

From the Director's Desk

Dear CE-DAT Friends,

All too often, the humanitarian community pours its efforts into acute disasters while chronic or recurring emergencies do not receive the attention needed. Such forgotten emergencies impact as great a number of people, if not greater.

A recent example of an often forgotten emergency is the food crisis in the Sahel affecting 10 million, 7 million of whom live in Niger. Over the past three decades, Niger has experienced recurrent food crises. The recurrent nature of such events poses questions about the effectiveness of humanitarian response and developmental aid targeting prevention.

In this issue of CE-DAT Scene, we review data from Niger that has been collected over the last five years in an attempt to monitor the nutritional situation and thus allowing the international community to issue warnings in a timely manner. We argue however that this monitoring is of little value if it's not followed by appropriate humanitarian action. We welcome your thoughts on this brief analysis.

Thanks for your continued support,

Debby Sapir, Director



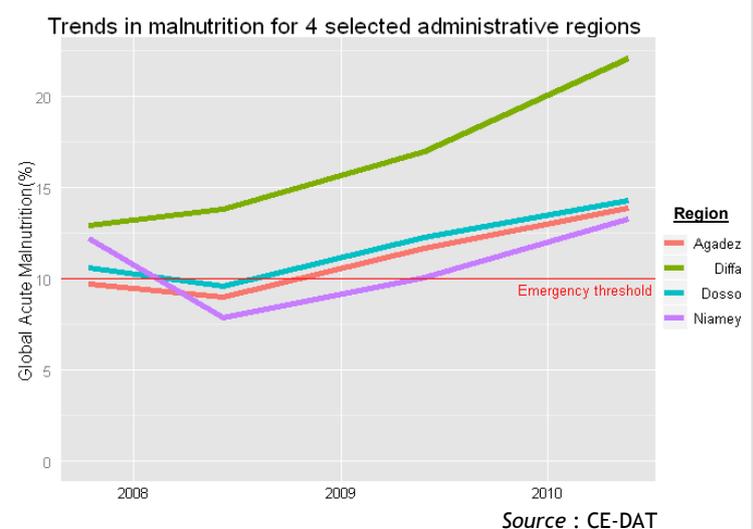
Malnutrition in Niger

In May-June 2010, the government of Niger conducted a nationwide survey to investigate levels of malnutrition among children in collaboration with UN agencies and several NGOs. This was the sixth assessment in a series started in October 2005 following the food crisis, with the aim of reinforcing evidence based humanitarian decision-making.

The results of the survey show high levels of malnutrition throughout the country. At the national level, global acute malnutrition (GAM) was 16.7%, well above the 10% emergency threshold commonly used by humanitarians. None of the eight administrative regions had GAM values below the emergency threshold. Of even bigger concern is the important deterioration compared to last year's survey: 16.7% vs. 12.3%, a 36% increase.

These findings increased discussions regarding nutritional needs in Niger. Yet it is important to consider these reported figures in a broader context.

For four out of the eight regions (Agadez, Diffa, Niamey and Dosso), the 2010 increase is a steady continuation of a trend that began two years ago (see chart below). On average, the increase in those areas was 27% for 2008-2009 and 23% for 2009-2010. However, at the national level, the rate of change in GAM sharply increased from 6% for 2008-2009 to 36% for 2009-2010. Since the four regions described above compose only 25% of the population, the steady increase seen there is not reflected at the national level.



CE-DAT is a global database on the human impact of conflicts and other complex humanitarian emergencies and serves as a unique source of health indicators for monitoring conflict-affected populations and for the production of trend analyses, impact briefings and policy recommendations

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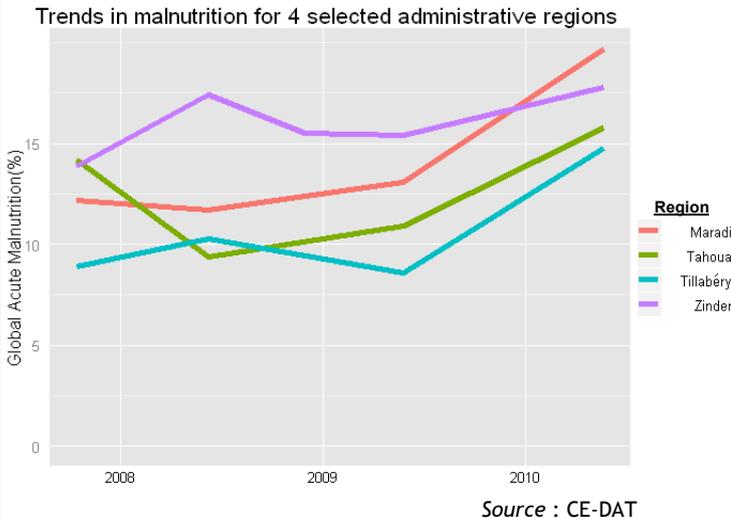
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In Taouha, Maradi, Zinder and Tillabéry - which represent the remaining 75% of the Niger population - we observe an average increase of 46% in malnutrition rates from 2009 to 2010. This sharp increase follows a 14% average increase in Taouha and Maradi and 14% average decrease in Zinder and Tillabéry from 2008 to 2009.

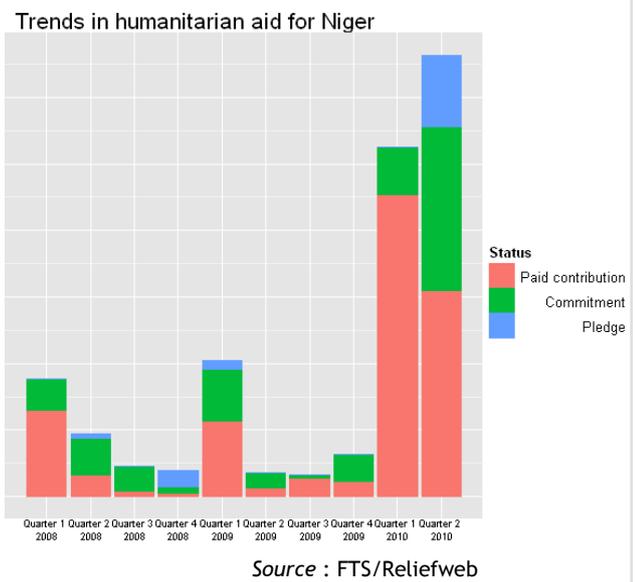
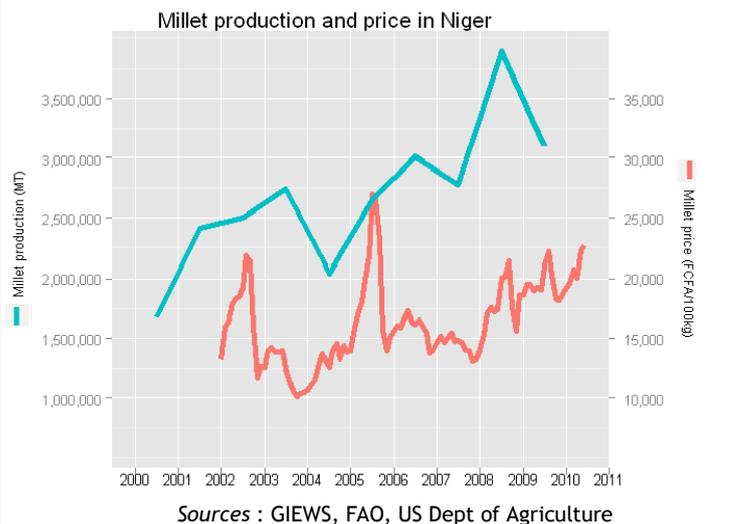
Warnings reflecting the described trends were issued by monitoring systems throughout late 2009. In response, the humanitarian community appropriately committed additional aid to Niger as of early 2010 (see chart below). Still, the malnutrition rates continued to increase.

In fact, it was not before May 2010 that the target population for food delivery was increased from 750,000 to 1.5 million. Following the latest survey in May-June 2010, the target population was again increased to 4.5 million. This is evidence of a delay between monitoring, calls for humanitarian action and distribution of aid. NGOs have pointed out short and long term implications of such postponement. Presently, the debate over the target population still continues.

In summary, monitoring systems are undoubtedly a valuable tool for preventing future nutritional crises in food insecure countries, but evidence based decision-making is only effective if calls for humanitarian action are followed by implementation in a timely manner.



The deterioration can be partly explained by poor harvests during the 2008-2009 season and consequential rise in food prices. The figure below shows food production and price trends since 2000. As expected, food prices are inversely related to production. However, in 2008-2009 prices remained high despite increased production in 2008. Thus, following the poor harvest of 2009, the initial level from which prices increased was higher than would have been expected, making food even less accessible for the already vulnerable populations.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

- ▶ National averages often mask existing trends at local levels.
- ▶ There is a need to minimize the delay between monitoring and humanitarian action.

CE-DAT and CRED News

The CE-DAT team will be giving a training to Concern and Goal in Dublin at the end of September. Topics addressed will include sampling techniques (including LQAS), the reliable assessment of malnutrition and mortality and the use of survey software. For more information, please contact [David Hargitt](#)

The EM-DAT Annual Disaster Statistical Review 2009 has been published and is available [here](#)

MICRODIS Symposium on Disaster Impacts and Assessment in Asia - August 25-27 in Hue City, Vietnam. Link: www.microdis-eu.be/content/asian-symposium

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