



Mayor of Chadakori putting policy into practice at one of the public hand washing stations with a COVID-19 prevention measures poster, developed by USAID TerresEauVie (June 2020). Photo: TerresEauVie

NIGER COMMUNE LEADS FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19

TerresEauVie Niger

Chadakori Commune develops and implements strategic measures for responding to and preventing COVID-19.

In Niger, when the government declared a state of emergency to combat the virus throughout the country, restrictive measures were taken to limit and prevent the spread of the pandemic. The government set up an inter-ministerial committee to fight COVID-19, drawing up the National Response Plan which served as a model for the

development of all regional, departmental, and communal plans. In this context, the USAID [TerresEauVie Activity](#), under USAID's Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced (RISE II) project and implemented by Winrock International, supported 25 communes in the development and implementation of COVID-19 contingency plans. The commune of Chadakori in the Maradi region is an example of developing successful plans and ensuring local ownership.

Collaboration leads to a coordinated effort

COVID-19 response and prevention actions are a communal matter in Chadakori. Local stakeholders have recently finalized their COVID-19 contingency plan with a total budget of 72 million West African Francs (CFA), or about \$130,000, to be executed between June and December 2020. The plan includes a wide range of activities, from trainings on biosecurity to evaluations of local capabilities, and is the result of a highly methodical and collaborative process.

When the commune volunteered to take the reins and mitigate the risk of COVID-19 in April 2020, TerresEauVie worked with them to develop a simple framework for COVID-19 contingency planning, with input from USAID's Development Food Security Activities (DFSAs). At the commune level, the Mayor and the Secretary General brought together representatives, including youth and women, health workers, and members of the Vulnerability Monitoring Observatory (OSV)¹. The latter is a key member as it operates at the communal level to aggregate and analyze the information received from the different community early warning groups. It strengthens the bottom-up transmission of information on vulnerability and thus the capacity at all levels to know that an emergency is looming and to call for action.

Communal stakeholders worked together and led the data collection and analysis process to draw up the COVID-19 plans, taking advantage of the commune's different planning documents and of the new information drawn from the COVID-19 context, such as the opportunity to collaborate with women's groups for soap production. To strengthen the link between the community, communal and sub-regional levels of the

¹ In Niger, the OSV is as a specialized committee aggregating and analyzing the community-based information on food security, human and animal health, social relations, as well as environmental and climatic conditions and transmitting the

data and analyses upstream to the sub-regional committee for the prevention and management of disasters and food crises.

Early Warning System, TerresEauVie brought together the Crisis and Disaster Prevention and Management Sub-Regional Committee, the mayor, and communal technical services to review the first version of the plan together. This effort in quality assurance was an important step for meaningful discussions, allowing them to go into greater detail around the plan's objectives, vulnerability factors and expected results. The stakeholders examined the commune's capacity to implement activities and evaluate their performance, and refined the strategies to manage COVID-19 cases.

Chadakori has taken its COVID-19 contingency plan from start to finish

The sub-regional committee's mission to monitor the plan motivated the commune because "it showed the steps to be taken to enrich the plan and followed a participatory approach," according to Zeinabou Ibrahim, the township's Secretary General. "We have a contingency plan that meets our standards and has been finalized and validated in a plenary session. We now master the methodology for developing good contingency plans. We are going to share this plan with peace of mind because we are confident of its quality... I have spoken about this plan at all the meetings I have attended in recent months and I take every opportunity to raise awareness among women's groups of my communes in terms of prevention measures." Chadakori plans to hold an informational and resource mobilization workshop with NGOs, the commune's diaspora, the State's technical services, and other stakeholders.

Chadakori is in the early stages of implementing the COVID-19 contingency plan, having carried out about 20 percent of planned actions. To encourage the commune to implement its plan, TerresEauVie supported an awareness campaign via Radio Anfani (regional station) and the communal radio program Voice of the Gobir (*Voix du Gobir*) from the commune of Guidan Roudji, which



Healthcare representatives Elhadji Harouna Alhassane (left) and Ousmane Yacouba (center) debate COVID-19 on Radio Anfani (May 2020). Photo: TerresEauVie

broadcasts to Chadakori. The campaign produced more than 200 broadcasted messages produced by the Ministry of Public Health in three local languages (Haoussa, Fulfuldé, and Tamasheq), and the organization of 14 debates and talks around COVID-19, led by local health services. TerresEauVie also provided 25 informational posters for the town hall, which distributed them in busy spots like the traditional chiefdom's courtyard, women's union headquarters, and health centers. "Thanks to these messages available in multiple languages, the population of Chadakori has become aware of the existence and seriousness of the disease. This has prompted many people to change their ideas and behaviors and to respect prevention measures, especially handwashing and personal hygiene," said Zeinabou Ibrahim. The city council has also created a WhatsApp group with the commune's technical service and health agents to continue sharing important information on COVID-19 and mitigation measures. In addition to working with TerresEauVie to implement the awareness campaigns, Chadakori also secured in-kind donations from partners including World Vision, Laboratoire Citoyenneté, and Taimakon Manoma, a national NGO.

By actively engaging a broad range of stakeholders and building communal consensus to proactively address the spread of COVID-19, Chadakori has laid a strong foundation for an effective response and prevention of the virus. To date, the commune has not recorded any positive cases.



Community Voices

Salamatou Ill (left) is a member of the "Hima Union" group in Chadakori: "I became aware of the danger of COVID-19 thanks to the messages on Anfani radio. The Secretary General summoned me to give me the posters to put up in the group's premises. She took the time to sensitize me and I immediately alerted the other members by showing the posters. Since then, we always wash our hands with soap and water, and masks are mandatory for our meetings."

Issaka Souley, nurse in charge of the Integrated Health Center (CSI) in Chadakori (right), said: "This contingency plan allows us to provide an appropriate response to fight COVID-19. Our team has undertaken, with the support of TerresEauVie, in-person and broadcasted awareness-raising events to make the population aware of the seriousness of this disease and to share prevention measures. All these actions have led the population to understand the virus's danger and to follow prevention measures such as handwashing with soap and water and social distancing, especially during office visits."