

## ADVOCACY NOTE

# A CRUCIAL NEED TO REINFORCE ACTIONS AGAINST THE GROWING THREAT OF EXPLOSIVE DEVICES (ED) IN NIGER



“Access to populations in need in Niger is more than necessary for all actors to relieve the suffering of these populations. However, the use of explosive devices is increasing day by day, making access to populations difficult and continues to increase the number of dead and injured. **Particular attention should be paid to incidents related to explosive devices.**”

## I. Background

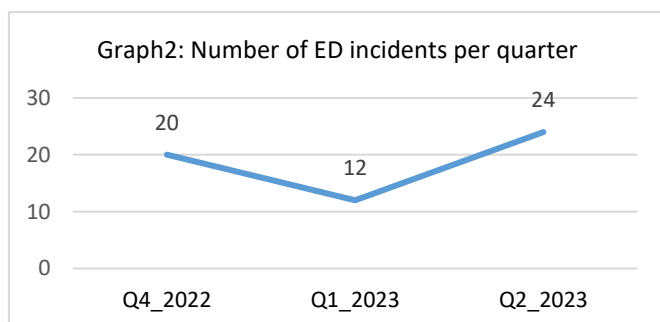
Niger is marked by a humanitarian situation characterized by attacks by non-state armed groups (NSAG) in Liptako Gourma and in the Lake Chad basin, which have caused forced displacement of around 700,000 people<sup>1</sup> including 400,000 internally displaced people (IDP)<sup>2</sup>, 251,760 refugees and 50,377 returnees. Despite efforts made by the State and its partners, the security situation remains worrying in certain localities in the regions of Tillabery, Tahoua, Diffa and Maradi. In 2022, approximately 3,821 protection incidents were recorded in these 4 regions and affected 18,408 people. During the first half of 2023, the protection situation did not improve despite a lull observed in some regions. More than 1,800 protection incidents were recorded from January to June 2023 (on average 955 incidents per quarter in 2022 against 934 during 2023). It is deploring to see the continued abuses by the NSAGs including theft and extortion of property, physical assaults, kidnappings, murders, sexual violence but also incidents related to explosive devices (ED). The security situation and military operations in neighboring countries (Mali, Burkina Faso, Nigeria), the continuation of NSAG incursions into Niger, the intensification of operations by the Defense and Security Forces (DFS) are all factors that predict the persistence of ED threats in Niger.

Indeed, since 2022, the threat of ED has continued to rage in the regions of Tillabery and Diffa. The Protection Cluster recorded approximately 55 ED-related incidents in 2022 (a 34% increase compared to 2021). From January to June 2023, 32 ED incidents were reported, representing more than half of the total number of incidents reported in 2022. It is also worth highlighting the problem of food insecurity which affects several departments, including those affected by ED threats. In fact, faced with the effects of food insecurity, communities could resort to negative coping strategies, in particular that of venturing into areas affected by ED in search of means of subsistence or even collecting scrap metal found on explosive remnants of war for resale.

In the face of a growing threat from ED, mine action capacities remain limited in Niger. Considerable challenges exist both in programmatic actions and in the coordination of interventions. No mine action coordination mechanism is functional either at the national level or in the regions affected by ED. This makes it difficult to strategically harmonize, target and prioritize mine action interventions. The objective of this note is to strengthen advocacy with state authorities, the various technical and donor partners in order to support mine action in Niger, protect communities and humanitarian actors against the risks associated with ED and enable them to enjoy their fundamental rights and freedoms.

## II. Analysis of the evolution of ED incidents and their impact

From the last quarter of 2022 to the 2nd quarter of 2023, 56 EE incidents<sup>3</sup> were reported mainly in the regions of Tillabery and Diffa. **Compared to the 1st quarter of 2023, it can be noted that the number of ED incidents doubled in the 2nd quarter of 2023, which indicates a worrying increase in the threat of ED in Niger.** This threat

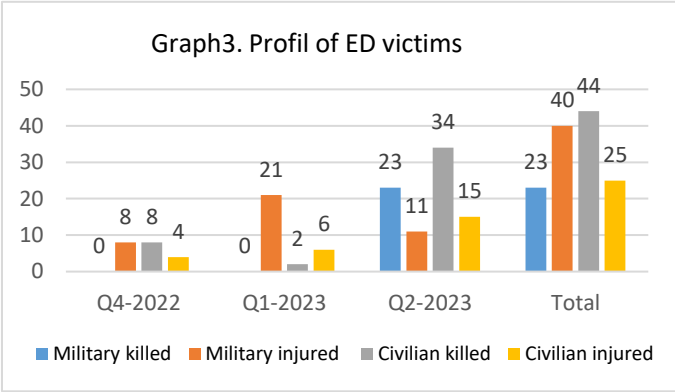


<sup>1</sup> UNHCR Niger monthly PoC statistics, Juin 2023

<sup>2</sup> Population displacement statistics, Ministry of Humanitarian Action and Disaster Management, July 2023

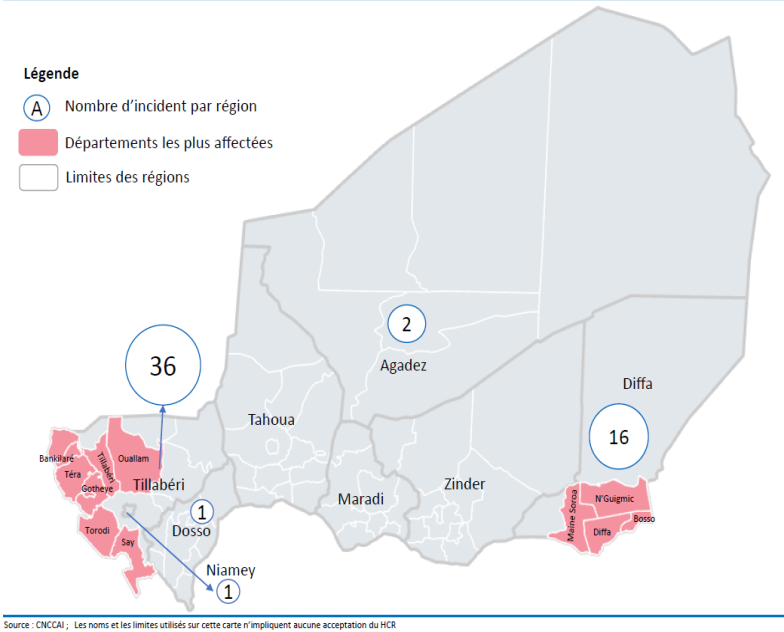
<sup>3</sup> Source : National Commission for the Collection and Control of Illicit Weapons (CNCCAI in french)

affects civilians more than the military, especially in the 2nd quarter of 2023 (Ref graph3). In fact, the reported ED incidents resulted in a total of 132 victims<sup>4</sup> and survivors, most of whom (52%) were civilians (killed or injured). **The percentage of civilians killed is almost double that of military killed**, which puts the threat on civilians more than militaries and reflects the need to strengthen mine action within affected communities.



The affected regions are those of Tillabery (areas of the 3 borders in the Sahel) and Diffa (region of the Lake Chad basin). **The Tillabery region has 7 affected departments<sup>5</sup>, and the Diffa region has 4.** A minimal number of ED incidents have also been reported in 3 other regions: Agadez, Dosso and Niamey (Ref graph2). This situation puts more than 200,000 people at risk of ED incidents in the affected areas.

**Graph2. Distribution of ED incidents per department** (Sep 22 - juin 23)



The prevalence of ED incidents related also leads to restrictions on the mobility of civilian populations on the roads to weekly markets, and the main cities of communities/departments. About 36% of those interviewed<sup>6</sup> say they encounter mobility constraints due to the activities of the NSAGs and military operations. This indicator varies from one region to another. In the regions of Diffa and Tillabery, 56% of respondents say they encounter mobility constraints, one of the main reasons being the presence of

ED. This considerably limits the periodic supply of households with means of subsistence and necessities in addition to the fear and psychological distress that the unpredictable presence of ED inflicts on communities. It is also important to highlight that of the 11 affected departments in the Diffa and Tillabéry regions, 9 (82%) are also affected by the [food insecurity](#)<sup>7</sup>. This could exacerbate

<sup>4</sup> CNCCAI: The disaggregation by sex and age of the 2023 data for victims is not yet available. However, according to the Child Protection Sub-cluster, the Child Protection Working Group of the Diffa region recorded 18 child victims of ED in 2022, the majority of whom (74%) are girls who went to look for firewood.

<sup>5</sup> Departments of: Torodi , Say ,Téra , Tillabéry, Gotheye , Bankilaré et, Ouallam (région de Tillabéry) et Diffa, Bosso , Mainé et N'Guigmi (region de Diffa)

<sup>6</sup> According to protection monitoring data (P21) 1<sup>st</sup> semester 2023.

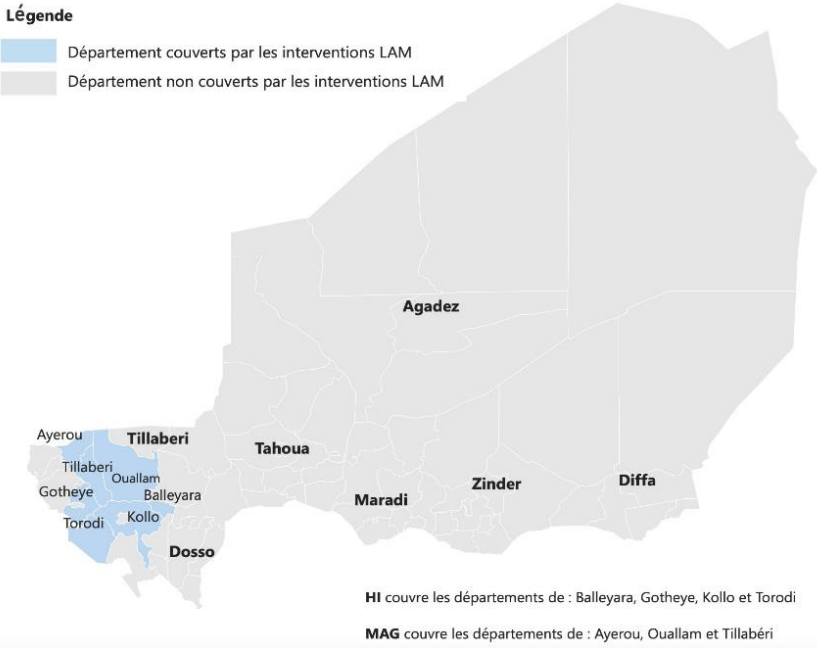
<sup>7</sup> [Food security situation, june 2023](#)

the needs of communities to intensify their coping strategies including livelihood-seeking activities that may expose them to ED risks.

The application of the [sanctions](#) in progress following the coup in Niger could increase the cost of living and increase the vital needs of already vulnerable populations. This new situation would expose them to the risk of enrolment in NSAG for a salary and therefore increase the capacity of NSAG in the installation of ED. In addition, the population could intensify their survival strategies by engaging in several types of activities to adapt to the high cost of living, including the search for subsistence in areas potentially affected by ED. Consequently, an upsurge in ED incidents is very likely.

### III. Major challenges in mine action interventions (MA)

Graph4. Mapping of MA activities, 30 juin 2023



In January 2023, the Protection Cluster launched a joint initiative of mapping protection interventions including mine action. The analysis of the data resulting from this mapping combined with the analysis of the protection response monitoring data brought out the observation below:

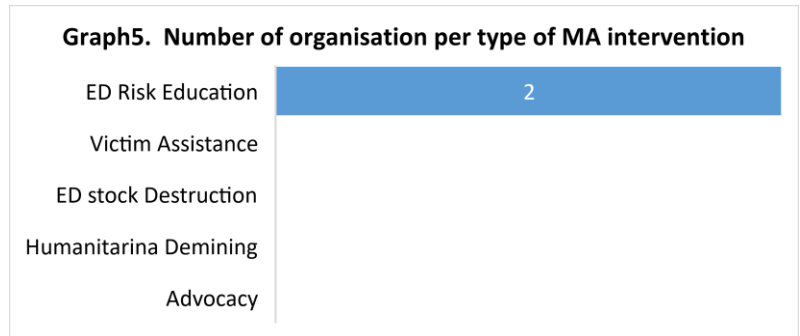
- Only two protection actors have interventions in MA which cover only a few localities of the 7 out

of 11 departments affected by ED (**Ref Graph4 & Gaph2**). 4 out of 11 departments most affected by EE remain without any LAM intervention.

- There is a **major gap in Explosive Device Risk Education (EDRE)** interventions in several regions affected by ED (Diffa, Tillabery, Dosso, Agadez and Niamey).
- A critical lack of victim assistance is observed in all 11 affected departments (**Ref Graph5**).
- Existing capacities have only made it possible to reach about 3,000 people<sup>8</sup> with EDRE activities, representing only 2% of target set in the [Humanitarian Response Plan \(HRP\)](#).
- 98% of the HRP LAM target is therefore not reached. In addition, 77% of the funding requirement MA interventions is not met.
- There is also a **lack of human resources dedicated to coordination at national and regional level, prevention, and assistance to victims**. The MA Sub-Cluster has not been functional since the withdrawal of UNMAS in early November 2022, despite joint coordination efforts between CNCCAI and MA actors including Mines Advisory Group (MAG) and Humanity and Inclusion (HI)

<sup>8</sup> Dashboard des réalisations de protection, cluster Protection, Avril 2023

- **A considerable need for capacity building in MA** for the various actors including frontline humanitarian actors, MA committees is urgently needed.



#### IV. Key recommendations

With the growing threat of ED, low geographic coverage, and low diversity of MA interventions, more than 200,000 people living in ED affected areas remain unassisted and at increased risk of becoming victims of ED. It is crucial to invest more in mine action to ensure communities receive gender and age-appropriate ED risk education. It would also enable communities to adopt safe behavior and access inclusive care services for victims and survivors of ED. Therefore, it is essential to strengthen the following aspects:

1. **Advocacy:** Strengthen advocacy with the various decision-makers (state authorities, technical and donor partners) for the return of UNMAS to Niger
2. **Coordination:** Identify additional technical partners who can support MA coordination at national and regional level (particularly in Tillabery and Diffa regions)
3. **Resource mobilization:** In 2023 approximately 77% of MA funding requirement is not met. It is essential to mobilize an amount of USD<sup>9</sup> 2,000,000 to scale up MA coordination, data collection by the CNCCAI, ED risks education (EDRE), assistance to victims, demining and MA capacity building.
4. **Collaboration:** Strengthen collaboration with the various actors to have a map of the areas affected by ED in order to intensify training sessions, awareness-raising with both communities and frontline humanitarian actors

<sup>9</sup> [plan de reponse humanitaire/HRP](#) 2023-2025, Niger

**Annexe 1 :** Some examples of ED incidents (*Sources : Protection Monitoring, CNCCAI, INSO*)

- *20/03/23: around 8 a.m. the vehicle of a local authority jumped on an improvised explosive device at Bougoum, Torodi-Niamey axis (Tillabery region)*
- *25/05/23 : ED in Ngouba at the passage of shepherds. 3 dead and cows killed (Diffa region)*
- *16/06/23 : EE against a DFS vehicle in Chetima Wango. 7 dead / 4 injured (Diffa region)*
- *6/06/23 : an explosive remnant of war (ERW) exploded against 03 children in the village of Agali (department/municipality of Dosso). The victims who were looking for scrap metal probably confused the device with a piece of iron that they hit with a hammer. The explosion caused the death of a child and 02 injured. It should be noted that the CNCCAI Regional Branch, which is supposed to coordinate EDRE activities at the regional level, does not exist in Dosso due to a lack of resources.*
- *4/07/2023 : around 9 a.m., an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) allegedly exploded at the passage of vehicle of the DFS Niyya operation, who were patrolling on the Torodi-Makalondi axis, not far from the village of Niaktiré (Tillabéry region).*

**Annex 2:** Testimonials from a Victim of EE Incidents

**Story of a 45-year-old man, victim of explosive devices, Toumour commune/Diffa region**

*I remember that Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> May 2023, Toumour market day. We had agreed with the late Mr. XX to go and get some food. Early in the morning we took the road. Mr. XX was in front with a cow in his possession that he intended to sell. He was in front of me since the beast kept running. Between us there was about 20 meters. Approximately 2 kilometers from the community of Toumour we heard a loud unbearable detonation. I fainted waking up only a few hours later at the Toumour health center. I didn't even know how I had been transported there. I was half deaf. It was then that I was told that Mr. XX died as well as the cow. I learned that he was the one who stepped on the explosive device. It was truly terrifying. There was blood running all over my body from the explosion. I was scared, but the nurses made me understand that it was not that serious.*

*I was taken care of at the Toumour health center. But later I heard that my family paid money for my treatment. I overcame my trauma on my own. However, I recognize that, the health workers treated me well and tried to cheer me up. From the beginning until today, I have made efforts to forget this disaster. But it's not easy. I can't stop thinking about the late Mr. XX. In addition, today, I am half deaf because I only have one functional ear. I need a consultation to regain full hearing.*

*My neighbors come regularly to try to encourage me and help me to hold on. And today thank God, everything is back to normal except for the slight hearing impairment that bothers me. We have not received awareness raising about ED. Perhaps, this is due to the fact that we lived a little away from Toumour. Currently I am afraid because in such situations neither my family nor our herd is safe. Everyone is exposed. Especially us nomads who are constantly on the move.*

This advocacy note was developed with the contribution of several actors including:



PROCAP Niger,  
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