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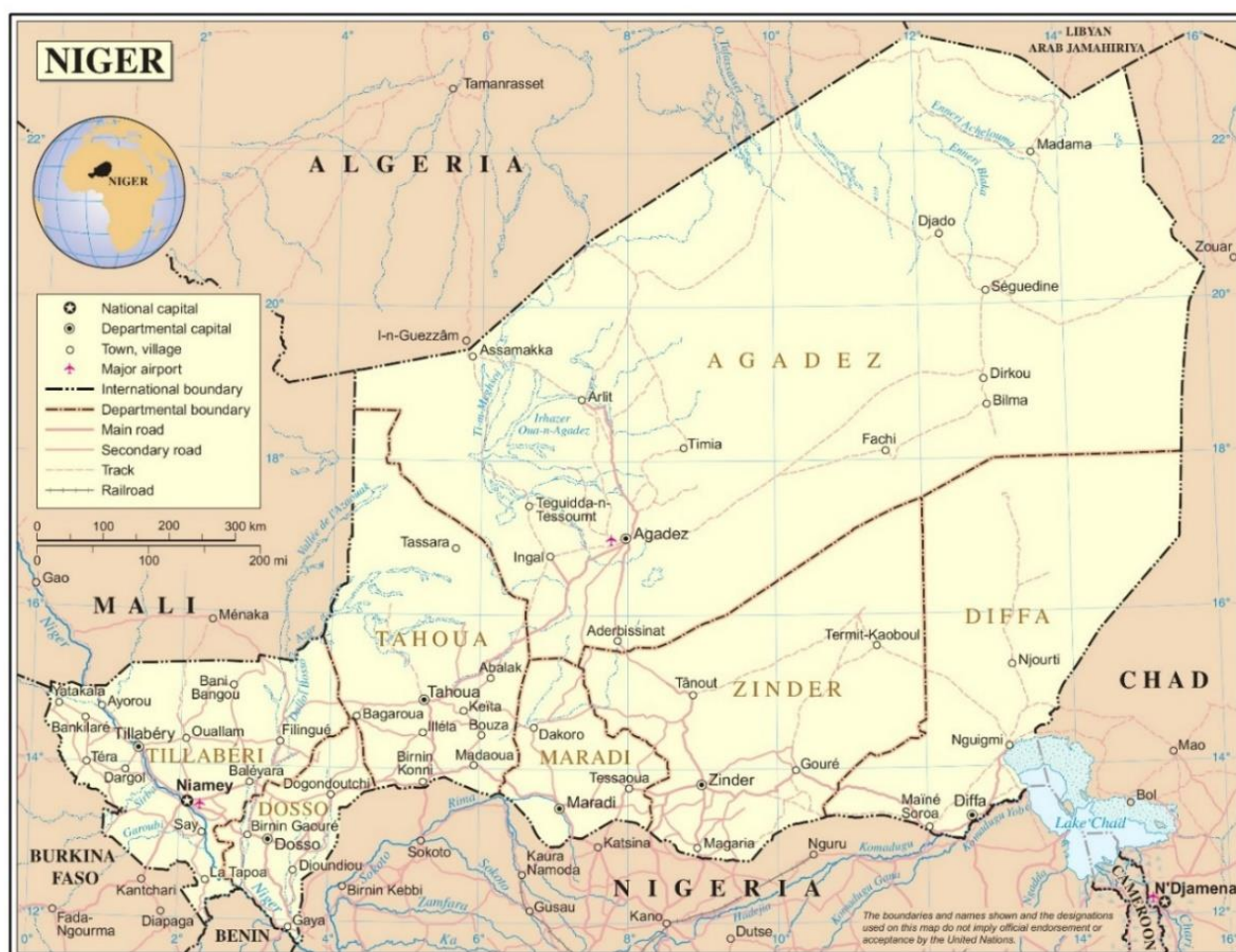|	
1. Overall purpose:	*For discussion and recommendation to the Minister*
2. Title:	Niger Strategic Framework 2023-2027
3. Presentation for Programme Committee:	24 May 2022
4. Previous strategic framework for Niger presented to UPR	Yes, the Niger Country Policy Paper was presented to UPR on 19 November 2015

Denmark – Niger

Strategic Framework 2023-2027

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Contents

5. Denmark and Niger 2023-2027: Vision and strategic objectives

Since 1974, the partnership between Denmark and Niger has been characterised by long-term development cooperation focusing on eradicating poverty, reinforcing democratic values, and improving living conditions for the most vulnerable. Niger became a Danish priority country in 2011 and since then the number of engagements and instruments have been broadened with added focus areas, such as stabilisation and migration. The bilateral relationship of today builds on a long-standing and significant contribution to Niger's development, for which Denmark is highly appreciated, and strong historical bonds exist. The substantial support over many years makes Denmark a credible partner for Niger bilaterally as well as multilaterally. The strong partnership and shared values is evident at high-level meetings and in multilateral fora.

According to the UN Human Development Index (HDI), Niger remains the least developed country in the world due to a combination of poverty, lack of education, poor healthcare, and a low standard of living. In addition to these structural challenges, Niger is today confronted by a multi-dimensional crisis stemming from factors at the national, regional, and global level, counting the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel, effects of climate change, geopolitical competition, and a humanitarian and food crisis. Denmark and Niger both have an interest in ensuring stability and improving the living conditions of the population by combatting terrorism, strengthening governance, reducing poverty, and increasing the livelihood of local communities. However, a stable and prospering Niger is not only an end to itself, but also a means to strengthen peacebuilding in the entire region. As Niger connects the West and Central African regions with North Africa, and, thereby, the Mediterranean, a destabilised Niger could be a risk not only for the region, but also for Europe and Denmark in the form of increased irregular migration from the region through Nigerien territory.

The strategic framework is a relevant instrument for delivering on the Danish strategy for development cooperation "The World We Share" with its strong focus on fighting poverty and inequality and promoting sustainable development, peace, and stability in a coherent manner ensuring adaptability and flexibility. Denmark should be present in poor and fragile countries where the needs are greatest; as the least developed country in the world faced by a multidimensional crisis, Niger is where Denmark needs to be. Delivering on Denmark's Foreign and Security Policy is an another key priority, notably ensuring Denmark's safety by supporting peacebuilding in the Sahel; promoting democratic values and human rights; utilising green Danish know-how; and by helping more people locally, especially women and girls. Danish strategies and policies will be implemented in a manner fully aligned with key national development objectives of Niger, including the country's Social and Economic Development Plan and the General Policy Statement of the Government. The partnership will further address Nigerien priorities, such as girl's education and security.

Denmark's vision for our partnership with Niger for the period 2023-2027 is to *prevent violent conflict and support peacebuilding and stability in respect of good governance and human rights, and to reduce poverty and inequality by enhancing resilience and accelerating inclusive, sustainable growth.* Three strategic objectives are envisaged to support this vision with crosscutting priorities to support the promotion of an effective, democratic, and responsible state as well as the inclusion of women, youth, and marginalised groups.

1. **Strengthen stability, prevent conflicts, displacement, and irregular migration** with the aim of promoting peacebuilding and handling structural causes for changed migration patterns, including forced displacement and irregular migration.
2. **Adaptation to climate change and strengthening resilience** with the objective of reducing poverty and preventing conflict drivers by adapting to climate change and supporting increased and equitable access to water resources, green economic growth, and job opportunities.
3. **Promote good governance, human rights, and gender equality** to strengthen democracy and promote civic space, accountable public institutions, and human rights, including gender equality and SRHR, in order to fight the root causes of inequality, exclusion, discrimination, and conflict.

2. Analysis of context, challenges, and risks

In April 2021, Niger completed its first democratic transition from one elected president to another. This transfer of power was a significant step forward for the country, which has experienced periods of strong political instability, including several rebellions and military coups. The development brings with it positive expectations by international partners, who increasingly look to Niger as a stable partner in an unstable region.

However, the political landscape remains volatile and the fragile balance could tip from institutional stability to state collapse, if existing fragilities and worrying trends are further aggravated. Growing discontent among the population could manifest itself as a loss of faith in democracy as has been seen in other countries in the region. This could potentially trigger a military overthrow of government.

Political stability and power concentration

The Republic of Niger has a semi-presidential system, with the executive branch, especially the president, concentrating most of the power, with a multi-party legislature. According to Freedom House, the country is partly free with a score of 48, which is higher than most West African states. Despite the recent democratic transition, the state has largely been built around the president's party, PNDS, which has been in power for more than 10 years. Today PNDS is by far the biggest political party in the national parliament, but does not hold enough seats to govern alone.

Historically, the political system is controlled by a coalition of elites coming from different parts of society, including political actors with similar background, economic operators, the military, and traditional leaders. The formation of government, as well as the functioning of the administration, seems to be based on linkages to these existing political elites rather than on efficiency or competence. Whilst this contributes to political stability in the short to medium term, it also creates barriers to the exercise of democracy and good governance in the medium to long term, and as such, it limits democratic consolidation. Participation in political life lacks diversity and inclusion of youth, women, and marginalised groups. However, Niger has been quite effective in integrating the different ethnic groups in key state institutions, which has led to less ethnic frictions and questioning of a common national identity, for example in comparison to neighbouring Mali. The majority of the population is Muslim, with 99% of the population practicing Islam. However, Niger is officially a secular country and the constitution prohibits religious discrimination and provides for freedom of religion and worship.

Political and economic power is concentrated around the capital, Niamey. The state, at the central level, only transfers financial resources to local authorities (266 communes and 8 regions) and deconcentrated technical services to the extent of the means available. When the financial resources are transferred, they are implemented with limited involvement of local communities. The lack of technical staff provided to local authorities is another challenge. The transfer of competences is gradual and concerns four areas: education, health, water and environment, including responsibility for the construction and maintenance of the corresponding infrastructure as well as the provision of social services. At the local level, traditional leaders formally play an important role in mediating and handling disputes, such as social conflicts and conflicts over access to land and management of natural resources. They work closely together with the Public Mediator in place in Niger since 2011.

Peace, stability, and security

Niger is a key player in international and regional initiatives and the security situation in Niger is linked to the regional situation and the instability in neighbouring countries. The country is an important member of the G5 Sahel and the Multinational Joint Task Force around Lake Chad, and at the centre of the international anti-terrorist coalition in the Sahel. As the security architecture in Sahel is changing, especially due to the situation in Mali, the international military presence in Niger is expected to increase in the coming years. This change brings the hope of increased security, yet also presents the risk of a domestic backlash, as much of the population are reluctant to see a larger presence of foreign troops in their country. It is expected that geopolitical competition, specifically the actions of Russia in Sahel, will lead to increased disinformation campaigns and more public manifestations against France and the West. Yet, Niger has been clear in their strong disapproval of the presence of the Russian Wagner group in Mali.

Compared to neighbouring Mali and Burkina Faso, Niger has a larger ratio of defence and security forces, but the number is insufficient to effectively control the county's vast territory. The government aims to double the number of army personnel to 50,000 soldiers in 2025, including making use of a policy of "positive discrimination" by recruiting from marginalised ethnic groups. Niger is less affected than its neighbours by the lack of trust between the armed forces and the population, and a large majority of Nigeriens have confidence in their security forces. More than 17% of the state budget is allocated to the security sector, including for the provision of military equipment. The management of these funds has been opaque with little oversight and the defence sector has been the subject of major corruption cases, which could affect the legitimacy and morale of the army and security forces.

Niger is struggling to contain the deteriorating security situation due to jihadist violence, banditry, and organised crime on several fronts. Since 2015, the army has been fighting Boko Haram in the south-eastern Diffa region, and more recently, the Boko Haram splinter group, Islamic State West African Province, as the group expanded from north-eastern Nigeria. Compared to its neighbours, the security situation appears better controlled. However, since the beginning of 2021 there has been a significant increase in the prevalence of violence, including attacks on local communities, targeted assassinations, and kidnappings perpetrated by armed groups. The deterioration of the security situation in northern Nigeria has spread eastward and is now spilling over into the southern regions of Niger from Dosso to Maradi. Most of the violence in Niger, however, is concentrated in the south-western regions Tahoua

and, especially, Tillabéri, bordering Mali and Burkina Faso. Islamic State in the Sahel Province (ISSP), previously known as Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, has been behind most of the violence against both military bases and civilians, particularly committing large-scale massacres of civilians. Although international and national forces have managed to slow down and weaken ISSP, the Al-Qaeda affiliated Jama'at Nusratul Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) seems to have taken advantage of ISSP weakening and extended the group's influence at the border with Burkina Faso launching attacks against government forces.

In the absence of the ability of the state to provide security at community level, many communities have recently formed self-defence groups, which has given rise to tensions within and between communities. The government recognises the existence of self-defence groups, but does not condone them and try to prevent them from developing, as they risk escalating community conflicts providing an opening for allegiances to jihadist groups. Apart from the jihadist violence, organised crime, such as cross-border crimes and trafficking of drugs, arms, and human beings, constitutes a security issue, which can both lead to an increase in violent disputes and create a source of income for jihadist groups as they establish links with criminal networks.

Economic development and employment

Niger's economy has been growing relatively steadily at over 5.2 percent the last two decades, yet Niger remains a low-income country and one of the absolute poorest in the world measured in GNI per capita. While Niger has been spared from the worst health related impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the fiscal position of Niger, already under pressure from the security situation and climate-related shocks, declined further with a fall in the growth rate from 5.9% in 2019 to 3.6% in 2020. In 2021, there was a further fall in economic growth to 1.4%, which translates to a real economy contraction of 2.3%, taking into account population growth. Economic growth is projected to pick up again in 2022 to 5.2%, but is expected to stay below its pre-pandemic trend. The economy is heavily dependent on the agriculture and livestock sector, which accounts for 43% of GDP and employs around 80% of the working population, making it particularly vulnerable to internal and external shocks, such as conflict, climate change, and price fluctuation for raw materials and consumption goods.

Niger has a significant mining and extraction industry largely dominated by international enterprises, extracting uranium, gold, coal, and crude oil. From 2023 onwards, Niger may experience a substantial transformation of its economy with completion of a 2,000 km-long crude oil pipeline financed by China linking Niger to Benin. According to estimations, oil production could increase fivefold and reach a production of 100,000 bpd in 2024. Such an increase in oil production alone would potentially represent a 25% increase of GDP and 45% of fiscal revenues. Without proper governance and frameworks in place to manage the sector, the potential benefits expose Niger to several risks.

The Nigerien economy is characterized by a large informal sector dominated by micro-enterprises, mainly in agriculture, and a small formal sector with little manufacturing. Nevertheless, the informal economy functions as a reservoir of employment and a social shock absorber in the event of a crisis, such as COVID-19.

Human development, poverty, and inequality

In 2020, Niger's GDP per capita was only 565 USD. Due to population growth, the absolute number of people living in extreme poverty (less than US$1.9 pr. day) has surpassed 10 million despite a drop in the relative share of people living in poverty. Furthermore, the overall fall in the relative poverty level seems to disguise the rise in inequalities, according to the World Bank. The state has put in place a system of social safety nets for the benefit of the most vulnerable and extended free access to health care and schooling. In practise, however, the gap between these formal commitments and the state's actual capacity is considerable, not least due to the demographic growth. One example is the education sector, which is one of the main reasons for the low placement on the UN HDI. According to Niger's National Education Plan for 2020-22, only 42% of girls, and 58% of boys, are enrolled in basic education. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, a girl could expect to receive the equivalent of 2.4 years of quality education over her lifetime (compared to 2.9 years for a boy). Fewer than 60% of primary school students continue to secondary school, while only 20% complete secondary education. Due to the low quality of the education system, less than 8% of children have acquired adequate literacy and numeracy skills by the end of primary school, according to UNICEF. The literacy rate is at 35% for people above 15. Niger is committed to gradually increasing the budget for education to 22% of the national budget by 2024.

Niger is affected by inequality, especially for the youth, who are excluded from the labour market and deprived of social and economic mobility, and therefore pushed towards the informal economy, which risks bringing them closer to banditry, trafficking and migration. At the same time, exclusion of youth from the political world deprives them of influence over development of their society and may push some of them towards radicalism. Inequalities are also evident in the divide between the urban and rural worlds. The under-investment of the state in rural areas negatively affects the herder-pastoralists, who suffer from a growing and multidimensional marginalisation, i.e. economic, social, and political, making them particularly vulnerable to injustices. Furthermore, population displacement creates new sources of tension with host communities, largely related to the occupation of space and distribution of resources. Niger has the sixth fastest urbanisation rate in the world (5.3%). The increasing urbanisation brings opportunities, such as fostering rural/urban interdependencies, which can boost the economy and decrease the cost of access to basic social services. Yet, it also comes with major risks, such as frustration over the lack of opportunities among young people unable to find employment, and may accentuate the precariousness of living conditions in the poorer urban peripheries. 70% of the urban population lives in neighbourhoods without access to water and health services.

Demographic growth, gender inequality, and SRHR

Despite some improvements to gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights, Niger remains far behind in a global and regional perspective. Gender inequality, including lack of education, economic opportunities, early marriage, and early childbirth, contributes to an extremely high population growth of around 3.8%, driven by the world's highest fertility rate of 6.8 births per woman. If left unchanged, the population is expected to triple in less than 30 years. More than half of all girls start their reproductive life before their 18th birthday and at this age three out of four are already married – one out of four are married before the age of 15. With limited access and knowledge about contraception, an early commencement of reproductive life has large implications for the sexual and reproductive health

of girls: one in three deaths among girls aged 15-19 are linked to pregnancy and its complications. Access to family planning and contraception is very low and a highly sensitive issue due to religion and tradition.

The government, with the president at the forefront, has made it a key priority to address the rapid population growth; education, especially of girls, is promoted as a key tool to address inequalities. Nevertheless, the society is still strongly marked by discrimination against women due to socio-cultural and religious norms and customs, which imply significant barriers for the empowerment of women and girls. This discrimination coupled with the lack of information and knowledge about their rights, excludes many women and girls from participating in political and economic life, and from claiming and enjoying their rights. With limited access to justice, many women still suffer from gender-based and domestic violence, including the practice of domestic and sexual slavery (wahaya). Despite ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discriminations Against Women, Niger made several reservations lacking conformity with the object and purpose of the convention, which has yet to be redrawn. Niger has adopted its second National Action Plan for Women, Peace, and Security covering the period 2020-2024.

Humanitarian situation, displacement, and irregular migration

Niger faces an acute and chronic humanitarian crisis. According to the UN, the number of people in need has increased by 65%, from 2.3 million in 2019 to 3.8 million in 2021. In conflict areas, human rights violations and abuses constitute the main concern with an unprecedented number of civilians killed in 2021, underlining the need for protection and monitoring of the situation of the population in these areas. Food and nutrition insecurity is an enduring issue, which impacts 40% of the population, and cereal and fodder production is in deficit every second year. This insecurity is driven by poverty, insecurity, environmental degradation, and recurring extreme climatic events; during the rainy season, serious flooding affects Niger. The situation has an especially severe impact on children, who are exposed to increasing and multifaceted risks, such as acute malnutrition, lack of access to education, violence, sexual abuse, child labour, and recruitment by non-state armed groups. As of 2021, 579 schools remains closed in the Tillabéri region alone according to the government. Countrywide, more than 50% of all children between 7-16 years of age are out of school. 1.6 million children are affected by malnutrition, including 450,000 of acute malnutrition, well above the WHO emergency threshold.

Niger is at the centre of migration, connecting routes across the Sahel and between sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, and Europe. Since the 1990s, Niger, and more particularly the Agadez region, has seen an influx of migrants crossing the territory of Niger to reach Europe via the Maghreb countries. These migration movements are mainly the result of the lack of economic opportunities, the conflicts that have developed in the region, the lack of employment opportunities for young people, and the structural difficulties of the agricultural production sectors, such as long periods of drought and structural famine, further exacerbated by the effects of climate change. Few Nigerien migrants immigrate irregularly to Europe; those who do immigrate do so legally with valid reasons for entering. In 2021, Frontex only detected 29 illegal border-crossings by Nigeriens. Most Nigerien migrants move within West and North Africa as part of a seasonal migration pattern finding work in the agriculture or construction sectors, which has played an important role for the economy and culture of Niger, and the region historically. However, other West and Central African migrants use Nigerien territory as a transit area on their way

towards Europe. While the number of migrants travelling through Niger saw a drop in 2016 due to anti-human trafficking laws, the tendency to avoid main roads and cities makes an actual number difficult to estimate, but IOM has measured a steady increase in the flows of migrants leaving the country. Niger is also a destination country for migrants from the region looking for economic opportunities, especially in artisanal gold mining sites. Many of these sites operate informally and often illegally, posing social, environmental, and governance problems.

The humanitarian situation in Niger and neighbouring states has led to displacement across the borders and within the country. Niger, as a state party to the refugee convention and its protocol, is as of March 2022 hosting more than 281,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, mainly from Nigeria, Mali, and Burkina Faso, as well as an internally displaced population of around 264,000. These movements are mainly driven by the security situation as well as natural disasters and climate change. The government has been facilitating and plans to organise further large-scale returns of IDPs to their homes. The first return of approximately 40,000 IDPs to the Diffa-region was conducted in mid-2021.

Climate change and resilience

Niger is one of the countries most affected by climate change with temperatures rising 1.5 times faster than in the rest of the world. Projections predict an increase in temperature of 2 to 2.5° in arid and semi-arid zones and up to 4° in the Niger River valley. In arid areas, i.e. 2/3 of Niger's territory, this will further increase pressure on water resources, even though rainfall is expected to remain similar or even increase in the coming decades, leading to a net result of 10-20% decrease in yields of most rainfed crops by 2050 compared to 2020. With flows of 30 billion cubic metres per year for surface water and 33.65 billion cubic metres per year for groundwater, Niger has significant water resources available. Yet, less than 1% of surface water resources and less than 20% of renewable groundwater resources are currently exploited. The challenges are mainly related to problems of mobilising water resources, regulating the flow of surface watercourses, and equitable allocation of the resource in periods and years of pronounced deficits. With the increasing climatic constraints on rain fed agriculture, irrigated cropping becomes an increasingly important alternative, but changing the production system is hampered by the investment cost of installations, energy for pumping, maintenance problems, and the application of laws governing access to land. Access to clean water varies greatly from urban (90%) to rural areas (47%). Conflicts over water are mainly linked to the use of pastoral water infrastructures: either because of the excessive concentration of herds in certain areas at certain times of the year; or, because of the extension of cultivation areas on to livestock territories, which limits access to water infrastructures for herders.

The principal effect from climate change in Niger is extreme weather events, such as drought and flooding, affecting urban and rural areas alike. Climate change is having a structural impact on production methods and the agricultural calendar. The consequences are a reduction in non-irrigated agricultural production, while for pastoralists the consequences are a reduction in the availability of fodder and water. Some of the usual coping strategies, including the seasonal movement of livestock, are no longer possible or effective given the environmental constraints, but also due to the security difficulties to which the herders are exposed, as crossing borders has become dangerous. Climate change has been reinforcing existing inequalities, with the poorest populations being the most severely exposed and affected, which increases the risk of violence over the distribution of resources and affect economic and social well-being.

The Nigerien authorities are committed to combating global warming and protecting the environment by both mitigation, e.g. land restoration and dune fixation; and adaptation, e.g. integrated water resource management and promotion of sustainable production systems.

Sustainable land, water, and natural resource management is a key aspect of resilience to climate hazards and the prevention of conflicts over land and resources, in particular as insecurity over land tenure is increasing because of the population growth. The government and several partners are engaged in actions to reclaim marginal land, but investments are still low compared to needs. Moreover, few actions are directed towards preserving the existing soil and forest resources. Land recovery and preservation contribute to adaptation to climate hazards, maintaining the productive base that contributes to the resilience of rural households, farmers, and pastoralists.

Democracy and civic space

Civil society is active but struggles to provide an effective counterbalance to the executive power. Civil society organisations (CSO) are not provided much space by the government to engage formally in political processes, yet some organisations are increasingly present in the political field, which is especially evident during political crises. This affiliation with the political sphere by some CSOs has led to a certain loss of credibility of the civil society among ordinary citizens, which has eroded their capacity to mobilise during marches and demonstrations. Many CSOs have a tendency to be personified with their leadership, and suffer from lack of "internal democracy" with little or no renewal of leadership figures. Many CSOs are concentrated in the capital and local governance issues are therefore not a part of their struggle. Local CSOs are rather weak and do not invest in the field of human rights, but often work in development activities alongside the communal authorities - sometimes in competition with these. Islamic associations also play an increasingly important role influencing both society and the political spheres, yet do not engage directly in political processes as religious affiliated parties are not permitted.

Niger has made positive steps in terms of respect for human rights. These advances are the result of inter alia the actions of the civil society and the National Human Rights Commission, accredited with an A status in accordance with the Paris Principles. In general, the government respects international law and the legal instruments adopted by the international community, including in the field of human rights, and Niger is up to date on its reporting to treaty bodies. Nonetheless, in spite of the overall progress in terms of respect for human rights, violations have been noted in several areas, notably against the right to peaceful assembly, freedom of expression, the prohibition against torture, and the right to life, including the occurrence of extrajudicial killings. The government has taken some steps to prosecute government officials for abuses, but impunity remains a problem.

Press freedom is improving and there has been a fall in the violations of press freedom the last couple of years. The media landscape has also evolved considerably, with the emergence of a plurality of television channels, community radio stations, and printed media. The independent media are active and express a wide variety of opinions. Lately, social media platforms and social networks have become increasingly accessible and are widely used as means of communication, especially among young people, with more people having access to mobile phones than to radios. However, cases of arbitrary suspension of media outlets and arrest of journalists with reference to cybercrime law challenges the freedom of journalists, especially as they switch from the traditional media to social networks.

Corruption remains a fundamental issue with low levels of transparency and accountability. Niger ranks 124 out of 180 on Transparency International's Corruptions perceptions index 2021, which is one step down since 2020. According to Afrobarometer (2020), most Nigeriens consider corruption to be continuously increasing. Civil society and media play an important role in revealing public mismanagement of fund, clientelism, and dubious appointments to public offices, etc. Numerous high-profile cases involving large sums and key ministries have recently been brought to light, but the follow-up and accountability remains limited. Corruption also affects the everyday life of Nigeriens, for example in the form of monetisation of access to free public services or corruption related to procurement and distribution process, limiting access to basic services, such as affordable medicine and health care.

Official Development Assistance

Being the recipient of a significant portion of ODA (11.1% of GNI in 2019 according to the World Bank) as well as hosting an activated humanitarian cluster system, Niger is partner to a complex web of resident and non-resident international actors supporting the country's development and capacity to respond to crisis. Between 2014 and 2020 Niger has experienced more than a doubling in provision of net ODA: from 315 to 699 mio. USD in bilateral support, of which 3.8% was Danish, and from 918 to 1928 mio USD via multilateral channels, including Danish partners such as the EU, IMF, regional development banks and UN agencies. In 2021, the top three recipient sectors were social infrastructure and services, such as education, health and population, and WASH, towards which 32% of the total ODA was channelled, followed by the production sector of agriculture, forestry, and fishing (24%) and humanitarian aid (18%). The UN has operated in Niger for more than 49 years, through its organisations, funds, and specialized agencies. The UN Country Team presently consists of 22 entities, 13 of whom are Danish strategic partners. The net ODA Niger receives has been increasing significantly in recent years, which makes the national implementation and absorption capacity a potential issue.

Scenarios

Due to the fragile situation in Niger and in the broader region, a positive scenario is not considered realistic for the period 2023-2027. Should Niger succeed in implementing its policies and create peace and stability internally, the spill-over effects and instability of neighbouring Mali, Burkina Faso, and northern Nigeria will continue to put pressure on Niger. Two scenarios are suggested, where stabilizing the status quo situation in the short-to-medium term would be a relative success, which reflects currents challenges for the stability, resilience, and development of the country:

In a **two-steps-forward-one-step-back scenario**, Niger will continue to struggle with instability and the current dynamics will persist, yet a positive security development is possible due to improved capacity of national forces and increased foreign military presence in Niger. At the same time, this increases the risk of popular criticism and demonstrations against foreign troops and the government, if positive results do not materialise quickly. Border areas will remain negatively affected by the security situation, but without Niger losing control or even gradually regaining some geographical areas. Community conflicts are contained, but existing tensions will not disappear. Socio-economic improvements will be limited due to high demographic growth and a significant budget allocation still necessary for the security sector. The political situation will remain fragile yet stable with the state carrying out reforms and retaining its legitimacy. The main risk factors will be a deterioration of the security and the socio-economic situation.

In the **worst-case scenario**, the security situation will drastically worsen and move further inland, possibly isolating the capital Niamey from the rest of the country. Foreign military presence will not create tangible results for the population and lead to rising anti-western sentiments. Increased corruption due to oil revenues could become a new driver of conflict and threaten the growth potential. Political power struggles and unanswered grievances amongst the population could lead to erosion of the state's legitimacy leading to the population's loss of faith in democracy, which could trigger insurgencies or unconstitutional regime changes. In such a scenario, the fragile balance of the political landscape would tip the relative institutional stability to a collapse, where the state may partially dissolve drastically increasing humanitarian needs and displacement.

The actual future trajectory may end up between the two scenarios - more negative than foreseen in the two-steps-forward-one-step-back scenario, yet without ending up in a worst case scenario. The trajectory will be influenced by the insecurity and stability of neighbouring states, the presence of national and regional armed groups, the presence of external forces in Niger, the state's ability to deliver basic services to a rapidly growing population, and the management of the unfolding humanitarian and displacement crisis.

The changing geopolitical situation in the world following the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 will also affect the trajectory of the scenario for Niger and the Sahel region. In Mali, in particular, an increasingly autocratic regime has found inspiration in – and support from – Russia. Russian mercenaries deliver protection for the regime, which further destabilises the situation, increases human rights abuses, and draws away resources from the national army. These developments cannot be seen in isolation from major global geopolitical shifts. Russian misinformation about the West, particularly strong in Mali, but equally present across the region, challenges the democratic space. Soaring commodity prices, including on food items and petroleum, due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, is already having an impact on the situation in Niger.

3. Achievements, strengths, and Danish political priorities
Achievements and strengths

The Niger Country Evaluation (2019) and the Mid-term Review of the Niger Country Programme 2017-2022 (2021) confirmed important results delivered within water supply and sanitation, stabilisation and peacebuilding, agricultural value-chains and job creation, as well as good governance and human rights.

Denmark has supported quality drinking water and improved access to sanitation and hygiene in rural areas for decades and is a privileged partner with a good reputation. During the period 2017-2022, Denmark has provided access to clean drinking water for 140,000 Nigeriens and responded with flexibility to the emergence of urgent needs, such as the return of displaced households in the Diffa region. Danish funding is channelled via the Joint Financing Mechanism (MCF), which has become increasingly relevant as a coordinated and aligned tool for support. The Evaluation, the Mid-Term Review, and learnings from the water sector programme 2017-2022 have underlined a need to increase support for integrated water resources management, with links to both climate change adaptation and local conflict prevention and mediation.

In the private sector and agriculture development, Denmark has supported inclusive economic growth, employment creation and development of agricultural value chains in the regions of Maradi, Diffa, Zinder, and Niamey. This Danish support has also enhanced the capacities of the national partner and authority HC3N and key private sector stakeholders, such as regional agricultural chambers. The engagement has improved the livelihood and resilience of producers, not least in fragile regions with an increasing number of displaced persons. Applying a conflict lens, the Danish engagement has focused part of the support on training and employment opportunities of young farmers.

In good governance, Denmark has contributed to conflict risk mitigation by putting the state-society relationship at the centre of our efforts. Denmark has supported capacity development of state institutions working with the management of security, demographics, migration, freedom of expression and human rights challenges, as well as supporting civil society organisations to address the underlying factors of instability, including improved democratic governance and the respect for human rights. To address challenges related to migration, Denmark in partnership with IOM has focused on capacity building national institutions, including on utilising migration data, and supported Niger digitalised travel documents, providing more than 26,000 documents for migrants stranded in Niger.

Denmark does not have a permanent presence in Niger, and the country programme 2017-2022 has been implemented via delegated partnerships to ensure effective management of Danish engagements and priorities, with supervision and engagement in policy dialogue by the Danish embassy in Ouagadougou. Experience with and reviews of the country programme and delegated partnerships have found several efficient and effective partnerships leading to achievement of objectives, but also identified less effective partnerships that did not decrease transaction costs for the embassy given relatively slow or inefficient implementation by partners, which required intensive follow-up. The modality of delegated partnerships makes sense in a context with no permanent Danish presence in Niger, but it also creates more distance to national stakeholders and limits the visibility of Denmark. Several Danish strategic partners and institutions, such as the Danish Institute for Human Rights, have been present in Niger for many years and have developed close ties to Nigerien stakeholders, which provides a strong advantage in delivering on Danish priorities.

Danish political priorities for the partnership with Niger

A number of relevant Danish bilateral and multilateral instruments will be leveraged to support the development of Niger and our shared values, interests, and political priorities through diplomacy, security means, humanitarian assistance, and bilateral and multilateral development cooperation. By further operationalising the humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding triple nexus (HDP), Denmark can provide a coherent approach to elevate immediate and short-term needs and strengthen the foundation for longer-term development, while enhancing peace and reducing instability. Denmark's commitment to cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, human rights, and youth will continue to be critical issues to address in order to resolve underlying conflict and fragility drivers and to generate lasting development, peace, and stability. In a fragile and volatile region, it is important to establish an agile platform for cooperation, where it is possible to adapt to changing circumstances over the strategy period.

Based on an analysis of the context as well as Danish and Nigerien strategies and policies, the following Danish political priorities will, in line with the three strategic objectives, constitute the framework for Denmark's partnership with Niger:

➢ Denmark will continue its contribution to peacebuilding and stability in Niger.
➢ Denmark will address forced displacement and irregular migration in and through Niger.
➢ Denmark will contribute to increase resilience at the national and local level and reduce the needs of people affected by crisis.
➢ Denmark will contribute to climate change management in Niger.
➢ Denmark will promote good governance, democracy, and human rights through all interventions.
➢ Denmark will support transformative change in Niger by contributing to gender equality and promotion of the rights of women and girls through SRHR and education.

4. Strategic objectives for Denmark's engagement in the country

The next five years will be a pivotal moment for Niger to consolidate and ensure democratic gains, reduce poverty and create growth, while maintaining peace and stability. The three strategic objectives pursued by Denmark in the period 2023-2027 will support the Danish vision and operationalise key Danish political priorities while ensuring they match national priorities and objectives set out by Niger. An underlying and crosscutting focus under each of the objectives will be to support the promotion of an effective, democratic, and responsible state as well as the inclusion of marginalised groups, women, and youth.

4.1 Strategic objective 1: Strengthen stability and prevent conflicts, displacement, and irregular migration

Main UN SDGs contribution: SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 16 (peace, justice & strong institutions), SDG 17 (partnerships)

The first strategic objective will focus on strengthening stability and preventing conflicts, displacement and irregular migration. Denmark will support Niger in upholding peace and creating stability by reinforcing conflict prevention and peacebuilding and address some of the underlying causes of internal displacement and potentially irregular migration towards Europe. Denmark will do so through a number of different instruments providing responses at the regional, national and local levels, some of which are already in place.

Peacebuilding and stabilisation

Denmark will be engaged through stabilisation efforts to counter cross-border threats such as extremism and violence in the Sahel region, in close partnership with allies and multilateral initiatives as for example the Sahel Coalition, including the Sahel Alliance and the P3S-initiative, and with an emphasis on ownership and the respect for human rights and international norms. The Danish Peace and Stabilisation

Fund would be a strong tool to further this objective. EU instruments, such as the civilian capacity-building mission EUCAP Sahel Niger, will be important tools to improve Niger's internal security sector and its capacities in the fight against security threat and organised crime. As the security structure in Sahel shifts towards Niger, Danish military engagement in partnership with allies and the Nigerien security and defence forces could potentially be utilised as an additional instrument. As neighbouring countries increasingly lose control of their territory bordering Niger, military assistance from international partners will remain important, yet such assistance should be provided with due attention to avoiding inflaming anti-Western sentiment that could cause political instability. Potential Danish assistance would be clearly based on the principles of transparency, accountability, and respect for human rights.

Integrating the 1325-framework on Women, Peace, and Security into interventions based on the respective action plans of Denmark and Niger is another important tool to increase peace and security, including advocating for women's right to full, equal, and meaningful participation in conflict prevention and stabilisation efforts and the protection of women and girls in conflict-affected situations. Denmark is in the lead of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Emergencies 2022-2023, and mitigating GBV risks will be a core objective of our humanitarian efforts.

Niger has a clear vision that the current instability and insecurity cannot be solved simply through military means. For decades, the country has developed a vision of an "architecture for peace" that integrates both national institutions and strategies with a view to prevent violent conflict. The government's stabilisation vision seeks to build the presence and relevance of the state as a mediator of conflicts amongst communities under pressure or between communities and the state. Denmark has a strong partnership with the High Authority for Peace Consolidation that plays a central role in the national peace and security architecture by preventing and managing conflicts between communities across the country and coordinating responses involving authorities, community representatives, and civil society.

Involving local actors at the community level to build trust and sustainability in conflict mitigation efforts will be important for success. Many of the bilateral partnerships will have a direct or indirect impact on peace and stability. Through different instruments, such as regional programs, strategic partnerships and bilateral engagements, Denmark has supported civil society's role in conflict prevention and management, and will continue to do so. Denmark will also continue utilising the technical expertise and local knowledge of Danish strategic partners and national partners, such as the national human rights commission, to monitor human rights violations, create social cohesion, and meet the protection needs of the civilian population, while assuring strengthened accountability for defence and security forces. The involvement and capacity building of defence and security forces is essential to build the confidence of the population and ensure sustained peace building and conflict resolution.

Handling changed migration patterns and addressing forced displacement

The deterioration of the security situation in Niger and the Sahel region have led to forced displacement inside the country, as well as migrants and refugees crossing the borders from neighbouring states. At the same time, natural disasters related to climate change affect thousands of people each year. Due to heavy rains and flooding, the number of internally displaced dramatically increases during the rainy season every year. Disasters such as drought and the gradual reduction of arable land due to desertification also trigger significant displacement and changes migration patterns, but the actual numbers are hard to determine due to the events taking place gradually over an extended period.

Denmark will address these two drivers of human displacement, security and climate change, as inter-linked. The threat multiplying effect of climate change, such as drought, and displacement due to armed conflict often overlap. Populations already suffering from instability and fleeing armed conflict are often disproportionately affected by the effects of climate change, since they typically lack the necessary resources, have more precarious shelters, and limited access to services. Conversely, resource scarcity and desertification caused by climate change might lead to more conflict between pastoralists and farmers, as herders increasingly move their cattle into agro-pastoral areas in search of greener pastures before harvest season or just after planting season.

The exploitation of natural resources and related environmental stresses can become significant drivers and triggers of violence, which need to be addressed. Working across the HDP nexus and focusing on long-term and sustainable solutions to human forced displacement will be important for addressing urgent humanitarian needs and creating long-term development. As insecurity and the effects of climate change impact the wider Sahel region, Denmark will further respond to the cross-border effects of these drivers of displacement via the regional programme on Climate Change, Conflict, Displacement, and Irregular Migration. This programme seeks to strengthen conflict sensitivity in climate adaptation, to expand social protection, and to expand climate-smart agriculture to vulnerable demographic groups.

Denmark is committed to help address the root causes of forced displacement in Niger, which requires a broad-based approach to displacement, combining humanitarian, peacebuilding, and development efforts. This must be done by developing and implementing sustainable solutions to the complex challenges facing displaced people and host communities, for example anticipatory and forecast-based early action addressing the needs of displaced persons and host communities, at the same time building local capacity and resilience.

Irregular Migration

The fight against irregular migration remains an important political priority for Denmark and the EU in Niger, but the national authorities have limited domestic resources to adequately address both the development and security dimensions of migration. Denmark will build on existing experience and partnerships, notably with IOM, on collaborating with the Nigerien government through development of capacity to manage migration in accordance with the commitments made under the Global Compact for Migration (GCM). This includes improved data collection and sharing as well as the coordination and return of stranded migrants. As a GCM champion country, Niger has demonstrated leadership in promoting safe migration through its support to vulnerable migrants in transit and addressing needs of displaced persons. With many different actors involved in managing migration in Niger, Denmark has been one of the few to support migration governance and capacity building of national institutions, who often lack the human, technical, and financial capacity to adequately deliver on their respective mandates. Other key partners, such as Danish strategic partners, have strong experience working with migrants, which can be complementary to bilateral engagements. As climate change challenges intra-regional migration patterns, the link between climate change and migration will be further explored, including via Denmark's more long-term approach to cooperation with IOM on a global and regional level. The Danish global strategy for IOM 2023-2027 can be leveraged to link a bilateral cooperation with the broader Danish priorities of establishing a more strategic and long-term partnership with IOM. Regular migration and mobility in the West African region may also be supported, contributing to the orderly

migration and free movement within ECOWAS, which has historically played an important role for the economy and resilience of Nigeriens.

4.2 Strategic objective 2: Adaptation to climate change and strengthening resilience

Main UN SDGs contribution: SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation) SDG 8 (decent work & economic growth), SDG 13 (climate action)

Denmark will contribute to effectively responding to the needs of people affected by crisis and strengthening the resilience of vulnerable population groups as well as of local mechanisms to prevent recurrent humanitarian crises and conflict, incl. through closer coordination across the HDP nexus. We will pay particular attention to keeping our promise in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development of leaving no one behind. This strategic objective will therefore give a particular attention to the needs of the most vulnerable, including displaced people and their host communities, to strengthen the resilience on national and local level.

Adaptation to climate change

Climate change is a conflict- and a risk multiplier in Niger. Access to natural resources, such as water and land, unpredictable agricultural outputs, and food insecurity is increasingly putting a strain on the rural population contributing to migration and conflicts. In line with Denmark's priorities for a greener development cooperation, we will use a multitude of instruments to strengthen adaptation to climate change in Niger. Introducing climate smart agricultural techniques and integrating green energy, such as combinations of irrigation and solar energy will be explored. Enhancing agro-ecological (organic) production methods is another niche to explore. Denmark already has a strong cooperation with Nigerien authorities on developing value chains and supporting small agricultural producers and companies creating economic growth and green jobs, especially for women and youth. Building on this past experience, but adjusting to the current context of climate change and security crisis, will provide Denmark with a broad platform for political dialogue on the climate agenda.

Denmark contributes to the population's access to quality drinking water and access to sanitation and hygiene with respect to human dignity. We will continue this support to make water, sanitation and hygiene services more responsive to local needs and priorities. More investment in Integrated Water Resource Management will be a priority to prevent conflicts over access to water resources as climate change puts increasing pressure on resources thus creating a link between stability and climate efforts. It will be a priority to meet the water and sanitation needs of IDPs while helping the Ministry of Water, together with humanitarian and other partners, to efficiently organize the WASH sector.

Strengthening resilience

Faced with a humanitarian crisis with chronic food insecurity, Denmark will support community resilience by improving access to food, water and sanitation, create opportunities and employment, and

support peace and mediation mechanisms related to local conflicts over resources. The Danish support to strengthen community resilience in the nexus between humanitarian and development assistance will be implemented through partnership with government, multilateral organisations, and Danish strategic partners who work with a dual-mandate within humanitarian aid and development assistance. We will also draw on synergies with inter alia WFP to advance food security.

Danish support to the rural sector constitutes a key entry point for increasing the resilience at the community level, as agriculture is the primary employment-generating sector of the economy. Agriculture and livestock contribute to securing the livelihood of the rural population and constitute a main driver of economic growth and job creation at the national and community level. Denmark will contribute to provide opportunities as well as protecting and creating jobs, especially for women and youth, to strengthen resilience and adapt to the fragile context of Niger. Strengthening economic resilience and increasing productivity in the agricultural sector will be an important contribution to reduce poverty and food insecurity while promoting stability and stimulating the local economy. Creating private sector led growth and employment will ensure resilience of the economy at both local and national levels.

In order to protect and improve livelihoods for all, a special emphasis will be given to the role of women in building resilience. The majority of workers in the agriculture sector are women, yet, women often face many barriers that impede women's participation in economic life, including the right to landownership.

4.3 Strategic Objective 3: Promote good governance, human rights, and gender equality

Main UN SDGs contribution: SDG 4, (quality education), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 16 (peace, justice & strong institutions), SDG 17 (partnerships)

The third strategic objective will be to promote good governance, human rights, gender equality, and an independent civil society, with a particular focus on the rights of women, youth, and marginalised groups. Denmark will continue to be active in establishing partnerships with likeminded partners that are active in promoting democracy and human rights in Niger. Our multilateral partnerships with the UN system, notably UNDP, OHCHR, IOM, UNFPA and UNICEF, will be valuable in terms of promoting and safeguarding international norms and standards and will contribute to our policy dialogue with the Nigerien government. As part of the Danish approach to democracy and human rights, we will work to strengthen the link between concrete development efforts and normative multilateral work on resolutions, UPR mechanisms, etc.

Consolidating democracy

Democratic development since the return to constitutional order in 2011 must be consolidated. Democracy and good governance will be promoted through all interventions. Denmark aims to take a holistic approach to democracy, not least through continuous policy dialogue with the government of Niger, but also through support and cooperation with the EU, the UN, and Danish and Nigerien civil society organisations and national institutions. Accountable and transparent public institutions can be an

end in themselves for achieving development goals, but are also a means to deliver rights, especially for the most vulnerable and exposed citizens. Good governance must therefore be addressed across the thematic interventions to improve the enabling environment for sustainable growth and jobs, climate action, and equal access to, for example, health, education and water. Denmark will work to promote the capacity of government to ensure respect for human rights and to deliver services in an open, accountable, and inclusive manner. After years of cooperation with the Nigerien civil society and independent national institutions, such as the National Commission for Human Rights, Denmark is well placed to contribute to improving democratic space and good governance. Corruption is a potential major driver of conflict. Dedicated anti-corruption initiatives may be included as part of civil society support, and will be addressed in all engagements through transparency and accountability measures. Denmark will continue to support free, fair and democratic elections in Niger with an emphasis on the inclusion of youth and women, to ensure their active participation in the democratic process to build a strong democratic foundation in Niger.

Civic space and human rights

Denmark will actively strengthen diverse and independent civil societies and people's movements, normatively and across programme interventions. We will continue to strengthen and empower civil society and support human rights defenders, as well as promote free media, open debate, free opinion and freedom of expression - offline as well as online. Civil society organisations are key actors in ensuring accountability of public institutions and inclusive decision-making in political and democratic processes. Emphasis will be put on promoting the rights and inclusion of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, such as youth, women, and marginalised groups, including religious minorities, who often find themselves outside the sphere of political influence. Attention will be given to youth led civil society organisations (CSOs) to foster a new generation of CSOs in Niger that may strengthen youth leadership and participation in all areas of political and social life, including conflict prevention. With the large increase in security and defence forces, the respect for human rights, including the International Human Rights Laws, is an area that needs attention, for example via the Danish Institute for Human Rights, to ensure the rights and protection of all civilians regardless of their status. Independent and pluralistic media play an important role in delivering quality and unbiased information to the population. As more Nigeriens have access to internet via their phones, social media become an increasingly important source of information for many Nigeriens, especially youth. These technological developments present both great challenges and opportunities for democracy and human rights. Denmark will leverage its digital strengths, as well as the global momentum and leadership provided by the Tech for Democracy initiative, in close cooperation with civil society actors and private companies to create digital resilience.

Gender equality and SRHR

Supporting transformative change by addressing root causes of inequality, including between genders, and strengthening the rights of women and girls, will be another key focus area. Ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health services and promoting sexual and reproductive rights, as well as other areas with bearing on demographics, will be important focus areas for Denmark, including through UN agencies, national organisations and institutions, and Danish strategic partners working in Niger. Gender equality and the rights of women and girls are a cross-cutting priority that will be mainstreamed into all humanitarian, development and peace efforts and addressed in policy dialogue bilaterally. Denmark will

continue to work in both a programmatic and a normative manner and we will analyse and identify the fundamental gender equality challenges in our humanitarian, development, and peace efforts to integrate a gender perspective in all efforts and partnerships. We will prioritise activities that promote gender equality and work actively to change the structural and systemic barriers, power structures and social and gender norms that suppress the rights and potential of girls and women. Denmark will work to advance gender equality in synergy with national organisations and institutions, Danish strategic partnership organisations, and multilateral partners engaged in Niger, such UNFPA and UNICEF.

The Nigerien government has made education and especially girls' education a strong national priority to end early marriages and pregnancies, reduce poverty, and strengthen human capital. For Niger, education is also a means to slow down the demographic growth rate, which limits the government's ability to improve Niger's human development. Denmark's multilateral engagements within education, such as Education Cannot Wait (ECW) and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), could be useful tools to support Niger achieving this objective and to ensure quality education. There is opportunity to explore collaboration with United Nations Girls Initiative (UNGEI) and LEGO Foundation to mobilise GPEs Girls Education Accelerator. Denmark already supports UNICEF's thematic funds on Health, Child Protection and Education in Niger.

Overview of Denmark's most important instruments, which can be utilised in Niger

- Political dialogue, including through the EU
- Political Initiatives (G5, Sahel Alliance, P3S - Partnership for Security and Stability in the Sahel)
- Military or security cooperation
- Team Europe Initiatives for Niger
- Bilateral development cooperation
- Peace and Stability Fund: Regional Peace and Stabilisation Programme for the Sahel
- Climate instruments, including the regional programme on climate change, conflict, displacement, and irregular migration in the Sahel.
- Other regional programmes and initiatives, including the Africa Programme for Peace (APP).
- Strategic Partnerships with Danish CSOs (CARE, Caritas, DRC/DDG, International Media Support (IMS), Oxfam IBIS, Save the Children, Danish Red Cross, and the Danish Labour Market Consortium)
- Human Rights and Democracy Partnerships (DIHR)
- Humanitarian aid (multilateral organisations and Danish CSOs)
- EU Institutions, including EUCAP Sahel Niger
- Multilateral organisations, funds and programmes, including earmarked funding to UN agencies (e.g. IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF) the World Bank, and the African development bank
- Financial instruments including the African Development Bank and the Green Climate Fund

5. Monitoring the strategic framework

The Embassy in Ouagadougou will monitor and evaluate the progress and results of Denmark's overall engagement in Niger in close cooperation with key policy departments of the Danish Ministry of Foreign

Affairs (MFA). Due to the highly volatile situation, an adaptive and flexible approach will be adopted as a general principle. The relevance of initiatives, programs and projects will be assessed during implementation, with the option to change modalities and instruments if the situation develops negatively, or even ends up in a worst-case scenario.

Adaptability and flexibility implies close monitoring of the security situation. In practice, the Embassy is partially constrained in fulfilling its monitoring role, as the present security situation in the country does not allow the staff to travel outside Niamey. Occasionally, joint missions with partners having access to required security measures, e.g. armoured vehicles, could take place. To help meet these challenges the Embassy will explore the feasibility and options for applying remote monitoring using Geo-Enabling Monitoring and Supervision (GEMS). In addition, the Embassy will look into the possibility of developing an operational security-monitoring tool for Niger similar to the one in place for Burkina Faso. However, this will need to be adapted taking into account the Embassy's more limited presence in Niamey.

To support and complement the Embassy's monitoring work, it is foreseen to engage a third party monitoring and evaluation consultant. Based on positive learnings from implementing the Niger Country Program 2017-2022, the consultant will validate data provided by implementing partners, verify assumptions and risks and assist in communicating achieved results and outcomes. In combination with a growing number of Danish funded multilateral and civil society engagements, the third party monitoring consultant will also integrate the monitoring of the bilateral development program with selected results indicators from multilateral and civil society instruments with the ambition of providing a more complete picture of progress and results of the Danish development portfolio in Niger. This will require the engagement and input of key policy departments at MFA.

The overall risk assessment will be anchored at the Embassy in Ouagadougou and will be part of a light-touch review of the bilateral development program carried out once every year. This mechanism will assess achievements on planned outcomes and help make informed decisions. The implementing partners will support the Embassy in engaging relevant national partners in dialogue about potential shifts in focus or content of alternative interventions. The embassy will engage in regular dialogue with civil society and NGOs, notably Danish strategic partners present in Niger. Annual meetings with Senior Management of MFA will provide strategic direction and assess the relevance of interventions and the need for adjustments based on developments in scenarios and risks. These meetings will be informed by: i) outcomes of the annual political dialogue between Niger and Denmark; ii) joint analyses undertaken with like-minded bilateral and multilateral partners as well as Danish strategic partners present in Niger, and iii) evidence based learnings from implementing Denmark's engagement in Niger.

The bilateral development program is expected to be implemented through six or seven delegated partnerships and one or two direct Danish engagements. This reflects a somewhat increased level of ambition for Denmark's engagement, relative to the eight delegated cooperation engagements in the previous bilateral programme. However, this ambition is supported by an already decided increase in human resources at the Embassy in Ouagadougou. The choice of partners will be based on sound financial and capacity assessments of each partner, also taking into consideration previous experiences. The partners for the bilateral programme are envisaged to include national authorities, non-governmental

organisations, multilateral organisations, and other bilateral partners to ensure a robust and flexible programme with different modalities, able to adapt to unforeseen developments and shocks.

With an ambition to strengthen Denmark's presence in Niger and boost engagement in strategic policy dialogue, the Embassy has taken steps to strengthen the logistical setup in Niamey by setting up a laptop office at the EU Delegation and acquiring a diplomatic car with full-time driver supporting the increasing number of missions. Although it will be explored how to further increase the presence in Niamey (project office, advisors, TA contract, etc.), the Embassy in Ouagadougou will remain responsible for the strategic policy dialogue with the government and the monitoring of projects under the bilateral development program. The embassy expects to undertake missions to Niamey on a monthly basis and to increase the frequency of financial monitoring visits.

6. Outline of the bilateral development programme

This chapter outlines the bilateral development programme for Niger 2023-2027. The development projects will largely build on previous Danish experience, while integrating lessons learned and recent contextual developments. The bilateral programme is not intended to cover all aspects of the three strategic objectives, but rather work in complementarity with other Danish programmes, initiatives, and instruments. Furthermore, synergy will be ensured between Danish efforts and the broader EU engagement in Niger, including the Multiannual Indicative Programme for Niger 2021-2027 focusing on governance; education and vocational training; and growth and green economy.

Priorities and strategic considerations for the bilateral development programme

The bilateral development programme will address fragility in a dynamic manner aiming at a combination of quick results and long-term processes for change, directly contributing to overall Danish policy priorities. The bilateral development projects will target areas where the needs are biggest and where building peace, preventing conflict and strengthening resilience will be most effective. In case the security and political situation deteriorates further, we will evaluate the need of substituting between projects or instruments of the bilateral programme and keep sufficient unallocated financing and flexibility in our programming to address unforeseen developments. Strong conflict analysis and conflict sensitivity in the way we work will be central to monitoring and adapting our engagement. The bilateral development programme will also serve to provide entry points for political and strategic dialogue with the Nigerien government and international partners, such as the EU, including on Team Europe Initiatives, the UN and other multilateral organisations, the Sahel Coalition, Alliance Sahel, and the P3S initiative.

Ensuring good governance, legitimacy, and effective state institutions will be an important transversal aspect. Besides the national level, we will strive to include local level decision makers, communities, civil society and the private sector. The bilateral programme will also seek to align with other bilateral and multilateral donors and ensure collaboration. The programme will contribute to address inequalities with special attention to women, youth, and marginalised groups. To make Denmark's engagement more responsive to the preoccupation and wishes of the young generation, we will explore options for collaborating with and consulting the young generation.

Bilateral development projects in support of strengthening stability and preventing conflicts, displacement, and irregular migration

In support of the first strategic objective, the bilateral development programme will focus on conflict prevention and stability initiatives. Additionally, the bilateral program will focus on addressing irregular migration. The bilateral projects will be leveraged to deepen the policy dialogue with inter alia the Ministry of Interior, Public Security, Decentralisation, and Customary and Religious Affairs (Ministry of Interior). The following project activities are envisaged:

Peace and stability

Denmark will continue to support the High Authority for Peace Consolidation (HACP), which is a unique public-sector entity with the political mandate to prevent and manage conflict that may arise between communities and the state. The HACP has been an active player in mediating conflict since the mid-1990's; it enjoys considerable credibility and is known for its ability to bring to the table all significant stakeholders. Denmark will have a strategic focus on further enhancing the effectiveness of the HACP to deliver on its mandate from conflict prevention over mitigation to peacebuilding through various tools and instruments. Future support could, building on lessons learned during the implementation of the Country Programme 2017-2022, include strengthening the resilience of communities in at-risk areas, further strengthening governance and the legitimacy of the state by mobilising and coordinating local and regional government presence at community level. In practice this is done, by coordinating and ensuring basic social services, justice and security provision, and local policing initiatives. To prevent conflicts and promote social cohesion, community level fora enabling dialogue with the local government can be included. Denmark could help strengthen strategic management of peacebuilding interventions at local level, by supporting the Departmental Security Councils (CDS) to be the central coordination link between local stabilisation activities and national stabilisation policy. Many partners and actors are engaged in peace and stabilisation in Niger, and the HACPs role coordinating stakeholders to promote an integrated approach from early warning and stabilisation to development could be supported to further the integration of the HDP nexus into crisis management.

Migration management

Denmark will support relevant national institutions to manage and coordinate migration in an effective and integrated manner, including the implementation of national policies and international commitments, such as the Global Compact for Migration. One of the main challenges for the state and its partners has been the formulation of a long-term vision in order to develop and implement sustainable strategies to counter irregular migration and encourage initiatives to stabilise areas with high migration density through their socio-economic development, but also to offer potential migrants opportunities for legal migration and circular migration. In September 2020, the Ministry of Interior became responsible for Niger's first National Migration Policy 2020-2035. Denmark has a strong position in support of migration governance, and continued support to the national institutions' implementation of the national strategy, and long term-vision for migration management, will be a priority.

Denmark has substantial past experience working with IOM Niger, which can serve as point of departure for a new bilateral project. For example, through this partnership, Denmark has been working with the National Statistical Institute to develop a national platform for migration data, which can be built upon

in a new phase. As many migrants move around freely and legally within the ECOWAS zone, activities supporting legal migration pathways could be explored. Denmark has experience working with the authorities on digitalising travel documents, in order to facilitate migration, especially for migrants wanting to return to their countries of origin, but lacking the proper paperwork to do so.

Niger is increasingly becoming an end-destination for intra-regional migration, especially due to informal job opportunities in the extractive industries (primarily gold), and it would be relevant to explore how to link stabilization and human rights initiatives, in line with strategic objective 3. The project will place a special emphasis on young and female migrants, exposed to various additional risks.

Bilateral development projects in support of adaptation to climate change and strengthening resilience

In support of the second strategic objective, the bilateral development programme will support adaptation to climate change, with a focus on the water and agricultural sector. Concrete interventions will be designed to fulfilling the targets for climate change adaptation (and environment) set in the Danish finance bill for Niger. The following project activities are envisaged:

Water and sanitation

We will increase the number of people with access to clean drinking water, sanitation and hygiene in rural areas where climate change is seriously affecting the poorest part of the population including women and children. Based on previous experience, Danish funding could be channelled through the Common Financial Mechanism (MCF), consisting of both government and partner funds, which constitutes the Nigerien government's main framework for financing public investments in the water sector. With the aim of improving governance within the sector, Denmark could also build capacity of key authorities in particular when it comes to making water, sanitation and hygiene services more responsive to local needs and priorities

An important principle for the future support will be to leverage Danish funding via HDP nexus interventions, combining urgent delivery of water and sanitation services with building resilience and long-term sustainability. Experience has shown that the management of humanitarian emergencies in terms of WASH services does not always fit easily into an existing programmatic approach. To meet unplanned needs, Denmark could put in place humanitarian support aimed at finding solutions to the urgent problems with access to WASH services for the most vulnerable populations including IDPs. To ensure flexibility and speed, a situational adaptability fund could be explored with the Ministry of Water to solve specific humanitarian WASH problems for the benefit of IDPs.

Water resource management

Improved management of Niger's water resources will be essential to adapt to climate change and ensure equitable and peaceful access to water resources. Based on Denmark's long experience in the water sector we will increase our support to Integrated Water Resource Management in Niger. The priorities in the National Action Plan for Integrated Water Resources Management will guide the identification of the future support, and the formulation of the project will take place in close cooperation with the Water Ministry.

Reviews of Danish support to the water sector in Niger show that there is a need to reconsider partners and approaches to more effectively address water resources management challenges in a climate change perspective. The future project could focus on strengthening the institutional framework and the governance of water resources through support to national as well as local authorities in developing a joint vision and a planning tool for the management and mobilization of the national water resources for people, livestock, and agriculture.

As lack of access to water resources is a conflict driver, especially in local communities, where farmers and herders are competing over diminishing natural resources including water, the project could contribute to local conflict mediation and resolution. The project could further contribute to developing adaptive measures to climate change such as scaling existing early warning systems targeting poor and vulnerable people.

Local and national resilience

Denmark will contribute to reduce poverty and the impact of climate change through improving the resilience especially of vulnerable rural communities. Special attention will be given to adressing youth unemployment in fragile areas, while at the same time addressing the issue of stability.

Adaptation to climate change through introduction and scaling of green solutions are at the heart of Danish priorities. Solar pumps, irrigation systems, improved seeds and climate smart agriculture could contribute to improving the revenues of the vulnerable populations in conflict zones, where some might be attracted by illicit sources of income, for example by joining terrorist groups. Support and opportunities could be provided to displaced persons and host families in the same areas. Synergy and complementarity with the Danish funded IFAD project, under the existing regional programme targeting the nexus between conflict, climate change and migration, will be explored.

Resilience of the national economy and employment is a complementary priority. Niger has strong national development objectives of moving beyond subsistence level farming; better utilizing large subterranean water resources; and leveraging the private sector in agriculture and agro-business to boost economic growth and employment. Denmark will explore the possibility of providing advisory services with a strong climate dimension. Experience with technical advice to farmers has proven positive through the value chain approach. This could include technical support for diversification of crops, farm management practices, land productivity and climate-adaptation information though digital platforms. Institutional support could be provided to regional agriculture chambers and relevant national networks, building on previous successful experience.

Denmark will also explore the possibility of supporting access to finance for climate-relevant investments of farmers relying on rain fed and irrigated agriculture through new and innovative financing mechanisms, including mechanisms that mobilizes more private finance for the sector. Subsidizing small-scale irrigation infrastructure or developing a loan mechanism to support irrigation infrastructure will be explored, with potential synergies to the engagement in the water sector. Financing mechanisms for climate-relevant investments that could be explored include guarantee institutions, such as Africa Guarantee Fund, GuarantCo, and IFU's High Risk High Impact Initative.

Bilateral development projects to promote good governance, human rights, and gender equality

In support of the third strategic objective, the bilateral development programme will focus on strengthening good governance, civic space, and human rights. Moreover, the strategic objective will address gender equality and SRHR. A particular focus will be on the rights of women, youth, and marginalized groups. The following project activities are envisaged:

Democratic governance and human rights

Denmark has a strong and longstanding partnership with the civil society organisations (CSOs) and independent national authorities to create dialogue, protect and defend human rights, and ensuring accountable and inclusive organisations. Denmark is a known and trusted partner in this field, and our continued engagement is relevant to continue helping develop the capacity of civil society and independent national authorities, allowing them to engage meaningfully and constructively with Nigerien government authorities on democratic governance. The envisaged project will apply a human rights based approach and pay special attention to ensuring that the rights of women, youth, and marginalised groups are protected and improved. The support will target right holders helping them to gain confidence and capacity in asserting their rights, and duty bearers, through awareness-raising and training activities.

The project will build on previous experience with supporting civil society and independent national institutions. The funding is mainly expected go to CSOs, via a fund manager, through calls for proposals focussing on a selected number of thematic areas, such as human rights, accountability, and access to quality media and information. This is especially relevant in a context of proliferating disinformation campaigns designed to manipulate popular opinion in the region, and in Niger. A particular focus will be on locally based CSOs to ensure that democratic governance and human rights are also promoted and respected outside the big cities. Specific attention will be given to young organisations with only a few years of experience, as well as youth led organisations in order to help develop and catalyse a new generation of CSOs.

Project activities could also include independent national authorities, in line with previous programs. This support could focus on supporting their management capacity at national and regional level; complaints handling capacity; enhancing their monitoring and reporting capacity; and, sensitising authorities and citizens on national and international standards in their respective fields. Denmark currently support the Nigerien human rights commission (CNDH) and the National Communication Council (CSC), but other national institutions could be considered as well. A partnership with independent national authorities could either be pursued as part of a bigger engagement together with civil society, as in the country programme 2017-2022, or be separated into a specific project to elevate the engagement with one or more of these authorities, which could further enhance political dialogue on core issues relating to human rights and good governance.

Gender equality and SRHR

To increase gender equality, Denmark will promote sexual and reproductive health and rights, including increased access to sexual and reproductive health services. This would be strongly complementary to the potential Danish financing for girls' education in Niger through use of multilateral instruments. Gender equality and the rights of women will be addressed across the board in Danish activities, but it

will remain important to provide targeted support in this area, including as a tool to improve policy dialogue with the government. Experience and lessons learned from previous Danish programmes will be built upon, including in choice of modality. Interventions aiming at enhancing women's and girls' rights, access to comprehensive sexuality education, access to family planning and maternal health services, as well as inclusion and sensitisation of men and boys on the importance of gender equality and SRHR, are possible ways of addressing inequalities. The previous country programme has placed an emphasis on generating institutional capacity to effectively address the demographic growth and issues relating to SRHR. Non-state actors such as traditional leaders and civil society organisations have also been included. This experience of working with both formal and informal authorities could be further enhanced in future support.

As 75 per cent of young girls marry before turning 18, comprehensive sexuality education and accessible information to young girls and adolescents will remain important. A special emphasis will be placed on reaching vulnerable and marginalised women and girls, including out-of-school girls. The government of Niger has placed high importance on slowing the demographic growth. Denmark will emphasise support for national capacities to develop national policies and programmes and strengthening national institutions ability to integrate evidence-based analysis on population dynamics, SRHR, gender equality, and their links to sustainable development. As part of the bilateral programme, a specific project focused on promoting gender equality and the rights of women and girls, including SRHR, is envisaged. Due to the current instability in Niger, a special focus will be on responding to the SRHR needs of women and girls in conflict situations, including the fight against gender-based violence.

Budget for the bilateral development program - Breakdown as per Finance Act 2023

	Initial allocation*	Adaptability reserve*	**Total***
Strengthen stability and prevent conflicts, displacement, and irregular migration	135.0	30.0	**165.0**
Adaptation to climate change and strengthening resilience	380.0	60.0	**440.0**
Promote good governance, human rights, and gender equality	145.0	40.0	**185.0**
Audit, adaptive learning, monitoring and evaluation	10.0	-	**10.0**
Total	670.0	130.0	**800.0**

*In million DKK.

The preliminary budget contains unallocated funds and allocations to reviews and studies under each strategic objective to ensure room for flexibility and adaptability in the implementation of the program.

Annex 1 – indicators

Impact level

Overall vision:

"Prevent violent conflict and support peacebuilding and stability in respect of good governance and human rights, and to reduce poverty and inequality by enhancing resilience and accelerating inclusive, sustainable growth."

Strategic objectives

Strengthen stability, prevent conflicts, displacement, and irregular migration with the aim of promoting peacebuilding and handling structural causes for changed migration patterns, including forced displacement and irregular migration	**Adaptation to climate change and strengthening resilience** with the objective of reducing poverty and preventing conflict drivers by adapting to climate change and supporting increased and equitable access to water resources, green economic growth, and job opportunities	**Promote good governance, human rights, and gender equality** to strengthen democracy and promote civic space, accountable public institutions, and human rights, including gender equality and SRHR, in order to fight the root causes of inequality, exclusion, discrimination, and conflict

Indicators and means of verification (MoV)

1. Stability	**1. Water & sanitation**	**1. Good governance**
SDG 16.3.3: Conflict resolution mechanism. MoV: World Bank Databank	SDG 6.1.1: Access to drinking water. MoV: World Bank Databank	SDG 16.6.2: Effective, accountable, and transparent institutions. MoV: TT's Corruption Perceptions Index
2. Conflict prevention	**2. Water resources**	**2. Human rights**
SDG 16.1.2: Conflict related deaths. MoV: ACLED	SDG 6.5.1: Integrated water resources management MoV: IWRM Data Portal	SDG 16.a.1: Independent national human rights institutions. MoV: GANHRI Status
3. Poverty	**3. Resilience**	**3. Education**
SDG 1.2.1: Population living below poverty line. MoV: World Bank Databank	SDG 2.1.2: Prevalence of food insecurity. MoV: World Bank Databank	SDG 4.5.1: Parity indices for education. MoV: World Bank Databank
4. Migration	**4. Economic growth**	**4. Gender equality and SRHR**
SDG 10.7.3: Safe migration. MoV: IOM Missing Migrants Project dataset	SDG 8.6.1: Proportion of youth not in education, employment or training. MoV: World Bank Databank	SDG 5.3.1: Child marriage rate. MoV: UNICEF Data

Annex 2 – key numbers

Indicator	Value	Year	Source
Key economic data			
Surface area (square km. Thousands)	1,267,000 km²	-	WB WDI
Population	24,206,636	2020	WB WDI
Gross Domestic Product, GDP (Current USD)	13,741,378.45 USD	2020	WB WDI
GDP Growth (annual pct)	1.4 pct.	2021	WB
GDP per capita (current USD)	567.7 USD	2020	WB WDI
"Ease of doing business"-index (1=most business-friendly regulations)	132	2019	WB WDI
General government final consumption expenditure (pct. of GDP)	15.6 pct.	2020	WB WDI
Tax revenue (pct. of GDP)	18.0 pct.	2019	OECD
Net ODA received per capita (current USD)	63.9 USD	2019	WB WDI
Net ODA received pct. of GNI	11.1 pct.	2019	WB WDI
Current account balance, pct. of GDP	-13.2 pct.	2020	WB WDI
Total debt service (pct. of GNI)	1.4 pct.	2020	WB WDI
Inflation, consumer prices (annual changes in pct.)	3.8 pct.	2021	WB WDI
Key social data			
Population growth (Annual pct.)	3.8 pct.	2020	WB WDI
Life expectancy at birth, total (years)	63 years	2020	WB WDI
Population ages 15-64 (pct. of total population)	48 pct.	2020	WB WDI
Urban population (pct. of total population)	17 pct.	2020	WB WDI
Mortality rate, under-5 (1,000 live births)	78	2020	WB WDI
Maternal mortality rate, modelled estimate, per 100,000 live births	509	2017	WB IDA
People using basic drinking water (pct. of total population)	47 pct.	2020	WB IDA
Physicians (per 1,000 people)	0.04	2016	WB IDA
Prevalence of HIV, total (pct. of population ages 15-49)	0.2 pct.	2020	WB WDI
School enrollment primary (pct. gross)	66.4 pct.	2019	WB WDI
Poverty headcount ratio at USD 1.90 a day (2011 PPP) (pct. of population)	41.4 pct.	2018	WB WDI
Income share held by lowest 20 pct.	7.6 pct.	2018	WB WDI
Key environment data			
Forest area (pct of land)	0.9 pct.	2020	WB WDI
People using at least basic sanitation services (pct. of population)	14.8 pct.	2020	WB WDI
CO2 emission (metric tonnes per capita)	0.1 pct.	2018	WB WDI
Renewable electricity output (pct. of total electricity output)	0.75 pct.	2015	WB WDI
Key human rights data			
Political rights, 0-40 points	23	2021	Freedom House
Civil rights, 0-60 points	28	2021	Freedom House
Number of human rights instruments ratified (out of 13)	12	-	OHCHR
Press Freedom Index (1-180)	59	2022	Reporters Without Borders