

## Field notes – Niger survey preparations and 24-hour recall training

Niamey, September 19-30, 2019

### **September 20, 2019**

Present: Balarabé; Aminou (Maman Aminou Amadou, consultant); Jikatt; Aichatou; Omar (replaces Ali Ousmane for supervisor the training of surveyors and for drafting reference manuals); Ibrahim

I met with the team on Friday to set the training agenda of the coming week. There was an overview of the preparations with the presentation of a few new individuals who were brought on board either to replace old members or to bring additional manpower to the team. Among the preparations, I noticed that they planned to publish a call for candidates on Tuesday September 24<sup>th</sup>.

While there were many little things discussed, the most important thing by far that came up was the change in how the team intended to conduct training of surveyors and of the pre-test/pilot phase of the study.

Given that the team is increasingly pressed by time and running behind schedule, we decided to drop the pilot phase of the survey with just 12 surveyors. Apparently, the INS always has the habit of pre-testing surveys with a small team (of about 10-12 people) to smooth out any potential problems and refine the survey tools before training the bigger survey team and then launching them directly into data collection. And that's what they intended to do for this survey too. I convinced the team that this approach was not a good idea with the 24-hour recall since there it was very unsafe to assume that the bigger team of surveyors would perform at the same level of the initial 12. I recommended that they directly pre-test and pilot with the whole team (of about 75 surveyors), not just 12 of them. They were worried about their capacity to handle such a huge amount of feedback on a daily basis with such a big group but we worked out solutions to spread the load on several team members.

This change had a big impact on logistics and budget which thankfully went down when this extra step was cancelled.

### **September 21**

The day was mainly spent with Jikatt and Gervais to discuss ideas about her master's project. She needed some guidance and was in search of some innovative ideas. I suggested a few and she will run them by Professor Haoua to get the green light from her. We also examined the collected recipe file for me to gain a better understanding of some fields and help them process the information. I spent the evening working on the recipe database.

### **September 23**

First 24-hour recall training day. The main trainers identified for training the surveyors starting October 7<sup>th</sup> were Yatta, Omar, and Balarabé. While the training was going to be focused on them, Jikatt and Aichatou were also expected to support the team. Dr Habi and Prof Haoua kept coming in and out of the

training. I started with a detailed introduction of the first and second pass and then we practiced the first pass in class. I gave them homework: to go and do the first pass on a friend or a family member.

During dinner that night, I met some old friends from the World Bank and we discussed my work in Niger. They sounded very interested and were open to the idea of funding the young children portion of the survey to have the information for 6-23 month-old children at the regional level (as opposed to the national level where they are now). That would mean increasing their sample size from 255 to over 1200. I proposed to put them in contact with the team and with people at the HC3N to continue the conversation.

Later in the evening, I started to draft the first versions of the probe lists for foods and recipes.

### **September 24**

We reviewed the homework from the day and discussed how the first pass went. Overall, it went just fine and the team got the hang of things very quickly. The rest of the day was spent on showing the team how to develop the probing lists for foods and recipes. Omar and Yatta are now tasked with completing them. The day passed by without the call for candidates going out. The team is running behind and trying to keep up with the numerous activities that they must carry out. In the evening and night of that day, I drafted the first version of the measurement methods list.

### **September 25**

Training continues: I demonstrated how each measurement method is used and armed with that knowledge, the team went over the measurement methods list I have prepared the night before to complete it and amend it as they saw fit based on their understanding of the diets in Niger. There were a lot of changes and I was happy about this. Next, we practiced a full 24-hour recall including the 4<sup>th</sup> pass in class.

### **September 26**

We spent the day training how to do 24-hour recalls and now added how to do a household unique recipe at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> pass. Omar was not there anymore (he was set to get married in 2 days and had to step out for related preparations) but Balarabé and Yatta performed very well. I am cautiously optimistic that they will be able to train the surveyors very well. Still no call for candidates.

### **September 27**

We discussed the logistics of the survey based the team's newly acquired understanding of the details of the method now that they have been trained. An issue came up with Pr Haoua (from the university): she now insists that the team needs to collect food and mixed dishes samples from each household to be sent back to her lab for analysis. She views that as a very simple task to be undertaken on the side by the surveyors who are also made responsible for receiving dry ice thermoses and sending them back after the sample are collected. Everyone immediately realized that this would not be as easy as she describes it. Given Balarabé's and the team's reaction to this, it was obvious that this was a very sensitive issue. The problem was that Pr Haoua was tying this to Aichatou's PhD thesis' subject. No response was given to her during the meeting, only a promise to consider the idea.

Later in the afternoon, the team decided to take me to their meeting with Dr Boubacar at the HC3N (Haut Commissariat Les Nigériens Nourissent les Nigériens). They informed him of the latest developments with Pr Haoua to which Boubacar seemed to very heavily lean for no. I also learned during that same visit that the World Bank people had visited him and that the conversation about the survey for young children was going towards possibly another separate survey next year in 2020 given the time constraints this time around.

### **September 28**

The day was spent working on adapting various files for CSDietary to work in Niger, including the sample file for the director's menu.

### **September 29**

I continued to work on the CSDietary files and also helped finalize the list of standard recipes to be collected at a central level in Niamey that was initially drafted by Jikatt and Aichatou.

### **September 30**

With Yatta and Balarabé, we went over the sampling design of the survey including the 24-hour recall repetition. They still do not know if they are going to be able to increase the sample size for the repetition. Some money was saved thanks to the cancellation of the pilot with the 12, but they had to spend more money than initially allocated on buying utensils to be distributed to household in preparation for the 24 hour recall.

We also went into the details of the training what was supposed to start next week. I did not get a good explanation from them for why the call for candidates had still not gone out but it sounded like there were some administrative issues with it. It also sounded that they were very busy in the training with me this week which was true. When we discussed things realistically, it became clear that the training could not start October 7 as planned and had to be pushed by a week to start on the 14<sup>th</sup>. I informed them that this means that I would now have to change my travel plans to come back to Niger at a later date, after October 23<sup>rd</sup>, given my commitments in Washington. They were fine with it and told that my presence at the early pre-test and pilot phases, which are now pushed to end October, would be just fine.

Later in the day, I sat down with Yatta and we wrote together a stata do file to format and compute information from the standard recipes file.

And with that, we come to end of the notes from this trip to Niger.