

NIGER

Sustaining bio-fortified and climate-resilient agriculture to serve women in remote areas

Why Niger?



1 in 2 children are chronically malnourished in Niger, with a 53% rate in Zinder region



90% of children do not have a diet that meets nutritional requirements



loses 7% of its GDP every year to malnutrition



24% of women are in agricultural workforce, yet they lack decision-making power on nutritional needs and family income – one of main drivers of malnutrition in Zinder

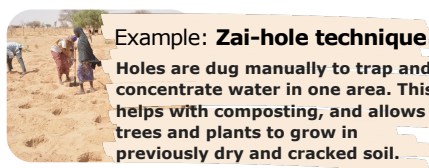


Project location: Zinder region (20 villages), Niger

Achievements so far:

1. Improved access to nutritious production & awareness

- **made biofortified seeds** (millet, cowpeas, groundnuts) **available to 300 women farmers at a 50% reduction price** (thanks to our subsidy) sold at 32 local retailer shops, resulting in up to **5x increase in crop production**
 - **ran marketing campaigns to raise awareness:** 1-hour radio discussion on yield and nutritional benefits of bio-fortified seeds; 5-minute publicity spots on selling point locations (x316) & seed benefits (x29)
- **successfully tested vegetable seeds before planting:** hot pepper, okra, lettuce, tomatoes (for rainy season) & watermelon, onion, potatoes (dry cold season)
- **410 farmers trained on climate-smart agricultural techniques:** e.g. zai-hole technique, fuel-efficient stoves, off-soil farming in bags to reduce water usage
- **2,670 households (8,010 people)** benefited from community discussion circles in each of the 20 villages on COVID-19 measures, positive health and nutrition practices



Current state

Duration: Dec 2020 – May 2022

Budget mobilized: USD 500,000

People reached so far: 14,175

Why we like this project

1. We promote biofortified seeds –which nutrient content is maximized. It is one of the most efficient solutions to prevent chronic malnutrition: **\$1 invested in bio-fortification = \$27 in economic benefits for the local economy.**

2. We enable FESA, a local small business specializing in biofortified seeds, to improve the distribution to remote areas.

3. We use digital technology to increase Social Behaviour Change reach through VIAMO, a social impact mobile technology company, which disseminates information through mobile phones and interacts with target audience at scale in local languages

2. Enhanced women's access & control of household income

- **increased the land lease contract** for women's gardens from 5 to 10 years to ensure long-term impact
- **trained 200 women on financial literacy and access to micro-credit** via VSLA (Village Savings and Loans Associations) approach, so women who had never worked for an income can have the opportunity to **start a small businesses**
- **784 goats distributed to 196 women** (14 women in each of 14 villages) as part of the goat bank system *Habanayé*, receiving 1 male and 3 female goats each



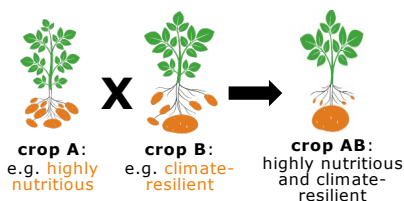
Where are we now?

- 6-month results report (dec 2020 – Jun 2021) has shown that progress has been made **reaching 76% of community targeted** (51% women) **in 6 months**
- We now need to
 - strengthen the retailers' network** to boost sales of bio-fortified seeds for long-term sustainability of the project
 - train on post-harvest techniques** to ensure the bio-fortified crops and vegetable crops are properly preserved
 - increase women's skills** in financial literacy to facilitate their engagement in income-generating activities

Biofortification explained

Biofortified seeds are smarter seeds that grow into more nutrient-dense crops than regular ones, as a result of cross-breeding various crop varieties.

These smart seeds can also have higher yields and are more resistant to climate effects.



How will we use the additional funding?

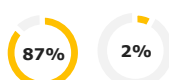
1. Continue expanding the current biofortification market system

- continue enabling access to **FESA's** products for more farmers by strengthening the retailer system, while continuing to subsidize the seeds
- find an **additional private sector partner** which specializes in bio-fortified seeds to diversify the offer and **create price competitiveness**, so that bio-fortified seeds continue to be bought after the end of the project



2. Address financial inclusion for under-served

- conduct an assessment to address the bottom of the pyramid and to understand the financial system in Niger, in order to **allow credit** for the under-served and under-banked **micro-entrepreneurs**



87% of the active population works in agricultural sector accounting for 43% of Niger's GDP: while the sector receives only **2%** of loans

3. Scale climate-smart techniques for sustainable production

- scale # of women farmers** trained on **climate-smart** agricultural techniques: e.g., off-soil farming, zai-hole, fuel-efficient stoves



Example: **off-soil farming**
Vegetables are grown on top/in holes cut into the side of the bag. This maximizes space, requires less water for cultivation. Soil is mixed with decomposed organic manure to fertilize soil, improving nutrient content & yields.

- support government extension services on **post-harvest handling and storage training** and engage the private sector to enable access to post-harvest equipment

How can you help us accelerate?

Financial contributions to:

- expand our project to train more **women** on financial literacy
- reach more people via **nutrition sensitization, climate-smart** techniques, and **increase crop production** via subsidy of bio-fortified seeds
- directly reach 18,656** people with ~\$27/farmer)

UNITLIFE's role in the project

UNITLIFE is a global initiative solving the challenge of inequality from birth. We will support this project with a focus on the following aspects:

- support additional local private sector** players focusing on bio-fortified seeds to expand coverage to remote areas and ensure a competitive market
- shape and develop micro-credit** and Village Savings and Loan Associations in order to ensure financial inclusion of population, in particular women
- secure the current Food system** and investigate additional ways to sustain the model via innovation (including digitalization) and a better continuum along the value chain

Nutritional aspects:



Goat milk

- rich in **proteins, calcium, potassium** for healthy growth. ~10% < lactose than cow's milk, making it easier to digest

Biofortified millet, cowpeas, groundnuts

- rich in **iron and zinc**, enhances cognitive development, strengthens immune system
- iron:** helps with healthy pregnancy
- zinc:** helps healthy growth

Vegetables seeds

- variety of micro-nutrients** incl. vitamin C, potassium, fiber, anti-oxidants

SDGs:

