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# RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABLE POVERTY ESCAPES IN **NIGER**

## Report

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This document was prepared by Aoife McCullough and Vidya Diwakar, of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

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There is a companion policy brief to this research report: Shepherd, A. (2018). Sustaining Poverty Escapes in Niger. Washington D.C.: USAID.



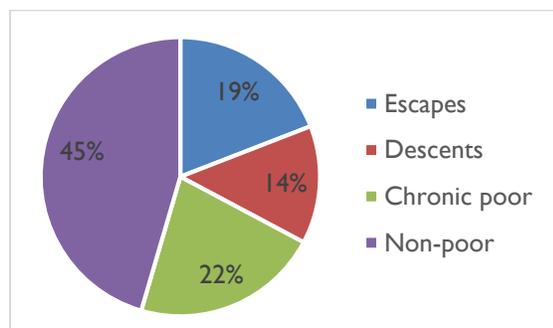
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The focus of this report is on resilience and household poverty dynamics, specifically escapes and descents, with a focus on what explains why some households escape poverty and remain out of poverty (sustained poverty escape), while other households escape poverty only to fall back into poverty (transitory poverty escape). Analysis of two rounds of the Living Standards Measurements Survey - National Survey on Household Living Conditions and Agriculture in 2011 and 2014 for this case study reveals that poverty escapes and descents are significant phenomenon in Niger (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Poverty trajectories in Niger, percent of households, 2011-2014



This report combines analysis from two rounds of the panel survey with qualitative research approaches, in particular, key informant interviews, life histories, and participatory wealth ranking in urban and rural areas of the Zinder region. The two-wave panel analysis allows investigation into the drivers of escapes and descents over the survey years, while the fieldwork permits a longer time-scale to be assessed and so offers a way in which to explore drivers of sustained and transitory poverty escapes. Specifically, it examines why some households are able to escape poverty (like in the panel data), but then also remain out of it (going beyond panel data years of coverage)—that is, they experience sustained escapes from poverty—while others escape poverty only to return to living in it again. The report investigates the resources (land, livestock, and assets), attributes (household composition and education level), and activities (including jobs and engagement in non-farm activities) that enable households to escape poverty sustainably and minimize the likelihood of returning to living in poverty again. The report situates these micro-factors in an analysis of the changing context for poverty eradication.

The research found that households with increased land, and who developed a nonfarm enterprise, or received remittances from domestic sources, between 2011 and 2014 were associated with significantly higher monetary welfare measured by per capita expenditures, according to the quantitative data. The qualitative data indicated that households with these characteristics *and* who diversified their assets were more likely to experience sustained than transitory escapes from poverty. In the life history interviews, most increases in landholdings were through inheritance.

Combining domestic or international migration with farm activities was a common strategy in rural areas and was likely to lead to escapes from poverty. Most rural men interviewed during the qualitative research practiced a mix of agriculture and migration, with migrants often returning during the wet season to plant, tend to their crops and harvest. However, these escapes from poverty were often transitory with many experiencing job insecurity and shocks which resulted in a fall back into poverty. The difference between sustained escapers and transitory escapers who combined migration with agriculture is that sustained escapers had a network that linked them to more lucrative trades such as masonry, security or the fuel trade. These networks were often based on villages having connections to certain trades. Shifts in trends of migration were noted with increasing numbers of young people opting to migrate within Niger.

Insecurity in Nigeria and Libya was a clear factor influencing life history respondents' decision to change to domestic migration, especially over the last five years. The devaluation of the Naira was another factor influencing people's decision to migrate within Niger. .

The risk environment is extremely challenging for poor and near-poor people in Niger. Environmental and agriculture-related shocks were the most common in the quantitative data; ill health figured prominently in the qualitative research data. Price shocks were associated with significantly reduced monetary welfare in the quantitative results. Coping strategies in the quantitative dataset included the use of savings, engaging in spiritual activities, and seeking help from relatives and friends.

The changing characteristics of households were also particularly important in impoverishment processes. Having more children, teenage marriage, especially for women just above the poverty line, were all associated with an increased likelihood of a descent into poverty in the qualitative research data.

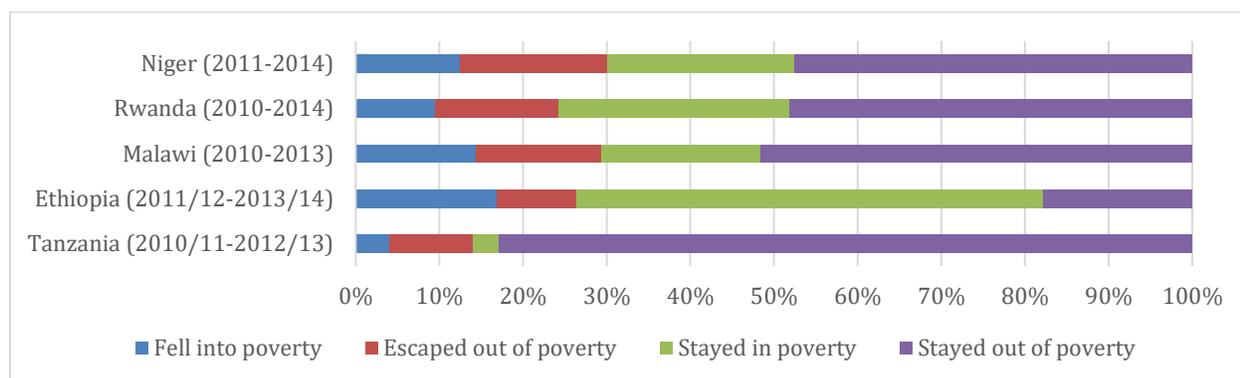
Strategies for sustained poverty escapes evidenced in the qualitative data included investing in livestock, agricultural land, vegetable gardening, and urban property. Livestock investments were the most risky investment; livestock often succumbed to disease or starvation. Spreading the risks through diversifying investments was more common among sustained escapers. Sustained escapers were also able to use family connections to help them recover from shocks, for example, to secure jobs in Nigeria. Several female interviewees were able to achieve a sustained escape through investing in livelihood assets such as push carts for transporting water and peanut oil extraction equipment from formal savings groups and money contributed at baptism ceremonies.

Note: The report is accompanied by a separate policy brief (Shepherd, 2018), which presents policy implications for sustaining poverty escapes in Niger that emerge from the analysis presented in this study.

## INTRODUCTION

Research by CPAN supported by USAID’s Center for Resilience investigated the extent and drivers of transitory and sustained escapes from poverty across a series of country studies to better understand the sources of resilience that enable people to sustainably escape poverty given the complex risk environments in which they live. The studies, alongside other CPAN research, found that from approximately 2010 to 2014, between 4 and 17% of households fell into poverty across Niger, Ethiopia, Malawi, Rwanda, and Tanzania, compared to 10-18% of households escaping poverty using country-specific national poverty lines (Figure 2). This heterogeneity encouraged an exploration into the factors responsible for these varied poverty dynamics.

Figure 2: Poverty dynamics using different national poverty lines



This report investigates the drivers of household escapes from poverty and descents into poverty in Niger, with a focus on sustained and transitory escapes (see Box 1). It brings together:

- New **quantitative analysis** of the panel component of the Living Standards Measurements Survey - National Survey on Household Living Conditions and Agriculture (ECVM/A), comprising 3,436 households interviewed in 2011 and 2014 in rural and urban areas of Niger.
- Insights from 14 interviews with **key informant interviews** such as government officials, researchers, representatives from non-governmental organizations and finance institutes in Niamey and Zinder region. Zinder region was chosen as analysis of the ECVM/A revealed the highest share of poverty mobility (escapes and descents) over the survey period. It is also a region in which USAID implement a range of programs including RISE and Feed the Future.
- Information from eight **focus group discussions** (FGDs) used to create participatory wealth ranking for households in four settlements in Zinder: Kara Kara suburb, Zinder (urban) Birni Quarter, Zinder (urban), Sabon Gari/ Manda Manda, Droum (rural, agro-pastoral) and Gouloumba, Dogo (rural, agro-pastoral). Knowledgeable members of the community were also interviewed to understand key local events that contributed to ascents or descents into poverty.

- **Life history interviews** (LHIs) with 40 individuals who, during the participatory wealth ranking, self-identified as belonging to households on the different poverty trajectories in urban and rural, agro-pastoral areas of Zinder.<sup>1</sup>
- **Wider literature** on the extent and nature of poverty reduction and poverty dynamics in Niger.

*Box 1: Definitions of poverty trajectories used in the study*

**Impoverishment** in this study refers to the process whereby a person or household that is non-poor slips into poverty. **Chronic poverty** is long-term poverty that persists over many years or even a lifetime, and is often transmitted intergenerationally. **Transitory poverty escapes** refer to individuals or households that used to live in poverty, succeeded in escaping poverty, and then subsequently fell back into poverty. USAID defines **resilience** as “the ability of people, households, communities, countries and systems to mitigate, adapt to and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth” (USAID, 2015). In this work, resilience is viewed as a set of capacities enabling households to escape poverty and remain out of poverty over the long term (experience a **sustained poverty escape**), even in the face of shocks and stresses. In other words, in the context of this study, the capacity to be resilient means an individual or household is ultimately able to avoid becoming impoverished or a poverty escape that is transitory.

## **A MACRO PERSPECTIVE ON POVERTY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH IN NIGER**

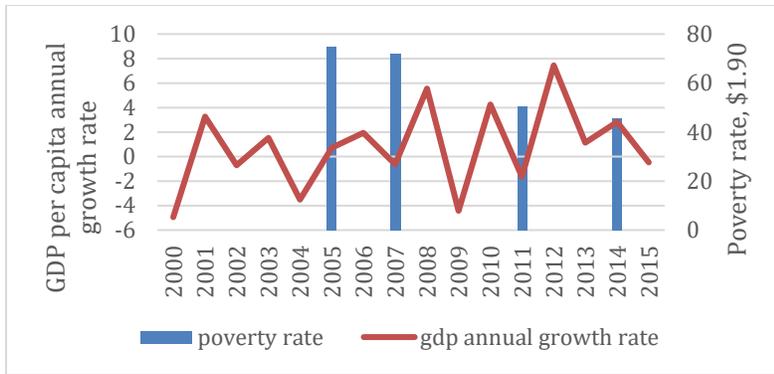
This section draws from the secondary literature in Niger to assess economic growth and poverty reduction. Poverty figures at \$1.90 a day for Niger indicate that poverty reduced from 74.9% in 2005 to 45.7% by 2014, equivalent to 1.1 million people pulled out of poverty (WDI, 2018). The poverty rate according to the national poverty line (182,635 francs CFA in 2011 terms) reveals a similar figure, where 48.9% of the population was under the national poverty line in 2011, compared to 50.34% using the \$1.90 line. The high rate of poverty reduction between 2005 and 2014 has been explained as due to a large share of GDP growth accruing directly to households during periods of growth in agriculture and services (Garba et al., 2016). However, it should be noted that the rate of poverty measured during 2005 was at the height of a severe famine so is likely to have skewed the degree of overall downward trend.

Considering the impact of the 2005 famine, the reduction in poverty rates may not be quite as impressive as the official data indicates. GDP per capita growth over the 2005-2014 period was low (Figure 3); just 1.5% on average (IRIS, 2016). Moreover, though poor households saw a rise in consumption over this period, inequalities between 2005 and 2014 have increased (Garba et al., 2016). The shared prosperity premium (the difference between the growth in the income of the bottom 40 percent and the growth in income at the mean) in Niger was positive although very small at 0.5 percentage points, an extra US\$0.39, while the population gained an extra US\$0.73 (World Bank, 2017).

*Figure 3: Poverty and growth in Niger*

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<sup>1</sup> Note, all life history names have been anonymised in this report.



Growth over the 2005-14 period has also been also highly volatile, mainly a result of erratic GDP from agriculture. Between 2005 and 2015, variations in agriculture GDP growth rates contributed to 84% of variations in overall GDP growth rates in the country (Garba et al., 2016). In this context, years of high growth are primarily a result of a good agricultural season and favourable climatic conditions (IRIS, 2016). It is estimated that 80% of population rely on rain-fed agriculture and, as a result, remain at the mercy of drought and climate change (World Bank, 2017). While there is a dominant narrative of increasing desertification from many qualitative studies, mapping and imaging studies indicate a mixed picture in relation to the degree to which desertification is happening. Indeed some studies indicate greening in some areas and degradation in other areas (Mbow et al, 2015). The greening could be due to interventions by development actors and also communities, such as through farmer managed natural regeneration which has had considerable successes across Niger (Larwanou and Reij, 2011), but also may be explained by more erratic and extreme rainfall patterns.

Erratic income from agriculture has also had an effect on food security. Between 2012 and 2014, Niger ranked between 93 and 102 out of 109 countries in terms of food insecurity, in an index combining indicators of food availability, affordability and quality and safety (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2015). The country’s land-locked position aggravates food insecurity by making food markets more difficult to integrate (Garba et al., 2016). In this context of erratic agriculture trends and recurrent poor harvests, rural urban migration has been a common strategy (Backiny-Yetna and Steele, 2015). While only 19% of the population was urban in 2015 (WDI, 2018), Niger has been experiencing urbanization, with young people increasingly leaving rural areas (Yacouba, 2012). At the same time, much migration tends to be circular typically to major cities or to Nigeria which enables households to meet basic needs during seasons when stocks are depleted, and so has an impact on smoothing consumption and preventing impoverishment (Bailey, 2008). Between 2000 and 2005, migration (domestic and international) and associated remittances were amongst the top five factors cited as perceived reasons for improved wellbeing for households (Hamidou, 2009).

Further compounding the country’s ability to respond to the welfare of its citizens are the 300,000 estimated refugees and internally displaced people, partly as a result of insecurity in Northern Nigeria, Diffa and Mali (World Bank, 2017). There is also extremely high population growth rates-- the highest in the world, with a fertility rate at 3.9%, or 7.6 per woman. Population growth and high age dependency ratios exacerbate pressures on the government to provide public services and jobs (Garba et al., 2016). Relatedly, Niger has the lowest Human Development Index rank, reflecting low education and health outcomes and weak infrastructure in these sectors. Though development programmes have been launched by former president Tanja in the 2000s and continued by President Issoufou, there is no publicly available data on the impact of these programmes.

Low GDP per capita growth across is partly a product of weak economic diversification- uranium and oil alone comprise over half of the country’s exports. Foreign investment is high for the region, at almost

40% of GDP (World Bank, 2017) although most of this investment is likely to be in hydrocarbons. IMF (2017) notes that a “reform momentum and strong donor support could set in motion a virtuous circle of private sector development”.

## **MICRO DRIVERS OF POVERTY DYNAMICS**

In addition to the macro drivers of vulnerability leading to poverty discussed above, the limited secondary literature on poverty dynamics in Niger highlights drivers associated with varied poverty pathways, which is the focus of this section. Exploring poverty dynamics, Boukar and Dangana (2006) disaggregate poverty in 2000 and 2005 into five categories: chronic poor, transitory poor, non-poor but vulnerable and precarious, non-poor vulnerable, and non-poor as well as non-vulnerable. They find that the chronic poor represent 42.5% of Niger’s population. A decrease in income, changing price of manufactured goods, loss of employment, underemployment all contribute to the chronicity of poverty, as do lack of access to drinking water and sanitation, malnutrition, and large household sizes.

In contrast, drought, decreases in income, large dependency shares, and low rates of electrification are associated with transient poverty in rural areas. The effects of drought and desertification are acute in both rural and urban areas, resulting in widespread soil erosion. Flash floods from torrential rains also occur, causing destruction of homes and public infrastructure including roads, as well as damage to crops and death of animals (Boukar and Dangana, 2006). Invasion of locusts is common in the country and can result in massive crop losses, which affect the wellbeing of crop growers and their families and has led to children being pulled out of school (IRD, 2012). To maintain standards of living in the face of these constraints, farmers may enlarge their fields or look for other fields, engaging in deforestation. The search for firewood also contributes to deforestation, which creates a vicious cycle of desertification and the accentuation of drought. In turn, these processes aggravate famine and malnutrition (Boukar and Dangana, 2006). As a result of these various stressors, there has been a mass migration of men out of rural areas (Yacouba, 2012).

Finally, chronically poor households are likely to have household heads without education (Daouda, 2010; Boukar and Dangana, 2006). Moreover, low education rates even at the primary level limit the ability of education to contribute to resilience of household heads and to reduce poverty (Boukar and Dangana, 2006).

## **MESO-LEVEL DRIVERS OF POVERTY MOBILITY OVER THE DECADES**

In this section, we discuss some of the findings from the FGDs with knowledgeable members of the community and KIs. The knowledgeable members of the community were selected by community leaders and tended to be imams, presidents of women’s associations, and elderly men and women.

Participants from FGDs in Droum and Dogo (rural, agro-pastoral areas) repeatedly stressed the impact that **successive famines** have had on livelihoods and poverty levels. The famine of 2005, precipitated by a locust attack across the Zinder region was so severe, it was named ‘Waza Kagayaba’ in Hausa (‘don’t talk to me’ i.e. ‘Don’t tell me about your tribulations; I’m also going through a terrible time). Additional famines were identified by FG participants since 2005 but these varied between location indicating the effects of irregular rainfall. Despite being smaller in scale, these successive famines were identified in FGDs as the principle drivers of poverty in rural areas. The effects of successive famines and climate change on the ability of rural households to maintain an income has resulted in some rural families selling land, livestock and resorting to using their children to beg in urban areas. The increase in the number of beggars was noted in FGDs and in interviews with KIs. Begging as a coping strategy also emerged in several of the LHIs, among both urban and rural dwellers.

While droughts are an obvious driver of poverty, migration and privatization of land emerge as **coping strategies** in the 1970s and 1980s. Prior to the 1970s, participants in FGDs in rural areas described land as being widely accessible. To raise cash to buy food in the face of drought, poorer families in some areas requested local leaders to allocate land so that they could sell a portion of their fields to wealthier families. Unfortunately, the generations born in the 1980s and 1990s experienced the brunt of this coping strategy as fields of poorer families were no longer large enough to divide among the new generation. For poor families, it was reported that field sizes had decreased to such an extent that the land could no longer sustain the household.

**Land degradation** was widely cited during FGDs as an additional cause of poor harvests. Given the debate in the literature about the extent to which land degradation is happening, these observations need to be understood in the context of the aid industry that has implemented a multitude of programs that aim to increase soil fertility, and could potentially contribute to the narrative around increasing soil degradation. While there are indications that land degradation is occurring (reported reduced yields per Ha, reduced milk yields from dairy herds), the extent to which land degradation is a factor in poor harvests could not be captured through a FGD.

FGDs and LHIs captured the decline in the practice of **pastoralism** that has been noted in the literature (e.g. Toupet, 1995). Several interviewees described changing from pastoralism as the main livelihood to farming. There are varied reasons for the reduction of profitability of livestock breeding. Camels are no longer a valued form of transport for goods and, while cows, sheep and goats are still valuable commodities, interviewees complained that the risks associated with livestock production make it more unreliable than in the past. Lack of pasture and disease were reported as constraints on the profitability of livestock breeding. The devaluation of the Naira in early 2017 badly affected the export of sheep and goats to Nigeria but a growing market in Agadez (due to the migrant economy), Djado (artisanal gold mine) and in Senegal has buffered the shock of the collapse of the Nigerian market.

For the last 50 years, **migration abroad** has represented an opportunity for young people to gain skills and, in some cases, earn significant amounts of money. As more Nigeriens migrated to northern Nigeria over time, competition for low paid work such as daily labor in market places, masonry and selling water and tea increased. Furthermore, insecurity in Nigeria from 2012 onwards dampened economic growth resulting in fewer jobs for a largely unskilled labor force. The devaluation of the Naira in early 2017 further diminished the benefits of migration to Nigeria. In the mid-2000s, young people from the Zinder region started travelling to Libya and Algeria but with the fall of Ghaddafi, this is no longer an option.

Instead, over the last 5 years, young Nigeriens are increasingly considering **within-country migration** as a better option than migration to Nigeria or Libya. The development of onion farms in the oases in Agadez has provided young people from the Zinder region with an alternative form of seasonal work. However, this is relatively new market and there have been problems with price fluctuations as increasing numbers of farmers accessed the market. There were reports of young men travelling to artisanal gold mines in northern Niger but as the conditions in gold mines are extreme and the risks of not recouping one's costs high, only a small proportion of young people are taking this livelihood option. Young people trained in masonry described looking for jobs in the construction sector in Zinder town but due to their lack of connections, they haven't been able to use their skills in Niger.

**Trade with Nigeria** has long been a feature of the economy in the Zinder region. Up until 2017, the bulk of exports from Niger to Nigeria was livestock. In the past, peanuts, beans, grass mats and rope made from raffia were exported. Millet, rice and other household items were imported. In FGDs, it was reported that the liberalization of trade during Ousmane's time in power (1992-1995), resulted in an increase in the numbers of people transitioning away from agriculture and into trade. However, following the re-imposition of import taxes in 1996 by Bare, some traders were badly affected and went bankrupt.

However, trade with Nigeria remained an important part of the economy with most of Zinder's nonagricultural products being imported from Nigeria. Until the fall of Ghadaffi, trade with Libya was also important. With the devaluation of the Naira in 2017, trade with Nigeria changed to one mainly based on imports. This has benefited traders while negatively affecting producers. In KIIs, there were reports that Nigerians are increasingly working to capture certain trades within Niger. Nigerians have bought parcels of land and warehouses in Zinder town, which they use to stock goods to sell to the market in Zinder.

Import taxes were raised as an issue in KIIs, FGDs and LHIs. **Corruption** is rife at customs and traders complained about not knowing how much tax they would have to pay in advance. Meanwhile, there is a brisk trade in smuggled goods along the border where there are no checkpoints. It was reported that the increased taxes that the GoN introduced in 2018 has pushed increasing numbers of Nigeriens to smuggle goods into Niger. According to the President of Traders in Zinder, 'there are now hundreds of fraudsters operating in Zinder' (KII).

Among rural women, the options to **diversify away from crop-based agriculture** included peanut oil extraction, importing food stuffs from Nigeria and mat making. Peanut oil extraction is a relatively new livelihood option for women. In the past, people used animal fat for cooking but since the 1990s, with the reduction of herd sizes and corresponding reduction in milk yields, there has been increased demand for peanut oil. Given that it's a relatively recent trade, it remains a fairly open market; there were examples in the LHIs of women starting extraction with no history of extraction in their families. In contrast, importing foodstuffs from Nigeria requires connections through either a husband who trades or a parent who was involved in trading. A woman who succeeds in setting up her own stall, known as 'boutique', is generally perceived as a very successful woman. While demand for mats has increased over the last 5 years with the construction of new mosques in rural villages, this work remained low paid so it functions more as an income supplement rather than as a driver of mobility. The competition from factory produced plastic mats in combination with a limited local market works to keep prices low.

Households living in urban areas were more likely to be affected by **political instability** and the perturbations in government that has affected Niger. During the 1990s, there were several political crises that resulted in the impoverishment of civil servants and their extended families who relied on their salaries. In 1994, the Communauté Financière Africaine franc (CFA franc) was devalued while civil servant salaries remained static. From September 1994 to February 1995, no salaries were paid. When Bare took control in a military coup, he agreed to a second set of structural adjustments, which resulted in a decrease in civil servants' salaries. Since the 2000s, civil servant salaries have stabilized but participants in FGDs complained that in order to get a job in the civil service these days, one needs to have the right connections. Short term rolling contracts are now a feature of civil service in Niger meaning that few civil servants enjoy the job security and benefits that come with permanent contracts.

### **Urban drivers of mobility**

In Zinder town, there were more diverse drivers of poverty mobility. With the devaluation of the Naira, there is a robust trade in **black market** fuel from Nigeria. The lack of regulation means that low levels of seed capital are needed to set up fuel stalls. There are currently an estimated 6000 such stalls in Zinder selling black market fuel (KII with Kabirou, 2018). As Zinder is well positioned on the Nigeria – Niger-Libya axis, there has been a growth in the number of transport companies. There are now 8 transport companies that employ over 500 people as dockers, drivers and administrators (KII with Kabirou, 2018). The relocation of the customs office to Zinder will result in an increase in this sector.

In FGDs and LHIs, it was reported that people are using **taxi-motos** more frequently creating a demand for moto-cyclists. The expanding university in Zinder also creates demand for student accommodation. The state provides grants to cover the living costs of students and it is estimated that the state contributes

to the accommodation and subsistence costs of approximately 10,000 students in Zinder (KII with Kabirou, 2018). However, this is an instable source of income for hosts, as student grants are often not paid for months on end.

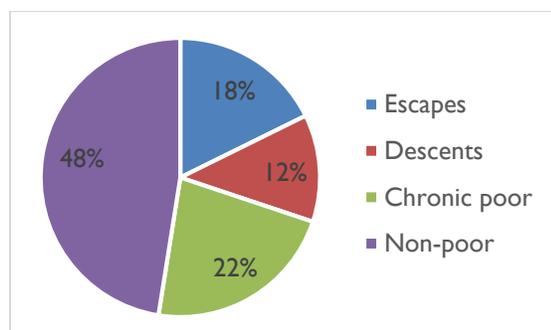
In Zinder, drivers of mobility for uneducated **women** included peanut oil extraction, water delivery, sale of ice, sale of street food, sale of fruit and vegetables, import of household items, and clothes making from scrap material. Over the last 5 years, the key events that impacted women’s livelihoods in Zinder were the demolition of Dolé market and the devaluation of the Naira. Dolé market is the main food and goods market for the Zinder region. Hundreds of petty traders operated their stalls in the streets around the market center. In December 2016, the GoN announced new legislation in relation to petty traders and moved to clear petty traders from streets in the main cities across Niger. In the process, many petty traders suffered property loss and more crucially a loss of clientele as customers no longer knew where to find them. Dolé market has since been renovated but to sell in the new market, traders will have to pay registration and rental fees. This privatization of the market area will work to exclude small scale traders who can’t afford the registration and rental fees. Unfortunately, most of the smaller scale traders are women.

## POVERTY DYNAMICS, WITH A FOCUS ON TRANSITORY AND SUSTAINED ESCAPES

The previous sections explored the macro and meso contexts of poverty reduction from the literature and FGDs, respectively, and then briefly presented results from other research on poverty reduction and poverty dynamics in Niger. This section introduces analysis of the Living Standards Measurements Survey - National Survey on Household Living Conditions and Agriculture (ECVM/A), a nationally representative survey of 3,436 households across Niger in 2011 and 2014. As the panel data only covers two years, here we focus on escapes from poverty and descents into poverty, rather than transitory and sustained escapes which we instead rely on the qualitative data to assess.

Panel data analysis using the national poverty line reveals that over half of the sample was poor in at least one of the two survey years, with 22% of households chronically poor (Figure 4). **Around 18% of households escaped poverty, between the waves, though a smaller share (12%) fell into poverty over the period.** The high mobility across survey years justifies an investigation into drivers of mobility amongst the various poverty trajectories, and how to nurture escapes from poverty in Niger.

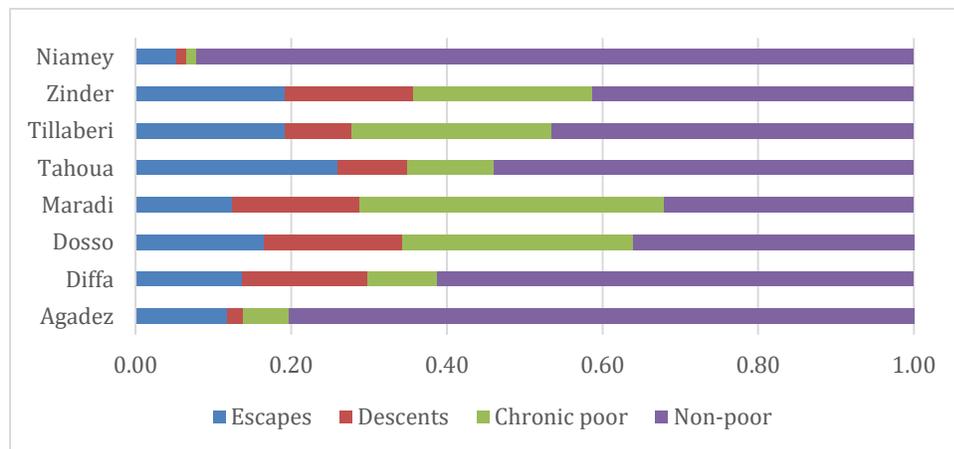
Figure 4: Poverty trajectories in Niger, percent of households, 2011-2014



When disaggregating the dataset by region of residence, we observe varied mobility rates (Figure 5). Mobility is lowest in Niamey, where 9 in 10 households are classified as ‘never poor’, meaning that they were never below the poverty line in 2011 or 2014. Mobility in contrast is highest in Zinder, where

poverty escapes and descents constitute 36% of panel households in the region. Niamey benefits from the presence of all main government offices, a massively growing aid industry and inflows of funding to support the Nigerien military and border police. Agadez, also with low mobility, experienced a boom during the survey period, mainly due to the migrant industry but also with the opening up of artisanal gold mines in Djado (McCullough et al., 2017). Non-poor rates were lowest and chronic poverty rates were highest in Maradi, where 39% of households in the region were poor in both survey years. Chronic poverty has been a feature of Maradi for some time. This has been attributed to factors including population density, decreasing farm sizes, food insecurity, and unpredictable rainfall (CPRC, 2011).

Figure 5: Regional differences in poverty trajectories, percent of households, 2011-2014



## WHY DO SOME HOUSEHOLDS ESCAPE POVERTY ONLY TO FALL BACK INTO IT, WHILE OTHERS ESCAPE POVERTY AND REMAIN OUT OF POVERTY OVER TIME?

This section investigates the extent to which various factors help promote or constrain the ability of households to escape poverty sustainably. These factors are grouped into those relating to: (i) household resource base; (ii) household attributes and capacities; (iii) engagement in certain activities; and (iv) shocks. The investigation relies on mixed methods research, comprising:

- Analysis of two waves of the National Survey on Household Living Conditions and Agriculture in 2011 and 2014 (see Box 2 for the quantitative approach employed in this paper, and the Annex for regression results and summary statistics based on survey data); and
- Life histories with 20 urban and 20 rural households, spanning transitory and sustained escapers and the chronically poor, in the Zinder region (see the Annex for a presentation of qualitative tools used to guide the fieldwork).

It is worth noting here that the quantitative approach to the analysis relies on two-wave data, to assess determinants of mobility amongst households that have escaped or descended into poverty between 2011 and 2014, regardless of pre-survey poverty status. The life histories go beyond the survey period to explore the factors supporting sustained escapes from poverty compared with transitory escapes. In other words, an escape in the quantitative data could turn into either a sustained or transitory escape later down the line. The differences between households who experienced sustained escapes and those who only experienced transitory escapes is explored during the life history interviews. The factors associated

with downward mobility in the quantitative data is also in turn indicative of why households may fall into poverty either for the first time or through a transitory escape.

The findings in this section draw on a combination of quantitative and/or qualitative research analysis, as specified in the text.

### Box 2: Approach to quantitative analysis

This study employs fixed effects regressions to investigate determinants of welfare mobility amongst households that have escaped from poverty or descended into poverty. Fixed effects regressions allow us to explore changes over time within households (rather than between households) and how this impacts monetary welfare through per capita expenditures during survey years. In the equation:

$$\text{Log}(\text{Welfare}_{i,t}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Head}_{i,t} + \beta_2 \text{Region}_{i,t} + \beta_3 H_{i,t}$$

for  $v_i = (1, \text{Head}_i, \text{Region}_i, H_i)$

where  $\text{Welfare}_i$  is the per capita expenditure of the household  $i$ ,

$\text{Head}$  is a vector of variables defining the characteristics of the household head,

$\text{Region}$  is a set of dummy variables on household region, and if it is urban or rural, and

$H$  is a vector of household specific controls.

In the analysis, we describe results across urban and rural samples unless stated otherwise, and only comment on results that are statistically significant at conventional levels ( $p < 0.05$ ; where  $0.05 < p < 0.10$  this is explicitly highlighted as marginally significant). We also include a 5% band above and below the poverty line in which we exclude households from the analysis to minimize measurement errors. See Annex for regressors and regression results.

Note: the presence of two-wave panel data renders a fixed effects model a better fit for our analysis, compared to an analysis of transitory and sustained poverty escapes as conducted in companion case studies (i.e. Scott et al., 2016), which rely on multinomial regressions to compare the longer poverty trajectories (PNP and PNN) between households.

This report aims to understand the drivers of mobility in welfare amongst households that have escaped or fallen into poverty, with a focus on what explains why some households are able to sustain poverty escape, while other households escape poverty only to fall back into poverty. The next section analyses drivers of upward and downward mobility based on life history interviews, as well as on panel regressions carried out on the subset of households that have escaped or fallen into poverty between survey years.

## INITIAL HOUSEHOLD RESOURCE BASE

### Key Message:

- **Regression analysis reveals that households which see an increase in land size over time that goes beyond the median in the first survey year experience an associated rise in monetary welfare by 15%.**
- **Household resources in rural areas are traditionally in the form of livestock and land. Those who are able to expand their land holdings and diversify household resources away from only investing in livestock are more likely to experience sustained escapes.**
- **Intergenerational wealth plays a significant role in determining whether an individual is likely to experience a sustained escape from poverty. For example, investments in land in the qualitative data was often passed on to offspring who could then use the land for income or activities that could contribute to a sustained escape.**

### **Land inheritance: Size matters**

The regression analysis indicates that **households which see an increase in land size over time that goes beyond the median in the first survey year experience an associated rise in monetary welfare by 15%**. An increase in land size over time, due to inheritance or investments, was moreover a route for sustained escapes according to life history interviews. Those who were able to invest in land, especially urban land, were less prone to descend into poverty in the face of shocks. Qualitative findings suggest that investment in land by urban and rural households in Zinder also increased the probability that the next generation would enjoy a sustained escape from poverty.

Indeed, land, often through inheritance, often enabled income or activities that could support a sustained escape. **Intergenerational wealth, passed on in the form of land was an important factor distinguishing sustained escapers from transitory escapers in the fieldwork.** Those with adequate land were able to divide their plots and pass on wealth. Moreover, soil fertility and access considered, once they inherited a field of approximately 2.5Ha or more, they were more likely to be able to build a livelihood around the land or were able to sell the land and invest in urban property.

**However, those with less land (for example only one field of 2Ha) were not able to pass on enough land to each of their children to enable their children to earn an adequate livelihood from agriculture,** according to the LHs. Children from these families struggled to find alternative sources of stable income and thus tended to experience more transitory escapes from poverty during their lives between times when they gained employment, most often in manual labour or petty trade. In urban areas, families just above the poverty line were often able to pass on a house but as this did not create an additional source of income, it was not a key factor in sustaining escapes from poverty.

**Women tended to benefit less from the transfer of intergenerational wealth as according to Islamic rules, they receive half of what their brothers inherit.** Even when they only inherit half of what their brothers inherit, this sometimes played a role in sustaining escapes from poverty (Box 3). There were however cases where women did not inherit their share of the land due to the death of their mothers at an early age and a break in relations with their paternal families. For example, Haowa Moussa from a village in Droum, lost her mother when she was a child. She went to live with her grandmother and lost contact with her paternal family. When her father died, she did not inherit anything.

There were examples of interviewees who had benefited from distributions of reclaimed land through NGO projects thus increasing the size of their landholding. In the case of Aichatou Yacouba (sustained escaper from village in Dogo), she benefitted from a land restoration project by receiving an additional field. Aichatou was able to use the income from the harvest to buy personal effects that she needed. However, it should be noted that it was not purely the distribution of land that facilitated her escape but rather a combination of different economic activities that she was able to draw on when faced with shocks.

#### *Box 3: How women's inheritance can facilitate sustained escapes*

Aliya Djibo experienced a period of poverty when she first got married; her husband was a warrior for the Sultan which meant an irregular salary. She started to sell wood, collecting it from the outskirts of Zinder and selling it in small bundles in Kara Kara suburb. However, there were variations in demand according to the season and people weren't willing to pay much more than the cost of transporting the wood.

Fortunately, Aliya had grown up in a rich family in a village outside of Zinder. When her father died, she inherited cows and land. She used this wealth to buy a plot of land for herself and her husband, and an additional investment property in Zinder. She diversified her income by selling nuts and vegetables.

However, the investment in property produced a regular rental income which she was able to use to sustain her escape into her old age.

*Source: Life history interview with Aliya Djibo, 58 years old, a sustained poverty escaper in suburb in Zinder*

### ***From livestock to land and beyond***

Many LHIs continue to invest their savings in cows, bulls, goats, sheep and poultry. However, **while an increase in livestock did facilitate escapes from poverty in some cases in the fieldwork, losses were common and were a feature of transitory escapes from poverty as animals succumbed to disease or people were forced to sell when the price was low.** Hamissou Souley, a transitory escaper from a village in Droum bought two bulls, each costing CFA120,000, with his savings from his work as a guard in Nigeria, only to lose them shortly after to disease. Zeinab Abdou invested her savings from making mats in a goat but was forced to sell it at a reduced price to help her family through a poor harvest. Distribution of livestock by development projects seemed to have a limited impact on people's trajectories among those that were interviewed. A key problem identified by interviewees was that animals kept at veterinary centers for vaccination are not well fed. When distributed at the village level, the animals are often in poor condition and vulnerable to starvation and disease.

**Moreover, where wealth was concentrated in livestock, absolute inter-generational wealth was decreasing.** For example, where a farmer from a village in Droum owns three chickens and one cart, his father owned 3 camels, 25 cows, 19 ewes and 17 goats, and 30 chickens (Oumarou Adamou, village in Droum, experiencing chronic poverty). Oumarou has invested in an irrigated garden which his father didn't have but the decline in savings in the form of livestock is notable. Similar intergenerational downward trajectories were noted in other households who continued to invest their savings in livestock. Some of the decrease in herd size can be attributed to the declining utility of camels and donkeys but there was also a notable decline in the number of cows between generations. There was evidence that some households were transitioning from investing their savings in livestock to investing in land, especially irrigated land and equipment to process food such as peanut oil extraction equipment or milling machines. Others used their savings to invest in transport such as carts or motorcycles.

### ***Electricity: Positive overall, but with the risk of high costs***

A 10% increase in asset value over time is associated with a marginal 0.3% increase in per capita expenditures of the household. Furthermore, in the regression, **of all resource variables investigated, households that newly acquired electricity in 2014 saw the largest increase in welfare, by almost 23%.** This might be on account of reverse causality, where households spend on electricity when they experience improved welfare. When exploring electricity descriptively, in the base year of the panel dataset, we observe the rarity of electricity coverage. Only 4% of households that either descended into or escaped from poverty had electricity in their dwelling, and most in urban areas of the dataset. Power cuts were also highly common, affecting 85% of these households in the week before they were surveyed in the panel dataset, at a rate of 2 cuts per day on average. The fieldwork further qualified benefits of electricity, revealing several instances where neighboring households access electricity through the same connection of a newly-electrified household, and could result in high bills. The officially connected house sometimes got into debt because they were left with large bills to pay that they could not afford.

## **HOUSEHOLD ATTRIBUTES**

### **Key Message:**

- **Quantitative findings indicate that having more children is associated with an increased likelihood of a descent into poverty.**

- **Households that are newly female-headed by the latest survey year see a large associated decrease in monetary welfare by 22% according to the regression analysis.**
- **Qualitative findings indicate that teenage marriages are more likely to break down and end in separation or divorce, and as a result increase the risk of a descent into poverty, especially for women coming from families just above the poverty line.**

### *Dependents: A stressor but with some benefits*

**Regression results indicate that an increase in the size of the household by one member over the survey years is associated with a 13% reduction in per capita expenditures.** Descriptively in the panel dataset, chronically poor households had 5 children on average, compared to just three amongst households escaping poverty. There were mixed findings from the LHIs on the effect of having more children on poverty trajectories. On the one hand, some interviewees described, how being an only child meant that they didn't have to share their food and as a result had a better diet. In urban areas, the cost of educating all children was clearly a burden on the household, especially on households that were on a downward trajectory.

**On the other hand, women described how, in polygamous households, the wife with the most children gets the largest inheritance when her husband dies.** There were several cases where children's income helped keep the household out of poverty. For example, Haoua Malou lost her income when her business went into debt. Her husband did not save when he was employed by the state and when he retired, they discovered that his pension was irregular and insufficient. Fortunately, one of her sons was able to get a job in a factory in Nigeria and one of her co-spouse's child started working in transport. These two salaries helped support the household through a difficult period (Haoua Malou, Zinder town, transitory escaper). In some cases, one or two of the children succeeded in earning high incomes through getting a state job or selling fuel on the black market and were supporting the whole family, including 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> wives. For example, Habsaitou Amadou from Zinder town faced an uncertain future when her husband lost his job at a local NGO and his old age prevented him getting another job. One of Habsaitou's co-spouse's children finished her education and got a job in a school. Her monthly salary supported the whole household including Habsaitou (Habsaitou Amadou, Zinder town).

### *Female headship and marriage*

**Households that are newly female-headed by the latest survey year see a large decrease in monetary welfare by 22%.** Of course, this is affected by the reason for female headship. In the LHIs, there were several examples of descents into poverty precipitated by widowhood or divorce. For several women, their teenage years were especially volatile due to successive marital breakdowns. For example, Fatima Amou (Zinder town, transitory escaper) experienced several transitory escapes and descents into poverty as she divorced seven times during her teenage years and early twenties. Despite a general perception that marriages involving young girls were more likely to result in divorce, teenage marriage continues to be widely practiced according to the qualitative findings. Across different age groups in the qualitative sample, women were mostly married by the age of 14. Several female interviewees described running away from their husband's house as they were not mature enough for marriage. If they ran away for long enough, the husband divorced them. **In cases of divorce, the girl's family usually has to repay the cash part of the dowry they received and this, combined with other shocks resulted in descents back into poverty for some households.** For example, Salay Mahaman's family fell into poverty following the divorce of his sister and a year of bad harvest where his father was unable to repay his loans (Salay Mahaman, village in Dogo, sustained escaper). Several interviewees also described periods of hardship following the divorce of their parents. One woman who grew up in Zinder described having to move to her mother's village where there was not enough food. Another man from Zinder described

quitting school when his parents divorced and he went to live with his mother’s family in the village.

## HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITIES

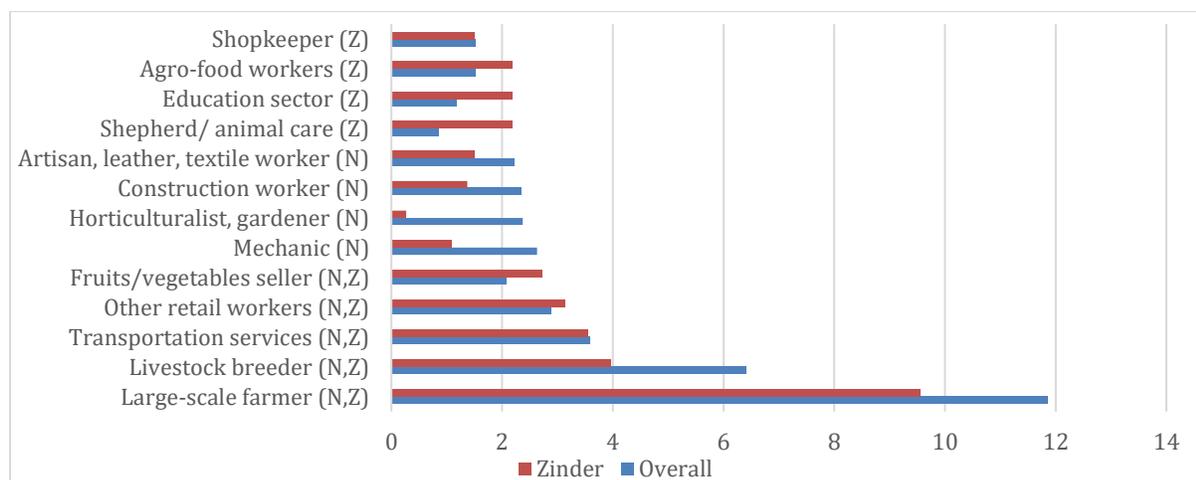
### Key Message:

- From the life history interviews, people’s choice of livelihood is heavily influenced by one’s network, rather than the choices between all different livelihood options available. Instead of a ‘livelihood choice architecture’, it may be more useful to consider a ‘livelihood network architecture’.
- Households which over time develop a non-farm enterprise see an associated increase in monetary welfare by 13% in the regression analysis, the largest increase amongst variables relating to household activities. Amongst all households escaping poverty, there was also a wider range of enterprise types relative to households descending into poverty.
- The regression analysis reveals that households that newly receive remittances from domestic sources experience an associated 13% increase in welfare over time. In the LHIs, insecurity in Nigeria and Libya, and the devaluation of the Naira was a clear factor influencing people’s decision to change to local migration. Combining domestic or international migration with farm activities was a common strategy in rural areas..

### Common livelihoods vary by poverty trajectory

Figure 6 lists the most prevalent livelihoods in 2014, excluding small-scale farmers, which were the most common occupation for household heads across Niger (38%) and even more so in the Zinder region (54%). Agriculture was still the most common livelihood, comprising farming and livestock breeding. Work in transport, retail, and fruits and vegetable sales were also highly common across the sample. Annex C lists common livelihoods and typical risks and rewards associated with these.

Figure 6: Ten most common livelihoods across Niger (N) and in Zinder region (Z), 2014



Differences in livelihood also emerge by poverty trajectory, where the fourth and fifth most common activity amongst household heads that had escaped poverty were in gardening and construction work, suggesting that these may be areas which are relatively undersaturated and offering opportunities for diversification (Table I). This complements findings from the LHIs where investments in irrigated land, irrigation technology and food processing equipment was noted among sustained escapers.

Table 1: Livelihoods by poverty trajectory, 2014

| Chronic poor                     | Poverty descents        | Poverty escapes            |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Small-scale farmer               | Small-scale farmer      | Small-scale farmer         |
| Large-scale farmer               | Large-scale farmer      | Large-scale farmer         |
| Livestock breeder                | Livestock breeder       | Livestock breeder          |
| Artisan, leather, textile worker | Transportation services | Horticulturalist, gardener |
| Other retail workers             | Shepherd/ animal care   | Construction worker        |

Across Niger in 2014, differences in employment activity also were found by gender and education of the household head. For example, women were more likely to be engaged in small-scale agriculture or retail and food sales. In contrast, men were likely to be small- or large-scale farmers, breed livestock, engage in transportation services, or be mechanics. The livelihoods also considerably varied by education background. While household heads with primary education or less typically had livelihoods corresponding with the top five activities listed in Table 1, the minority of heads with secondary education instead were most likely to be school teachers, engaged in administrative functions, or upper management in the health sector.

From the LHIs, it was clear that choice of livelihood is heavily influenced by one’s network, rather than the choices between all different livelihood options available. For example, it was impossible for men and women without appropriate contacts in Nigeria to get into trade. People whose parents were traders often had to wait until their parents were very elderly or died before they could ‘inherit’ their network of contacts and begin trading at scale themselves. As market information is limited, successful trade depends on having reliable and trustworthy trading partners. Similarly, access to training in trades such as construction also depended on having appropriate connections. Certain villages in the Zinder region had connections with construction operations in Nigeria and young people were able to secure apprenticeships and work through these connections. In contrast, although, there are large new warehouses and houses being constructed in Zinder town, young people in the villages that were covered in this research didn’t have relevant contacts and so weren’t able to benefit from these opportunities. Instead of a ‘livelihood choice architecture’, it may be more useful to consider a ‘livelihood network architecture’. Within a livelihood network architecture, one could look ways in which networks could be expanded to include marginalized members of the community.

**Non-farm enterprises: Beneficial but with risks**

**Households which over time develop a non-farm enterprise see their monetary welfare increase by 13% in the regression analysis, the largest increase amongst variables relating to household activities.** When disaggregating results by area of residence, this finding is only statistically significant amongst rural households. The enterprises amongst households escaping poverty was more diversified compared to households falling into poverty. While enterprises amongst poverty escapers and descents in the panel dataset spanned vegetables, meat, and clothes, escapers were also involved in selling perfume and petrol. Similarly, individuals across trajectories were involved in administration and transport businesses, while those escaping poverty were uniquely employed also in health, restaurants, and postal services. Finally, while ‘personal services’ was the most common enterprise category across households escaping (16%) and falling into poverty (14%), this category was much more prevalent in the Zinder and Tahoua regions. The type of personal service also varied. Marabout/ sorcery services were the most common personal service enterprise listed for households escaping poverty (15%, compared to just 3% for households falling into poverty), and were typically undertaken by men across urban and rural areas in the latest panel year.

According to the regression analysis, the associated impact of non-farm enterprises more generally also differs by gender, in favor of female-headed households who experience higher relative improvements in welfare over time. Supporting the quantitative analysis, the LHIs also revealed several examples of women who enjoyed a sustained escape from poverty through moving from agriculture to a non-farm enterprise. The most common non-farm enterprises that facilitated a sustained escape from poverty among women in the fieldwork were petty trade and extracting and selling peanut oil. **Women who were able to do this either benefited from inheriting trading connections from their families or receiving a loan or gift from a neighbor/wealthy person.** The informal market in Zinder allowed urban women to set themselves up as sellers of peanut oil with relatively low seed capital. Peanut oil extraction was a factor in facilitating sustained escapes but it took a toll on some women's health. Kadija Madou, a transitory escaper from Kara Kara suburb in Zinder, fell back into poverty after she was forced to abandon her extracting activities due to breathing problems that developed as a result of the extraction process.

However, not all non-farm enterprises facilitated escapes as evidenced in the fieldwork. Several interviewees described getting into debt after selling too much produce on credit or paying unexpected import taxes/bribes. These interviewees were uneducated and their lack of literacy may well have made it difficult to keep track of their credit/debit and tax bills (see Box 4). In other instances, several rural women interviewed were involved in mat weaving which supplemented the household income. Demand for mats had increased locally with the construction of new mosques in neighboring villages. Locals bought the mats to donate to the mosque or to use for their own praying purposes. However, income from mat making was low (CFA1000-2000 for a mat that could take up to 3 weeks to make) so this activity was not a factor in sustaining escapes. Zeinab Abdou from a village in Droum, despite weaving mats almost full time, was nevertheless found to be on a downward trajectory. Her downward trajectory was precipitated by declining crop yields and stress sales of her small ruminants to help her husband.

In the LHIs, several educated men succeeded in getting jobs in the civil service or with NGOs.. Men who succeeded in getting a job with a regular income tended to experience an increase in their standard of living. However, men who worked with NGOs, particularly local NGOs, often had short term contracts and experienced periods of vulnerability between contracts.

*Box 4: The challenges of managing credit and import taxes for small business owners*

Nefissa Boukari imported household goods that women buy for their daughters' dowries such as mattresses, kitchen utensils, plates and thermos dishes. The most profitable time for her business was during Ousmane's time in power (1993-1995). Ousmane liberalized trade and abolished import taxes: "Honestly, during the reign of Mamane Ousmane, there isn't one trader who would say that he did not earn a lot or he is not proud of these years. Because during this time, you take products from Nigeria to your place and you don't pay anything en route. Nobody asks you for one single franc. It was during this time that I bought livestock and started to buy things for my daughters' dowries."

After Ousmane was ousted in a coup, Barré reinstated import taxes and Nefissa experienced a lot of difficulties. Often her goods were seized at the border because she didn't have enough to pay the taxes. Sometimes other traders would help her out so that she could get her goods back. But at times, the taxes were more than the value of the goods. She had difficulty passing on the cost of the taxes to her clients as they were often aware of the price of goods in Nigeria and so were reluctant to pay a higher price. Sometimes the women offered to pay the extra cost in installments but this resulted in outstanding debts that Nefissa found difficult to manage. Eventually, she 'guzzled' all her finances and now cannot afford to go to Nigeria herself.

*Source: Life history interview with Nefissa Boukari, Zinder town. Translated from Hausa.*

## ***Agriculture and migration***

As yields from rain fed staple crops were widely reported as having declined since the 1970s and field sizes for many households reduced, **most rural men interviewed during the qualitative research practiced a mix of agriculture and migration, with migrants often returning during the wet season to plant, tend to their crops and harvest.** The difference between sustained escapers and transitory escapers who combined migration with agriculture is that sustained escapers had a network that linked them to specific trades such as masonry, security or the fuel trade. These networks were often based on villages having connections to certain trades. For example, Sabon Gari had connections with the construction sector in Nigeria. Gouloumba had connections with Libyan pastoralists. However, within these village based networks, there were hierarchies. Those who had attended Koranic schools in Nigeria had a more diverse network, while those whose family had a history of trading had links to specific traders. Different networks allowed migrants to access work faster and to begin gradually building their wealth over time. Once migrants had built up some wealth, they were much better able to weather the vagaries of migrant work. Transitory escapers amongst the life history respondents were more likely to spend their savings early on in their careers on dowries or healthcare leaving them more vulnerable to income insecurity typical of informal migrant labor.

Examples of sustained escapes in rural areas of the fieldwork occurred when families worked together to diversity their activities and balance variations in income from agricultural produce, livestock breeding, value-added agricultural produce and migrant work. **Some households chose to maximize their income from migrant activities by ensuring at least one male member of the family worked in Nigeria even during the wet season.** For example Moussa Souley from a village in Droum, got a job in construction in Nigeria. However, he also had land to tend to in Niger. He therefore alternated migrating with his son, ensuring that they kept a job in construction while also tending the family land. Other examples of sustained escapes occurred when households were able to transition from migrant labor in Nigeria to importing food stuffs and selling them through small shops or ‘boutiques’.

**There were some examples of sustained escapes based on a diversification within agriculture into small-scale vegetable production** (maraichage) to complement crop-based agriculture. While it was not possible to sell vegetables at the village level, access to local markets meant that these small-scale producers were able to sell their produce. Vegetable production helped smooth household income when a household experienced a shock. Irrigated land is increasingly seen as more productive than rain-fed agriculture. As Ibrahim Moumouni (village in Dogo, transitory escaper) noted, “With the problem of soil depletion and infertility, gardening brings more than agriculture as was practiced by my parents when I was a child” (Translated from Hausa).

**In urban areas of the fieldwork, there were indications that there is a gradual move away from combining agricultural work in people’s village of origin with urban based activities.** Older urbans dwellers were much more likely to describe combining agricultural work during the wet season in villages surrounding Zinder with petty trade or manual labour during the dry season, especially during their twenties and thirties. This strategy did not necessarily guarantee a sustained escape in the past but harvests provided supplementary income to households. There are increasing opportunities for diversifying away from agriculture mainly through trade and transport and some interviewees described being able to support their households through accessing an income in these areas. However, those who were not able to access the more lucrative livelihoods and relied on daily labour were potentially more vulnerable than their parents who combined agriculture with daily labour. Some younger interviewees noted that the land is now so unproductive that without fertilizer, there is no point in farming. But without the capital to invest in fertilizer, they invested their efforts in getting daily labour instead. As Mahamdou Iliia noted “I have a garden but I don’t work it as its not productive and needs inputs [fertilizer] which I can’t afford. I can’t benefit from it as each day, I need to invest my time in finding work so I can eat”

(Zinder town, translated from Hausa).

### **Local migration as an increasingly viable strategy**

**The regression analysis reveals that households, which receive remittances from domestic sources during the second year of the panel survey (i.e. 2014), experience a 13% increase in welfare over time.** Domestic remittances were more common than international remittances amongst households escaping or falling into poverty. When disaggregating by area of residence, we furthermore observe that this associated impact is larger (18%) in rural areas, where not purely just domestic transfers, but also the combination of domestic and international transfers that is also associated with an increase (by 20%) in welfare. In contrast, an increase in both sources of remittances were associated with reductions in monetary welfare in urban areas (13-16%), perhaps reflecting reverse causality and its use in helping mitigate severe descents into poverty. **In the LHIs, insecurity in Nigeria and Libya, and a devaluation in the Naira was a clear factor influencing people's decision to change to local migration.** The development of onion farming in oases outside Agadez in the Air mountains, the migrant economy in Agadez and the discovery of gold in Djado have created an informal labour market that is increasingly more attractive than Nigeria. Transport costs are cheaper and the value of the CFA more stable.

However, since 2016, there has been a clampdown on migrant smuggling in Agadez and artisanal mining in Djado so **the effect of remittances from local sources may already be decreasing.** Furthermore, the collapse in the price of onions in 2017 following an over production relative to demand meant that remittances from local sources were severely impacted. Interviewees reported earnings in 2017 half of what they had earned in 2016. The instability in the informal labour market in Niger made it difficult for people to secure a sustained escape.

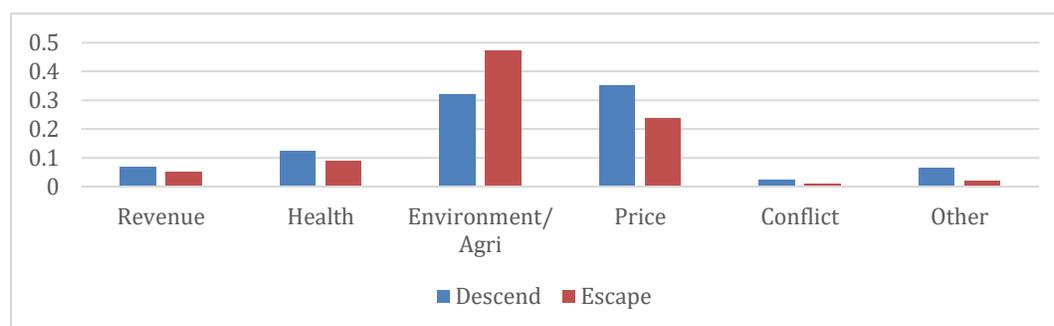
## **HOUSEHOLD SHOCKS AND STRESSORS**

### **Key Message:**

- **Experiencing a price shock was associated with reductions in monetary welfare by 14% in the quantitative analysis.**
- **In the quantitative and qualitative data, environmental and agriculture-related shocks were most common. Ill health also was a key contributor to impoverishment in the qualitative data.**
- **The most common coping strategy in the latest survey year of the quantitative dataset was the use of savings (20%), followed by engaging in spiritual activities (10%), and seeking help from relatives or a friend (10%). Sustained escapers in urban and rural areas were also more likely to be able to use their family's connections, for example to secure jobs abroad, to help them recover from a period of shock induced poverty.**

Disaggregating the panel dataset in 2014 by type of shock, environmental shocks were commonly listed by households which had escaped from poverty, while price shocks were far more common amongst households that descended into poverty (Figure 7). Revenue and health shocks were more commonly cited in urban areas (23% and 15% in urban areas, respectively, compared to 4% and 9% in rural areas), while environmental shocks were more frequently reported in rural (40%) rather than urban (30%) areas. Additional regressions disaggregating by type of shock build on this finding to indicate that **a price shock over time could reduce monetary welfare by as much as 14%.**

Figure 7: Household shocks by type, 2014<sup>2</sup>



On being asked to retrospectively identify the major shocks that affected their welfare during specific periods in their lives, LH interviewees were most likely to identify the major famines of 1974 and 1985 and illnesses of different members of their families. **LHIs revealed that health spending was largely in reaction to shocks rather than preventative measures.** The most common health shocks that people mentioned in LHIs were related to birth complications and injuries resulting from motorbike accidents. While both sustained and transitory escapers were likely to use livestock to pay for health costs, for transitory escapers, the health costs arose when they had not yet amassed enough wealth to easily recover from a shock which meant that the shock resulted in a descent into poverty.

Another shock mentioned in the fieldwork stemmed from the pressures of dowry. Traditionally, intergenerational wealth was passed on through the dowry system. Parents paid for their son’s dowry which was usually transferred to the bride’s family. The bride’s family usually provide the bride with goods to set her up in her new life including beds, mattresses, fabric, pots, plates, chests, jewelry etc. **In households just above the poverty line, the transfer of wealth from parents to their son’s in-laws sometimes resulted in fall in living standards and a descent into poverty. Several transitory escapers in the fieldwork were young men who were the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> son.** Their families had spent their savings on dowries for elder brothers so they were forced to pay for their dowry themselves (Box 5). In a few cases, the cost of the dowry forced young men to sell their investments and subsequently made them more vulnerable to shocks in the early years of their married lives.

*Box 5: Self-paid dowry ultimately increasing vulnerability to shocks*

Adamou lives in a village in Droum. His father practiced agriculture, livestock breeding and trade. However, the family’s resources were depleted by paying for his elder brother’s dowry so his family could not afford to pay for his dowry. When Adamou was 15, he first went to Nigeria to work but when he wasn’t paid, he decided to go to Agadez to work on the onion farm in the oases. He got this job through connections that people in his village had with onion farmers in Agadez. The first year he went there, he managed to earn CFA500,000. He used that to pay for his dowry and help his parents. The next year that he went, he only earned CFA150,000 as there was an oversupply of onions and the price had collapsed. When his wife gave birth to two sons, he took a loan to pay for two sheep for the baptism. He paid back

<sup>2</sup> Note: Revenue shocks in the dataset are: loss of regular transfers from another household, from non-agricultural households, bankruptcy, large loss of wage revenues, and loss of a wage-earning household member.

that loan after the next season in Agadez but he has not managed to invest his savings in any substantial resources which makes him vulnerable to shocks. When his wife became ill, his father gave him a goat to cover his expenses.

*Source: Life history interview with Adamou Souley, a transitory escaper in Droum*

To cope with these negative shocks, households engaged in various strategies. The most **common strategy in the latest survey year of the quantitative dataset was the use of savings (20%), followed by engaging in spiritual activities (10%), and seeking help from relatives or a friend (10%). Sustained escapers in urban and rural areas in the fieldwork were also more likely to be able to use their families' connections to help them recover from a period of shock induced poverty.** For example, from the fieldwork, a trader from a village in Droum suffered losses during the 1985 famine, which resulted in him getting into debt. As a coping strategy, he migrated to Nigeria. As his father had been a trader who imported foodstuffs from Nigeria, he was able to capitalize on his father's connections and start trading in cereals. When he returned to Niger a few years later, he continued to use his connections with Nigerian traders and started importing cereals. A man who grew up as a pastoralist near Goure described the effects of the 1974 and 1985 famines on his family's herd. By the late 80s, their herd was decimated. However through connections that his family had with Arab traders, he was able to get an apprenticeship as a driver and ultimately get a job as a driver for the government.

**For transitory escapers their social connections were less likely to be able to help them recover from a period of shock induced poverty.** There were examples of family members or neighbors giving animals as part of the habanaye system or, in urban areas, helping out with electricity costs but this support was often not significant enough to prevent a fall back into poverty. However, even relatively wealthy families don't always have connections in the right networks to recover from shocks. When Taiba Issou's husband died, she was not able to access his pension as she did not have any connections at the Office of Pensions who would facilitate the process.

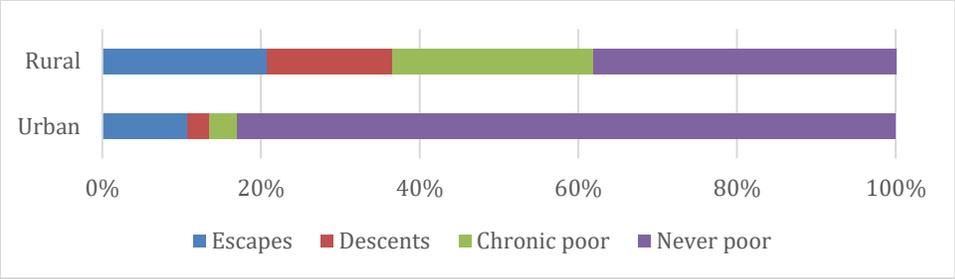
## **SPOTLIGHT ON URBAN POVERTY**

### **Key Messages:**

- **Poverty mobility is much lower in urban areas, where there is instead a higher share of households that are not poor in either survey year (though a lower share living in chronic poverty).**
- **Impoverished households in urban compared to rural areas are more likely to experience ill health that acts as a disabling factor in their daily activities.**

**Descriptively in the panel dataset, we observe that poverty mobility is much higher in rural areas compared to urban areas.** For example, escapes from poverty between 2011 and 2014 are almost twice as high in rural compared with urban areas, while descents are greater by five times in rural compared to urban areas. Similarly, chronic poverty rates are also more than seven times as high in rural areas relative to urban areas (Figure 8).

*Figure 8: Poverty trajectory by urban vs rural area of residence*



**Resources and activities**

We next undertake regression analysis for households residing in urban areas and that escaped or fell into poverty over the survey years. In the regression analysis, **transfers received locally and from abroad are interestingly associated with reductions in per capita income** in urban areas, by 13% and 16%, respectively. The finding may be on account of reverse causality, where migration for example to Nigeria as part of the ‘exodus’ may be a coping strategy for some urban households to help mitigate severe descents into poverty. Also in the regression analysis, households which see a rise in their asset value, as well as an increase in rooms per person, and those that newly have electricity and sanitary toilets experience an associated rise in their expenditures, again likely on account of reverse causality as noted earlier. The finding on asset values is statistically significant only at marginal levels.

**Attributes and capacities**

*Health and mobility*

While the above findings explore poverty dynamics in urban areas, it is also the case that many household heads move between urban and rural areas, sometimes seasonally for jobs, or otherwise for longer spells of time. On the former, rural-urban circular migration in Niger is a common livelihood strategy, and one which increases in years where the harvest is poor. A study by Leighton (2010) also explores permanent migration to urban areas. He categorizes the urban vulnerable population into four groups: migrant population who find a better quality of life in urban areas and choose to remain; vulnerable residents with no land who are structurally food insecure; vulnerable residents with access to land who live in the city outskirts and have small amounts of income from their own production; and marginalized and disabled populations that may congregate in communities with low access to water and sanitation as well as health and education facilities (Mohiddin et al., 2012). This last group could be particularly prevalent amongst impoverished households, with health issues contributing to their impoverishment. Investigating this in the panel dataset, we see that **16% of impoverished household heads in urban areas had a health problem that prevented the head of household from carrying out normal activities for more than two weeks**, compared to just 2% amongst households that escaped poverty in urban areas. These dynamics differ from rural areas, where just 3% of impoverished household heads had a health problem preventing their normal activities.

**STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINED POVERTY ESCAPES**

**Key Message:**

- Some life history respondents who experienced sustained escapes from poverty invested in livestock but, investing in livestock was a high-risk strategy with losses common. Other sustained escapers diversified investments into agricultural land, vegetable gardening, and urban property.

- **Households in both urban and rural areas of the fieldwork resort to domestic and international migration as key coping strategies. Social networks were important in developing more sustainable sources of income from international migration.**
- **Finally, several female interviewees were able to invest in key assets such as push carts for transporting water and peanut oil extraction equipment that sustained escapes through accessing money from formal savings groups and money contributed at baptism ceremonies.**

This section provides initial hypotheses on strategies for longer-term, sustained escapes from poverty, based on the sample of sustained escapers interviewed in the fieldwork.

### **Strategy I: Continued investments in livestock**

As a saving method, investment in livestock certainly has its advantages. Despite fluctuations in price, there is always a demand for meat. This means that in crisis situations, households can sell livestock to traders and so can access cash relatively quickly. Furthermore, the demand for meat is likely to grow as the urban population moves away from small scale livestock breeding.

**Those who were successful in using livestock breeding to sustainably escape poverty used two strategies. One strategy was to specialize in animal husbandry during gestation periods.**

Through specializing, other people are then willing to pay for that expertise. For example, Salay Mahaman from a village in Dogo, specialized in animal husbandry during gestation. When he achieved good results with his own herd, other people from the area started to give him their animals to care for during gestation periods. He also managed calving and lambing (See Box 6). However livestock breeding is becoming an increasingly risky livelihood and those who have the option, diversify their activities or indeed, use it to progress into more lucrative livelihoods, as demonstrated in the below example

#### *Box 6: The benefits and risks of livestock breeding in securing escapes from poverty*

Salay Mahaman grew up in a family that practiced a combination of pastoralism and agriculture. When he was a child, he worked for his father, bringing his family's animals and animals of wealthier people in the village to pasture. However, when he was a teenager, his family got into debt. His father had taken a loan of peanut seeds from a government seed program but due to a poor harvest, he was unable to repay the loan. His older sister then got divorced and, following a review by the village chief of the divorce case, the family were required to repay the dowry.

The family sold their three cows (each worth CFA 25,000) and their relations in the village contributed to help them pay back the dowry. The man and his father started collecting wood to earn money. The family also migrated to Nigeria during the wet season to work in vegetable gardens. The man lived in poverty for several years until he married.

Salay Mahaman married very well. As was the tradition among the Peul, the bride's family give the newlyweds two cows so that they can have milk. When the bride's father passed away, she inherited those two cows, plus 2 additional cows, 3 goats, 2 ewes and 2 chickens. Salay started engaging in livestock breeding, specializing in investing in productive breeds. Other people in his village began paying him impregnate their female animals and to assist with calving/lambing. With the profits he earned from livestock breeding, he bought a cart and was then able to charge for transport of materials.

Salay's specialization in livestock breeding enabled him to earn money from looking after people's animals however there are several factors to note in his life history. His wife's inheritance enabled him to specialize

in livestock breeding. Once he had enough money saved from livestock breeding, he moved out of livestock breeding and into transport.

*Source: Life history interview with Salay Mahaman, sustained poverty escaper in village in Dogo.*

**Another strategy that sustained escapers used was to sell livestock products directly to consumers.** When the road between Magaria and Zinder was being constructed, Aichatou Yacouba from a village in Dogo sold milk from her three cows to the construction workers. As the construction workers were onsite, a cold chain was not required and Aichatou was able to begin to sell milk with no initial set up costs. However, it's not clear how sustainable milk production would be at larger scale in the Zinder region. Declines in milk yields over the past 20 years were noted during LHIs indicating the increasing challenge of finding enough pasture for milk producing cows.

These two strategies are both labor intensive – for those who practice a combination of migration and agriculture/livestock breeding, these strategies would be difficult to manage. Furthermore, the second strategy depended on the customers being on-site. Once the construction of the road was complete, Aichatou sold milk to the local teacher and those who didn't have a lactating cow. However, her income decreased by CFA50-100 per day.

### **Strategy 2: Shifting from livestock to irrigated vegetable production, food processing and property investments**

While investment in livestock can facilitate sustained escapes, it represents a high-risk investment strategy. In urban and rural areas, there were indications that some have adjusted their investment strategies in response to the increased riskiness of livestock breeding. There was evidence from the LHIs that **households who had practiced pastoralism in the past were increasingly investing in land. There were several examples of households who diversified into vegetable gardening which helped smooth their income in the face of poor harvests or disease.** Local demand for vegetables is limited so this livelihood depends on a good transport system. There are increasing roads which make the transport of vegetables to local markets more feasible. As the population urbanizes, the demand for vegetables is likely to increase.

**Others were investing in technology for value addition to carry out some basic food processing or preservation** such as grinding machines for producing flour or powder from leaves, or fridges to cool water or drinks. However, sometimes investors lacked the funds to repair in the event of a breakdown. Unpredictable electricity costs were cited as an additional risk.

**An investment in urban property is another form of diversification practiced, and one that represents a much larger investment than an investment in a goat or ox.** Those who converted their wealth stored in livestock into urban property experienced significant increases in wealth. Aliya Djibo from Zinder described how her father owned a large herd of cows. When she inherited part of his wealth, she converted this into two properties in Zinder that she now rents out (see Box 3). Mamane Oumarou, a tailor who earned a stable salary during the late 1990s and early 2000s making clothes for civil servants invested his wealth in property rather than livestock as would have been the tradition in the past. In 2005, the number of international NGOs increased dramatically in Zinder as a humanitarian response was organized in response to the famine. Mamane was able to sell his property for a profit and purchase a larger property which he rented out to an NGO.

### **Strategy 3: Migration networks crucial to sustaining poverty escapes**

**Migration was a key coping strategy for people living in both urban and rural areas but connections were more important than skills, in developing more sustainable sources of income from migrating.** Most men who migrated internationally to Nigeria were able to use their network to gain work selling water or fuel. Connections with certain networks were especially valuable. Those who had connections with the construction sector in Nigeria were often able to secure employment for several consecutive years. Others inherited a trading network from their parents which enabled them start importing foodstuffs from Nigeria. There were also social connections between rural Peul living in Dogo and pastoralists in Libya enabling young people to engage in short term work (1-2 years) herding animals and gardening to save money. In Zinder, there were more examples of people with connections with other urban centers in Niger such as Niamey, Agadez and Arlit. These connections sometimes provided opportunities to work, especially during times of shock.

#### **Strategy 4: Savings groups for women**

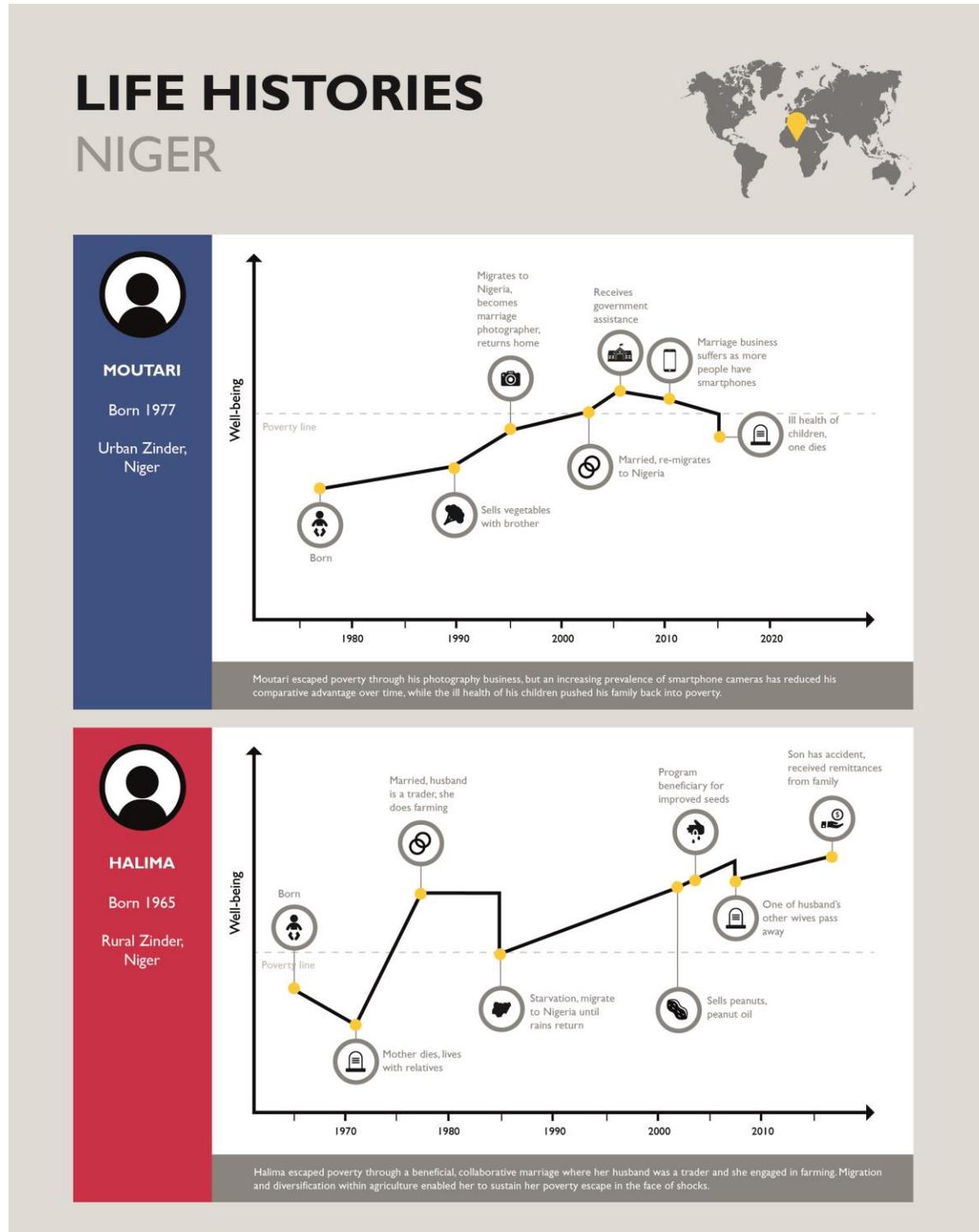
**Several female interviewees were able to invest in key assets such as push carts for transporting water and peanut oil extraction equipment that sustained escapes through accessing money from a savings group or baptism ceremonies.** In many cases, savings groups were initiated and managed by the women themselves. For example, in a poor suburb in Zinder town, women set up savings groups where for a defined period (e.g. 5 days), each woman contributes CFA500. On the fifth day, one woman receives the contribution and makes an investment of her choice. Baptism ceremonies often functioned as more informal savings groups. Women were sometimes able to gain up to CFA80,000 from baptisms. Aisha Issoufou from Kara Kara, Zinder, combined the CFA 15,000 from a savings groups and CFA10,000 from a baptism ceremony to buy a push cart that she used to transport water bidons to sell in the neighborhood. After a few years, she saved money from the sale of her iron bed, a loan from a wealthier neighbor and money from the baptism of her niece to purchase a larger draw cart. She is now able to transport up to 21 bidons of water twice a day. She makes CFA10 per bidon. Her labour costs are minimal as her children fetch and sell the water. Other interviewees were not so strategic in using savings from their savings groups, buying material and kitchen utensils. In some cases, savings groups disintegrated because women were unable to keep records due to illiteracy. A women's savings group in a village in Droum collapsed as there were no records and the women accused each other of not paying their fair share.

## **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This report examined the drivers of welfare mobility amongst households that escaped or descended into poverty in Niger, with the qualitative analysis focusing particularly on sustained and transitory escapes from poverty. It found that households engage in certain strategies in the context of insecurity and household shocks, which can enable them to maintain resilience and sustain poverty escapes over the long term. These have typically included investments in livestock, but more recently in moving away from livestock to instead focus on irrigated vegetable production, food processing and property investments. Circular migration, both domestic and international, have been important in sustaining escapes from poverty where these have been helped by social connections. Finally, saving groups for women have also been a way that households have been able to invest in resources over time to enable them to sustain escapes from poverty.

To further improve the pace of poverty reduction in Niger going forward, efforts should acknowledge the various poverty trajectories that households may experience, and the drivers responsible for sustaining an escape from poverty as well as the strategies that can be adopted to successfully build household resilience, as outlined in the preceding section. The accompanying brief discusses the policy implications of results presented in this study.

Figure 9: Life history diagrams



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## ANNEXES

### A. SUMMARY TABLE, MEAN VALUES

|  | Chronic poor | Descents  | Escapes   | All       |
|--|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Per capita expenditures                            | 125211.68    | 258354.00 | 137619.49 | 253226.71 |
| Asset value  | 129954.20    | 66588.01  | 522722.20 | 254586.50 |
| Rooms per person                                   | 0.34         | 0.45      | 0.37      | 0.46      |
| Households with electricity (%)                    | 0.02         | 0.07      | 0.03      | 0.15      |
| Households with sanitary toilet (%)                | 0.03         | 0.05      | 0.11      | 0.18      |
| Mean distance to improved water (meters)           | 461.48       | 463.24    | 446.67    | 377.71    |
| Land size > median (%)                             | 0.87         | 0.92      | 0.88      | 0.89      |
| Livestock > median (%)                             | 0.44         | 0.48      | 0.54      | 0.54      |
| Female headship (%)                                | 0.05         | 0.03      | 0.10      | 0.10      |
| Age  | 44.05        | 40.30     | 48.69     | 44.89     |
| Married head (%)                                   | 0.96         | 0.97      | 0.91      | 0.90      |
| Household size                                     | 8.56         | 6.15      | 7.69      | 6.64      |
| Dependency share (%)                               | 0.61         | 0.53      | 0.56      | 0.51      |
| Primary education completion of household head (%) | 0.13         | 0.12      | 0.10      | 0.17      |
| Head employed in agriculture (%)                   | 0.91         | 0.87      | 0.81      | 0.73      |
| Non-farm enterprise (%)                            | 0.65         | 0.67      | 0.57      | 0.63      |
| Transfers from abroad (%)                          | 0.30         | 0.26      | 0.30      | 0.29      |
| Transfers from domestic (%)                        | 0.35         | 0.41      | 0.31      | 0.36      |
| Presence of shock (%)                              | 0.73         | 0.67      | 0.78      | 0.66      |
| Number of shocks                                   | 1.40         | 1.32      | 1.33      | 1.21      |
| Urban residence (%)                                | 0.02         | 0.03      | 0.08      | 0.18      |

## B. REGRESSION RESULTS

Note: Fixed effects regression results presented below amongst households that had either escaped or fallen into poverty between 2011 and 2014. The dependent variable across subsamples is monetary welfare, measured through the log of per capita expenditures of the household. The independent variables examine changes over time as well through the panel data, within households, rather than changes between variables as explored in typical cross-section specifications. To obtain more precise estimates of coefficient values in cases such as these where the dependent variable is in log form, we have taken the exponent of the coefficient listed below. Observe that the best fit is for urban households, as identified by an examination of the R-squared value.

Please refer to Box 2 for more detail on the empirical specification employed in this analysis.

| Subsample of interest→                          | All households<br>escaping or descending<br>into poverty | Urban<br>households     | Rural<br>households    | Rural households<br>with combined<br>transfers | Female-headed<br>households |
|---|--|-------------------------|------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| VARIABLES                                       |  |                         |                        |  |                             |
| Log(asset value)                                | 0.0270***<br>(0.00606)                                   | 0.0473*<br>(0.0264)     | 0.0249***<br>(0.00621) | 0.0267***<br>(0.00625)                         | 0.0468***<br>(0.0133)       |
| Rooms per person                                | 0.130***<br>(0.0236)                                     | 0.655**<br>(0.261)      | 0.129***<br>(0.0214)   | 0.129***<br>(0.0224)                           | 0.101***<br>(0.0235)        |
| Household with electricity                      | 0.205***<br>(0.0376)                                     | 0.181***<br>(0.0629)    | 0.203***<br>(0.0550)   | 0.214***<br>(0.0569)                           | 0.157***<br>(0.0385)        |
| Household with sanitary<br>toilet               | 0.167**<br>(0.0738)                                      | 0.136<br>(0.0951)       | 0.151<br>(0.0992)      | 0.154<br>(0.0977)                              | 0.0847<br>(0.209)           |
| Distance to improved<br>water                   | 3.01e-05<br>(2.65e-05)                                   | -2.15e-05<br>(9.84e-05) | 2.47e-05<br>(2.83e-05) | 2.75e-05<br>(2.81e-05)                         | 0.000102<br>(7.39e-05)      |
| Land size > median                              | 0.136***<br>(0.0492)                                     | 0.0837<br>(0.102)       | 0.137**<br>(0.0566)    | 0.143**<br>(0.0570)                            | -0.0373<br>(0.162)          |
| Livestock > median                              | 0.0535<br>(0.0376)                                       | 0.0169<br>(0.0787)      | 0.0568<br>(0.0411)     | 0.0555<br>(0.0417)                             | 0.102<br>(0.0916)           |
| Female headship                                 | -0.248**<br>(0.0999)                                     | -0.228<br>(0.315)       | -0.220**<br>(0.101)    | -0.189*<br>(0.103)                             |                             |
| Age of household head                           | -0.00207<br>(0.0135)                                     | -0.00556<br>(0.0227)    | -0.00622<br>(0.0153)   | -0.00177<br>(0.0151)                           | 0.102***<br>(0.0380)        |
| Age-squared                                     | 3.58e-05<br>(0.000126)                                   | -6.60e-05<br>(0.000185) | 0.000107<br>(0.000145) | 7.13e-05<br>(0.000143)                         | -0.00107***<br>(0.000384)   |
| Married head                                    | -0.0308<br>(0.0985)                                      | 0.144<br>(0.276)        | -0.0759<br>(0.0974)    | -0.0571<br>(0.0976)                            | 0.0726<br>(0.263)           |
| Household size                                  | -0.139***<br>(0.00949)                                   | -0.128***<br>(0.0216)   | -0.136***<br>(0.0101)  | -0.142***<br>(0.0100)                          | -0.0977***<br>(0.0269)      |
| Dependency share                                | -0.147<br>(0.118)  | 0.0482<br>(0.245)       | -0.155<br>(0.130)      | -0.123<br>(0.132)                              | 0.0566<br>(0.224)           |
| Primary education of<br>household head          | -0.0905<br>(0.0865)                                      | -0.336***<br>(0.128)    | -0.0308<br>(0.0975)    | -0.0438<br>(0.104)                             | 0.325<br>(0.309)            |
| Head employed in<br>agriculture                 | -0.0475<br>(0.0525)                                      | 0.0121<br>(0.106)       | -0.0753<br>(0.0596)    | -0.0823<br>(0.0598)                            | -0.147<br>(0.114)           |
| Non-farm enterprise                             | 0.124***<br>(0.0396)                                     | 0.0721<br>(0.0917)      | 0.124***<br>(0.0421)   | 0.132***<br>(0.0426)                           | 0.250***<br>(0.0904)        |
| Receipt of transfers from<br>abroad or domestic |  |                         |                        | 0.186***<br>(0.0678)                           |                             |
| Receipt of transfers from                       | 0.0394   | -0.177**                | 0.0824*                |  | 0.0469                      |

|                                   |           |          |          |          |          |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| abroad                            |           |          |          |          |          |
|                                   | (0.0433)  | (0.0785) | (0.0474) |          | (0.124)  |
| Receipt of transfers-<br>domestic | 0.124***  | -0.145** | 0.167*** |          | 0.318*** |
|                                   | (0.0345)  | (0.0618) | (0.0375) |          | (0.113)  |
| Presence of shock                 | -0.0759   | -0.137   | -0.0505  | -0.0493  | 0.0218   |
|                                   | (0.0504)  | (0.102)  | (0.0565) | (0.0566) | (0.159)  |
| Number of shocks                  | -0.00118  | 0.0421   | -0.0114  | -0.0105  | 0.0124   |
|                                   | (0.0204)  | (0.0382) | (0.0216) | (0.0221) | (0.0602) |
| 2014.year                         | 0.0976*** | 0.300*** | 0.0634** | 0.0506*  | 0.386*** |
|                                   | (0.0266)  | (0.0559) | (0.0291) | (0.0296) | (0.0760) |
| Constant                          | 12.90***  | 12.80*** | 12.94*** | 12.83*** | 9.397*** |
|                                   | (0.420)   | (0.907)  | (0.451)  | (0.451)  | (1.020)  |
| Observations                      | 1,422     | 216      | 1,206    | 1,206    | 192      |
| R-squared                         | 0.388     | 0.646    | 0.383    | 0.368    | 0.811    |
| Number of hid                     | 711       | 108      | 603      | 603      | 131      |

Fixed effects regressions; Robust standard errors in parentheses; \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

### C. RISKS AND REWARDS FOR COMMON LIVELIHOODS IN ZINDER

| Livelihood              | Risks  | Rewards  |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Farmer                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Drought/irregular and unpredictable rainfall</li> <li>· Declining soil fertility</li> <li>· Deforestation, desertification</li> <li>· Invasion of locusts</li> <li>· Theft</li> <li>· Price fluctuations/currency fluctuations in main export markets</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Households maintain a basic source of food which can support them in the face of loss of income from other sources</li> <li>· Having own source of food staples means that HHs are less vulnerable to price fluctuations</li> <li>· Increasing opportunities in the area of irrigated gardens as demand for salad and vegetables increases in urban areas. There will be limitations however to the number of irrigated gardens that the watertable in Niger can support</li> </ul> |
| Livestock breeder       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Drought/irregular and unpredictable rainfall</li> <li>· Disease</li> <li>· Declining profitability and status of pastoralists means that young people are less interested in pastoralism</li> <li>· Price fluctuations/currency fluctuations in main export markets</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Source of milk/protein in times of need</li> <li>· There is always a market for meat so can easily be converted into cash to cope with shocks</li> <li>· Can be passed on from generation to generation</li> <li>· Can be used for dowries</li> </ul>   |
| Transportation services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Accidents resulting in losses of goods/injuries/disabilities</li> <li>· Bandits on routes</li> <li>· Clampdown on migration results in long delays on borders creating unpredictability and increased costs</li> <li>· Oversupply of motorcyclists as increasing numbers of migrants return from Nigeria with motorbikes</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Zinder well-positioned on Nigeria-Niger-Libya axis</li> <li>· Relocation of customs office to Zinder expected to increase work in sector</li> </ul>   |
| Construction            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Network only effective in one area and fluctuations in economic activity mean that you need to seek work elsewhere</li> <li>· No health insurance in case of accident</li> <li>· If manual labourer with minimal skills – subject to demands on daily basis. With decrease in numbers of urban hhs engaging in part time agriculture, there is a risk of over dependence on construction</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Can provide steady, relatively well paid work if one's network is in an area where there is plenty of construction. For example, this was the case in Maidaguri prior to 2012.</li> <li>· Transfer of technology: construction skills acquired in Nigeria to introduce new building methods in Niger</li> </ul>   |
| Petty trader            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· No legislation to protect your rights to informal trade</li> <li>· Increasing privatization of central markets</li> <li>· Price fluctuations</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Source of diversification to complement crop-based agriculture</li> <li>· Particularly beneficial with increased access to local markets</li> <li>· Help smooth income when household experiences shock</li> <li>· Culturally acceptable livelihood for women – allows them to access their own source of income</li> </ul>   |

|              |  |   |
|--------------|--|---|
|              |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Owners of small shops in villages have limited competition</li> </ul>  |
| Trader       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Changing policy on import and export taxes</li> <li>· Price fluctuations</li> <li>· Corruption at border</li> <li>· Competition from larger, better resourced Nigerian traders</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Devaluation of Naira means that goods from Nigeria are cheap – increased demand in the Nigerian market</li> <li>· Increasing numbers of NGOs operating in Niger creates increased demand for imported goods</li> </ul> |
| Water seller | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Installation of waterpumps by the GoN or NGOs decreases demand for water from outside area</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Longer hot seasons means more demand for water</li> </ul>  |
| Fuel seller  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Change in government policy regarding the black market in fuel</li> <li>· Connections are needed in Nigeria to set up a business</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Devaluation in Naira has created increased demand for black market fuel</li> <li>· Small capital needed to set up fuel stall</li> </ul>  |

Note: table above based on common occupations in quantitative data as well as qualitative fieldwork data

## D. APPROACH TO PARTICIPATORY WEALTH RANKING

In Niger, it is not possible to access the household identifiers from the panel survey. However, we have the district identifiers, and given that USAID also works in some of those areas, we are able to return to them for this research.

This means that the research needs to recreate household wealth trajectories over the previous 10 years using participatory wealth ranking. Specifically, it will conduct historical participatory wealth ranking for three points in time using pre-determined wealth classifications.

Approach to historical wealth ranking (estimated time 2.5 hours):

1. Assemble a focus group (separate FGDs for men and women) of 15–25 participants across the wealth spectrum and ideally heads of households. Explain the purpose of exercise – stress that this is research and there will be no direct benefits coming from this exercise.
2. Introduce the focus groups to different wealth categories, which have already been determined by previous research (see table below). Ask FGD participants their opinion on those different wealth categories (these categories were slightly adapted during each FGD). Display the wealth categories and talk through them.

Wealth categories for participatory wealth ranking (households do not have to have all characteristics), sample for men in Birni

| Wellbeing | Education   | Assets   | Nutrition   |
|-----------|---|--|---|
| Very poor | Schooling is not assured. Children are sent home from school every day for non-payment of COGES fees (Schools Management Committee); children cannot pay fees for the playground/sports; they only take CEG (general education) classes                   | Do not own their own house; cannot pay rent; live in open squares in the suburbs; beg for money  | Eat maize-based dishes, salad leaves, cabbage, beancakes; rice and chilli; women beg for food   |
| Poor      | Children often complete 4eme (age 13-14) but rarely manage to pass the BEPC (certificate of completion of secondary school); where children are expelled, families are unable to afford private school (as with very poor category)                       | Live in rented houses (paying CFA 3-5,000), or in an inherited house; farmland has been parcelled out; 2-3 goats but some families have none.  | No guarantee that they will be able to eat more often than 3 or 4 days in a week ; they look for money for salt every day ; they eat rice, bean, maize, or fruit and veg-based dishes but they do not eat meat. |
| Middle    | Children often continue education to high school, some even complete high school, families are able to pay for their children’s educations until they are expelled; they are able to host other pupils from local villages who come to the town to study. | Live in a banco (akin to mudbrick) house ; do not have their own [electricity] meter; engage in revenue-generating activities; some cultivated land; own a cart, a bicycle and a phone | At home, the family eats rice, sorghum, pasta or meat-based dishes, with stew; also fruits and vegetables.  |

|           |   |   |  |
|-----------|---|---|--|
| Rich      | Can afford the entirety of their children’s schooling – even in private schools – and can also fund studies abroad. | Owens at least 5 houses, two or three cars, engages in business, owns at least 10 landholdings, two or three motorcycles, a herd of livestock (cows, goats and sheep) managed by someone in the countryside.                                      | Owens food shops, fridges filled with juices and chicken, eats meat at home daily.   |
| Very rich | Children study at university, and abroad if they wish. Children enrolled in private schools.                        | Owens a multi-storey house, several bungalows, visits cities like Dubai and regularly completes the Hajj and 'Umrah. Gives out Zakat at mosque, owns several herds of cows, goats and poultry, distributes a lot of money to the youth for Zakat. | Eats meat daily, owns a fridge full of drinks and frozen meats, food is abundant at home, is able to eat whatever they want, eats whenever it takes their fancy. |

For the purposes of identifying households which are transitory escapers, the poverty line is set between the level of medium and poor households in the above table. A separate table with characteristics of urban areas is also created for FGDs in urban areas.

3. Ask those households present to assign their current situation (2018) to a particular wealth category by attaching post-it notes to the large piece of paper.
4. Then ask them about their situation five years ago and ask them to assign themselves to a category for that time period.
5. Explain to the focus group how households are on different wealth trajectories and start a discussion about the reasons behind impoverishment and upward mobility between 2013 and 2018.
6. Do the same exercise for 10 years prior.
7. Explain to the focus group how households are on different wealth trajectories and start a discussion about the reasons behind impoverishment and upward mobility between 2013 and 2008.
8. Ask if they know of any households in the community on PNN or PNP trajectories? Write those names on post-its and stick on the large paper.
9. Investigate if there are any differences in reasons for impoverishment across the two time periods (e.g., opening of a health center may have resulted in a fall in health shocks, climatic conditions, etc.).
10. Have a discussion about the different types of support/program involvement for households on the different trajectories. Ideally, we can then conduct life histories with households receiving different types of support (e.g. stipends, being in farmer organizations).

## E. LIFE HISTORY INTERVIEW TEMPLATE

**Life histories with one household head.** Either male or female. Ideally the person who took part in the FGD. If that is not possible, then whichever of the male or female household head who is available.

Important points:

- The outputs of the life history interview will be: 1) a narrative of the respondent's life and 2) a life history map (see end of document for an example)
- Map the life of the respondent against the pre-determined well-being classifications.
- Life periods are (though not all may be relevant to every respondent):
  - Childhood: 0 – 12 years
  - Youth: 13 years to marriage/start of own household OR 20 years (whichever is relevant)
  - Young adulthood: Marriage/start of own household or 20 years– 40 years
  - Late adulthood: 40 years – 60 years
  - Old age: 60 years +
- Ensure you identify well-being levels at these points:
  - Childhood
  - Just before start of own household/marriage
  - Just after start of own household/marriage
  - Now
- Focus on upward and downward mobility and reasons for these changes (why the upward or downward mobility in well-being).

### Introduction, focus and consent

- When you arrive at the household, introduce yourself, the research and purpose of research:
- Explain our focus: in as much depth as you need to – that you want to understand changes in assets and well-being during their life and to learn more about why such changes happened. Positive and negative events. Explain to them that at five different points in their lives you will be asking questions about; what has enabled them to improve their lives? If they have fallen back then why have they done this? If they were able to manage in the face of shocks then how were they able to do this?
- Obtain informed consent- i.e. ensure respondent agrees to take part in the interview.
- The interview will be anonymous – it won't have their name on it.
- You are going to take notes and record the interview - these notes will only be seen by other members of the research team. The recording will only be made available anonymously to the people who will be transcribing the interview.
- You will write short stories from the interview – some of these (without their name) will be seen by other people.
- Ask permission to take a photograph (if you will do so)
- Other people will see their photograph (without their name)

### Getting started

- Write down interviewee's name, age, gender, (interviewer's name).
- Note down individual's appearance and demeanour (happy, sad, anxious, etc).
- Describe house and compound.

### Genealogy/demographic

- Draw genealogy tree or table and note sex/ages (date birth) of the household members (nuclear household or, if there are other family members living on the same homestead, include those members); who's married to whom; include multiple spouses and circle the respondents

household; level of education of each household member (especially the person being interviewed, and the spouse).

- If female-headed household, ask how it got there (ie. death of husband or migration or...?)
- Focus on people within the household.

#### Livelihoods and assets now

[Note for researchers: You can choose whether to do this now or do this chronologically].

[Note to researchers: Interested in physical assets which may include land, livestock, Implements – hoes, trailers, cart, plough, tractors, number of houses, ‘state’ of houses (i.e. tin roof?), clothes/household items, mode of transport, consumer durables (e.g. mobile phone). Get as accurate estimate as possible, but rough magnitude is better than no magnitude at all e.g. more than 5 cows but less than 20].

- Livelihoods now: Can you rank your livelihoods now? (i.e. primary, secondary, tertiary livelihood). Probe for all other livelihoods activities/sources.
- Assets now: What assets do you have in the household? Can you rank them in terms of value? Does your house have electricity? Do you have a mobile phone?
- Land now: Do you own the land you work on/ If you had to sell it, whose decision would it be? (Sharecropping, leasing, mortgaging- which type? Or are you working off someone else’s land?
- For household: Where do children study? Did they always do that or how it has changed?

[Note to researcher: This is a good point to locate the respondent on Y-axis of life history diagram].

#### Childhood – approximately 0 to 12 years old

[Note to researcher: at this point we are getting at parent’s livelihood and assets].

- When and where were you born?
  - Parents: Where are your parents from? (Origins of the family - in the case of migration from another place, when did they move and why?).
  - Siblings – how many? Which birth order? Are they sisters or brothers?
- Education: What level of education did your parents have? What level of education do you and your siblings have? How was your education, and your siblings’ education, funded?
  - Did you experience any stigma or discrimination in gaining access to schooling or during your time at school by anyone, including teachers, other students, or administration? What type of discrimination did you face?
- Livelihood of parents: Can you rank your parents’ livelihoods i.e. occupation during your childhood? What was the main occupation of your parents? What was their second occupation/ source of income? What was their third occupation/ source of income?
  - If involved in crop agriculture, which crops and why?
  - Who were the crops sold to? Who did you get agricultural inputs from?
  - What was the nature of those relationships (i.e. selling crops/getting inputs/etc)?
  - Assets of parents: what assets did your parents have? Can you rank them in terms of value or importance for income generation?

Ask about the house and compound:

- Describe your house and compound you were a small child (e.g. at age 8 years old)
  - electricity, building materials, etc
- How did it compare with other compounds in your village?
- How did it compare with the house that you live in now (much better, better, the same, worse, much worse)?

[Note to researcher: This is a good point to locate the respondent during childhood on Y-axis].

Ask about home Life:

- relationship with parents and siblings;

- responsibilities – what were your chores?
- how was work divided among different members of the family (young, old, men, women)?
- food – and type of food and number of meals/day?
- leisure activities? Paid and unpaid labour outside house?
- health of interviewee and family during childhood?

Ask about important relationships for building livelihoods and coping with shocks:

- Key relationships: landlords, friends, employers, richer households, social networks, neighbours, kinship networks, employment relations, cooperatives, banks
- Looking back over this early part of your life do any difficult events or periods stand out?
- Probe shocks, coping strategies taken, channels of support (relatives, friends, NGOs, church, moneylender etc)
- Note carefully all changes in asset levels, ask if there are any assets that have been particularly important for escaping poverty? Any death of livestock that has been influential?
- Note changes in livelihoods. Any non-farm income/ activity/ enterprise? How did they get this?
- Looking back over this early part of your life are there any positive events or periods that stand out?

#### Youth – approximately 13 years to marriage (or 20 years old, whichever is more appropriate)

- School: When did you leave school?
  - Probe around if, when and why respondent left school?
- Livelihoods: What livelihood activities did you engage in and can you rank them from the most important to the less important in terms of income?
  - If involved in crop agriculture, which crops and why?
  - Who were the crops sold to? Who did you get agricultural inputs from? What was the nature of that relationship?
- First job/ enterprise/ livelihood activity: What was it? Rank livelihood activities at this period of your life in terms of their importance to household income and food security (e.g. farming, livestock rearing, job, small enterprise...)?
  - How did you get this job/ start this enterprise/ move into this livelihood activity? Did you get help from anyone?
- Job, discrimination: Did you experience any stigma or discrimination in securing a job or while working by anyone, including line managers, other colleagues, or administration (or clients? service users? if in public-facing job)? Was this in any way related to your ethnicity?
  - Did you receive any different (positive) treatment when trying to get a job because of your ethnicity? Did you experience jealousy from friends or family as a result?
  - Has the government helped or hurt your ability to get a job? Have they taken any action to reduce discrimination that has benefited you specifically? Did you experience jealousy from friends or family as a result?
- Job, migration: If you migrated away from the village, did you have a job before you went? How did you find this job? How did you send money back to your family?
- Job, NFE: If you started a non-farm enterprise why did you decide to start this?
  - If so, who and how did this work?
- Describe working conditions/ constraints/ profitability/ shocks/ risks/ coping strategies associated with the different livelihoods activities
- Any credit/ loan taken out? For what? Largest amount? Ever taken loans to repay loan?
- Assets during youth and before marriage/starting own household: What assets did you have before starting own household? How does this compare with assets during childhood? Account for changes in asset holdings – probe reasons for sales and main source of finance for purchases or main reasons for acquisitions and from whom.

Important relationships for sustaining livelihoods and coping with shocks:

- Key relationships: landlords, friends, employers, richer households, social networks, kinship networks, employment relations, cooperatives, banks
- Any participation or engagement in social safety nets? How important is this for your household? When/ in what event has it been especially important?
- Looking back over your youth are there any difficult events or periods that stand out? (use this question to probe shocks, coping strategies, changes in asset levels, changes in livelihood strategies)
- Looking back over your youth are there any positive events or periods that stand out? (Use this question to probe opportunities, investments, resilience)

### Young adulthood

Ask about their marriage:

- Are you married?
- How did you meet your husband/ wife?
- Parent's/ family's views of the match? Their view of the match?
- How much was the dowry? Was all of it able to be paid? What was the source of the dowry and where did it go?
- Move to your spouse's village – feelings about that/ problems; setting up home; relationship with in-laws/ extended family/ community; relationship with spouse/took jobs or not? What jobs? Family pressure/consent on jobs?.

Ask about their livelihoods:

- Assets at marriage – in particular productive assets – livestock, agricultural implements, land, rickshaw...
- What livelihood activities did you engage in and can you rank them from the most important to the less important in terms of income and food security? Which were the most important assets for following each particular activity?
- Describe the working conditions/ constraints/ profitability/ shocks/ risks and coping strategies associated with each of these livelihoods activities.
- If involved in crop agriculture, why are you farming? Which crops are you farming? Who owns the land which you farm on? If sharecropping/ leasing what are the arrangements of this? Is it easy to find land to sharecrop/ lease here?
- Have price changes of agriculture goods (either inputs such as seeds or the sales price for crops) affected you? How?
- How did you get any better livelihoods during these years?
- Did you ever migrate? How did you get the good/better jobs if you did?
- Social networks that helped you get the jobs/work?
- Any credit/ loan taken out? For what? largest amount? Ever taken loans to repay loan?,

Ask about their children:

- Make sure dates of births have been identified
- Any difficulty with births?
- How have you financed the education of your children?
- Remittances from older children/ kin

Ask about the health of family members:

- Health of interviewee and family?
- Impact on household well-being?

- Were there any periods of sickness? If so, of who and where did you go for treatment? How much did it cost and how did you find that money?

Ask about relationships which were important for building livelihoods and for coping with shocks:

- Key relationships: landlords, friends, employers, richer households, social networks, kinship networks, employment relations, cooperatives, banks
- Any participation or engagement in social safety nets? How important is this for your household? When/ in what event has it been especially important?
- Looking back over your early adulthood are there any difficult events or periods that stand out? (Use question to probe shocks, coping strategies, channels of support [relatives, friends, NGOs, church, moneylender etc], changes in asset levels, in livelihood strategies).
- Looking back over your early adulthood are there any positive events or periods that stand out? (use this question to probe opportunities, investments, aspiration, resilience)

### Late adulthood

- Which assets does the household now have?
- Livelihoods during late adulthood – which assets were particularly important for the different livelihoods activities
- Compare assets at marriage and now and account for changes. Account for changes in asset holdings – probe reasons for sales and main source of finance for purchases or main reasons for acquisitions and from whom
- Were any assets particularly important for escaping poverty? Has the loss of any particular asset been important in the household experiencing any downwards mobility? How did the household cope with the loss of this asset?
- Compare livelihoods at marriage and now and account for changes. For instance, is there now any non-farm income/ activity/ enterprise? What was the source of finance for this? Why did they decide to start this?
- If involved in crop agriculture, why are you farming? Which crops are you farming? Who owns the land which you farm on? If sharecropping/ leasing what are the arrangements of this? Is it easy to find land to sharecrop/ lease here?
- Have price changes of agriculture goods (either inputs such as seeds or the sales price for crops) affected you? How?
- Has there been any change in the profitability of these livelihoods between early adulthood and late adulthood? Has the nature of shocks facing these livelihoods changed over time?

Ask about the health of family members:

- Health of interviewee and family?
- Impact on household well-being?
- Were there any periods of sickness? If so, of who and where did you go for treatment? How much did it cost and how did you find that money?

Important relationships for sustaining livelihoods and coping with shocks:

- Key relationships: landlords, friends, employers, neighbours, richer households, social networks, kinship networks, employment relations, cooperatives, banks. If any of these relationships have been important, how have they been important?
- Any participation or engagement in social safety nets? How important is this for your household? When/ in what event has it been especially important?
- Looking back over your late adulthood are there any difficult events or periods that stand out? (Use this question to probe shocks, coping strategies, channels of support)

- [relatives, friends, NGOs, church, moneylender etc], changes in asset levels, changes in livelihood strategies).
- Looking back over your late adulthood are there any positive events or periods that stand out? (use this question to probe opportunities, investment, acquisition, aspiration, resilience)

#### Older age

- How is life during older age?
- Working or not work? Are you able to support yourself? If not, who is supporting you?
- Health? Were there any periods of sickness? If so, of who and where did you go for treatment? How much did it cost and how did you find that money? If you are taking regular medication, where do you get this from?
- Widowhood: age when spouse died; implications; feelings; change in status
- Relationships with others: responsibilities; support from children; role in community; status?
- Any participation or engagement in social safety nets? How important is this for your household? When/ in what event has it been especially important?
- Any changes in recent years?
- Looking back over your older age are there any difficult events or periods that stand out? (use this question to probe shocks, coping strategies, channels of support [relatives, friends, NGOs, church, moneylender etc], changes in asset levels, changes in livelihood strategies)
- Looking back over your older age are there any positive events or periods that stand out? (use this question to probe opportunities, investment, acquisition, aspiration, resilience)