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CaLP Case Study

Unconditional cash transfers to reduce food insecurity for displaced households and assist in the repatriation of people to their villages of origin.

Regions of Zinder, Agadez and Maradi in Niger.

A project of Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund Deutschland e.V. (ASB)



With the generous support of



In 2012, Niger was affected by a food crisis that caused large population displacements. The NGO Arbeiter- Samariter-Bund Deutschland e.V. (ASB) distributed unconditional cash transfers in areas of food insecurity to improve food access for those displaced and those affected, and to help repatriate people to their villages of origin in the Zinder, Agadez and Maradi regions. By means of cash transfers, ASB repatriated 672 internally displaced households to their communities of origin in time for the sowing season (June, 2012).

1 The humanitarian context

The food crisis in the Sahel region in 2012 affected the Nigerien population severely. Poor crop production, increased food prices as well as a significant number of Nigerien returnees fleeing the conflicts in Libya, Ivory Coast, Mali and Nigeria, made access to food and other basic items very difficult. According to the director of the agricultural development department of Tanout, seven out of ten people faced food insecurity in April 2012. In this context, approximately 501 households were displaced to the city of Agadez and 725 households to the city of Zinder, fleeing from escalating food insecurity in their villages of origin. Subsequently, these households were identified by the Regional Committees for the Prevention and Management of Disasters and Food Crises in Zinder and Agadez¹ (CRPGCA).

Seasonal population outflow is a normal phenomenon in Niger, but the emigration of entire families at the end of a season – as was the case at the beginning of 2012 – is exceptional. Starting in June 2012, inter-regional missions were organised to evaluate the general situation in the villages of origin of displaced households and the places where they sought refuge. The host communities and authorities in the regions of origin were involved in this evaluation process. The results showed that the environmental conditions in the villages of origin of the returned refugees were favourable (in terms of security, stability, arrival of first rains) while the economic situation of households was getting

worse. Renewed displacements were observed, with rural households taking refuge in urban centres either in their region of origin or in regions further away – data which was confirmed by the CRPGCA census. The increase of precarious and unhealthy housing conditions in zones of high flooding risk was observed too. There was also a sudden rise in begging by women and children in the cities and the imminent arrival of the sowing season coupled with the general context of humanitarian crises in the country pushed the local authorities and the Government to make an appeal for emergency assistance to the international community² of NGOs working in Niger, in order to repatriate internally displaced people (IDPs) as quickly as possible.

ASB has been working in the regions of Zinder and Agadez since 2005 and specialises in food crisis response as well as risk prevention management. It was therefore well placed to respond to this appeal. After coordinating with other NGOs working in the region, ASB centered its action on internally displaced households. The results of a preliminary study and the census undertaken by the regional committees of Agadez and Zinder in April 2012 (nearly 501 and 725 households respectively) show that the majority of displaced households were classed as 'very poor' since they had difficulties covering their basic needs (food, shelter, hygiene, health etc.) and had adopted negative survival strategies (e.g. selling off productive assets before their departure).

¹ These state committees are the regional representation of the National Mechanism for the Prevention and Management of Disasters and Food Crises (DNPGCCA), the main objective of which is the coordination of intervening actors in the case of an emergency in order to ensure the relevance, efficacy and efficiency of food aid.

² www.unocha.org/cap/appeals/appel-global-pour-le-niger-2012.

2 Project overview and logic

General and specific goals

The general goal of this project was to reduce vulnerability by improving the food security of 1,226 households. For 672 households displaced to urban areas because of food insecurity, this involved covering their basic needs during the most difficult months of the year and facilitating repatriation to their villages of origin. For 529 very poor households displaced to resettlement areas (including people with disabilities), this required covering their basic needs and preventing new displacements.

Distribution phases and modalities

Cash transfers were carried out directly by ASB in four installments during 2012.

Phase 1 – June/July: ASB paid the first unconditional cash transfer of 32,500 CFA francs to 672 internally displaced households identified in the urban districts of Agadez and Zinder, followed by two days of voluntary repatriation by bus of displaced households back to their villages of origin. This transfer was intended to encourage and facilitate the return of IDPs in time for the sowing season. At the same time, ASB carried out a similar cash transfer to 529 households identified as beneficiaries by means of the household economic analysis (HEA).

Phase 2 – July/August: unconditional transfer of 32,500 CFA francs to 1226 households in 13 distribution sites in the resettlement areas.

Phase 3 – August/September: reduction of distribution sites to nine and an increase in the unconditional cash transfer amount following an observed rise of food prices on the markets (to on average 37,885 CFA francs). The first transfer took place at 45 distribution sites, the second one at only 13 such sites. The third and fourth transfers took place at nine distribution sites. This decrease in the number of distribution sites was due to a need to reduce personnel and logistical costs following the increase in the transferred amount of cash.

Phase 4 – September/October: last unconditional transfer of 32,500 CFA francs. There were 25 women with disabilities among the beneficiaries

and they received the same amount in total but they received it in two installments delivered to their homes directly by ASB.

Implementation partners

One of the strengths of this project was the good level of coordination with other actors in the area. Ten actors contributed to improving the impact of this project through an effective coordination network led by OCHA. In practice, the CRPGCA delivered the first census; the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) ensured negotiations with transporters for the return of the IDPs and Handicap International provided technical support in targeting people living with disabilities. The World Food Programme (WFP) took charge of the first cash transfer to 315 beneficiaries in Agadez. UNICEF and ASB supported the transportation costs while IOM and the Red Cross (French and Nigerien) facilitated the return of displaced people to their communities of origin. UNICEF distributed 315 non-food item kits. The Nigerien Red Crescent assisted with departures, ensuring that everybody was accommodated properly in the correct vehicles and that they received water distributed by ASB. The French Red Cross distributed protein biscuits to 90 displaced children under five years old, while the Regional Directorate of Public Health (DRSP) of Agadez vaccinated all the displaced children under five years old. Local authorities were involved in the entire process of project implementation, from the distributions to the project evaluation.

3 Project implementation

Targeting and registering beneficiaries

Initially, ASB aimed to target all 1,226 displaced households in Agadez and Zinder identified by the CRPGCA. However, when the census was updated at the beginning of the project, only 672 displaced households could be identified, i.e. only 55% of the initial target. After coordinating with the local authorities and the project donor, ASB extended their target to cover two categories of beneficiaries: very poor households living in the resettlement villages and people with disabilities.

To carry out the registration of the 672 internally displaced households in Zinder and Agadez, the families held general meetings at every site to appoint committees. The committees were composed of representatives from among the displaced people to attest that the beneficiaries were actually displaced families. Subsequently, ASB distributed identification cards to the beneficiaries, which had to be returned at the end of the project.

The second targeted category consisted of 529 very poor households living in eight villages that had been identified as those in most need³ by the sub-regional committee of Takeita in the community of Garagoumsa. These households were selected on the basis of a community targeting procedure. The key criteria to differentiate the various socio-economic groups were:

- the size of the household
- the cultivated surface area
- the type and number of livestock owned
- the possession of a plough

With the support of Handicap International and the Zinder Regional Federation of People with Disabilities, ASB identified 25 disabled women that headed large families in the urban community of Zinder. These women and their families were also targeted. The selection criteria were determined in cooperation with Handicap International. As heads of households, these women lacked resources but still had to take care of children aged between zero and five. ASB aimed to achieve fair targeting among these women by taking into account the different types of disability in Niger. These include leprosy, blindness, deafness/hard-of-hearing, victims of work accidents and physical disabilities. Besides the 25 disabled women that were heads of households and had children aged under five, 31 households with at least one person living with disabilities were selected according to the HEA criteria (see criteria in the table below). In total, 56 people living with disabilities benefited from this project. Even though they benefited from the transfers at home, these 31 households were kept in the category of beneficiaries targeted through the HEA in order to avoid the risk of double counting.

The results are shown in the following table:

Table 1: Socio-economic analysis based on HEA criteria

	%	Average size of household	Possession of land (ha)	Livestock
Very Poor	68	5–9	0–3	1 goat (lent to the household by a better off household) and 6 poultry
Poor	16	8–15	1–6	1 sheep, 3 goats, and 6 poultry
Average	10	10–20	2–10	4 cattle, 7 sheep, more than 10 goats, approx. 20 poultry
Wealthy	6	15–30	4–30	13 cattle, 15 sheep, more than 16 goats, more than 20 poultry

³ That is to say villages with more than a 60% crop shortage that had not benefitted through any initiative of the state or other partners during the year of 2012.

Table 2: Synthesis

Target group	Internally displaced	Very poor	People with disabilities
Targeting criteria	Displaced households in urban zones identified by the CRPGCA of Zinder and Agadez	Socio-economic criteria (HEA)	Women living with disabilities who are the heads of large households
Targeted by whom?	ASB (on the basis of the CRPGCA census in Zinder and Agadez)	ASB / local authorities	Zinder Regional Federation of People with Disabilities / Handicap International / ASB
Number of households	672	529	25
Number of communities	30	2	1 (urban community of Zinder)
Number of transfers	4	4	2
Total amount received by household	Total of 135,385 CFA francs (on average)	Total of 135,385 CFA francs (on average)	Total of 130,000 CFA francs
Other actors and roles directly connected to the ASB programme	OCHA sub-office in Agadez: Provided intervention alerts and coordination as well as the provision of logistical resources. PAM: managed first cash transfer in Agadez (315 beneficiaries). UNICEF: contributed 20% for the transportation of displaced people and distributed 315 non-food-item-kits. Nigerien Red Crescent: organized departures. French Red Cross: distributed protein bars.	Local authorities: Supported targeting, were present at distributions, involved in the evaluation process Police force: present at distributions.	Zinder Regional Federation of People with Disabilities: follow-up

Establishing the transfer amount: tracking prices and market analysis

Out of concern for the coordination and harmonisation of other transfer programmes in the region, ASB set the amount of transfers as recommended by the Food Crisis Agency and Support Plan of the Nigerien government to 32,500 CFA francs (approximately 50 Euros) per month per household. In all aspects, this harmonisation served to mitigate any potential lack of understanding and/or tensions between the villages while remaining very close to the estimation of needs. To monitor the food price in the intervention area, market assessment tools were established in cooperation with the SIMA.⁴

The prices of niébé (local bean), gari (manioc flour), cereal crops (millet, sorghum, maize, and rice), oil, iodine salt and livestock were regularly tracked.⁵ Based on qualitative and quantitative data, the tracking focused on the availability of food (supply, cross-border crop flow, analysis of demand/supply) and on the accessibility of food (prices, terms of exchange). These enquiries were led by the market monitoring officer at ASB and were accompanied by discussions with dealers, sellers and buyers from the market. The data collected was used to adapt the implemented activities, to adjust the amount of cash transferred, but also to survey the market capacity to satisfy additional demand without causing inflation. This market monitoring helped

⁴ Information System for the Agricultural Market supervised by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Craft and the Promotion of the Private Sector.

⁵ The main markets tracked were: Tanout, Matameya, Dolé, Zinder, Birii and Koundoumanoua.

identify any rises in food prices (figure 1), especially of niébé (18.9% on average), millet (11.8%), sorghum (5.8%), maize (7.2%) and rice (0.4%) during the third payment. This information was used to help increase the amount of the transfer to between 36,000 and 40,000 CFA francs, depending on the increase of food prices in each area. Furthermore, this analysis served to underline that the price of millet, sorghum, maize and niébé rose by 81%, 71%, 8% and 180% respectively compared to the averages during 2011. The adjustment and calculation of the amounts to be transferred was based on the following factors:

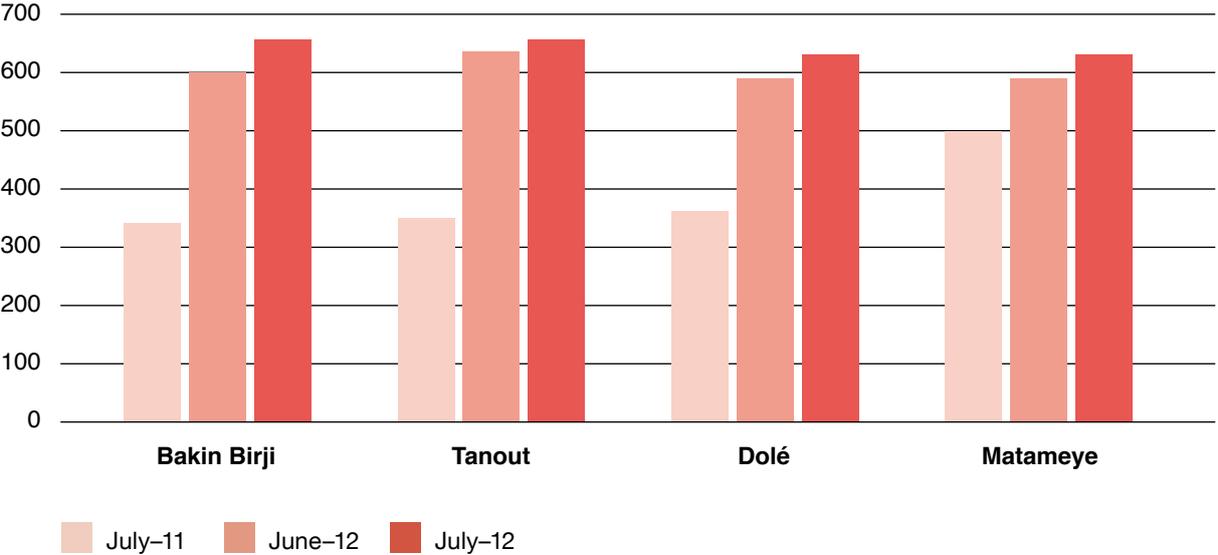
- Indicator 1: Price of main crops (millet, maize, sorghum, niébé) per 100kg bag in retail
- Indicator 2: Exchange price for livestock (poultry, sheep, goats, cattle)
- Indicator 3: Transaction costs (transportation)
- Indicator 4: Exchange rate Naira⁶ / CFA francs
- Indicator 5: Physical accessibility of the market

Operations procedure

At the start of the project, 67 vehicles were mobilised to carry out the voluntary repatriation of displaced households to the villages of origin in Agadez and Zinder. The households received their first transfers two days before returning to their areas of origin.

The project’s other beneficiaries received their transfers at the distribution sites which had been set up close to their villages. The distribution sites were generally set up in district buildings (like the district stadium). People living with disabilities received their transfers at home in two installments. Beneficiaries received information about the forthcoming distribution from the local authorities several days before each distribution. The distributions were carried out in the presence of the main intervening actors (authorities, ASB, committees) and only after the representative of each household presented his/her beneficiary card. Every person who received a transfer signed the sheet. At the end of each distribution, detailed lists of completed payments were signed by the mayor and ASB and saved for evaluation and accountability purposes.

Figure 1 : Evolution of prices per tia⁷ of millet in CFA francs in different markets in the area:



⁶ Naira is the currency used in Nigeria. 1 Naira = 3.1 CFA francs
⁷ One tia equals approximately 2.5 kg of crop.



Photo : ASB

Departure of internally displaced people in Agadez.

Follow-up and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation took place throughout the project and involved different internal departments of ASB (technical, administrative, finance and security). The office in Zinder made it easier to regularly monitor operations in the field. The monitoring of the markets enabled ASB to adjust the amount of the third transfer in a timely manner from 30,000 to 36,000 or 40,000 CFA francs, according to the area. ASB supported the creation of a total of 13 committees for the management of beneficiaries, as well as complaint committees for each community and distribution centre. This coordination among the beneficiaries and ASB allowed a smooth execution of the cash transfer distributions.

In September 2012, a joint evaluation mission was organised in the field with the mayors of Gangara, Garagoumsa, Kanya Wame and Tirmini. The evaluation was based on focus group discussions in two villages per community. These discussions dealt with the appraisal of the project implementation, the uses of money and the project impact on the lives of the beneficiaries (social and economic).

This project also benefited from an external monitoring and evaluation process that took place on various levels. The local authorities participated in the evaluation process by taking part in a joint monitoring trip. WFP, the implementation partner for the first transfer, also handed in a report after the completion of its activities. Lastly, a final project evaluation was carried out by a team of external evaluators (CNESS-Bozari⁸). One of the criteria examined was the project impact, in particular the repatriation of IDPs. The final evaluation used individual and focus group discussions in each location and for each target group in order to gather information.

The sampling was carried out according to the total population in question. The sample consisted of 53% of the targeted women and 47% of the targeted men. As the table below shows, 181 beneficiaries were interviewed, 68.5% of them through individual discussions and 31.5% through group discussions (four consisting of women, three of men). Fifteen actors and organisations involved in the implementation of this cash transfer project were also interviewed individually.

⁸ A private consulting firm, *Cabinet National d'Expertise en Sciences Sociales*

Table 3 : Synthesis of the methods for follow-up and evaluation

Type of follow-up / dates	Organisation(s)	Method / instruments	Which actors were involved?	Main results	Can the report be shared?
Narrative report by partner 31/05/2012	PAM	—	—	315 targeted beneficiaries repatriated; good appraisal about cash received and timing of distributions	Yes
Joint evaluation 09/2012	ASB / communities (Gangara, Garagoumsa, Kanya Wame and Tirmini)	Discussions with beneficiaries (two villages per community = one village with a high number of beneficiaries and one village with an average number of beneficiaries); meetings with administrative authorities and non-beneficiaries of the project	Mayors ASB CRPGCA	Cash helped to preserve livelihoods, reinforce solidarity and local cohesion in the villages, and create harmony within households.	Yes
External evaluation 11/2012	CNESS-Bozari Cabinet	Individual and focus group discussions (sampling 10% of beneficiaries)	10% of beneficiaries and local authorities	This was a social safety net project, covering the dimensions of protection and prevention and helping to reintegrate displaced beneficiaries back into their villages. The inclusion of people living with disabilities showed that the Sphere standards were taken into account and respected.	Yes

Analysis of cost and efficiency

The direct and unconditional distribution of money turned out to be the quickest method of implementation in this context. It would have taken too long to arrange a contract with the IMF or a mobile phone operator in this situation. This solution was also the least expensive. In fact, apart from the cost of human resources, the total cost of this direct transfer only made up 1.7% of the total distributed amount (expenses for logistics and security), in contrast to 4-7% of the costs for the transfer service carried out by IMF or the mobile phone operators. ASB synchronised its distributions with district market days so that the beneficiaries did not have to do the same journey twice and could do their shopping directly after having received their transfer.

Four impacts of the cash transfers

Impact of the transfers on market behaviour

The different discussions which took place throughout the joint evaluation of ASB and the communal authorities showed that the cash transfers did not directly influence the local market. The beneficiaries assumed that the availability of goods and market prices were not impacted by the cash distributions. Rather, the rise in prices which was observed was connected with the poor harvest in 2011. During one of the focus group discussions, the interviewees stated that the increase of transactions and exchanges between the village merchants and the beneficiaries restored the confidence among these market actors because debts could be repaid. This had a positive impact on the market system.

Ensuring repatriation and reintegration of displaced households

The group discussions showed that the first payment distributed had the expected effect for the displaced households. In fact, 100% of displaced households were reintegrated in their villages of origin just in time for the sowing period and were ready for the beginning of the crop season (creating a source of income for the poor households). One village leader testified that normal village life resumed because of the people returning. "I am happy to see the population of my entire village return among us. From now on, all decisions and other agreements which had to be postponed because of too few people in my village can finally be made". The cash transfer programme thus served to reestablish a social balance at the community level.

Protecting the livelihoods of very poor households and / or households with a member living with disabilities

Some beneficiaries described how their livelihoods had been rehabilitated by the cash transfers. Close to 60% of the beneficiaries indicated that the money received helped them avoid having to sell animals or land, or getting into debt in order to plant next season's crop. It also enabled them to invest a part of the money in income generating activities or in collective savings. Staff from the Zinder Regional Federation of People with Disabilities who performed evaluation interviews emphasised that the transfers meant people living with disabilities could stop begging, feel more dignified and acquire a higher social autonomy.

The analysis of cash transfer usage carried out by the CNESS-Bozari revealed that 100% of respondents used the money to buy food (of which 31.5% spent all the money on food).

Intervention at the right time

If the project achieved success in supporting the repatriation of IDPs to their villages of origin and having a positive impact on the protection of livelihoods, this can be attributed in large part to the fact that it took place in time for the sowing season, when food is scarce (June-September). In general, this period is the most difficult for agricultural communities since food supplies are at their lowest, field work accumulates, and cases of malaria, colds and diarrhea are at their peak. During this period, it is important to have enough food to meet the calorie requirements, as well as enough money for medical expenses, in order not to have to sell assets. In addition, July until September is the fattening period for livestock.

This season is a determining period for the very poor as they carry out work which is paid for either with goods or money. The poorest households start to work on wealthier people's fields and only afterwards can they devote time to preparing their own small fields. Altogether, 99.4% of respondents said that the cash transfer helped them avoid having to sell animals; 100% avoided having to sell their fields, and 100% avoided having to take out loans in order to survive the season of scarcity. The transfer programme also discouraged the poorest households from migrating to urban areas. This prevented population movements and protected livelihoods, a fact that was pointed out by many people questioned during evaluations as well as by community leaders. As one of the beneficiaries emphasised during an individual interview: "It is this money which allowed many among us who had already packed our bags to unpack them again".



Photo : ASB

Understanding and appraisal of the project by the beneficiaries

On the whole, beneficiaries demonstrated a high level of understanding about the targeting process: 54% of the internally displaced households claimed to have been selected on the basis of a census (displaced or handicapped), and 42% said it was on the basis of socio-economic criteria. Very few respondents indicated that they were among those selected because of influence peddling.

As the table below shows, the cash transfer project was broadly appreciated by the beneficiaries. Despite the average 20 kilometres they had to travel in order to reach the distribution points, the distance to receive the transfers was not strongly criticised. In all likelihood, this was because the transfers took place near the markets on market day. The beneficiaries would travel this distance anyway because of the opportunities markets represent to find jobs / income.

Table 4 : Appraisal of the different aspects of the cash transfer operation by the sampled beneficiaries.

Aspect	Level of expressed satisfaction			
	Mediocre	Fairly good	Very good	Total
Targeting	1.7%	23%	86%	100%
Distribution	—	8.8%	91.2%	100%
Montant	—	14.2%	85.8%	100%
Distribution frequency	—	29.9%	70.1%	100%
Distance to distribution point	17.4%	27.3%	55.4%	100%
The non-inclusion of household size	29.9%	9.3%	60.7%	100%

5 Challenges, solutions and lessons learned

5.1 The distance

Challenge

The distance of 20km on average between the villages and the distribution points was more important than was estimated in the preparation phase of the project. The number of distribution sites (only nine) was not sufficient for the two final transfers.

Solutions / lessons learned

In order to reduce the number of distribution points without creating additional travel costs for the beneficiaries, distributions were synchronised with market days. As explained before, the households containing disabled people continued to receive their transfers at home. Altogether, 97% of the targeted beneficiaries came to collect their allocation. In terms of lessons learned, it is very important to have a budget that allows for a high number of distribution points.

5.2 Incentives for migration

Challenge

Households that did not migrate from villages affected could in future be tempted to leave with the single goal of benefiting from projects of this type. If no efficient and sustainable accompanying measures are provided by the local authorities, beneficiaries could in turn risk entering a cycle of temporary migration regardless of whether the harvests are good or bad.

Solutions / lessons learned

One year later, the migration phenomenon has not reoccurred. However, the potential risk has prompted ASB to anticipate the risks of migration in the following year (2013) by reinforcing the census capacities of the mayors and their ability to manage migration through the establishment of a body to observe migration. This idea is currently being developed together with the local communities and in the future could help prevent and manage mass migrations, as well as protect the rights of IDPs. Equally, the ongoing involvement of the authorities since the response in 2012 contributed to reducing the risks of mass migration. Communities have increasingly integrated migration into their vulnerability monitoring systems in order to be able

to warn NGOs on time. The use of these indicators serves to improve preparation for this type of phenomenon and to limit the impact upon the population.

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Photo : Aubrey Wade / Oxfam

The Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) (www.cashlearning.org) is a consortium of humanitarian organizations that aims to improve the quality of emergency cash transfer and voucher programming across the humanitarian sector. CaLP originated from the will to gather lessons learnt from the emergency response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2005. Today, CaLP is composed of five steering committee organisations: Oxfam GB, the British Red Cross, Save the Children, the Norwegian Refugee Council and Action

Against Hunger / ACF International. These five organisations came together to support capacity building, research and information sharing as a way to promote cash transfer programming as an effective tool to deliver aid in times of crisis.

In 2010, the CaLP partnered with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies (IFRC) to develop and implement new activities for 2011 with support from ECHO.

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