

Real Time Evaluation  
Project ADVANCE Niger



RTE Team:

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Terms of Reference

Real Time Evaluation: CRS Project ADVANCE

***Terms of Reference for the Real Time Evaluation***

***CRS/Niger Emergency Response in 2010***

***Project ADVANCE***

**1. Introduction**

The 2009 agricultural season in Niger was marked by dramatic crop production deficits. The most recent drought in Niger has led to an escalation in the price of locally-produced staple grains in the region. While demand in local markets remains high,<sup>1</sup> as is normal right before the lean season, many vulnerable households do not have access to foods available on local markets. The United Nations (UN) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) released an Emergency Humanitarian Action Plan in April 2010 to request over \$130 million needed to “save lives in Niger and help people escape looming food insecurity and malnutrition.”<sup>2</sup> The Government of Niger (GoN) identified Tillabery and Ouallam as two “extremely vulnerable” departments in the country.<sup>3</sup>

In response to the food insecurity situation of 2010, CRS/Niger is currently implementing Project ADVANCE or Assistance through the Distribution of Vouchers Aiding Nigerien Communities in Emergency in Tillabery and Ouallam Departments, Tillabery Region. Through the support of USAID/FFP, Project ADVANCE seeks to assist vulnerable households with food voucher distributions. The distribution of vouchers aims to make local food stocks available to the targeted population.

Through Project ADVANCE, CRS/Niger and implementing partner ABC Ecologie supports a population of 140,758 in 278 villages in Tillabery and Ouallam Departments, Tillabery Region. The program targets 20,108 of the most vulnerable households with monthly food voucher distributions. Each household receives a food voucher worth approximately \$50.

**2. Purpose and objectives of the Real Time Evaluation**

RTEs are a particular approach to evaluation which attempts to monitor the performance of a response at an early stage, thus providing the opportunity to correct shortcomings in ‘real-time’. By aspiring to directly influence the current intervention, the approach is particularly relevant to humanitarian assistance, since it contrasts sharply with traditional ex-post evaluations, where findings can only influence a future program cycle. Despite the evaluation moniker, an RTE focuses its attention on management processes rather than assessing impact.

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<sup>1</sup> SIMA Weekly Bulletin #92, April 27, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> UN OCHA Press Release, *US\$133 Million Needed to Address Food Security and Nutrition in Niger*, April 7, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> GoN Household Vulnerability Survey, according to OCHA’s Emergency Humanitarian Action Plan, April 2010.

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With this in mind, the **overall purpose of this RTE** is to enable those involved in the CRS Niger response to learn from implementing the program to date and to make improvements so that the program is effective in meeting the needs of disaster affected people.

#### **The objectives for this RTE are:**

1. To document the accomplishments to date.
2. To review the response against the four established criteria and recommend immediate changes that can improve the emergency program.
3. To identify good practices to use more widely and lessons learned in this response.
4. Promote a learning approach within CRS by reporting and communicating the outcome of the RTE beyond CRS/Niger to the agency worldwide and to partners.

#### **3. Methodology**

The assignment will be led by two team leaders external to CRS/Niger, Head of M&E of CRS/Mali and WARO's RTA for M&E, who are responsible for assessing a range of program performance and management issues and for producing the report. All partners may wish to be represented on the evaluation team but RTE team members will be selected based on appropriate qualifications.

The commissioning manager will confirm the other members of the RTE team and agree with the team leader whether translators, and or data collectors, need to be hired or such support, if needed, is provided by other staff not involved in the project being evaluated. Logistic arrangements will also be verified. Such arrangements will then be completed prior to the arrival of the team leaders.

The RTE team will carry out the exercise as follows:

- Hold an initial discussion with the commissioning manager and available members of the country team to ensure that all are clear on RTE expectations and outcomes. If time allows, the evaluation questions and methods and the emergency plan they are carrying out (verifying the activities being done and the objectives they are trying to achieve) will be discussed.
- Hold a short planning meeting with all members of the RTE team including translators and data collectors, and if possible the commissioning manager, to review and, as needed, amend the questions, methods, any data collection tools, the stakeholders to be interviewed, logistic arrangements and the daily schedule for each member of the team. Draw on existing RTE reports (if, and when available) to maximize incremental learning from RTEs across the organization.
- Use the four criteria with sub-headings as set out below to structure the data collection and reflection sessions.
- Have discussions with relevant staff at various levels of CRS (within the country program, region and HQ), partners, and other stakeholders to reach conclusions against the criteria.
- Consult with the affected population, using participatory tools as far as possible when engaging with disaster affected people, and attempt to triangulate information.
- Consult with staff at various levels – management and field - to understand what enables them to achieve results as planned and what barriers are stopping them from achieving results
- Present and discuss findings with the emergency response team, partner staff and management in a reflection workshop before departure to discuss findings and give opportunities for the team(s) to

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further develop the findings and generate lessons learned and recommendations for this and future projects.

- Create an action plan, complete with the names of the person responsible and a timeline, for the project to start implementing immediately after the reflection session.

The RTE will be conducted to analyze initial results and reflect on the appropriateness and effectiveness of activities, delivery mechanisms and targeting, and community participation and accountability. The RTE will be conducted with food voucher distribution activities, so that the team can adjust implementation strategies as needed for greatest impact and accountability in the next round of voucher distributions.

The four broad criteria listed below, with associated questions, will be examined to judge the effectiveness of the emergency response.

#### Relevance/appropriateness

1. How well is CRS' response meeting the needs of the affected population?
2. How was the assessment carried out and were decisions on how to respond based on the findings?
3. To what extent have Sphere common standards been achieved?
4. In what ways is the project flexible and changing to meet conditions and phases of the response?
5. To what extent were the relevant Sphere technical standards appropriately applied given the situation (taking culture and socio-economic factors into consideration)?
6. How were learnings from previous in-country emergencies feed into this response and how can they continue to inform the response?

#### Program and management effectiveness

1. What internal and external factors affected the speed of our response at country level including the contingency (preparedness) plan, access to CRS emergency funds, pre-positioning of relief items, staff deployment systems, and the local context?
2. How did the timeliness of the response help reduce the impact of the disaster for affected people?
3. What particular challenges or good practices have arisen in working with vulnerable groups of people?
4. How satisfied are affected people with their level of involvement, with the information they receive on project activities and their ability to complain and get a response?
5. How well are essential program support functions operating and resourced (including finance, HR, logistics, media and communications)?
6. How well did funding mechanisms function at country office and or partner levels?
7. How well did the monitoring system support decision-making?
8. How well are risks assessed, documented and managed?

#### Connectedness and sustainability

1. In what ways are program participant needs changing?
2. How well is the program adapting to their changing needs?

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3. How is the response building on local capacities and reinforcing positive coping strategies?
4. What plans are being made for the next phase? How can the next phase meet immediate needs and link to existing development programs?
5. What lessons learned and good practices from the initial response can inform the next phase of the response?

#### Coverage (who and how many people are we reaching?)

1. How were decisions made regarding targeting (sub-groups of the population being reached and the locations where the response is carried out)?
2. How well have we ensured complementarity with other humanitarian actors?
3. How well has the program addressed the differing needs of men, women, children, the elderly, and the disabled?
4. Who and how many different groups of people are targeted and how effectively are they being reached?
5. Are targeting methods equitable and transparent?

#### **4. Presentation and documentation of findings and recommendations**

The RTE team will debrief with the field teams and senior representatives of the affiliates on its main findings at a Day of Reflection workshop, and the team leader will complete a draft report for comments upon return to their base. A final report should be produced ideally within the following week. The report should be brief, not exceeding 15 pages plus some short annexes containing the Terms of Reference and a timeline of the response. The final report will be signed off by the commissioning manager noting their agreement or not with the action plan and posted on CRS Global. The country program office and partner agencies will be responsible for taking forward the action points and recommendations relevant to them. *[Include provisions for debriefing meeting with the regional office, and/or HQ emergency operations to share learning, if feasible.]*

#### **5. Ownership, resourcing and timing**

The Grants and PQ Quality Coordinator is the RTE commissioning manager, though this task may be delegated to another individual. The evaluation team will be accountable to the commissioning manager. The following is the list of key players in the RTE:

Name	Title	Role	Email	Phone
Liz Pfifer	Grants & PQ Coordinator, CRS/Niger	Commissioning Manager	epfifer@ne.waro.crs.org	
Abderahamane Bamba	Head of M&E, CRS/Mali	RTE team leader	abamba@ml.waro.crs.org	
Heather Dolphin	RTA M&E	RTE team co-	hdolphin@waro.crs.org	

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		lead		
Pape Said Coly	Head of M&E, CRS/Senegal	RTE team member	pcoly@sn.waro.crs.org	
Souradja Mahaman	Emergency Coordinator, CRS/Niger	RTE team member	smahaman@ne.waro.crs.org	
Adamou Abdourhimou	Head of M&E, CRS/Niger	RTE team member	aabdourhimou@ne.waro.crs.org	
Evelyn Sallah	Fellow, CRS/Niger	RTE team member	esallah@ne.waro.crs.org	

## 6. Assumptions and requirements

- Evaluators will have access to all documentation and can take part in relevant meetings and field trips.
- Evaluators will have access to key staff in the responding in-country CRS office and/or, partner offices for conducting interviews.
- All members of the evaluation team will have access to members of the affected population for conducting interviews.
- Evaluators will take confidentiality and objectivity into consideration during the process.

## 7. Timeline for key activities and deliverables

Date	Activity	Locale	Responsible	Deliverables
17 September	RTE team arrives	Niamey	Liz	
18-19 September	RTE team preliminary meeting, document review, confirm interview questions, etc.	CRS/Niger Office Niamey	Liz/Souradja	
12-24 September	RTE team conducts evaluation	Ouallam, Tillabery	Heather/Bamba	
27-29 September	Reflection workshop and final meetings	CRS/Niger Office Niamey	Heather/Bamba	

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30 September – 15 October	Complete RTE report	In respective offices	Heather/Bamba	
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