eye on the leaf-nutritious Moringa, as a water and soil conservation method and to increase food variety. RAIN takes a grassroots approach to alleviating hunger: To build ownership and self-reliance, wells and gardens are managed by elected community members who establish savings to fund maintenance work.



Voices of RAIN

To hear more from Nigeriens about their experience with RAIN, [click here](#).

“ Everywhere in our village and the neighboring villages we speak of the positive things you have brought to Betarmatas. The entire community is delighted, and **we are all ready to do whatever it takes to conserve and maintain these gains**. We will never forget all the good that you have done for the future of our children, for our women’s group, and for the entire village and community of Betarmatas. ”

THE ENMIKRAS WOMEN’S GROUP OF BETARMATAS

“ I’m very happy with what RAIN has brought, especially the Savings & Loans group which has helped the women here a lot with their needs – **it helps them to feel safer and like it’s their money, they’re in control, they don’t have to go to someone else for help**. ”

FATIMA

“ Without this mentoring program, I don’t think I would do well or have a bright future because **in the beginning, not only did I not know the importance of school but even my parents did not value school**. For this, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. ”

ASSALAMA MOHAMED

“ The best investment you can make in a community is to **show them the ways and means that will trigger positive change**, like what you are doing. ”

TDJABIRÉ DOULLA
CHIEF OF THE VILLAGE OF BARKA DJABIRÉ



RAIN Leadership

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