



How can humanitarians address the non-economic loss and damage of the climate crisis in fragile and conflict affected states?

A deep dive into Niger

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Introduction

Niger, a country in West Africa that spans the Sahara Desert and the Sahel region, has faced complex emergencies due to climate-related hazards, armed conflict and high levels of displacement since 2015. [Climate variability and extreme weather](#) threaten agricultural livelihoods, which employ 71 per cent of the population. [Pastoralists are also impacted by changes in climate](#), losing grazing land and dealing with high levels of herd die-off due to drought. [Floods have affected 100,000–200,000 people annually](#) since 2012 while political instability, including the 2023 coup, has [worsened insecurity and continues to impede the delivery](#) of aid.

As a country heavily impacted by displacement – nearly 5 per cent of Niger’s 25 million people were displaced by disasters in 2024 – the social cohesion of displaced people in Niger is critical. Social cohesion, or the social ‘[togetherness](#)’ in a particular society or community, can include elements of belonging, trust, co-operation and identity. Social cohesion is important for societies to thrive as well as to foster resilience to different hazards; for example, if people have a shared understanding of community needs and priorities, it is often easier to come together to address challenges.

Humanitarian assistance can play a central, supportive role in providing key services to host communities and displaced populations alike, in ways that build sustainable social cohesion and reduce the non-economic loss and damage that both climate change and conflict bring. It can also act as an important buffer to lessen the compound impacts of displacement, conflict and climate stress. However, this must take place *with* and not *for* local communities.

In regions of Niger like Tillabéri, where displacement, conflict and climate stress stretch formal systems to their limits, communities are constantly creating new ways to survive, connect and address challenges such as resource competition and violence, with the support of humanitarian actors.

The Danish Red Cross and the Red Cross Society of Niger: Supporting social cohesion in regions impacted by conflict and climate change

Humanitarian assistance can play a critical role in both providing social assistance and linking assistance mechanisms with long-term adaptation efforts. The Danish Red Cross (DRC), which works in 23 countries, [works closely with the Nigerien Red Cross](#) in the Niamey and Zinder regions, supporting people affected by both conflict and climate-related disasters to foster social cohesion and increase resilience. Their effort prioritizes working *with* and not *for* local communities. As the director of programme operations in the Nigerien Red Cross explained: “We no longer simply provide assistance; we are working towards building community resilience.”

In Niamey, the DRC and the Nigerien Red Cross have supported women from communities of internally displaced people (IDP) and those hosting them to create income-generating activities, including market gardens where in-demand crops can be grown and sold. As the DRC migration focal point in Niger explained:

"This project helps address the main problem of limited resources. The IDP and host community members share the garden; they plant and sell together and share the income. In the past, only one group had the resources, which was a problem. They also get to know each other and share questions and concerns. A kind of social activation of the support system happens with those gardens."

In Zinder, the DRC and Nigerien Red Cross support primary healthcare, psychosocial needs, contact tracing, and the provision of basic necessities such as hygiene supplies and food assistance. Together, they also strengthen the resilience of migrants and the areas they come from. In addition to providing healthcare in fixed centres to strengthen existing services, the DRC also supports a mobile clinic in Niamey to reach migrants in informal settlements who otherwise lack access to healthcare. Another project by the Nigerien Red Cross and ICRC, ‘[Ecoresilience](#)’, was launched in 2023 and implemented in conflict-affected areas. It addresses the short-term needs of displaced and host communities affected by both conflict and climate change impacts.

"If the population can't adapt to climate change, we're really going to continue to record more and more loss and damage." (Community Key Informant, Niger)

‘Not Just the Land’: A story map exploring loss and damage, displacement and social cohesion in Niger

The Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, in collaboration with the DRC, the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), and the Red Cross Society of Niger, has produced a [story map](#) focused on the Tillabéri region in western Niger. Story maps are web-based communication tools which blend research, analysis, imagination and local frames of reference visualized through interactive mapping, multimedia and narrative. This story map presents key findings from the study [Displacement, climate change and social cohesion: Exploring loss and damage dynamics](#), which was conducted by the DIIS with support from the DRC. The story map and study are complemented by a [short video animation produced by the Climate Centre](#) which explores three elements of social cohesion (belonging, safety and

support) as part of better understanding the non-economic loss and damage arising from climate change. Building on a literature review, a multi-site empirical study, key informant interviews and policy and programming analysis, the research offers grounded insights into how displacement and climate intersect with social and community relations.

The story map depicts how the successful integration of displaced people into host societies and the improvement of their well-being post-conflict necessitates both social investments into communities and ensuring access to basic necessities like shelter and food, as well as markets and services like education and healthcare. It illustrates ways that formal and informal community-led social assistance in Niger addresses short-term needs arising from climate and conflict shocks impacting livelihoods. This work is bolstered by increased social cohesion, as without it there is a risk that displaced people are excluded from existing social structures and avenues for assistance. As the DRC Niger Country manager explained:

“We have many programmes that support displaced people and we always have some aspect of climate impacts included. This is because if we look at the local cohesion component it is often related to natural resource management. For us, addressing both displacement and climate impacts is an important integrated approach. Displaced people are sometimes the people most affected by climate risks.”

From Niger to the global climate change negotiations: Adaptation under pressure

In Niger and other countries affected by fragility, conflict and violence (FCV) as well as the compounding impacts of climate change, neither the limited existing government support nor humanitarian assistance can address the scale of need alone. Much of the current community-led and other humanitarian assistance lacks the ability to embed climate adaptation efforts into larger governance structures at both local and national level. Without this broader work, assistance risks being projectized and piecemeal. At the same time, there are important but untapped opportunities to bridge adaptation efforts and financing with ongoing social cohesion work in Niger.

Adequate climate finance to conflict-affected countries like Niger can support both displaced people and host communities and reduce the loss and damage that climate change impacts can bring. However, climate finance currently lags far behind. [Niger needs a reported 9.9 billion US](#) dollars (USD) to implement the mitigation and adaptation measures it needs. While the exact scale of climate finance flows is difficult to capture, [Niger has received 157 million USD](#) from the Green Climate Fund – one of the largest climate finance providers – suggesting that the amount received from other donors is equal to or less than this amount. These figures suggest a significant gap in actual versus needed climate finance to the country.

However, important strides taken at COP30 on the [Global Goal for Adaptation](#) (GGA) seeks to move adaptation away from being just an aspiration to instead a concrete, measurable framework. For the first time, a set of 59 voluntary, non-prescriptive indicators was agreed upon, covering water, food, health, ecosystems, infrastructure, livelihoods, finance, capacity and technology.

The GGA offers some important pathways for Niger and other African countries affected by FCV to increase advocacy, planning and access of adaptation support through these indicators – but only if

climate finance is made available and committed to this work. At the June 2026 Bonn climate meetings there was [disagreement about including the COP30 target of tripling adaptation finance into the GGA text](#), suggesting that adaptation work still has a long way to go, including making the finance needed to enable it more accessible in fragile countries like Niger.

Another positive outcome of COP30 was the launch of the first call for proposals by the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD), marking a major milestone in global efforts to support countries and communities facing the unavoidable consequences of climate change. While adaptation finance focuses on strengthening resilience and reducing future climate risks, Loss and Damage (L&D) finance addresses the economic and non-economic harms that occur when climate impacts exceed people's ability to adapt. As such, this fund offers another pathway for countries to receive the support they are due to address critical impacts of climate change, including displacement.

Conclusion

Humanitarians and other assistance actors can help address the non-economic loss and damage of the climate crisis in Niger and beyond in a variety of ways. Our research points towards the importance of the following:

- **Supporting communities to link existing or prospective community-based adaptation with wider opportunities for replicating and scaling work, and providing the finance to enable it.** This can take place, for example, through accessing climate finance, with humanitarian and government actors as linking intermediaries and collaborators to support work in FCV contexts that may not otherwise be funded. Continuing to address the challenge of limited access to populations in need, which both humanitarians and governments face, is one important foundational aspect of this work.
- **Bridging gaps between humanitarianism, climate adaptation, peacebuilding and displacement programming** to enable linked programming, targeted support by relevant actors at different stages of crises and reduce costs and duplication. Practically, an overlap in needs and potential support can be identified through Enhanced Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments (ECVA) – a participatory risk assessment process used within the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. Supporting communities in Niger to undertake ECVA can support the implementation of action plans derived from EVCA assessments; and, as a member of the Nigerien Red Cross explained, “guide communities towards innovative, environmentally friendly approaches that enable them to cope with climate change.”
- **Ensuring that host communities are embedded into humanitarian work with displaced people as both providers and recipients of assistance.** Host communities are key but overlooked actors in displacement responses and their positive involvement is particularly critical in resource-constrained areas, such as post-conflict settings and those affected by the impacts of climate change. The involvement of host communities can help foster social cohesion while simultaneously improving conditions in hosting communities.

- **Understanding that adaptation efforts symbolize both resilience *and* loss and damage that has already occurred.** While fostering social cohesion can mitigate some of the impacts of loss and damage, there is a need for wider recognition that changing social dynamics and community make-up in Niger and other countries affected by conflict and climate hazards is often borne out of situations of grief. Promoting psychosocial care alongside primary healthcare as well as ensuring sensitive engagement in programme design and community engagement is needed.
 - **Adaptation finance and Loss and Damage finance should embed conflict sensitivity to allow funding in FCV settings,** supported by flexible policies and guidance throughout the project cycle. During proposal development, conflict analysis should be a core requirement to ensure that interventions are informed by local dynamics and understandings of social cohesion and existing coping mechanisms. Funding frameworks should systematically assess how changes in the security and political context affect project delivery, helping to ensure that Loss and Damage interventions remain conflict-sensitive, impartial and responsive to local realities.
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