

SPECIAL REPORT Niger Remittances Study Summary

December 2011

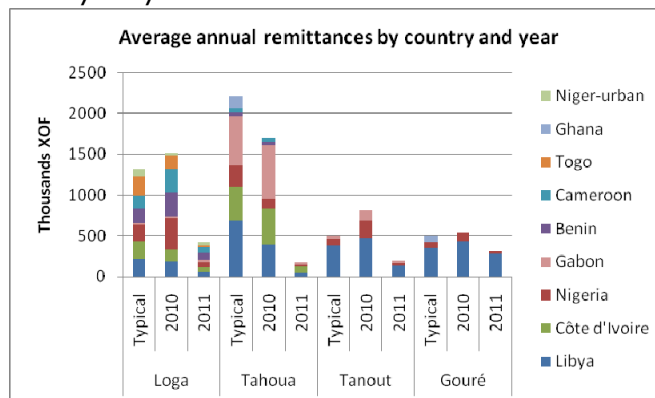
- Remittances from migrants in 2011 dropped significantly when compared to 2010 and typical remittances (based on recall, Figure 1).
- Remittances declined significantly from all countries and in all areas assessed. The greatest proportional drop occurred in areas not dependant on remittances from Libya. This indicates that reported declines in remittances in 2011 are not exclusively a result of conflict in destination countries. Instead the trends may also be significantly related to more endogenous factors, such as the bumper harvest of 2010/11.
- Information from post-assessment field trips between September-November 2011 indicates that returnees from Libya have found alternative sources of income, most particularly commercializing household assets (renting motorcycles or carts) and migrating to alternative destinations such as Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon and Gabon.
- In general, current evidence suggests that declines in remittance income during the course of 2011 is not reason to assume that households will face gaps in meeting minimum food and non-food needs in 2011/12.

FEWS NET's remittances study

FEWS NET's livelihood analysis shows that migration plays an important role in households' food security strategies in Niger, most particularly in parts of Loga, Tahoua, Tanout, and Gouré departments (Figure 2).¹ In fact, during the 2009/2010 consumption year (associated with 2010), remittances from labor migration reached an historic peak and contributed significantly to household coping capacity in response to a general agricultural and pastoral crisis. The most important destinations for these migrants were Cote d'Ivoire, Nigeria, and Libya. However, between December 2010 and February 2011, armed ethnic/religious/political conflicts erupted almost simultaneously in these three countries, which interrupted typical migration patterns and caused many long-term migrants to return to Niger. At the same time, agricultural and pastoral production for 2010/11 reached record highs.

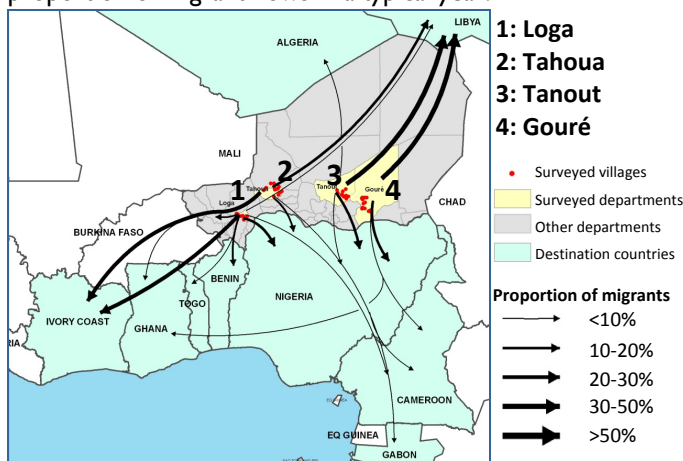
Given the importance of remittances to household food security in an average year, FEWS NET conducted a rapid field assessment with focus groups and key household interviews in May 2011 in these departments to better understand the effects of the Libyan, Ivorian, and Nigerian crises on migration and remittances. The results of this study are not intended to be representative; they demonstrate only likely trends and relative importance of variables. This report summarizes the findings of that study (see "[Les transferts à Loga, Tahoua, Tanout et Gouré face aux crises en Libye et Côte d'Ivoire](#)"²).

Figure 1. Summary of average annual remittances by country and year.



Source: FEWS NET

Figure 2. Map showing assessment area and relative proportion of migrant flows in a typical year.



Source: FEWS NET

¹ <http://www.fews.net/docs/Publications/Niger%20Livelihoods%20zoning%20report%20Final.pdf>, FEWS NET 2011.

² http://www.fews.net/docs/Publications/Niger_SRMigration_2011_07_fr_final.pdf, FEWS NET 2011.

Key observations from the study

Migration, as used in this study, denotes the temporary or permanent movement of workers to mostly international destinations for the purposes of securing work. In terms of migration patterns, seasonal migration is by far the most common, and occurs between November and May. Migrants’ destinations are closely correlated with the region from which they come. Households in Tanout and Gouré tend to travel to either Libya or Nigeria, with the most remittances coming from Libya. In western Niger, destinations are significantly more diversified. In addition to some remittances from Libya and Nigeria, households also receive significant amounts of remittances from Gabon and Côte d’Ivoire. Other coastal countries are also represented.

Remittances in 2011 were, in general, significantly lower than in 2010 and in a typical year (Figure 3). Since “typical” was estimated by recall and follows a year of very high remittances, we expect it to be positively biased. The greatest decline in remittances was observed in Tahoua region. Almost half of households interviewed in Tahoua claimed that, during an average year, they depended on remittances for at least half of their annual household income. In 2011, however, almost all households reported that remittances accounted for merely 0-25 percent of their revenue that year. The other three departments studied showed similar—though less exaggerated—trends.

When compared to the yearly average and 2010, the use of remittances for purchasing food dropped significantly in 2011. Though the loss of remittances is a likely cause for many households, this may also be due to less need for remittances given the bumper agricultural and pastoral production of 2010/11. If acute food insecurity were a generalized issue for families dependant on remittances, we would have expected fewer households to report primary allocations on “other” non-food expenses compared to the average or at least on par with 2010 (Figure 4).

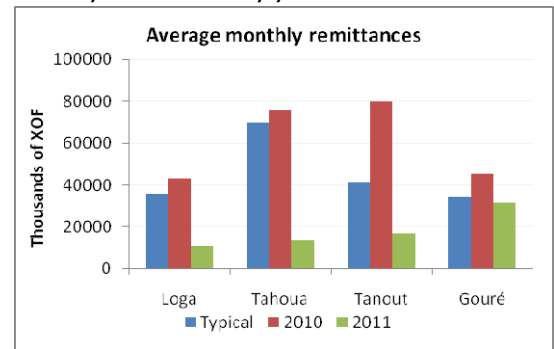
Post-study observations

Post-assessment field trips between September-November 2011 indicate that returnees from Libya have found alternative sources of income. Many are capitalizing on household assets (e.g., renting motorcycles or carts). Others are migrating to alternative destinations such as Côte d’Ivoire, Cameroon and Gabon.

Other, a similar study conducted by Action Contre la Faim in western Chad, which is somewhat similar to eastern Niger, indicate that most households with returnees from Libya were eating four meals per day at the beginning of the 2011 lean season. Since poor households don’t eat four meals a day even at the best of times, this supports a conclusion that it is wealthier households that benefit most from remittances from Libya. These households are at low risk of acute food insecurity even without remittances. Anecdotal information indicates that the same conclusion may apply in Niger. The high cost of migrating to Libya--as compared to urban areas within Niger or Nigeria--were identified as a key factor constraining poor households’ access to remittances from Libya.

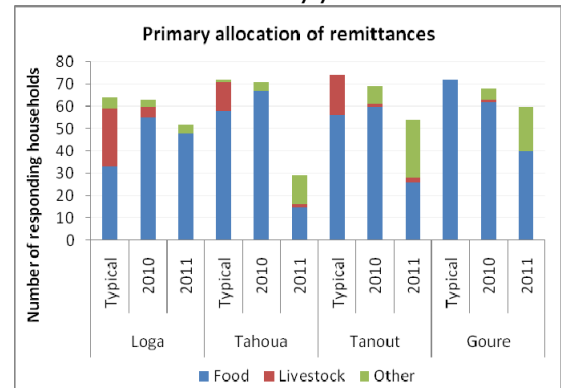
Current evidence suggests that declines in remittance income in 2011 is not reason to assume that households will face gaps in meeting minimum food and non-food needs in 2011/12. However, local agricultural and pastoral conditions in western Niger are very poor for 2011/12. FEWS NET’s current projections anticipate average to above-average remittances in these areas due to a significant increase in flows of migrants to Côte d’Ivoire matched by high demand for reconstruction labor. Additional field verification and monitoring of remittance flows and cereal prices is necessary to test whether or not the expected average remittance income will be sufficient to fill the gap left by poor production in western Niger.

Figure 3. Graph indicating average estimated monthly remittances by year and area.



Source: FEWS NET

Figure 4. Graph of respondents showing primary allocation of remittances by year and area.



Source: FEWS NET