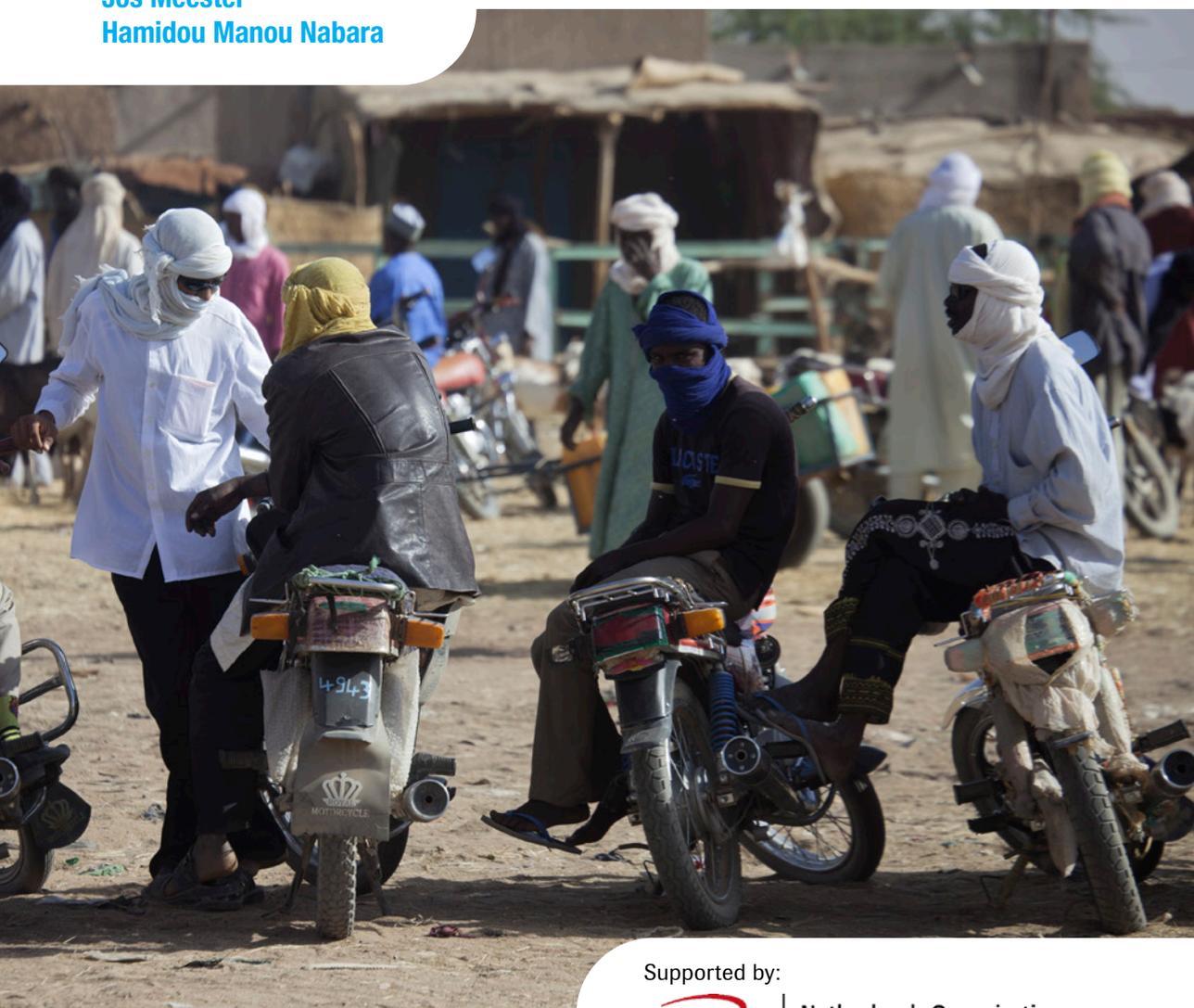


Migration and Markets in Agadez

Economic alternatives to the migration industry

Anette Hoffmann
Jos Meester
Hamidou Manou Nabara

CRU Report



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Abstract

This report situates the migration industry of Agadez in the broader context of the town’s political economy. After providing a brief economic overview, the report maps out the value chain of migration in Agadez and shows its multiple linkages with other sectors in the economy. It subsequently explores how the implementation of the 2015 Law Against Illicit Smuggling of Migrants in late 2016 – supported by European Union funding and capacity building programs – affected the economy in general and people’s livelihoods in particular. Given the migration industry’s deep entanglement with people’s livelihoods, the criminalisation of northbound migration robbed large parts of the population of an important source of income. Evidence suggests that the crackdown on migration also exacerbated feelings of marginalisation, tensions between groups and mistrust vis-à-vis state authorities. Any reduction in outbound migration flows through Agadez can be sustained only if alternative income-generating opportunities will materialise in the immediate future. The report offers three sets of recommendations showing concrete ways to leverage the region’s existing potential: to create economic opportunities in the short term, to work towards an enabling business environment and to design support measures in a conflict-sensitive manner.

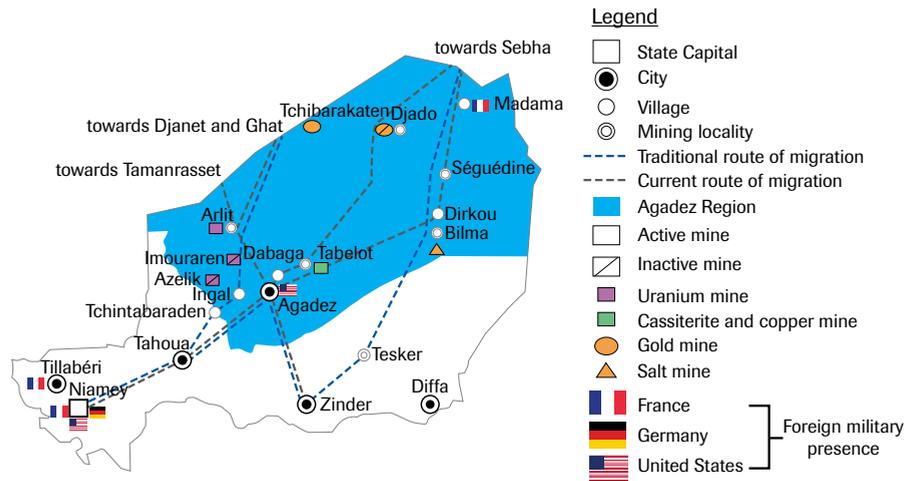


Figure 1 Map of Niger

Executive summary

At the intersection of transit routes, the region of Agadez has historically benefited from migration as a source of income. In recent years, and profiting from the fall of the Libyan regime, which eased coastal access, Agadez grew into a major hub for traders facilitating the passage of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa to Europe. Facing persistently high numbers of migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea, the European Union (EU) has joined a strategic partnership with Niger to stem the flow of northbound migrants. This report investigates the impact of clamping down on a major source of income on the economy and population of an already volatile region.

Because agriculture, a traditional and still important source of income for the region, is subject to production fluctuations, and the region's other economic sectors (tourism, artisan handicrafts and uranium mining) declined over the past few years, a boom in the migration and gold industry provided an important windfall. The migration industry offered direct jobs for more than 6,000 people (in jobs such as *passeurs*, *coxeurs*, ghetto owners and drivers) and the combination of migrant consumption and increased trade with Libya indirectly supported incomes of reportedly more than half of all the households in Agadez. Since late 2016, however, migration flows have begun to circumvent the city of Agadez in the wake of the implementation of the 2015 Law Against Illicit Smuggling of Migrants, which is supported by EU funding and capacity-building programs. Because surface gold deposits are also running low and gold mining sites have been closed, economic opportunities in the region have become increasingly scarce.

The adverse economic effects of irregular migration-mitigating measures are not just limited to those directly employed in the migration sector and migrants (who pay additional for their passage and face the risk of being abandoned in the desert as smugglers try to cope with the increased risk of arrest). Another economic fallout is evident among businesses that previously thrived on demand driven by both migrants' and smugglers' consumption, for instance food and water sales, as well as the demand for motorcycle taxis, bus transport and money transfers. Unemployment is on the rise, especially given that young people working at the lower tiers of the migration value chain are leaving the business due to the increased risk associated to the facilitation of migration.

Commerce and other value chains relying on imports are also suffering from reduced traffic because less return traffic has decreased the supply and raised prices. Among the significantly affected, for instance, are workshop owners from the industrial area in Agadez, who also report that checkpoints at the entrance of Agadez have become more burdensome for their suppliers in that both waiting time and facilitation fees are on

the rise. Faced with lower local purchasing power, craftsmen have little room to reflect the increased transaction costs in their product pricing. Increasing facilitation fees are likewise extracting funds from the productive economy. In addition, and due to growing insecurity across Niger's northern border, business and technology transfer from Libyan businesses has also slowed. Farther down the route, in waypoints like Dirkou and Séguédine, economic effects are likely to be even more pronounced, considering the route now circumvents checkpoints and hence places that were previously on the route.

This is not to say that no growth sectors are visible. The market for private security is seeing increasing demand and benefits from the availability of skilled labour and equipment, such as drivers who used to work in the migration industry. Another sector facing an uptake in revenues is the hospitality sector, which is increasingly catering to NGO personnel and journalists visiting the area on migration-related assignments. The report also identifies potential for short- and long-term economic development in the sectors of agriculture and pastoralism, artisanal handicrafts and jewellery, gold and uranium mining, infrastructure, private security and small trade, as well as a number of opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

The report offers three recommendations to leverage the region's existing potential. First, promoting income-generating activities and businesses in the short term is key. Concrete measures could include conducting a participatory market assessment, supporting the ongoing business plan competition, deploying road construction and maintenance, or ensuring that international actors commit to sourcing locally. Second, working towards an enabling business environment in the longer term is also necessary. Key elements in this area are developing entrepreneurial thinking in the region, removing obstacles preventing access to markets, promoting greater transparency and accountability among the larger companies, investing in infrastructure, and potentially exempting Agadez city from the *zone rouge* travel warning. Third, designing support measures in a conflict-sensitive manner is essential. This means any engagements in the area should avoid exclusively targeting actors involved in the migration economy. More generally, local perceptions and processes, not just the actual outcomes of an intervention, need to be carefully monitored in fragile societies, where perceived injustice can easily trigger violent reactions. Finally, no matter how weak and informal markets are in Agadez today, they are still part of a broader settlement; interfering in them can have wider destabilising effects.

List of abbreviations

AFD	Agence française de développement [French Development Agency]
AFNCG	Association of Nigerien Women against the War
COMINAK	Compagnie Minière d'Akouta [Minerary Company of Akouta]
CIPMEN	Centre Incubateur des PME au Niger [Incubation Center for SMEs in Niger]
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EPGA	Economie Politique et Gouvernance Autonome
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
KfW	KfW Development Bank
LASDEL	Laboratoire d'Etudes et de Recherche sur les Dynamiques Sociales et le Développement Local
MAE	Minister des Affaires Etrangères [Ministry of Foreign Affairs]
NGO	Nongovernmental organisation
IOM	International Organization for Migration
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
SOMAIR	Société des Mines de l'Aïr [Mining Company of the Aïr]
SOMINA	Société des Mines d'Azelik SA [Mining Company of Azelik SA]
UNESCO	United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture
WB	World Bank Group
XOF	International Organization for Standardization denomination for XOF currency

1 Introduction

One of the last significant outposts on the border of the Sahara Desert, the Nigerien city of Agadez has a rich history of trade and commerce. Situated at the bisection of the Trans-Sahara Highway (connecting Algiers to Lagos) and the West Africa–Libya route, a wide variety of goods and people have passed through the city over the ages, ranging from salt to slaves, from livestock to uranium and gold.¹ As trade patterns changed, so did the value proposition of the Saharan trade corridor. Port infrastructure developed in the countries surrounding Niger, making the Saharan route increasingly marginal. The route once served as a gateway for African exports to North Africa, the Middle East and Europe, as well as for European imports to affluent *Hausaland* cities.² Over time, however, the costs associated with transport along the route became prohibitively expensive as sea- and air-based transport developed in other hubs in the region (facilitated by the development of railways). As licit trade through the region faced a sharp decline, informal and illicit trade, taking advantage of weak governance and security along the route, began to flourish. Benefitting from the fall of the Libyan regime to ease coastal access, Agadez became known as a major hub for traders facilitating the passage of migrants through Africa and to Europe.³

Facing persistently high numbers of migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea, as well as numerous drownings, the European Union (EU) is attempting to stem the

1 Kemper, S. 2012. *A Labyrinth of Kingdoms: 10,000 Miles Through Islamic Africa*, New York: W.W. Norton; Pellerin, M. 2017. 'Beyond the "Wild West": The Gold Rush in Northern Niger,' Small Arms Survey.

2 *Ibid.*

3 Molenaar, F. and El Kamouni-Jansen, F. 2017. 'Turning the tide. The politics of irregular migration in the Sahel and Libya,' CRU Report, The Hague, Clingendael. Irregular migration is defined here as migration undertaken by persons 'who, owing to unauthorized entry, breach of a condition of entry, or the expiry of his or her visa, lacks legal status in a transit or host country' (Malakooti, A. 2015. *Migration Trends Across the Mediterranean*, Paris, Altai Consulting and IOM, 3). Irregular migration flows are integrated by 'temporary and reversible movements' [circular migration], 'long-term migration,' and 'forced migration' [refugees] (Guilmoto, C.Z. and Sandron, F. 2003. *Migration et développement*, Paris, La Documentation Française). Although the majority of migrants in Agadez are regular West African migrants travelling freely under the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) protocol, (the debates surrounding the implementation of the 2015 law has framed these migrants as irregular migrants. Legally speaking, migration becomes irregular only when ECOWAS citizens cross the border with Libya and Algeria without valid travel documents.

flow of migrants.⁴ Efforts addressing migrant departures from Libya have had limited effect and are subject to concerns regarding the conditions of those stranded in Libya, prompting the EU to explore mitigation strategies in other hubs on the route, namely Agadez.⁵ Although criticised for numerous reasons,⁶ measures in Agadez region seem – according to the official IOM numbers – to be considerably more effective at reducing the number of northbound migrants leaving (though traffic may have shifted to other routes).⁷ At the centre of what appears to be a successful EU intervention is the *Loi 2015-36 relative au trafic illicite de migrants* (the 2015 Law Against the Illicit Smuggling of Migrants) passed in May 2015 and enacted as of late 2016, making Niger the first country in the region to criminalise the smuggling of migrants.⁸ Policy measures appear to have been relatively effective at limiting migrant outflows from Niger, but questions regarding the effects of closing down a major source of income on the economy and population of an already volatile region remain largely unanswered.

-
- 4 International Organization for Migration. 2017. 'Mediterranean Update: Migration Flows Europe: Arrivals and Fatalities,' July; see also the UNHCR Operational Portal on Refugee Situations, <http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean> (accessed September 2017). Most visible of the drownings is that of the Syrian boy Aylan Kurdi in 2015. Smith, H. 2015. 'Shocking images of drowned Syrian boy show tragic plight of refugees', *The Guardian*, 2 September, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/02/shocking-image-of-drowned-syrian-boy-shows-tragic-plight-of-refugees> (accessed September 2017); Reuters. 2015. 'Troubling image of drowned boy captivates, horrifies', <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-turkey/troubling-image-of-drowned-boy-captivates-horrifies-idUSKCN0R20IJ20150902> (accessed September 2017).
 - 5 Al Jazeera. 2017. 'EU leaders ink deal to stem refugee flow from Libya,' <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/02/eu-leaders-ink-deal-stem-migrant-flow-libya-170203151643286.html> (accessed August 2017); Dearden, L. 2017. 'EU Malta summit: Leaders warned against stranding thousands of refugees in 'concentration camps' in Libya deal', *Independent*, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/eu-malta-summit-leaders-warn-strand-thousands-migrants-libya-deal-concentration-camps-crisis-a7560956.html> (accessed August 2017); Molenaar and El Kamouni-Jansen, *op. cit.*
 - 6 See, for instance, Tinti, P. 2017. 'The EU's Hollow Success over Migrant Smuggling in Niger,' *Refugees Deeply*, 17 January, <https://www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/community/2017/01/17/the-e-u-s-hollow-success-over-migrant-smuggling-in-niger> (accessed August 2017); minutes of migration stakeholder meeting held in October 2016, obtained from deputy mayor of Agadez during field work in early July 2017.
 - 7 IOM, *June-July 2017*, Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM). Migration through Agadez is down significantly since autumn 2016. However, only 10 to 20 percent of these migrants are destined for Europe, hence a reduction at Agadez does not translate one on one in a reduction at the Libyan coast. Molenaar and El Kamouni-Jansen, *op. cit.*; Samuel Hall. 2016. 'Selling Sand in the Desert, The Economic Impact of Migration in Agadez,' IOM Niger.
 - 8 Africa at LSE. 2017. 'What incentives does Niger have for cracking down on migrant smuggling? Not many,' <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2016/01/13/whatincentivesdoesnigerhaveforcrackingdownonmigrantsmugglingnotmany/> (accessed August 2017).

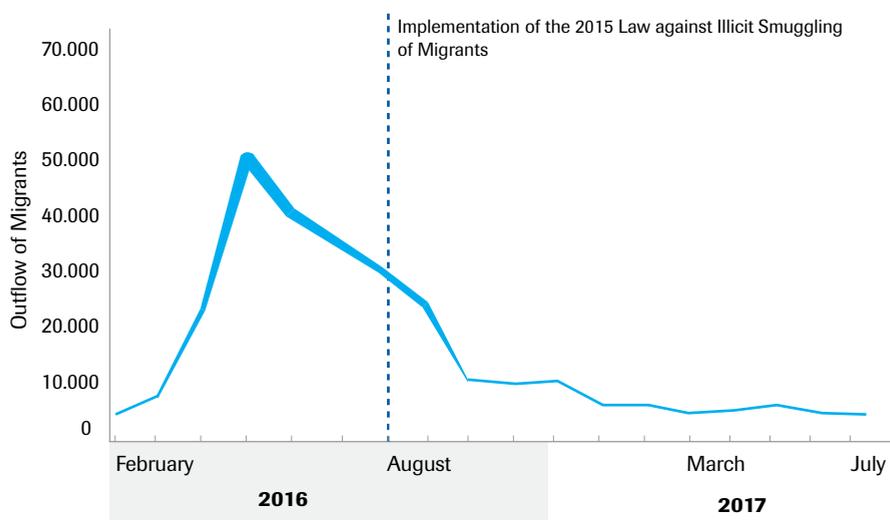


Figure 2 Evolution of northbound migration from Niger

Building on survey data, focus group discussions and key informant interviews (see appendix 1 for an overview of the research methodology), this report explores the implications of Niger’s EU-supported migration policies on the economy of Agadez.⁹ First it describes the city’s main *economic drivers* to better understand the significance of the migration industry to livelihoods of the city’s inhabitants. It then analyses the economic potential of the *migration market* and assesses the *impact of EU policy on the migration market* to size the impact for the region. The report concludes by indicating realistic *opportunities for private-sector development*, which may be employed to mitigate the economic impact of the clampdown. Further implications of migration policies on local governance dynamics and security in the region are described in a companion report [Local governance opportunities for sustainable migration management in Agadez](#).

9 We invite the reader to further explore the data using this study’s interactive [data dashboard](#).

2 Agadez's economy in brief

Although the city is known as a hub for migration, the economy of Agadez is relatively diversified, and some of the major economic drivers are in fact based on local production rather than transport and commerce. To understand the significance of the migration industry, familiarity with its position in the wider economic context is essential. Most important are the agricultural and livestock sectors, which provide livelihoods for the majority of Agadez's inhabitants.¹⁰ Livestock production (camels, goats, sheep and cattle) generates a significant share of Niger's gross domestic product (GDP), and although difficult to measure because of the large herds crossing the border into Nigeria informally, it is ranked as the country's second most important foreign exchange earner.¹¹ Agricultural production in turn largely remains subsistence oriented, boasting only a few vegetable crops, namely, cowpea, groundnut and onion, contributing to export earnings that can therefore be considered cash crops.¹² Citrus fruits and potatoes are grown for the southern Nigerien market, supplementing farmers' livelihoods but not generating earnings from export taxes for the central government. Because crops are not diversified, external shocks such as slumps in crop prices or droughts, most recently in 2014, can have a heavy and adverse impact on household incomes.¹³ Production is mainly geared to local consumption and is not taxed; and is hampered by inadequate agricultural equipment and irrigation, the silting of water sources and underdeveloped livestock infrastructure (such as veterinary services and food storage).¹⁴ Professionalisation among producers is limited, and considerations regarding generating surplus production or export opportunities are not major drivers of the sector. Many young people have been abandoning the profession.¹⁵

10 Personal interview with a representative government authorities and private-sector organisations in Niger. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June; Commune Urbaine D'Agadez. 2012. 'Projet de plan de développement communal (PDC) 2012–2016.'

11 Zonon, A. 2007. 'A preliminary assessment of the economic value of the goods and services provided by dryland ecosystems of the Air and Ténéré,' IUCN The World Conservation Union.

12 According to the chamber of commerce in Niamey, in 2013 annual turnover of onion production in Agadez amounted to XOF 50,000,000 (EUR 76,225), exceeding the local earnings on uranium. Interview with chamber of commerce representative. 2017. Niamey, Niger, June.

13 Pellerin, *op. cit.*; Bagnetto, L. 2012. 'Agadez Onion Crisis Adds to Niger's Food Problems –Africa,' RFI, <http://en.rfi.fr/africa/20120906-agadez-onion-crisis-adds-niger-s-food-issues> (accessed 24 August 2017).

14 Commune Urbaine D'Agadez, *op. cit.*

15 Focus group discussion with youth representatives. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

Home to an UNESCO world heritage site, the region also has a proven potential for tourism.¹⁶ Especially in the period between 1985 and 1991 and then from about 1998 to about 2007 the sector attracted considerable revenues, servicing approximately 5,000 (predominantly European) tourists annually and at times serving as a waypoint for the Paris-Dakar race. By 2007, it was composed of some 62 travel agencies employing approximately 500 staff, mainly those of higher caste Tuareg origin (for an overview of Niger's main northern ethnic groups, see box 1).¹⁷ For a number of years, the sector provided an alternative livelihood in agricultural low seasons and periods of drought. The sectors' success drove investments in off-road vehicles for guided tours. However, the sector suffered heavily under the 2007–2009 Tuareg rebellion and the general insecurity in the area. The remaining companies in the sector now rely predominantly on NGO personnel visiting the region.¹⁸

Box 1 Northern ethnic groups with transnational ties¹⁹

The Tuareg make up 10 percent of the Nigerien population and are concentrated in the sparsely populated and impoverished northern region of the country surrounding Arlit and Agadez. Their ties extend to neighbouring countries such as Libya, Algeria and Mali. The Toubou make up a mere 0.4 percent and live primarily in desert areas in northeastern Niger. Their ethnic ties extend to Libya, Chad and Sudan. The Arab population, mostly of Libyan descent, makes up 0.3 percent of the population. In the city of Agadez, they gravitate towards the neighbourhood of Dagamanet.

The ethnic groups have reached an informal understanding over the division of territory and spoils in the Agadez region. The Toubou control the Libyan axis of the migration trade and the transportation routes to the Djado gold mines. The Tuareg control the Algerian axis and routes to the Tchinchaden gold mines. When conflict ensues on these routes, it is usually between individual smugglers. The Arabs are well known for cross-border trade of agro-food products from Libya and Algeria as well as for their involvement in drug trafficking. Given their

16 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. 2017. 'Historic Centre of Agadez,' <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1268> (accessed September 2017).

17 Debarbieux, B., et al., eds. 2014. *Tourism in Mountain Regions: Hopes, Fears and Realities*, Geneva, UNIGE, CDE, SDC.

18 Personal interview with a representative of an implementing agency. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

19 The main ethnicities in Niger are Hausa (53.0 percent), Zarma-Sonrai (21.2 percent), Tuareg (10.4 percent), Fula (9.9 percent), Kanuri Manga (4.4 percent), Tubu (0.4 percent), Arab (0.3 percent), Gourma (0.3 percent), other (0.2 percent). Institut National de la Statistique. 2012. 'Structure de la population,' Niamey.

increasing economic power, the Arabs have expanded their commercial operations by investing in transportation, hydrocarbons, construction and public works.

The 2007-2009 rebellion resulted in the incorporation of many Tuareg leaders in the state. At the national level, the current prime minister is a Tuareg. At the local level, both the President of the Regional Council and the mayor of Agadez are Tuaregs as well. Several wealthy Arabs have established important political connections through financial contributions and high-level political appointments. The Toubou are less politically connected.

More interestingly, the remaining former employees and entrepreneurs of the once thriving tourism industry have mostly found refuge in the migration business, the two sectors requiring similar skill sets. Experienced former tourist guides with unique knowledge of the desert reinvented themselves as *passeurs*; drivers shifted their clientele from tourists to migrants and the local food industry began to adjust their menus to the needs and budgets of transiting visitors from neighbouring countries.²⁰ The networks of local tour guides, drivers and young fixers largely remained in place. Copying the all-inclusive packages for tourists, *passeurs* would aptly offer arrangements to migrants that included the pick up from the local bus station, the accompaniment to a ghetto for lodging (typically the walled compound of a private residence), the connection to a motorcyclist for errands as well as to a private or formal money transfer agent to finance the next leg of their trip.

As tourism dropped significantly in the 1990s and effectively came to an end in 2007 because of Tuareg rebellion, the market for artisanal handicrafts and jewellery lost an important customer segment. After the entire Agadez region was labelled a red zone in 2010, tourists no longer visited the Tuareg capital. In response, Tuareg artisans, traditionally a separate endogamous status group, began bringing their products closer to their potential customers, establishing sales points in Niamey: currently half of production is sold in Niamey. This coping strategy has not fully negated the loss of revenue, however.²¹ In recent years, production has declined further as visas for artisans

20 Interestingly, the recipe of the typical travelling fare that women in Agadez prepare for the migrants dates from ancient times. It is still the same nutritious snack – locally known as *tokoudi* – made of cheese, dates, millet and flavours that nomads would carry with them on their long journeys through the desert long before French occupation. Today, migrants depend on the same dry mix: a mouthful of tokoudi dissolved in a zip of water makes for a migrant's meal in the desert, provided the crossing does not outlasts the standard ration. Personal interview with former mayor of Agadez. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

21 Tiekoura, O. 2012. 'Tourism and gender identities in Agadez, Niger,' *Via@ – International interdisciplinary review of tourism*, 62(2), 1-8.

selling in Europe have become increasingly difficult to obtain, further jeopardising the livelihoods of the mainly lower caste Tuareg households in the sector.²²

Losses in tourism were to a certain extent offset by developments in the mining sector. Niger is one of the world's primary producers of uranium and uranium exports are the country's most important foreign currency earner, generating 72 percent of its export revenue. Production is centred around the city of Arlit and the country's two main mines, Aïr and Akouta, are currently exploited by the SOMAIR and COMINAK, two companies owned by a French-led consortium. Though the sector has growth potential (currently three new concessions are in various stages of development) the sector faced a slowdown in 2013 and 2014 after significant price drops in uranium.²³ Both the SOMAIR and COMINAK mines closed temporarily following protracted negotiations on tax rates, and the SOMINA mine closed permanently, due to losses caused by delays and budget overruns. More than 3,000 jobs were lost in the SOMINA mine closure alone.²⁴ Development of the Imouraren concession was similarly postponed pending a rise in uranium prices.²⁵ According to interviews with local government officials in Agadez, no uranium-related tax revenues have reached Agadez's local government coffers in recent years.²⁶

When uranium went into decline in 2014, gold mining took off. The main sites of Djado and Tchibarakaten provided livelihoods for approximately 1,000 and 500 Nigeriens respectively, as well as tens of thousands of foreign workers, mainly from Chad, Sudan and Libya.²⁷ Mining was largely informal, artisanal mining of surface deposits. Indirectly, profits earned in the gold sector pushed a boom in various sectors. Amongst others, new houses were constructed in Agadez, increased demand for private security providers facilitating transport between Agadez and the gold sites, and demand rose for consumption goods such as vegetables, fuel and water (supplied through Agadez).²⁸ Though highly lucrative, employment in the gold sector has declined sharply. In 2017,

22 Personal interviews with several jewellery artisans. 2017. Niamey, Niger, June.

23 World Nuclear Association. 2017. 'Uranium in Niger,' <http://www.world-nuclear.org/information-library/country-profiles/countries-g-n/niger.aspx> (accessed August 2017).

24 Pellerin, *op. cit.*; personal interview with a representative of the mechanism for resources and response for migrants. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

25 World Nuclear Association, *op. cit.*

26 Personal interviews with representatives of the Regional Council and the regional chamber of commerce. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

27 Pellerin, *op. cit.*; Personal interview with a gold miner. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

28 Personal interview with a hotel employee. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

the government closed the Djado gold mining site. At the same time, the quality of discovered surface gold dropped significantly, from 24 to 17 karat, and gold prices fell.²⁹

A last significant sector is obviously trade and commerce. Trade in the region relies on the smuggling of both licit and illicit goods. Licit goods consist of subsidised food staples (such as couscous, milk, tomato sauce), cement and subsidised fuel, mainly brought in from Tuareg areas from Algeria.³⁰ Additionally, cars, electronics (refrigerators and televisions) and mining equipment come through Toubou areas from across the border with Libya.³¹ These items are mainly sold in Agadez itself because the route from Agadez to Niamey is tightly controlled. Consumers may come from various locations in the region, however, including the capital. Illicit items consist mainly of drugs (cocaine arriving from Guinea, Niger and Ghana) and include the arms trade as a side business.³² Small arms are mainly smuggled from Libya; other arms are available through Chadian gold miners.³³

Box 2 Agadez's trade and commerce, embedded in the system of sultanate³⁴

That most of the trade in Agadez is informal does not mean that it is not being taxed. A system of semi-informal tax collection system has in fact long prevailed. The system enables merchants to sell imported goods at very attractive prices: a sack of rice would cost nearly the same amount in Cotounou (a Benin port city) as it does, after being imported, in Niamey or even Agadez, despite the lengthy

29 Pellerin, *op. cit.*; personal interview with a gold miner. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June. The Nigerien government authorities explained the need to close the Djado mining site by referring to the complex security situation in the region and the uncontrollable presence of informal Sudanese and Chadian gold miners who enter the country without permission and extract most of the gold to be channelled. Many interviewees, including a gold miner active in the region, claimed that the Nigerien military, some Toubous in collaboration with Arabs, Sudanese and Chadians, continue to mine in Djado. One interviewee depicted the current scene at the site by referring to the Nigerien armed forces walking around in Djado 'holding their Kalashnikov in one hand; a metal detector in the other.' Personal interview with miner, previously in Djado, at the time of the field research in Tchibarakaten. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

30 Much of these merchandise are transported via Ingall or Tchintbaraden to Tahoua, past Agadez. Agadez region likely benefits from these imports through taxation. Personal communication from migration expert. 2017. Niamey, Niger, September.

31 Personal interview with representative of the Centre for the Promotion of Investments (CPI) of the chamber of commerce and industry of Niger. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

32 Africa Frontex Intelligence Community. 2017. 'Africa-Frontex Intelligence Community Joint Report 2016,' Frontex.

33 Pellerin, *op. cit.*

34 Personal interview with representative of regional chamber of commerce. 2017. Niamey, Niger, June.

bus transport linking these towns. This is only possible because significantly lower volumes are declared than actually transported: a common practice referred to as *pont basculé*, the manipulation of the weighting of the truck. To ensure declaration specificities are not being checked at one of the many police checkpoints, each merchant would pay around XOF 2,000 (EUR 3) to the police to ensure smooth passage. In 2015, a bus with 70 passengers travelling from Cotonou to Niamey would generate extra revenue of XOF 140,000 (EUR 213) for the police. A personal anecdote related by a representative of the regional chamber of commerce in Agadez illustrates the level of institutionalisation of this practice. Travelling by bus from Cotonou to Niamey, he once refused to pay his share of the facilitation payment, stressing that he had nothing to hide. When the bus was waved through the next police checkpoint without much ado, he realised that his fellow passengers had collectively made up for his missing share. The bus driver had handed over the total amount to the police. Locally known as the system of sultanate, this facilitation network has traditionally eased the import of goods; it also came to accommodate the transport of migrants into Agadez.

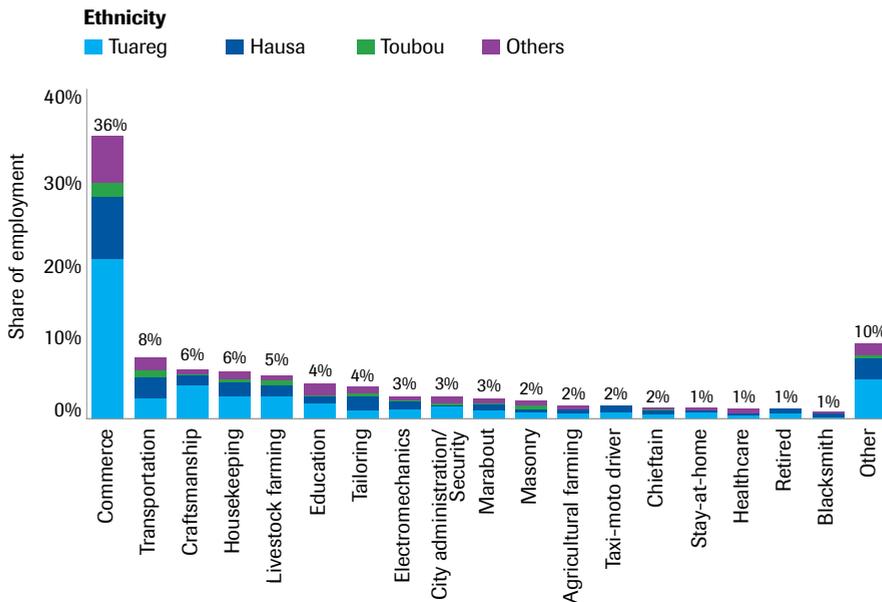


Figure 3 Employment across occupations by ethnicity

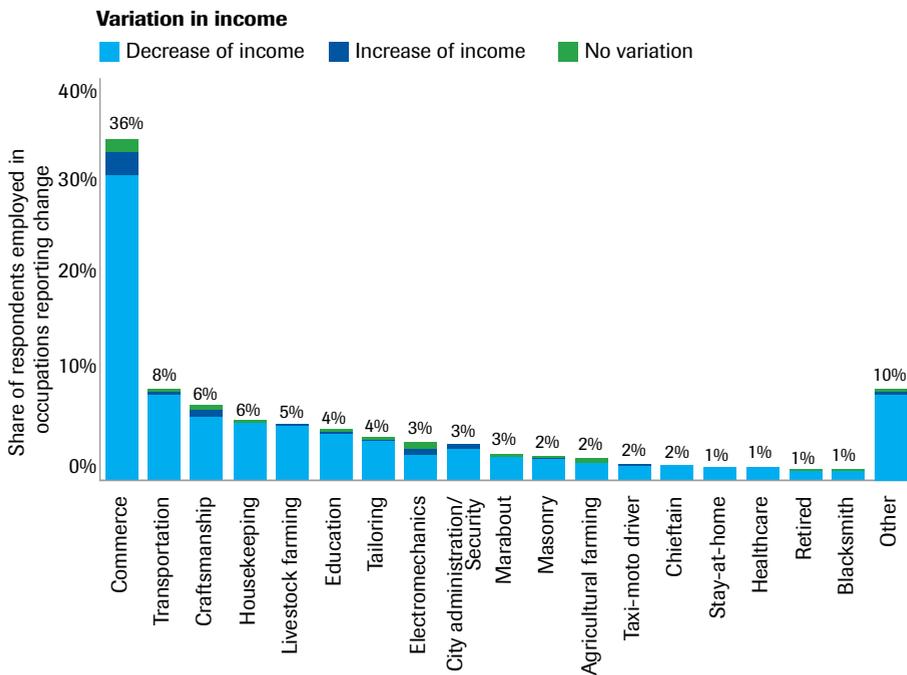


Figure 4 Changes in income by occupation over the last 5 years

3 Historical overview of the migration value chain

The migration business developed as a logical complement to existing trade in the region. Routes had considerable overlap, and transporting outbound migrants avoided empty rides on the way to pick up goods from Libya and or Algeria. Although (circular) migration was well established, the migration industry started professionalising following the Tuareg rebellion of 1990 to 1995. As a reintegration effort, Tuareg ex-rebels – namely, their leaders – were granted *papiers de courtoise* by the Agadez municipality, granting them the right to legally transport people from Agadez via Arlit to Algeria.³⁵ Growth was facilitated by the availability of off-road vehicles from the declining tourist industry, as well facilitation and navigation skills learnt in that same business. Journeys were facilitated for approximately XOF 3,000 (EUR 5). Inclusive arrangements were developed in which one person could be paid to facilitate all legs of the journey for about XOF 15,000 (EUR 23) to Dirkou and XOF 35,000 (EUR 53) to Sebha (Libya), taking up to 20 days.³⁶

In contrast with tourism, the migration business recovered quickly following the rebellion of 2007 to 2009, and boomed after the fall of the Libyan regime in 2011. With the closure of the till then widely used Western route (Senegal – Mauritania – Morocco), the route shifted from Algeria to Libya, passing by Dirkou and Séguédine, until the handoff point at Madama. Here migrants were transferred onto Libyan vehicles, which in turn supplied fuel for the Nigerien vehicles for the return trip. The Libyan route passed through Toubou-controlled territory and relied on support from Nigerien Arabs.

With the rule of law in Libya in decline and the Toubou entering the business, the migration industry underwent a modernisation process: Toubou smugglers brought in new and larger vehicles from Libya, thereby shortening the trip to three days.³⁷ Prices for an inclusive trip reached up to XOF 150,000 (EUR 229), putting earnings per truckload (approximately 25 migrants) to about XOF 4,000,000 (EUR 6,100). The trip could be paid in advance or on credit with a mark-up. From 2011 onwards the smugglers' or *passeurs*' profit margins grew and their wealth became more visible in Agadez: larger houses

35 Personal interview with a journalist from Radio Sahara. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

36 Personal interview with representatives of the Urban Commune of Agadez. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

37 Personal interview with representative of chamber of commerce. 2017. Niamey, Niger, June. The Tuareg used Toyota Hilux, which would carry 25 persons, whereas the Toubou introduced the Tundra model, which accommodates up to 30 migrants.

emerged and an influx of new cars started to roam the streets.³⁸ Another indication of the migration boom was the growing number of jobs it provided, mostly for family members of local smugglers: brothers of the *passeurs* became drivers, cousins were hired as ghetto-managers, and young nephews started to work as *coxeurs*.³⁹

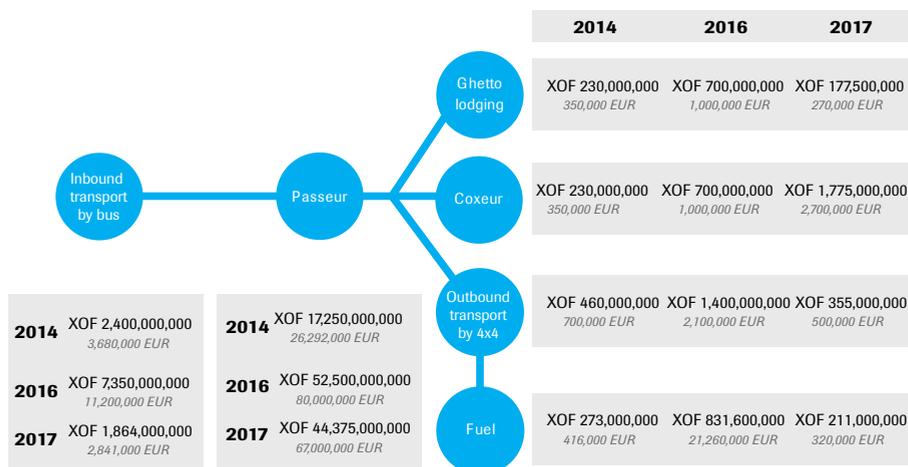


Figure 5 Migration value chain, with estimated revenues⁴⁰

Initially, migrants arrived in Agadez by bus. In response to a consistently high demand for transport from migrants, bus companies used to run separate buses for migrants

38 Personal interviews with a journalist from Radio Sahara and with a representative of an implementing agency. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

39 Personal interview with a journalist from Radio Sahara. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

40 Figures are estimated based on number of migrants passing through, unit prices and consumption per migrant (assuming full transport loads of 70 per bus and 25 per truck). Migrants passing through were estimated at 115,000 (2014), 350,000 (2016) and 88,750 (2017, assuming a 70% decline over 2016), based on IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix figures and the authors' estimates of migration flows over 2017 based on developments in figures throughout the first 8 months of 2017. Prices used were as follows: Bus rides at XOF 21,000; inclusive trips at XOF 150,000 in 2014-2016 and XOF 500,000 in 2017; bus station pick up at XOF 2,000 in 2014-2016 and XOF 20,000 in 2017; ghetto lodging at XOF 1,000 per night, assuming 2 nights per refugee; outbound transport fees at XOF 100,000; fuel at XOF 450 per litre, assuming consumption of 11 litre per 100 kilometre over a 1,200 kilometre trip. Unit prices are based on personal interviews with journalists of Radio Sahara, two large bus companies, the chamber of commerce and industry of Niger, the Urban Commune of Agadez. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June. Prices for fuel and ghetto lodging are based on online interviews with a journalist, a representative from the NGO Tamakrast and a public official responsible for Regional Development. 2017. September.

to spare regular passengers the extended security check-ups migrants are subject to. Tickets sold for approximately XOF 21,000 (EUR 32), totalling approximately XOF 2,400,000,000 (EUR 3,700,000) over 2014.⁴¹ Two of the seven main bus companies currently operating in and around Agadez, STM and Rimbo, confirmed that the influx of West African foreigners into Agadez boomed between 2011 and 2014, leading to the purchase of new vehicles and additional employment.⁴²

Following the (legal) entry into Agadez, a *passeur* facilitated the irregular section from arrival in Agadez until the passing the Libyan border. *Coxeurs* awaited the migrants at Agadez's bus station, ensuring the migrants find their way to lodging at one of the city's ghettos. Based on estimates from several experts on the ground in Agadez,⁴³ *coxeurs* earned about XOF 2,000 (EUR 3) per migrant from the *chef de ghetto*, totalling approximately XOF 230,000,000 (EUR 350,000) over 2014. The *chef de ghetto* was usually employed by a *passeur*, netting approximately XOF 1,000 (EUR 1.5) per night per migrant, totalling approximately XOF 230,000,000 (EUR 350,000) over 2014.⁴⁴ The approximately 200 ghettos in Agadez generally had a capacity of over 30 people, and employed about five motorcyclists to run errands for the migrants in town, sparing them the need to leave the relative safety of the ghetto (charging about XOF 400 / EUR 0.60 per errand). The *passeurs* earned about XOF 150,000 (EUR 229) per inclusive trip (XOF 17,250,000,000 / EUR 26,300,000 over 2014), and hired drivers for at least the last leg of the journey at XOF 100,000 (EUR 152) per ride (XOF 460,000,000 / EUR 700,000 over 2014).⁴⁵

The presence of migrants in the community also led to demand for other goods and services in Agadez, such as water, jerry cans, sunglasses, turbans, food, fuel, transportation, communications and money transfers services. On average, migrants spent about XOF 19,000 (EUR 29) as they passed through Agadez (totalling XOF 2,185,000,000 / EUR 3,300,000 over 2014),⁴⁶ contributing to the Houssa-dominated

41 Approximately 115,000 to 150,000 migrants passed through Agadez in 2014; personal interviews with a journalist from Radio Sahara, mayor's office. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

42 Personal interviews with CEOs of two large bus companies. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

43 Earnings along the migration value chain have fluctuated significantly in recent years. The estimates presented in this section represent modest estimates, based on information about prices charged before the application of the 2015 Law Against the Illicit Smuggling of Migrants. Experts concur that prices across the chain have significantly increased ever since.

44 Assuming migrants stay two nights in Agadez. Because costs in Agadez are high, migrants are incentivised to minimise the duration of their stay in the city, generally arriving over the weekend in order to depart on Mondays. As prices of passage have increased over the years, increasing numbers of migrants have extended their time in Agadez to work and pay for passage. Interviews with representatives of the mayor's office, regional chamber of commerce, Regional Council. Agadez, Niger. June 2017.

45 Assuming 25 passengers per ride.

46 Samuel Hall, *op. cit.*

commerce in town. Migrants frequently transferred additional funds into town to cover expenses of the trip and possibly beyond, giving rise to a growing market for formal and informal money transfer operators. Currently, about 50 such agents are in town, facilitating transfers of around XOF 5,000,000 (EUR 7,600) a piece at a 10 percent margin (XOF 1,200,000,000 / EUR 1,800,000 over 2014).⁴⁷

Overall, in 2014 when migration through Agadez town was approaching its height, reportedly more than half of all households in Agadez benefitted from the industry to the point of intensifying the existing circular migration of Nigeriens from the South moving to Agadez in search of employment.⁴⁸ Most motorcyclists operating taxis in Agadez are from Maradi, men from Zinder typically come to do masonry and women from the same region come to Agadez as cleaners, all testimonies of a relatively thriving economy.⁴⁹ Purchasing power went up, as prices of consumption goods did not rise significantly (only selectively for certain groups of foreigners), and the imports business from Libya flourished, offering a wide range of household goods and Japanese and Korean cars: electronic appliances such as refrigerators and televisions, but also mattresses were and still are high in demand. The price difference with Niamey is such that it attracts till this day customers from the capital to come buy those products in Agadez. Knowledge, skills and machinery also improved, as many entrepreneurs who went to work in Libya have returned to Agadez due to the deteriorating security situation in the country. Drawing on their experience and freshly imported machinery many of them have established flourishing workshops in Agadez.⁵⁰ Migrants generally did not take part of the labour market in Agadez, as few intended to stay long enough to warrant searching for work.⁵¹ The pressure on salaries frequently associated with migration was thus limited.

The migration economy also generated significant local tax revenue at the commune level. Up to the implementation of the 2015 Law Against the Illicit Smuggling of Migrants (late 2016), the authorities of Dirkou earned an estimated XOF 155,000,000 (EUR

47 Personal interview with a journalist from Radio Sahara. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June. Assuming four transfers per operator per month.

48 Due to higher population growth, southern Nigeriens have traditionally come to Agadez to work in mining, horticulture or as household help, particularly between October and April during the dry season. Personal communication from migration expert. 2017. Niamey, Niger, September. Nearly all interviewees confirmed the estimation of migration beneficiaries.

49 Benattia, T., Armitano, F. and Robinson, H. 2015. 'Irregular Migration between West Africa, North Africa and the Mediterranean,' IOM Nigeria, 21, http://www.rodakar.iom.int/oimsenegal/sites/default/files/Altai%20Consulting-Free%20Movement%20and%20Migration%20in%20West%20Africa-Final%20Report..._0.pdf (accessed August 2017).

50 Personal interviews with local entrepreneurs. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

51 Samuel Hall, *op. cit.*

236,000) in visitor taxes on the migrants, while the authorities also levied road taxes.⁵² In a context of decentralised governance, where transfers of funds from the centre to the regions remain the exception rather than the rule, these direct local revenues were critical for local development of the region.⁵³

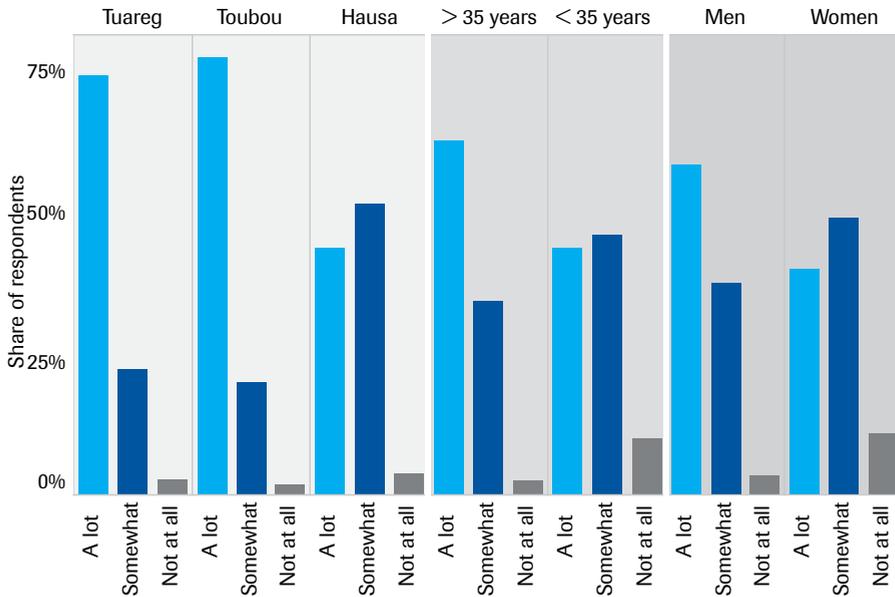


Figure 6 Perceived economic benefits from migration by demography

The modernisation of the migration has undoubtedly generated increased direct and indirect incomes for a majority of households in Agadez. Evidence gathered for this research shows that the migration value chain has boosted economic activity in multiple sectors, ranging from transport to hospitality, from the financial sector to the service industries. Overall, according to estimates gathered from experts during fieldwork in Agadez approximately 6,000 to 7,000 people were employed directly in the business,

52 Personal interview with representative of the Regional Council. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June. According to a smuggler quoted in a news article in *The Guardian* in November 2015, three checkpoints were present between Agadez and the border and at each of them the driver would be requested to pay XOF 10,000 (EUR 15) per passenger to pass (Kingsley, P. 2015. 'On the road in Agadez: desperation and death along a Saharan smuggling route,' 9 November, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/09/on-the-road-in-agadez-desperation-and-death-along-a-saharan-smuggling-route> (accessed September 2017).

53 Personal interview with representative of the Regional Council. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June; Bensaad, A. 2003. 'Agadez, carrefour migratoire sahélo-maghrébin,' *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*, 19(1), 7–28, <https://remi.revues.org/336> (accessed September 2017).

many more in other industries benefitting from the migrants passing by. These positive economic effects came at a critical moment, offering an alternative to two of the regions' former economic lifelines: tourism and mining. Earnings from the migration business did however not appear to equal the rise in consumption deriving from the gold industry, which brought more than 20,000 people to the region.⁵⁴

The migration economy has thus made a critical contribution to people's livelihoods and, by extension, to the region's stability.⁵⁵ Nonetheless, most of these economic activities take place in the informal sector, which makes their further upscaling and state revenue generation a far-off scenario. Of even greater concern is that the professionalisation of the migration business has gone hand in hand with deteriorating travel and lodging conditions, which migrants have had little choice but to accept: because of greater organisation between the chain actors (*passeur, coxeur, chef de ghetto, moto-taxi-men*, and so on), the room for migrants to negotiate prices or conditions has dwindled to nearly nothing.

Besides aiming to drastically lower the migration flow towards Europe, the new human-smuggling measures undertaken by the Nigerien government with support from the EU seek to address this latter point. Indeed, the goal of the European Agenda on Migration is to address the fact that 'migration needs to be better managed in all its aspects and to take 'immediate action to prevent further losses of migrants' lives.'⁵⁶ In reality, criminalising the migration industry in Agadez has failed to fully recognise the industry's embeddedness in the town's broader political economy and has therefore had the opposite and rather harmful effect on both the migrants and the local population.

54 Pellerin, *op. cit.*; personal interview with a journalist from Radio Sahara. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

55 For a more detailed discussion of the impact of the migration sector on the region's stability, see the companion report [Local governance opportunities for sustainable migration management in Agadez](#).

56 European Commission: Migration and Home affairs. 2017. 'European Agenda on Migration,' https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration_en (accessed September 2017).

4 Impact of the 2015 Law Against the Illicit Smuggling of Migrants

Despite the benefits that the migration industry brought to the region, the situation quickly changed after the 2015 Law Against the Illicit Smuggling of Migrants was adopted and subsequently implemented in Agadez starting in the autumn of 2016.⁵⁷ The arrests of 282 drivers and ghetto operators and at least nine gendarmes (on migration-linked corruption charges), combined with the confiscation of at least 169 trucks used to transport migrants through the desert, have had a strong deterrent effect on the irregular migration industry.⁵⁸ EU support was critical in making this happen through its 'hands-on support on the ground to support the design and implementation of the short term actions to tackle smuggling and trafficking in human beings.'⁵⁹

Although activities facilitating migrants' journeys from Agadez onto Libya became illegal in 2015, the effects of the new policy became increasingly pronounced. Increasing securitisation of the routes has substantially increased the risks along the route for both smugglers as well as migrants. Northbound migration through the town of Agadez is down significantly compared to 2016, but this reduction does not take into account the number of migrants who attempt to cross the desert by less-tested routes to circumvent the one through Agadez and its surrounding checkpoints.⁶⁰ The number of attempted desert crossings from alternative towns in the hope of avoiding the numerous

57 The adoption of the 2015 Law followed briefly after the Valletta Summit on migration, which gathered ministers of foreign affairs and government representatives of EU and African states to negotiate a new partnership to address root causes of migration.

58 Data is available for the period from July to mid-October 2016 and for January to August 2017. Actual numbers may therefore be higher because no data is available for the period from mid-October to December 2016. See: European Commission. 2016. 'Second Progress Report: First Deliverables on the Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration,' https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/second-progress-report-1_en_act_part1_v11.pdf (accessed September 2017); European Commission. 2017. 'Fifth Progress Report on the Partnership Framework with third countries under the European Agenda on Migration,' https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/20170906_fifth_progress_report_on_the_partnership_framework_with_third_countries_under_the_eam_en_0.pdf (accessed September 2017).

59 European Commission, 2016, *op. cit.*

60 IOM, *op. cit.*

checkpoints in and around Agadez risks to remain rather high. The apparent statistical success also comes at a significant human cost because migrants are increasingly abandoned in the desert by smugglers attempting to evade arrest.⁶¹ Furthermore, since the industry has gone into hiding, migrants' mobility in Agadez has decreased and thus their dependency on local smuggling networks is stronger today. As one of the motorbike drivers pointed out, 'Since migrants can't leave their ghettos anymore, they cannot check the exact prices in the local market themselves. So we can charge them double or even three times the price and keep the difference ourselves. Particularly non-French speakers have little choice but to pay the amounts we charge them.'⁶²

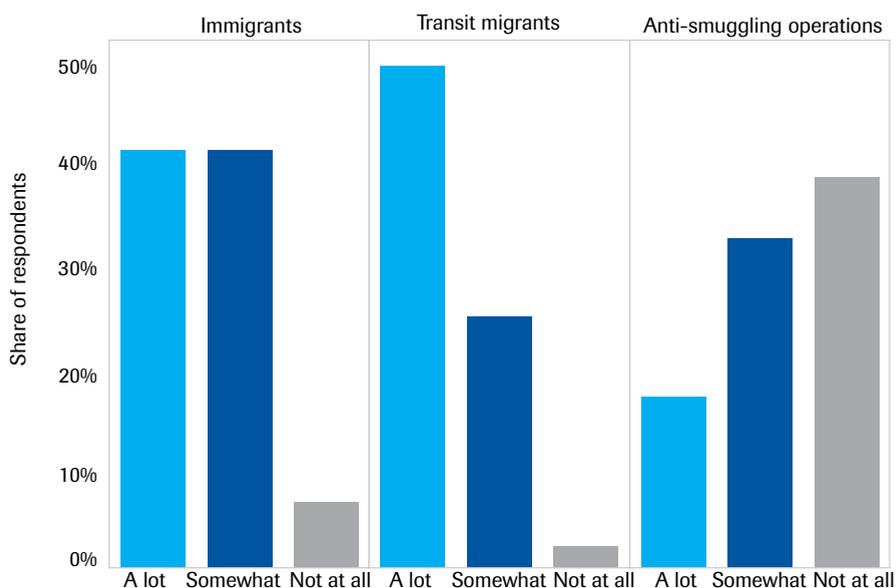


Figure 7 Extent to which respondents' community benefits from immigrants, transitory migrants and antismuggling operations

61 In February, local media reported 38 migrant bodies found in the desert; during the week of field research for this report, a television crew accompanied a Nigerien military mission to rescue the survivors of a truck that had broken down in the desert, with 20 passengers missing. See, for example, Nieuwsuur. 2017. 'Migranten verdwalen en drogen uit in de woestijn van Niger,' 8 July, <https://nos.nl/nieuwsuur/artikel/2182188-migranten-verdwalen-en-drogen-uit-in-de-woestijn-van-niger.html> (accessed September 2017). A former mayor of Agadez reported that a women committee had been set up to organise searches of dead bodies in the desert: 'We know that there is many more dead in the desert than what we hear in the local media. We cannot bring them back to life, but should find these bodies and give them a proper burial. That's the least we can do and it's important in our Islamic culture.' Personal interview. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

62 Focus group discussion with motorcyclists. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

4.1 Economic sector most affected: transport

Typically presented by local authorities as the most obvious effect and perhaps proof of law enforcement is the number of confiscated cars and arrested smugglers. Interviews with entrepreneurs and private households quickly revealed that these measures often leave households without their main source of income. Interviewees concurred that arrests are primarily targeted at the many young Nigerien motorcyclists, the so-called moto-taxis from Maradi or at Toubou or Arab drivers: 'everyone who looks like an Arab or Toubou and drives a four-wheel-drive is highly suspect.'⁶³ However, no arrests of high-ranking smugglers could be confirmed during fieldwork.

Box 3 Toubou's response to car confiscations under 2015 law⁶⁴

In late 2016, the Toubou took to the streets and threatened to attack the police commissariat where about 100 confiscated cars were parked. Their aim was to reclaim ownership of the vehicles and to use force if necessary. The authorities reacted promptly, relocating the cars to the military camp outside of town. As a former Toubou chauffeur explained, the incident needs to be understood in the context of long-standing pastoralist traditions, according to which one basic rule holds that 'If you attack my camel, I'm entitled to kill you,' Unsurprisingly, authorities took the threat very seriously.

The Toubou, many of them double nationality individuals, were marginalised under Gadhafi and largely neglected by the government authorities in Niamey. In fact, many Toubou argued that they have effectively functioned autonomously through necessity for a long time, cross-border smuggling activities being their lifeline. With the confiscation of their cars, which are critical to their livelihoods, the Toubou feel 'not only threatened by the hostility of their territory, but also by the hostility of their government,' as a former Toubou chauffeur put it.

Two interviewees suggested that the next rebellion in northern Niger was imminent and that this time the Toubou would be in the lead. Rumours have it that rather than closed, the Djado mines had been given to the Toubou to

63 At least 169 vehicles were confiscated and 291 migration-linked arrests made. A public prosecutor with the Agadez high court was quoted by an interviewee in February 2017 confirming that 100 people had been arrested and 300 vehicles confiscated (Diallo, I. 2017. 'EU strategy stems migrant flow from Niger, but at what cost?' Special report, *Irin news*, 2 February, <https://www.irinnews.org/special-report/2017/02/02/eu-strategy-stems-migrant-flow-niger-what-cost/>).

64 Personal interviews with a former mayor of Agadez and a representative of the chamber of commerce in Agadez. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June; Molenaar and El Kamouni-Jansen, *op. cit.*

compensate the heavy losses they had suffered from the migration-mitigation measures. Although these allegations could not be verified, they indicate the frustration levels among the Toubou.

Though not criminalised by the 2015 Law Against the Illicit Smuggling of Migrants, the formal supply side of the migration value chain has also suffered heavy losses. Bus companies connecting Agadez to the capital and other neighbouring towns have either closed down or ceased operations.⁶⁵ Rimbo Transport Voyageurs, one of the largest bus companies, used to operate five buses between Niamey and Agadez every day, but today schedules only one. This bus reaches Tahoua at full capacity yet arrives in Agadez nearly empty. Nigerien passengers complain that the company no longer operates separate buses for migrants – as it used to do to spare nonmigrants the lengthy police checks migrants had to endure – and that, because of the decline in number of passengers, buses now accommodate both migrants and nonmigrants. Adjusting to the shrinking demand, the company released 75 percent of its staff operating the Niamey–Agadez route and increased its fares to cover operating costs.⁶⁶ Meanwhile, banditry on the roads has increased significantly, particularly along the Tahoua–Agadez–Arlit, Ingall–Agadez and Dirkou–Tabelot–Agadez routes, a development many interviewees linked to the numerous job losses in the migration and mining industries.⁶⁷

The migration sector had adapted to the new policies, largely by going into hiding. Migratory movements continue accommodating large volumes, but routes have been altered to circumvent cities and other areas presenting high risks of arrest. The alternative routes are generally harder to traverse and hence put a higher strain on vehicles, increasing the chance of vehicle breakdowns in inaccessible places. Additionally, the costs of the route along the desert have gone up significantly to cover the increased risk to which the smugglers are exposed. During 2017, prices of a trip rose from XOF 150,000 (EUR 229) to XOF 500,000 (EUR 762), the latter equalling the price of a new car when filled to capacity, prompting drivers more easily to abandon their passengers to their fate. The relatively visible *coxeurs*, in turn increased their tariffs from XOF 2,000 (EUR 3) to XOF 20,000 (EUR 30), reflecting their particularly high exposure to the risk of being caught.⁶⁸

65 Examples are Air Transport, Nigma Transport, Passenger Transport.

66 Personal interview with representatives of Rimbo Transport Voyageurs and STM Transport. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

67 Ibid. Personal interview with staff member GIZ. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

68 Falschi, V. 2016. 'AGAMI – Agadez Migration Project: Final Evaluation,' 5, <http://www.nigermigrationresponse.org/sites/default/files/AGAMI%20final%20evaluation%20report.pdf> (accessed September 2017).

The increasing risks with smuggling work have also led to the entry of new actors in the chain. Where previously most work was handled by Nigeriens, migrants are now competing in the business. Through their networks in countries of origin, they are better able to plan migrants' arrivals, thereby shortening the time to departure and reducing the risk. Migrants have also made inroads as drivers because the risks of arrest are lower: if caught, they can hide as a migrant among the passengers. Overall, although criminalising migration from Agadez onwards has increased both risk and profit margins for all facilitators in the chain, migrants themselves face both higher risks and higher costs. It is unknown how many migrants cross the desert by different routes, which makes estimating the effectiveness of recent migration policies difficult.

4.2 Facilitation payments on the rise

With the additional competences and resources of police and security forces, the ability of security actors to levy informal taxes or bribes along the migration value chain has increased. The threat of a five-year prison sentence and car loss has reportedly proven effective in skyrocketing extortion rates. Again, both the formal legal side of the value chain is affected before Agadez, as well as the now illegal side of the chain when crossing and leaving Agadez. For example, since the law is being enforced, the number of police checkpoints on the road between Niamey and Agadez has increased to 10. At every checkpoint, migrants are requested to pay at least XOF 10,000 (EUR 15) to continue their journey, amounting to a total amount of XOF 130,000 (EUR 198) per person.⁶⁹ As to departures from Agadez, police are reportedly charging XOF 50,000 (EUR 76) per truck leaving Agadez for Libya.⁷⁰ As the 2015 Law Against the Illicit Smuggling of Migrants has enabled security forces to charge higher facilitation fees, competition between the police/gendarmerie and the army has stiffened. The armed forces that used to accompany migrant trucks with military convoys now accuse the police for turning a blind eye on smugglers' trucks when passing their checkpoints. In response, a new practice has quickly emerged: instead of charging chauffeurs of migrant transports on the spot, police officials make prior arrangements with the smugglers, ensuring that payments are received before departure and that the trucks know how to circumvent the police checkpoints.

69 Personal interview with former member of the Association of Nigerien Women against the War (AFNCG). 2017. Agadez, Niger, June. These accounts prompted one interviewee who had recently travelled by bus from the capital to Agadez to proclaim, 'The only criminals in the migration business, it's the police! They deliberately increase their margins without providing any services!'

70 Personal interview with a journalist from Radio Sahara. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

In effect, the 2015 Law Against the Illicit Smuggling of Migrants is being used as pretence to levy higher taxes from the smugglers and, by extension, from the migrants themselves. Yet, evidence also suggests that it is the wider local economy that bears the brunt of the crackdown on migration.

4.3 Effects on the wider local economy

Because the numbers of northbound migrants arriving in Agadez are down and routes increasingly circumvent major cities, demand – driven by both irregular migrants' and smugglers' consumption – has been tailing off. Women entrepreneurs have lost a good share of their customers to sell food to, water vendors are left waiting in vain with their jerry cans, and groups of motorcycle taxi men populate street corners complaining about police harassments increasingly outweighing the number of customers per day.⁷¹ Unemployment is increasing, and young people working in the lower tiers of the migration value chain are leaving the business because of the increased risk. Additionally, many people employed in the informal economy who previously benefitted from the consumption of irregular migrants have seen losses in income. Commerce and other value chains relying on imported inputs from neighbouring countries, namely Nigeria (such as cement, steel and wood) are also seeing increasing difficulty because transaction costs and, by extension, prices have gone up. Workshop owners from the industrial area in Agadez reported that checkpoints at the entrance of Agadez have become more burdensome for their suppliers in recent months because both waiting time and facilitation fees are on the rise. Faced with less local purchasing power, craftsmen have little room to reflect the increased transaction costs in their product pricing; their profit margins have reached a low point. In addition, business and technology transfer with Libyan businesses has also slowed. Further down the route, at waypoints like Dirkou and Séguédine, economic effects are likely to be substantial as well given that the route now circumvents checkpoints and hence places that previously were on the route.⁷²

4.4 Income losses and economic decline causing greater insecurity

Risks and costs are further heightened by an increase in banditry along the transport routes, leading to additional payments, confiscation of goods and equipment or

71 Focus group discussions with women entrepreneurs, motorcyclists and youth. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

72 Personal interview with a journalist from Radio Sahara. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

kidnapping.⁷³ Given the skilled labour (frequently ex-combatants) and equipment (vehicles) becoming available from the decline in the migration industry, combined with the availability of arms, further increases in banditry are a considerable risk. Combined with increased corruption, this means that cash is increasingly extracted from the productive economy. Following a similar logic, the market for private protection is seeing increasing demand and benefits from the same availability of skilled labour and equipment. Nonetheless, many new employees in the business view this work as a stepping stone to other, better paying jobs, such as goldmining or returning to migration-related work.⁷⁴ Another sector facing an uptake in revenues is the hospitality sector, which is increasingly catering to EUCAP expats, their logistic support companies as well as US military staff. In addition, NGO personnel and journalists have also become regular visitors to the city of Agadez on migration-related assignments. Many young men now work as fixers, connecting journalists with smugglers.

4.5 Social tensions on the rise

Because smuggling is embedded in the broader political economy of Agadez, the economic effects of smuggling measures have wider social repercussions and risk eroding the town's social fabric. Known for its diversity and multi-ethnic tolerance, the town is now seeing growing tensions between groups. Neighbours from the ECOWAS region, for example, are experiencing a wind of change. Anyone interacting with a potential transit migrant, the general perception is, risks being arrested. As a result, ECOWAS migrants are no longer as openly welcomed in Agadez as they used to be. No differentiation is made between ECOWAS migrants who look for more permanent work in Agadez and those who seek to earn money to finance the continuation of their journey. The counterproductive effect of the 2015 Law Against the Illicit Smuggling of Migrants becomes obvious: the same law that discourages migrants from transiting onto Libya, inhibits their settlement in the Agadez region, as host communities would risk to be jailed for receiving them. An interviewee related the struggle of a Ghanaian secondary school teacher who decided to stay in Agadez permanently as the route to Libya became too risky and also because he identified some demand for English teaching. However, as an ECOWAS foreigner he could not find a room to rent because locals would be afraid to facilitate his settlement.⁷⁵

73 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. 2016. 'Shattered dreams: Returning migrants in Agadez tell their stories,' <http://www.unocha.org/story/shattered-dreams-returning-migrants-agadez-tell-their-stories> (accessed September 2017).

74 Personal interview with private security company. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

75 Personal interview entrepreneur. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June. Even though it has always been very cumbersome to obtain a work permit, ECOWAS migrants could actually find work in the informal sector and interacting with them was not feared as a criminal act. This situation has changed.

In addition, resentments among the population towards local authorities ‘that do not dare to stand up against Niamey’s deal with the EU’ are on the rise, primarily against the police and its requests for facilitation payments.⁷⁶ The discontent among Agadez residents this creates is discussed in greater detail in a companion report ‘[Local governance opportunities for sustainable migration management in Agadez](#)’. Enough to say here that, although residents perceive the law to be implemented impartially, implementation hits the Toubou community especially hard given their overrepresentation in the business. Conflict potential is thus rising because of grievances associated with the migration policy, though their salience among the wider population is currently still limited.

76 Focus group discussion with youth representatives, personal interview with women entrepreneurs. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

5 Opportunities for development and stability

Although in economic decline, the region does not lack potential or ambition. In light of the destabilising effects of the migration mitigation measures so far, it is high time to harness this potential to create alternative economic opportunities. Rather than completely breaking up the migration sector, the ecosystem that has developed around and along the migration value chain, the networks, skill sets, services and experiences should be used wherever possible as entry points for developing the region. Because both short-term impact and longer-term structural economic change are needed, three development pathways – to be tackled simultaneously – suggest themselves: create income opportunities immediately, work towards an enabling environment and large investments for structural change and consistently avoid doing harm.

5.1 Promote the creation of income-generating activities and businesses today

Because half of Agadez households are reportedly facing the risk of losing an important source of livelihoods, alternative income-generating activities are urgently needed. Nearly all the respondents interviewed for this report were keenly aware of the amount of funds the EU committed to improve migration management and provide alternative income streams in Agadez. Many have high expectations about the share they expect to receive. Immediate benefits need to materialise and be visible to reinforce livelihoods and curb frustration. The following recommendations are concrete measures to support livelihoods in the short term by producing quick wins. Although some of them will also advance the mid- to long-term agenda of structural change for sustainable economic growth, not all will do so. Nonetheless, the urgency and scope of the economic downturn demands immediate results.

1) *Participatory market assessment*

In developing support measures geared to viable economic activity, a critical first step is a sound assessment of the market. This information can be generated through a participatory market assessment in which the target group itself is involved in gathering the data and learns on the job how to collect data effectively. The objective of this intervention, ideally co-managed by the migration committee of the mayor's office and the chamber of commerce of Agadez, would be twofold: to generate urgently needed information on the demand and supply sides of the (formal and informal) labour

market, and short-term employment and on-the-job training for a dozen people in each neighbourhood in Agadez. The group of data collectors should be diverse, composed of former migration actors and others, women and men, Tuareg, Toubou and Haussa. Skills and locations of the migration industry could be harnessed to conduct the assessment: *moto-taxis* could ensure the mobility required to cover all blocks or markets of a neighbourhood, for example, and former ghettos could be arranged to hold focus group discussions with traders, craftsmen, artisans and farmers.

As the survey results suggest, caution should be taken as people's views about market opportunities, and skills needs are likely to be influenced by perceptions of the support the international community can provide or has previously provided in the region (see figure 8). Inputs are easily influenced and framed based on conceptions of existing livelihoods, rather than on an accurate assessment of market potential. An opportunity may be profitable for the individual but not be scalable to a group because no unserved demand exists. An example is common requests for assistance to start a shop, because rather than serving any new demand, such shops would instead parcel up existing (and declining) demand among an increasing amount of actors. A participatory market assessment that brings businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs or employees together can create awareness about market viability.

The following overview presents some initial thoughts for livelihood opportunities by sectors based on the interviews with experts in Agadez. For each of these economic sectors with high potential for growth and employment, specific short-term and long-term measures should be developed. This overview offers some initial thoughts.

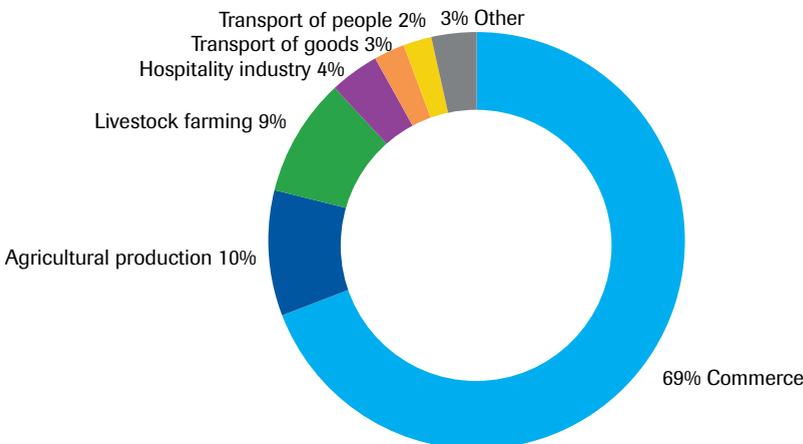


Figure 8 Respondents' preferred sector in which to develop activities if funds were available

Box 4. Livelihood opportunities by sector

Agriculture and pastoralism

Agadez has been and will remain an agro-pastoral economy. Although some produce is already sold nonlocally and even exported, untapped potential is available. Strengthening existing processing facilities and introducing additional ones could be considered because they would ensure a higher added value, increase the lifespan of produce and make products easier to transport long distance, thereby bringing new markets within reach. Enabling conditions required to access new markets include improvements in road conditions and marketing efforts to introduce the concept of using processed foodstuffs. Cooperatives might be able to facilitate these developments. Declines in both sectors now threaten the survival and further development of these cooperatives, many of which have grown and professionalised not only thanks to long-term development cooperation and support from AREVA, but also facilitated by a steady demand from migrants and mine workers. Access to new markets has absolute priority and the aspired integration of Agadez in the country's south as a gateway to the wealthy north Nigerian market indicates part of the solution. The recent maintenance work on the road connecting Agadez with Aderbissinat is provisional at best and much larger investments are required to enable trade between Agadez and Zinder.

Products in the region with potential worth exploring include oranges, grapefruits, melons, raisins, tomatoes and other vegetables. Grain, which is currently imported, and spirulina might also be crops that could be developed. Additionally, storage facilities may decrease the fluctuations in revenue, as it would allow local producers to delay sales until higher price points, and might allow for sales to spread to cover limited periods of drought. Professionalisation of the agricultural sector, and demonstration that substantial profits can be made, may also make the sector more attractive to the young people again. During the gold rush, many young people quit agriculture for more lucrative mining activities, causing a labour shortage in the agriculture sector. The decline in mining will not automatically translate into a supply of agricultural labour. Significant upscaling will be needed to make the sector more attractive again.

On a related note, pastoralism is currently producing only limited amounts of commercial side products. Given the availability of the necessary facilities in Agadez, dairy products and leather manufacturing could be scaled up significantly and provide in livelihoods of people currently considering these inputs as waste.

A word of caution is merited, however. The area around Agadez depends on flash floods from the mountainous area northeast of the city, which replenishes

groundwater along the wadi. Rainfall in the region is subject to long-term fluctuations due to the Atlantic Multidecadal Oscillation. When a new dry phase in the cycle starts, approximately two decades of dryness can be expected. Temperature patterns in the North Atlantic seem to indicate that a new dry phase may commence within a matter of years. Such a period will severely constrain opportunities for agro-pastoralist livelihoods in Agadez (and in much of the rest of the Sahel). At the local level, measures for optimising agro-pastoralist livelihoods with substantially less water can be promoted to enhance resilience. Nonetheless, the need for people to engage in (circular) migration to meet their food and income requirements will increase. At the broader Sahel level, a substantial increase and change in the migration dynamics can be expected.

Short-term measures

- Offer cooperatives a market for processed agricultural produce guaranteeing fair prices and stable quantities (see recommendation 4).
- Negotiate long-term orders between international organisations, military missions, larger hotels and the existing cooperatives so that they can keep operating (see recommendation 4).
- Offer skills training in irrigation and supply production facilities, as well as micro credit schemes to help cooperatives to professionalise and attract young people.

Mid- to long-term measures

- Invest in infrastructure and infrastructure maintenance (see recommendation 8).
- Reform of the agro-pastoral sector's rural infrastructure and governance can increase production and support access to new markets. Improvements in watering facilities for livestock and road infrastructure will facilitate access to new markets. Productivity can be improved by making the services required to acquire and operate new types of equipment available. Examples of such services are credit facilities, training as well as maintenance and repair services.
- Development of postharvest processing to ensure production for new markets is viable.

Artisanal handicrafts and jewellery

This once thriving sector went in decline because it lost access to a market rather than due to environmental factors. Factors such as high transports costs have only a negligible impact on the margins on artisanal jewellery. Removing obstacles to access well-established markets in Europe, France in particular, will allow artisans to export again. Complemented with training to market and selling their products online could facilitate a substantial rise in the sector's revenues.

Short-term measures

- Ensure the French consulate and other European embassies in Niamey ease the visa application processes of handicraft traders with excellent track record (see recommendation 6).
- Revive the old practice of public commission of artisan work to beautify and equip state buildings and other public offices.

Mid- to long-term measures

- Revive the *Office du Tourism* and team up with the artisan workers organised in associations to cope with the crisis of tourism in the region.
- Ensure availability of skills, equipment and infrastructure required to enable online sales and international shipping

Mining

Although the uranium sector is facing a slowdown, it still generates considerable revenues. Currently, these revenues bypass Agadez to a significant extent. Developing suppliers to the sector such as chemical laboratories, ore transport, (mining) vehicle maintenance services and so on might be able to shift business from Niamey towards Agadez, especially when ore prices pick up and sites currently in development go into the production stage.

Like the uranium sector, gold is facing a slowdown because surface deposits in many areas are nearing depletion. Full-fledged exploration of deeper gold deposits is yet to start, however. Chinese, Nigerien and Sudanese companies have acquired permits in 2016, and a Japanese company is expected to enter Djado, but access for informal miners is likely to be restricted. When professional operations come into production, local inhabitants might be able to benefit as well by developing support services for the mining industry, much like the uranium industry.

Mid- to long-term measures

- Ensure clear communication throughout the development of new mining sites to make local SMEs aware of the types and volumes of services required during development and throughout operation of the site. By ensuring that detailed documentation on the expected volumes (and their changes over time) as well as quality standards of required goods and services is available and easily accessible, potential suppliers are able to plan their production and investments in capacity and expertise. Documentation could be made available through, for instance, the Agadez antenna of the chamber of commerce, and announced by radio. Furthermore, points of contacts at major mining operations could be made accessible for local suppliers to ensure that questions they might have regarding procurement volumes, planning and quality standards can be answered (see recommendation 5).
- Support the development of local SMEs with potential as suppliers to ensure they can develop to the point at which they can produce at the scale and quality required in the sector. A supplier development programme could be developed in collaboration with mining companies. A program could start with screening local companies for their potential as suppliers for low-risk items, based on regular supplier due diligence procedures, communicating to the companies on exactly what aspects improvements are required. Subsequently, companies with potential as competitive suppliers could be identified, and targeted support could be provided aimed at ensuring companies perform at the required level. Depending on the good or service, this may entail support to a supplier on a number of aspects in order to align supplier capabilities with the buyer needs. Support may entail capacity development, recruitment of relevant expertise, training, certification, development of management procedures, quality management procedures, production processes or planning to ensure on-time delivery (see recommendation 2).
- Ensure the availability of human resources qualified to work in the sector and access to (import) the required equipment. Training or exchanges of personnel with other companies involved in the sector elsewhere (or both) may be leveraged for this purpose.
- Press for greater transparency in the transfer of development taxes from central state to regional level. Initiate a public-private dialogue between government authorities and mining companies to increase mutual understanding of needs and benefits of mining operating for communities, local and central government and company (see recommendation 7).

Infrastructure

Poor road quality is a considerable constraint on private-sector development. Investments in road construction could bring in a significant amount of temporary jobs, next to bringing down cost in most sectors. Training small and medium-sized enterprises in road maintenance services could provide some opportunities for the longer term, and might reduce risk for developing construction companies by providing them with a relatively secure base income. Investments in health and education infrastructures are also urgently needed.

Short-term measures

- Invest in public work schemes to rehabilitate road infrastructure or other infrastructural domains (see recommendation 3).

Mid- to long-term measures

- Complete building the cement plant in Malbasa, construction on which has been on hold for a year.
- Strengthen training providers to equip SMEs with the skills needed to undertake road maintenance.
- Provide training to road operating agency personnel on the development of appropriate preventative road maintenance schedules and budgets.

Private security

Private security is in considerable demand given factual and perceived insecurity in the region. As military sources in Agadez indicate, a high likelihood for Agadez to remain marked *zone rouge* in the years to come, the security protocol of international organisations, NGOs and hotels will require the use of private security companies in the long term. In addition, demand for private security services may receive an additional boost if mining sites go into operation again. Although private security may not be a desirable growth sector, given its reliance on continued banditry and organised crime, it does provide an exceptional opportunity to reach former smugglers and ex-combatants by using the sector as a stepping stone to transition back to peaceful and legal forms of livelihood, by providing employees with an uniform, a phone, maybe a motorcycle at one point, and ideally a career path, a job in private security matches young men's expectations of manhood and a better life more easily than the prospect of becoming a productive farmer or garbage collector. In addition, belonging to a company with a corporate identity and the possibility of receiving training in

technical and soft skills will ease former smugglers' and other youths' integration into society.

Short-term measures

- Provide training to employees in technical and soft skills (such as conflict management, mediation, deescalating communication and reporting skills).
- Provide support to employers to professionalise their management, equipment and training curricula to support personnel retention and professional and ethical service delivery.

Small trade

Labour with good basic or specialist skills is in low supply. Growing businesses are thus constrained or forced to make considerable upfront investments in training of new personnel. They face unpredictable levels and frequency of extortion and increased transaction costs.

Short-term measures

- Promote communication technologies to report incidents of extortion along different trading routes and communicate them publicly, for instance through the local radio.
- Intensify the ongoing dialogue with Niamey authorities to immediately stop the beautification campaign and offer adequate forms of compensation for the entrepreneurs whose workshops were destroyed (see recommendation 6).
- Ensure the success of the ongoing business plan competition in Agadez and communicate success stories by local radio (see recommendation 2).

Mid- to long-term measures

- Support SMEs in their growth by offering business development services and facilitate training, coaching and matchmaking to link aspiring entrepreneurs and labourers to the market providing training in professional or entrepreneurial skills (see recommendation 5).
- Support the development of the key infrastructure (such as electricity) required for these companies to operate (see recommendation 8).

Women entrepreneurs

Agadez women dominate several sectors: they make up the majority of traditional handicraft production, except for jewellery, run successful cooperatives in agricultural processing and identified market potential in henna treatment services and carpet making. The latter activities have the advantage of being compatible with their other productive (farming) and reproductive tasks women are expected to perform. A significant number of women from the region leave Agadez to work as maids in Algeria.

Opportunities exist in other professions, such as dentists and opticians, for which respondents identified a significant shortage

Short-term measures

- Offer women producer and artisan cooperatives a market for processed agricultural produce guaranteeing fair prices and stable quantities (see recommendation 4).
- Involve women in the identification of skills needs and market opportunities, that they perceive as both desirable and practical (see recommendation 1).

Mid- to long-term measures

- Ensure women's input into measures aimed at creating an enabling business environment through chambers, associations and cooperatives (see recommendation 5).

2) Ensure ongoing business plan competition becomes a success

With support from the World Bank and others, the 'House of the Enterprise' of the Chamber of commerce in Niamey launched a nationwide business plan competition with the goal to promote small- and medium-sized enterprises. Six hundred proposals were submitted through the regional chamber of commerce in Agadez to Niamey, and additional ones by entrepreneurs directly. Although called business plans, many of the proposals instead resembled lists of items required to run a business.⁷⁷ At the time of our field research, 600 proposals from all regions had been pre-selected. The candidates will receive two months of training to professionalise their proposal, after which a

77 Personal interview with representative of regional chamber of commerce. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

second selection round will identify 300 businesses that will be accompanied in the process of implementing their business plan during a 18-month period.⁷⁸

Regional authorities expressed some concerns about the process wondering how many proposals from the Agadez region would be accepted, but young people reacted usually very positively.⁷⁹ The initiative, already at an advanced stage of implementation, offers a unique opportunity to make the implementation of the selected business plans from Agadez a success, and to communicate the success accordingly. All necessary support should be provided to ensure the winning entrepreneurs from Agadez become role models to inspire others and counterbalance the quickly spreading feelings of being left out once again as a region. Although not on the ground in Agadez, the incubator CIPMEN could offer high-quality business advice and has successfully done so in the past.⁸⁰

In its design, the business plan competition is partially comparable to the Reconversion Plan, which is described in a companion report, '[Local governance opportunities for sustainable migration management in Agadez](#)'. The aim of the latter plan is to reintegrate actors involved in the migration economy throughout the entire region by providing them with seed funding to set up their own businesses. In practice, the plan builds on the lessons learnt in the aftermath of the rebellion, when former combatants were reinserted in society by providing support for small projects. To date, a small pilot project had been funded that allowed for the distribution of a total of XOF 145,000,000 (EUR 221,000). Applications could either be submitted individually (for XOF 800,000 to 1,500,000 / EUR 1,220 to 2,287) or in a group (up to XOF 4,000,000 / EUR 6,098).⁸¹ Lessons from the nationwide business plan competition could be applied here to ensure that the implementation of these projects will result in the successful development of local businesses and long-term economic development.

78 Personal interview with representative of the 'House of the Enterprise' at the chamber of commerce. 2017. Niamey, Niger, June. A promising example of such a business plan, related by a representative of the Incubator CIPMEN, plans to collect and recycle metal garbage. The enterprise is run by two young adults who already extracted tin and exported it to Nigeria. They employ 50 employees, low-skilled, did a proper due diligence in preparation of the project or business, and collaborate with SOPAMIN (Areva's uranium mine), which has a new director. CIPMEN offered training for them in Niamey, IOM financed. Personal interview with representative of Centre Incubateur des PME au Niger (CIPMEN). 2017. Niamey, Niger, June (<http://www.cipmen.org>).

79 Personal interview with representative of the regional chamber of commerce. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

80 In the past, CIPMEN has coached several successful social enterprises in Agadez, including in social media, documentary movies and the garbage collection and recycling business mentioned earlier.

81 République du Niger. 2017. 'Rapport des travaux de la réunion d'installation et de la première session ordinaires de la commission consultative régionale de l'administration territoriale (COCORAT)'. Also see: Hadan, I. 2017, 'Agadez: La colère des acteurs de la migration,' *NigerDiaspora*, 28 August; online interview with NGO Tamakrast. 2017, August.

3) Road construction and maintenance for immediate short-term employment

Poor road conditions were identified by many market players as a main obstacle to business development. Different infrastructural initiatives (such as electricity, roads, irrigation) are under way, though in very early stages, involving support from the World Bank (WB), the Agence française de développement (AFD) and Germany's KfW development bank and implementation capacity from the private sector.⁸² Such efforts, if undertaken in a labour-intensive manner, can create income opportunities for a significant number of low-skilled people. Although the employment generated is temporary, any effort to enhance infrastructure should draw on and strengthen whatever private-sector capacity is available locally. If strengthened, domestic small and medium-sized companies will not only be able to take on road maintenance work in the medium to long term, they might also have the ability to absorb the trained short-term labour hired for the public road construction in the first place.

4) Source locally

Foreign visitors in Agadez are no longer tourists but instead members of military missions, journalists and aid workers. Although this situation is a temporary one and all efforts should be geared towards bringing tourists back to the region, these new actors do present an existing market that, if served locally, can generate urgently needed jobs and income immediately. International development agencies and EUCAP Sahel have established an existence in town and the US military mission has just completed building their bases near Agadez. An assessment of the skill sets, skills level and labour capacity required in the coming years to secure and maintain these premises will give an indication of what kind of support will be needed to match the immediate and mid-term demand for local products and services. International agencies should commit to source locally as much as possible. This will decrease the grievances people in Agadez have started to signal vis-à-vis the missions and the international community more generally, one interviewee asking, 'How does Agadez benefit from their presence? It is us who can preserve peace in the region, they need us more than we need them. So why did the EU and the Americans pay the central government authorities and not the regional authorities to set up shop in Agadez?'⁸³ Whether accurate or not, the statement testifies to the growing anger towards these missions. Advocating the services and

82 Personal interview with representatives of regional chamber of commerce. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

83 Personal interview with representative of Regional Council, focus group discussions with youth and female artisans. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

products needed via the local radio will ease the matchmaking between local supply and demand.⁸⁴

5.2 Invest in an enabling business environment

The 2015 Law Against the Illicit Smuggling of Migrants has not led to any improvements in the business climate. Yet the environment was less than enabling long before the law was passed. The urgency to spark private-sector activity could serve to reform the wider ecosystem. The entry points for income-generating activities identified in the previous section aim to bring quick positive impact. Additional measures are required to enable structural change. Among the key structural obstacles highlighted by interviewees were a lack of entrepreneurial attitude, endemic corruption, lack of access to markets, deficient infrastructure and the Agadez security label (*zone rouge*).

5) *Inject entrepreneurial thinking into 'une culture de l'argent facile'*

Many people in the region are quick to move into new livelihoods once it is demonstrated money can be made or financing is available. Fewer, however, are adept at spotting new market opportunities or able to grow their business to service demand beyond their own or local needs. Professionalisation of profitable enterprises by incorporating entrepreneurial thinking, new ways of working, new technologies or new sales channels are limited. As observed more often in fragile contexts, Agadez displays a trading culture that prioritises 'activities that generate easy money quickly,' prioritising opportunism over creativity. The Toubou in particular are accused of earning fortunes from the smuggling industry without investing into productive value addition in the local economy.⁸⁵ Yet promising entry points to promote and reward a culture of entrepreneurship exist. A case in point is a group of experienced entrepreneurs running well-equipped small- to medium-sized workshops in the industrial areas of Agadez. Interestingly, their success owes everything to the long history of labour migration that most families in Agadez share and that influences Agadez youths' persistent desire to travel to Libya.⁸⁶ Faced with deteriorating security and crime in southern Libya, many young carpenters, electricians, plumbers, mechanics from Agadez – who spent several years in Libya to practice their trade, earn a living and save money for a future investment at home – have returned home in recent years. With solid working

84 The potential information function of radio stations is discussed in more detail in a companion report [Local governance opportunities for sustainable migration management in Agadez](#). An inspiring example of an initiative that connects local entrepreneurs in fragile markets to (temporarily) military and peacebuilding missions, but also more sustainable markets is Building Markets, a platform that connects local markets to domestic, regional and international supply chains (see <http://buildingmarkets.org>).

85 Personal interview with representative from the chamber of commerce. 2017. Niamey, Niger, June.

86 Focus group discussion with youth representatives. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

experience, on-the-job training and often-imported machinery from Libya they perfectly know how to operate, these entrepreneurs have all the critical elements to business success. In addition, anecdotal evidence suggests that these former migrant labourers are best positioned to serve as role models for success in Agadez, discouraging their employees, often not much younger than themselves, from trying their luck north of the desert.

Another way of promoting entrepreneurship and innovation could be to engage a selection of well-established large family business people in Agadez, the local business elite who have made significant contributions to the development of Agadez over the past decades, for instance in the fields of road construction, mining and trading.⁸⁷ They could be introduced to the most compelling business ideas of young people. Experienced entrepreneurs could act as coaches and mentors and even investors for emerging businesses, and young aspiring entrepreneurs could inject fresh thinking into the established family business while growing under its wings. Facilitating the interaction between the two generations would also help preserve the fragile social fabric of a community that today faces numerous growing tensions.⁸⁸

6) Remove obstacles to access to markets

Although access to finance is not a major bottleneck for most businesses in Agadez, access to markets has proven more difficult than it was. The French embassy has declined numerous visa application from Tuareg artisans who used to travel from Agadez to France twice a year, and from there onto other Schengen countries, to sell their products at festivals and jewellery shops. After decades of compliance with the visa regulations, this year many artisans are stranded in Niamey and wait for an opportunity to give their jewellery to another trader who does get a visa to enter Europe and agrees to sell on their behalf.⁸⁹ Immediate action should be taken to enable the artisans to travel again. Another example of obstructed market access concerns the hundreds of artisans who used to run their workshops near the old mosque at the historic city centre. In preparation of the Independence Day festivities in December 2016, and as part of an Agadez beautification campaign, workshop owners received 48 hours' notice before their premises were levelled by bulldozer. For many of them, everything they had built in a lifetime was demolished in 30 minutes: tailors, handicrafts, book shops. Because they received no compensation, these micro entrepreneurs had to relocate and start

87 The chamber of commerce of Agadez is currently completing a study about the local business elites, mostly family enterprises. A list of names and contact details can be obtained from the director general.

88 A central challenge in terms of local investment capacity is that many of the larger capitalists from Agadez are now based and prefer to invest in the South, in particular in real estate, petrol, transport and money transfer services. Nevertheless, these businessmen tend to employ youth from Agadez.

89 Personal interviews with artisans. 2017. Niamey and Agadez, Niger, June.

from scratch.⁹⁰ Many of them took to the street to demonstrate in protest, but quit when things risked turning violent. Anger towards both local and central authorities runs deep, however.⁹¹

7) Promote greater transparency and accountability through larger companies

Because complaints about corruption practices are on the rise, a particular focus in all private-sector development initiatives should be put on accountability and transparency, both mechanisms for and adherence to them.⁹² Private companies can set examples and act as champions in instigating a culture of accountability. Because mining companies might at some point resume operations, mechanisms should be put in place to avoid misdirection of funds and ensure that the 15 percent development tax actually reaches the communes.⁹³ A concerted effort by the international community, ideally in collaboration with (established or new) mining companies, could leverage their influence to press for greater transparency in the transfer of corporate contributions from central state to regional level. Donors could initiate public-private dialogue sessions precisely on the interlinkages between transparency, the business case for a company to obtain a social licence to operate and the risk of increasing the propensity of violent attacks.⁹⁴ This would not only be to the immediate benefit of surrounding local communities, but also contribute to improving stability of the wider ecosystem, in which these companies operate.

90 Two interviewees were victims of the demolitions, a well-known female dressmaker and the owner of a newspaper kiosk.

91 Personal interview with artisan representative. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

92 This trend of growing numbers of checkpoints and increasing amounts of extortion was echoed throughout the interviews and focus group discussions, straddling local government officials, entrepreneurs and civil society representatives.

93 According to the Regional Council of Agadez, the central government authorities have retained between XOF 12 and 13 million (EUR 18,300 to 19,800) that should have been channelled to Agadez instead. Recently, the Regional Council won a court case obliging several mining corporations (including SOMAI, COMINAC and SONICHAR) to pay the regional state. Personal interview with representative of the Regional Council. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

94 A case in point is the kidnapping of seven employees of AREVA, a mining company operating near Arlit and its contractor SOGEA-SATOM in September 2010. See BBC. 2010. 'French nationals among seven workers kidnapped in Niger,' 16 September, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-11325749> (accessed September 2017).

8) *Invest in infrastructure*

Inadequate provision of power, bad roads and unreliable access to water were each identified as structural business obstacles.⁹⁵ They make operating a business difficult and costly. Improvements in the environmental factors will lower costs, thereby raising margins on existing products, and make new kinds of production viable. The AFD and the EU are also planning on installing a hybrid electricity plant, the AREVA company looked into solar energy to enable irrigation, and the Tunisian company MBC installed solar-driven street lamps (which local electricians are not equipped to repair). The companies Manutention Africain and Komatsu, in turn, have been in charge of electricity provision in the region and have seen some success. Large investments will require systems in place for checks and balances. If not succumbing the risk of corruption, such visible improvements in infrastructure will not only unleash economic potential and create employment, but also send a clear message of commitment to the population of Agadez.

9) *Consider exempting Agadez from the zone rouge to send a more positive signal to foreign investors*

Attracting and cofinancing foreign investment with risk-sharing modalities would be a useful way to start off and diversify economic activity in several sectors. More importantly, in light of rising tensions, larger visible investments will help shift the perspective from the decline and frustration to hope for growth in the future. Take, for example, cement. Although cement is currently imported from Nigeria, Benin and Togo, a partially finished cement factory stands unused in Malbaza and other projects exist for Tahoua region. Investments in road construction might provide the necessary impulse to get the factory into production.

Yet significant foreign investment will remain a far-off scenario unless the security code for Agadez town changes from red to orange. A more nuanced cartography of risks, comparable to the one for Chad, would strengthen the ultimate security guarantor against terrorism: the region's population and their commitment to peace and development.⁹⁶ Interestingly, the Nigerien MAE only labelled the regions red after seven employees of AREVA and SATOM in Arlit were kidnapped on 16 September 2010 (and not right after the second rebellion). Changing the security label of Agadez town back to orange will not be enough to attract investors; more positive guarantees are needed.

95 Interviews with representatives of the Regional Council, chamber of commerce and mayor's office. 2017. Agadez, Niger, June.

96 Only the border regions are marked as zones with a strictly negative travel advice. See France Diplomatie. 2017. 'Conseils par pays - Tchad'. 27 September. <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/conseils-aux-voyageurs/conseils-par-pays/tchad/#securite> (accessed September 2017)

Yet it is a measure that can be with immediate effect and would act on the insight from experience in fragile settings more generally that security requires development as much as development requires security. Last, although easing investors' and entrepreneurs' access to the region can have stabilising effects, consistent pressure on large companies such as the French-owned AREVA to adhere to social and environmental standards will equally abate people's frustrations in the region.⁹⁷

5.3 Ensure conflict sensitivity

Although opportunities need to materialise quickly, it is equally important that support strategies are carefully planned to not reinforce existing tensions and fuel frustrations.

10) Avoid exclusive targeting of smugglers

Considering the deep entanglement of the migration value chain with other sectors of the local economy, alternative income-generating opportunities are needed for more than the direct migration actors – that is, drivers and ghetto owners – alone. Exclusive targeting of smugglers will inevitably reinforce the stigma and exacerbate emerging tensions between perceived winners and losers of the 2015 Law Against the Illicit Smuggling of Migrants. IOM's short skills trainings were successful in decreasing resentments between host communities and migrants by offering the courses to both groups.⁹⁸

11) Keep in mind that process and perception matter as much as outputs and facts

Closing down an entire industry and replacing it by alternative, mostly smaller, income generating activities is inevitably a highly contested affair. Clear communication about future interventions, eligibility criteria for beneficiaries and intended outcomes is critical and as relevant as the outcomes themselves. Local radio stations can help pass such information on time. Similarly, despite all the good intentions and a sound implementation process, an intervention can still be perceived as unfair and biased. This is particularly the case when a legacy of marginalisation and mistrust prevails among the population towards local authorities or between groups in the population. The implementation of the Reconversion Plan is a case in point, in that people took to the streets to express their anger about what they perceived as a lack of transparency

97 Pouria Amirshahi. 2014. 'Zone rouge au Niger : L'urgence d'une modification de la carte du MAE,' 17 September, <http://www.pouriaamirshahi.fr/2014/09/17/zone-rouge-au-niger-lurgence-dune-modification-de-la-carte-du-mae/> (accessed September 2017); personal interview with representative of regional chamber of commerce. 2017. Agadez, Niamey, June.

98 International Organization for Migration. 2016. 'Vocational Trainings in Agadez'.

and fairness in the process of awarding funding to applicants. Close monitoring not just of the results but also of people's perceptions is important to not further undermine legitimacy of local authorities or fuel violent confrontation.

12) Avoid any form of market distortion

As this report has shown, despite being in decline, the economy in Agadez has reasonable potential. It is important to strengthen whatever market initiatives exist and to not crowd out small informal businesses by bringing in aid, or to upset well-established local market players by undermining their (often semi-formal) economic transactions. Interviewees used Diffa region as an example, where by catering to the pressing needs of irregular migrants and host communities international humanitarian aid has made it increasingly difficult for local entrepreneurs to provide products and services on a market basis.⁹⁹ The risk of development aid crowding out local market players is further problematic because it can have destabilising effects if these market players see their business being challenged. For example, international support of the Nigerien armed forces, a critical safeguard of the regions' stability, is crucial and should be sustained in the long term. Yet the donation of vehicles to strengthen the army's capacity should be planned in light of possible negative effects it could have on the Toubou's flourishing cross-border car trade with Libya. Although relatively small in size and questionable in nature (vehicles are smuggled into Niger and then formally registered in Agadez), this trading business is significant for the region's stability, because the group dominating it is also the main victim of the migration mitigation measures: most smugglers currently in prison are Toubou. Any additional, even minor, intervention that (inadvertently) further undermines the Toubou's economic existence could be the straw that breaks the camel's back.¹⁰⁰ In other words, the donation of cars in the context of a booming car market should be implemented in a way that does not cause further destabilisation.

99 Concrete examples were obtained in a personal interview with representative of CIPMEN. 2017. Niamey, Niger, June.

100 Although the entire car business is under control of a handful wealthy Toubou, given the trade's size, a whole supply industry of micro-, small- and medium-sized local businesses has developed around them, mostly informal, some formal: several car parks have been established in town, young men are employed to watch, clean and sell the vehicles. Others are hired to deliver cars to Niamey. Between 20 and 30 new cars (mostly Toyota and KIA) are driven in convoys from Libya to Agadez every week, protected by the Nigerien military.

Conclusion

As some of the Agadez region's key economic sectors (tourism, artisan handicrafts and uranium mining) fell in decline over the past few years, a boom in the migration and gold industry provided a windfall. The migration industry offered direct jobs for approximately 6,000 to 7,000 people and indirect incomes to reportedly more than half of the households in Agadez. Yet migration flows started circumventing the city in the course of 2017 as a consequence of the 2015 Law Against the Illicit Smuggling of Migrants and EU policy, and, because surface gold deposits are running low, economic opportunities in the region are becoming increasingly few.

The impact of these recent developments can best be understood in historical context. Frustrations are not only caused by the immediate decline of livelihoods, but also fuelled by the bitter reminder of the post-rebellion period when rebellion leaders were promised alternative sources of income that never materialised. As a result, economic despair and mistrust run even deeper in Agadez today than they did in the 2000s. Both direct employment in the migration value chain as well as demand in secondary sectors are in decline as passenger volumes through the city have fallen. As a result, the reduced traffic along the Agadez migration route has led to a decrease in other trade and smuggling activities as well, making inputs and commerce less lucrative. This is partly due to a reduced purchasing power and partly to increased transaction costs, because informal levies on goods have increased and transport of goods has become more time intensive. Increasing banditry and corruption from newly empowered security actors is raising the cost of doing business even more. Despite minor upticks in private security and hospitality, opportunities to generate a livelihood are in decline and feelings of despair and injustice spreading quickly.

In spite of these challenges, opportunities for economic development exist. In the immediate term, existing skill sets and entrepreneurial capacity, as well as ongoing initiatives can be leveraged to identify market opportunities and enable small businesses to grow and generate employment. Direct support for entrepreneurs and workers at the micro level should be complemented by more structural measures to produce a business environment, which enables small and medium-sized firms (both formal and informal) to compete. Finally, in light of the increasingly fragile fabric of Agadez and its position in a highly volatile region, it is of utmost importance to ensure that any intervention be designed and implemented in a conflict-sensitive manner.

Appendix: Methodology

The report builds on a combination of survey data, focus groups, key informants, and interview data. The first explorative stage of the research (May 2017) consisted of gathering secondary socioeconomic and conflict data on the Agadez region through a survey of a random sample of 597 respondents (Agadez population = 118,244, $z = 1.96$, $ME = 0.04$). Randomisation was ensured through the random selection of 14 Agadez neighbourhoods (see map). In each of these neighbourhoods, researchers used the method of randomly selecting households and individual respondents within these households as commonly applied by the Afrobarometer. The distribution of survey respondents approximates the gender and ethnic distribution in the region. Nevertheless, and in lieu of recent census data, we remain very careful with the extrapolation of our sample findings to the entire Agadez population in our discussion of the survey data.

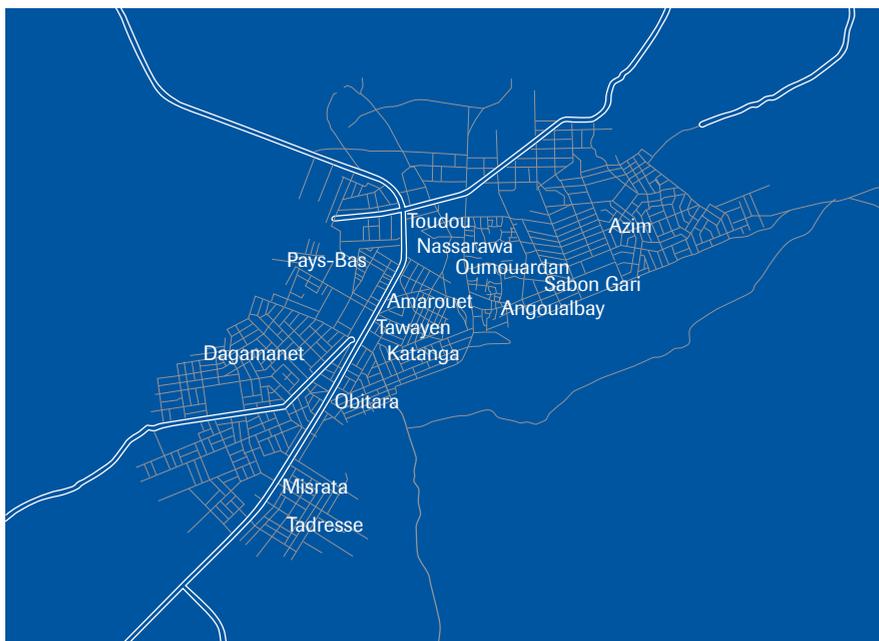


Figure 9 Map of the neighbourhoods of Agadez where the survey took place

The survey gathered information about the respondents' relevant demographic characteristics, the (sub)sector or industry in which they work, experienced changes in access to livelihoods (such as assets or skills, activities, employment opportunities),

experienced changes in access to governance (such as access to security provision, justice, conflict mediation, and interest representation), and experienced changes in the number and types of inter-group conflicts. Although a majority of questions provided the respondent with the 'Don't know' and 'Refuse to answer' choices, our two-tailed test showed no statistical significance of these two answer categories. In our discussion of the survey results, we therefore exclude all 'Don't know' and 'Refuse to answer' entries.

During the second research stage (June-July 2017), EPGA and Clingendael conducted 60 key informant interviews with state authorities, elected authorities (Regional Council, mayor, Megional Council), traditional authorities (sultan, chef de quartier, chef de femme), Touareg elites, Toubou elites, local and international NGOs, religious leaders, news media, members of the private sector, and chambers of commerce. In addition, we conducted eight focus group discussions with migrants (two focus groups), (former) migration facilitators (two focus groups), young entrepreneurs (two focus groups), and female artisans and producers (two focus groups). The key informant interviews and focus group discussions allowed for the further exploration of the effects of the migration industry and migration-mitigating measures on Agadez. In addition, these interviews allowed for the identification of potential economic growth sectors and of bottom-up initiatives that could be supported to support the stability and economic development of Agadez

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