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Act to End Neglected Tropical Diseases | West FY 2024 Workplan–Niger October 1, 2023–September 30, 2024

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I. ACRONYM LIST

ACAME	Association of African Essential Medicines Centres (Association des Centrales Africaines des Medicaments Essentiels)
ALB	Albendazole
AFD	French Development Agency (Agence Française de Développement)
APOC	African Program for Onchocerciasis Control
BCC	Behavior Change Communication
CDD	Community-Drug Distributor
CIND	Country integrated NTD database
CSI	Center for Integrated Health (<i>Centre de Santé Intégré</i>)
CY	Calendar year
CNHF	Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
DEP	Directorate of Studies and Programming (<i>Direction des Etudes et de la Programmation</i>)
DGSP	Direction Générale de la Promotion de la Santé
DLM	Disease Control Directorate (Direction de Lutte contre les Maladies)
DPH/MT	Pharmacy and Traditional Medicine Directorate (<i>Direction des Pharmacies et Medecine Traditionnelle</i>)
DQA	Data Quality Assessment
DRSP/P/AS	Regional Directorate of Public Health Population and Social Affairs (<i>Direction Régionale de Santé Publique de la population et des affaires sociales</i> in French)
DSA	Disease Specific Assessment
EPI	Expanded Program on Immunization
EDC	Electronic data capture
EU	Evaluation Unit
FAA	Fixed Amount Award
FEFO	First Expiry, First Out
FTS	Filariasis Test Strip
FY	Fiscal Year
GHSC-PSM	Global Health Supply Chain – Procurement Supply and Management (Chaine d'Approvisionnement Mondiale en Santé - Approvisionnement et Gestion des Achats)
HD	Health District
Helen Keller	Helen Keller International
HRA	High-risk adults
HSS	Health system strengthening
ICT	Immunochromatographic test
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
IHC	Integrated Health Center
IVM	Ivermectin
ITI	International Trachoma Initiative
JNV	National Vaccination Days (<i>Journées Nationales de Vaccination</i>)

LF	Lymphatic filariasis
MAHCG	Ministère des Affaires Humanitaires et de la Gestion de la Catastrophe (Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management)
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDA	Mass Drug Administration
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation, and learning
MF	Microfilariae
MMDP	Morbidity management and disability prevention
MOE	Ministry of Education (Ministère de Education Nationale)
MoH	Ministry of Health (<i>Ministère de la Santé Publique</i>)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NTD	Neglected Tropical Diseases
NTDP	Neglected Tropical Diseases Program (<i>PNLMTN - Programme National de Lutte contre les MTN</i>)
OCP	Onchocerciasis Control Program
OEC	OV elimination committee
ONPPC	National Office of Pharmaceutical and Chemical Products (<i>Office National des Produits Pharmaceutiques et Chimiques</i>)
OV	Onchocerciasis
PCT	Preventive chemotherapy Treatment
PNDO/ELF	National Program for the Elimination of Onchocerciasis and Lymphatic Filariasis (<i>Programme National de Dévolution de l'Onchocercose et d'Elimination de la Filariose Lymphatique</i>)
PNLBG	National Schistosomiasis and Soil-Transmitted Helminthiasis Control Program (<i>Programme National de Lutte contre la Bilharziose et les Géohelminthes</i>)
PNSO	National Eye Health Program (<i>Programme National de Santé Oculaire</i>)
Pre-TAS	Pre-Transmission Assessment Survey
PZQ	Praziquantel
RDT	Rapid diagnostic test
RISEAL	<i>Réseau International Schistosomiase Environnement Aménagement et Lutte</i>
RPRG	Regional Program Review Group
SAC	School-age children
SAE	Severe adverse events
SAF	Surgery, Antibiotics, Facial Cleanliness, and Environmental Improvements
SCT	Supervisor's Coverage Tool
SCH	Schistosomiasis
SCIF	Schistosomiasis Control Initiative Foundation
SCM	Supply chain management
SMM	Sustainability maturity model
SNIS	National Health Information System (<i>Système National d'Information Sanitaire</i>)
SOP	Standard operating procedure
STH	Soil-transmitted helminths
STTA	Short-term technical assistance
TA	Technical assistance

TAS	Transmission Assessment Survey
TEC	Trachoma Expert Committee
TEO	Tetracycline Eye Ointment
TF	Trachomatous Inflammation – Follicular
TIPAC	Tool for Integrated Planning and Costing
TIS	Trachoma Impact Survey
TSS	Trachoma Surveillance Survey
TT	Trachomatous trichiasis
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization
ZTH	Zithromax

II. NARRATIVE

1. NATIONAL NTD PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND SUPPORT:

Niger is the largest country in West Africa, with an area of 1,270,000 km² and an estimated population of 25,369,415 (according to 2023 estimates). Niger is divided into eight regions and 72 health districts (HDs) with 1057 Integrated Health Centers. Niger's National Integrated Program for the Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) was established in 2007 to eliminate and control the five preventive chemotherapy (PC) NTDs – lymphatic filariasis (LF), trachoma, onchocerciasis (OV), schistosomiasis (SCH) and soil-transmitted helminthiasis (STH) – according to World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines. It is within the Directorate of Disease Control (DLM) of the Ministry of Public Health, Population and Social Affairs (MoH) and led by an NTDs program coordinator. The National Program for the Fight against Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDP) is composed of three programs: the National Program for the Devolution of Onchocerciasis and Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis (PNDO/EFL); the National Program for the Fight against Bilharzia and Soil-Transmitted Helminths (PNLBG); and the National Eye Health Program (PNSO). In fiscal year (FY) 2022, the NTD Master Plan (2022-2026) was developed and validated, which will guide the national NTD strategy until 2026. The NTDP is supported by several implementing partners and receives funding from multiple donors. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has been supporting Niger's NTDP since 2007, first through the NTD Control Program (2007-2011), followed by the End in Africa project (2011-2018), and now through the Act to End NTDs | West (Act | West) program (2018-present). Act | West is managed globally by FHI 360, with Helen Keller serving as the lead implementing partner in Niger. World Vision (WV) and Deloitte are also consortium partners in Niger, providing technical assistance (TA) on health systems strengthening and sustainability initiatives.

Niger first implemented mass drug administration (MDA) for LF in 2007 and achieved 100% geographical coverage in 2014. Following the completion of the FY 2022 transmission assessment surveys (TAS1), 53 of the 54 health HDs endemic for LF at baseline have achieved the stop-MDA criteria.

Following the Onchocerciasis Elimination Committee (OEC) meeting in February 2023, the PNDOEFL through the MoH officially submitted the OV elimination dossier to the WHO representative in Niger. This dossier is the culmination of efforts that began in 1976 with vector control and disease mapping and led to the FY 2017 creation of the OEC, composed of national and international members with expertise on onchocerciasis.

Niger continues to advance towards the trachoma elimination thresholds. To date, 53 out of 62 endemic HDs have met the criteria to discontinue MDA and 28 HDs have met the elimination criteria for trachoma (with both TT < 0.2% and TF < 5%). Despite these achievements, there are still areas where trachoma prevalence has consistently remained above the elimination threshold (persistent trachoma) and where trachoma prevalence has seen a resurgence (recrudescence trachoma), both of which have slowed progress. With support from USAID, the PNSO has undertaken numerous efforts to improve program delivery and investigate the root causes of persistent (in 9 districts) or recrudescence (in 6 districts) trachoma in certain districts (*further details are available in the **trachoma** section*). These efforts resulted in more aggressive and targeted strategies, which were first integrated into the FY 2022 Work Plan and then progressively into the 2023 and 2024 work plans that followed. In particular, these included biannual MDA, the Wait and See Strategy, and biological analyses coupled with trachoma impact surveys (TIS+) and surveillance surveys (TSS+). With few HDs remaining to complete MDA, the

PNSO initiated the development of the trachoma elimination dossier. In February 2023, the PNSO invited WHO AFRO to facilitate a workshop to familiarize key stakeholders with the dossier development process and review required dossier content. During the workshop, participants proposed the creation of a national technical committee. The terms of reference (ToR) and the proposed committee members were submitted in March 2023 to the Minister of Health for consideration and approval. The committee will be established by the end of FY 2023 and activities will be programmed below in the FY 2024 work plan.

Efforts to control SCH and STH began in Niger in 2004-2005 with mapping and MDA. All 72 HDs are endemic for STH and 69 HDs for SCH (except three HDs: Tesker, N’Gourti, Bilma). There are 17 sentinel sites for SCH/STH in 17 HDs throughout the country where disease prevalence is assessed. MDA implementation beyond FY 2023 is uncertain following the sudden end to the British Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)-funded Accelerating Sustainable Control and Elimination of Neglected Tropical Diseases (ASCEND) project. Further, Unlimit Health (formerly SCI Foundation)’s GiveWell support for deworming in Niger ended in March 2023, with SCIF only able to fund 38 out of the 69 targeted HDs in FY 2023.

The multisectoral NTD coalition established in FY 2021 continued its actions to strengthen stakeholder collaboration throughout FY 2023. The NTD sustainability plan was technically and politically validated in December 2022. This plan will help maintain progress in NTD elimination and control through progressive mainstreaming of NTDs services into the national system and through a strengthened collaboration between the NTDP and other health programs and with non-health sectors. The next steps for the Government of Niger and NTD partners will be to prioritize integration opportunities and to mobilize and coordinate national efforts to effectively implement the sustainability plan. In this context, bilateral negotiation meetings between USAID and the Ministry of Health are planned for fiscal 2024.

Activities supported by the host government partners

The Government of Niger provides support to the MoH, NTDP, and the *Direction Générale de la Promotion de la Santé* (DGPS) to combat NTDs by providing staff salaries, infrastructure (office and meeting room facilities), MoH vehicles for NTDs activities, and import exemptions for NTD drugs and other consumables.

2. IR1 PLANNED ACTIVITIES: LF, TRA, OV:

i. Lymphatic filariasis

Proposed Fy 2024 activities

➤ LF MDA

In FY 2024, no MDA is planned, pending the re-pre-TAS or TAS1 results in Aguié HD.

➤ DSA

The following LF surveys are planned for FY 2024. The number of surveys proposed takes into consideration the appropriate interval between TAS as well as the volume of activities proposed in FY 2024.

- Re-pre-TAS in Aguié HD
- TAS1 in Aguié one month after the pre-TAS, assuming Aguié passes.

- TAS3 in 15 HDs (13 EUs): Bouza, Keita, Diffa-Bosso, N'Guigmi-N'Gourti, Goudoumaria-Maine Soroa, Mirriah, Damagaram Takaya, Takeita, Dungass, Matameye, Magaria and Zinder Commune.
- **LF Remapping planned in Doutchi, Tibiri and Loga HDs (three EUs)**

Three HDs (3 EUs) will be targeted for remapping in FY 2024: Doutchi, Tibiri and Loga HDs in the Dosso region.

Dossier Status for LF:

The current date for submission of the dossier, which accounts for the FY 2021 pre-TAS failure in Aguié and assumes that all remaining surveys in the various districts will be successful in FY 2024, is 2027.

In FY 2024 two activities are programmed by PNDO/EFL to support LF dossier:

First LF dossier draft review meeting

In FY 2024, with the support of Act West, the PNDO/EFL will organize a two-day review meeting to review the first draft LF dossier narrative, for completeness and alignment with WHO dossier template; the first draft is expected to be completed by the end of first quarter of FY 2024. The meeting will make recommendations for improvement and assign responsibility for and timeline for the changes. This meeting, which will take place in Niamey, will bring together stakeholders from the national level and the PNDO/EFL team.

Meeting to insert the observations of the review and to set up the elimination committee

After the first review meeting, the PNDO/EFL will organize a two-day meeting to finalize the first draft. This meeting will review the changes recommended at the first meeting by the designated persons, and to validation of the first draft file.

i. Trachoma

Proposed FY 2024 activities:

➤ **MDA**

No MDA is planned in FY 2024 (pending results from the FY 2023 TIS in four HDs and TSS surveys in 11 HDs).

➤ **DSA**

In FY 2024, six months after the FY 2023 MDA, TIS will be held in five HDs including the four that benefited from MDA in FY 2023 (Mirriah 1, 2, 3, Takeita 1, Matameye 3 and Damagaram Takaya 1) and Bilma HD, which is under the “wait and see” strategy (for 2 years following the most recent survey, which was conducted in April 2022). TIS will also be conducted in the Sayam refugee camp in FY 2024 six months after MDA. TSS is planned in one HD (Matamaye 1) in FY 2024.

The PNSO proposes to conduct TIS+ and TSS + (adding dried blood spot and ocular swab collection to conduct serological and PCR testing) to the trachoma surveys in two HDs in Zinder region. Discussions are ongoing to finalize the district list and costing information. At present, it is anticipated that support from Act | West will be requested for the following two HDs; however, FHI 360 would like to determine the feasibility of adding these indicators to more of the surveys and is additionally awaiting justification from the PNSO for the selection of HDs:

- TIS+ in Takeita 1
- TSS+ in Matameye 1.

These two districts, all of which are recrudescing, contiguous and border on Nigeria, are experiencing a major phenomenon of migration in and out of the country.

Additionally, two HDs, Ouallam and Banibangou, are “overdue” for their TSS (they have been eligible for TSS since April 2021 due to insecurity).

Dossier Status for Trachoma

Niger is moving towards eliminating trachoma as a public health problem, though there are still recrudescing and persistent HDs awaiting MDA and/or TIS between FY 2023 and FY 2024. These HDs will complete their TSS in FY 2025 and FY 2026 to allow the PNSO to submit the trachoma elimination dossier by no later than 2030 (likely earlier) for validation by WHO. The trachoma elimination committee has been established, and the dossier files are updated on an annual basis (see below).

Update on historical data

The PNSO records MDA data and surveys from all HDs since baseline mapping in an Excel file managed by the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer. Data is stored on a password protected computer with updated anti-virus software installed. Data is currently up to date and backed up regularly to an external hard drive. Since 2017, trachoma DSA data are also stored on the Tropical Data server.

Elimination Dossier Status

In February 2023, to better orient the program on the content of the trachoma elimination dossier, an orientation workshop was organized with the technical support of partners, including an expert from WHO-AFRO. Participants reviewed the required components of the dossier and gained an increased understanding for the scientific and technical validation process. Following this workshop, the PNSO began the dossier development process by:

- updating the historical data Excel file according to the recommended dossier template
- proposing members of the National Committee for the Elimination of Trachoma
- drafting of the terms of reference for the Elimination Committee

The proposed terms of reference and list of committee members have been submitted to the Minister of Health for consideration since March 2023 and are awaiting approval. This committee will benefit from Act | West support for the organization of meetings in FY 2024. In FY 2024, under the technical support of Helen Keller and FHI 360, the first trachoma elimination committee meeting will focus on updating the dossier and assigning tasks to working groups as per the action plan developed.

ii. Onchocerciasis

Proposed FY 2024 activities:

➤ OV MDA

No OV treatment is planned in FY 2024.

➤ Supervision

No MDA supervision is planned in FY 2024.

➤ DSA

No DSAs are planned in FY 2024.

Dossier Status for OV:

Act | West hired a consultant in FY 2023 to assist the PNDO/EFL in reviewing and updating the dossier prior to the Expert Committee Meeting. In FY 2023, the draft dossier was reviewed and finalized by the committee of national and international experts with the support of Act | West. This dossier was officially submitted to the WHO Country Representative in Niger by the MoH on February 9, 2023. Following the dossier submission, WHO Independent Verification Team conducted the country visit during the week of 4-7 July 2023 as part of the verification process and had several meetings and interviews with key stakeholders. The Team was satisfied with the evidence presented on onchocerciasis elimination in Niger, but requested revision of the dossier to provide more details as this is the first dossier in Africa and the team would like to see this as a model dossier for other countries. Act | West assisted the PNDO/EFL on the revision of the dossier which was resubmitted early August. The Team requested and had a further call on the 22nd of August with Dr Salissou, Yaobi Zhang (Helen Keller) and Daniel Boakye (End Fund) and discussed further revisions. In FY 2024, the PNDO/EFL will host an Expert Committee meeting. This meeting, which will bring together both national and international experts, aims to review and add any information to the dossier as needed after WHO's observations are received, and to advise the country on the main activities to be planned to demonstrate the elimination of transmission.

Celebration for the Oncho Dossier Validation in Niger

If WHO declares the validation of the Oncho Elimination Dossier in Niger, the MoH will plan with potential funding from partners (Act | West, End Fund, WHO) a celebration event in Niamey to highlight this milestone in the elimination of NTDs and the fact that Niger would then become the first African country to eliminate Oncho.

3. IR2 SUSTAINABILITY AND HSS STRATEGY ACTIVITIES**a. System strengthening****i. DATA SECURITY AND MANAGEMENT****Sustainable data security and systematic storage of NTD data at the NTDP****FY 2024 Planned Activities:****Meeting to validate national data security guidelines**

In FY 2024, the NTDP will hold a one-day workshop to finalize the data security policy and ensure all relevant data policies from the MOH and Government of Niger are included, before validating and disseminating the policy.

Data management**DHIS2 training for program data managers**

DHIS2 is now part of the health worker's daily routine in data management. Since 2018, all CSIs heads have been trained to use this tool, which is filled in monthly for routine indicators and after each campaign for validated MDA data indicators. Certain NTD morbidity data are also included in the DHIS2. Along the DHIS2 data cycle there are several layers for data entry, review and corrected. Niger, CSI Chiefs are at the peripheral level and ensure data collection and entry at the CSI level. Data entry also happens at the district and regional levels. NTD program Data Managers are responsible for each program's monitoring and evaluation units and cannot fully exploit DHIS2 for programmatic monitoring and decision-making due to lack of training. NTD program data managers require training on DHIS2

fundamentals to better verify and analyze the NTD data reported in DHIS2 by CSI Chiefs, hospital service majors and district data managers. Given the need for the NTD programs to monitor the information entered on this platform, data managers need to be trained in its use. The aim of the training is to provide quality data in the DHIS2 at all levels, and to enable programs to monitor the data entered into DHIS2. A five-day training course will be provided by Statistics Division managers. This will involve two people from the other national NTD-specific programs, four people from the NTDP and 2 participants per region. These staff are responsible for periodically monitoring the entry of NTD data into DHIS2 by each operational level and providing feedback as required. The FY24 training will focus first on the use of the platform and then data entry (current and future) allowing regional data managers to strengthen the adoption of the new system and benefit from its analyses. To date the DHIS2 reporting for NTD has been partial and switching 100% to that option in the next year would result in data loss, thus the continued support for non-DHIS2 for this interim transition period. Still, given that DHIS2 is the ultimate destination for NTD data, we want to keep demonstrating the benefits to those CSI, HD and regional data managers. Having this training done in-person with NTD-familiar trainers ensures the benefits are directly applicable to NTDs.

ii. DRUG MANAGEMENT

DRUG MANAGEMENT

From 2020, the Ministry of Health started to favor another option for the transport of health commodities which constituted authorizing the ONPPC to do the transport up to the last mile (CSI level). The ONPPC has experimented with this approach with support from the French Development Agency (AFD) for mother and child health inputs in Dosso and with the Global Health Supply Chain – Procurement Supply and Management (GHSC-PSM) USAID for anti-malaria inputs in Dosso and Tahoua. The roles of the different actors and levels of the health pyramid are well established, and the implementation of the national supply system are based on the guiding principles described in the sections below. In 2024, for the transport of drugs for SCH MDA, the NTD and ONPPC programs decided to implement this new strategy (transport to the CSI level) for a pilot phase in one HD (Kollo district). Once this pilot site has been positively evaluated, the NTDP will consider expanding the methodology to other districts.

Monitoring, transparency and accountability

An information system is in place at all levels to track medicines throughout the supply chain. ONPPC uses SAGE 100 Cloud software for logistics information management. At regional and health district levels, data is collected on paper using delivery and receipt slips. This paper data is entered into the Channel software by districts NTD focal points. The information collected will be shared with the various stakeholders in the supply system. All stakeholders will have access to the supply chain data. All these management tools are available from ONPPC, NTDP and Helen Keller for supervision and audit during mass treatment campaigns at the targeted district level.

Coordination of stakeholders and activities

ONPPC prioritizes and works within the NTD supply chain coordination committee. Implementation of activities will result from coordinated planning with implementing actors and/or beneficiaries. Ongoing training and supervision in the HDs who will conduct the MDAs is necessary to ensure better drug management. Act | West is funding drug inventory and reverse logistics activities, as detailed below (please see Supply chain management and reverse logistics for PZQ and FTS) in collaboration with NTDP and ONPPC to improve drug tracking.

Improvements and next steps to focus in FY 2024

ONPPC will actively work with PNLMTN and Helen Keller-Niger to capitalize on the gains made in the management of health commodities for NTDs. In FY 2024, the ONPPC will contribute to improving the quality of implementation through the following specific activities:

- Capacity building through training of ONPPC officers (regional and district level drug management focal points) in inventory management, storage and transport of NTD medicines. The most recent training was conducted in 2019, and there have been many new agents assigned to the ONPPC in the past four years, hence the need for retraining.
- Setting up a post control mission with the PNLMTN, so that the ONPPC can correct errors on the spot as soon as they are identified. This will be done after the implementation by the ONPPC and before the start of the MDA. Its objective is to physically inventory the quantities of medicines put in place and comply with the campaign implementation plan.
- The logistics reverse and the follow-up of the correct repackaging of the returned medicines, their adequate storage with a better control of the quantities in stock.

The ONPPC faces a recurring problem of storage capacity at the central and regional level. The main strategy is to upgrade ONPPC's storage capacities through the construction and renovation of storage warehouses and cold rooms. At the central level, the Route Fillingué warehouse was refurbished and brought up to standard with the support from the Global Fund in 2021-2022. This was to secure all the products managed by ONPPC, and more specifically to have a warehouse with 2,700 pallets at central level and 600 pallets in each of the 5 regions, and to ensure that all ONPPC warehouses meet the WHO's regulatory guidelines for good practice by FY 2025.

Each year, after the national evaluation of the MDA campaign, the process of physical inventory (reverse logistics) of the remaining medicines in the field will be followed. The remaining quantities inventoried are then repatriated to the ONPPC stores. The ONPPC roles will be to store the remaining medicines and package them for the next MDA accordingly."

Since FY 2020, a number of measures have been taken to fill various gaps in drug management. These are to address large stocks after mass campaigns, the high risk of expiration of medicines, significant differences in the quantities available at distribution sites. Faced with these challenges, measures were taken to include the training of drug focal points and managers, the validation of the treatment target by district, the development and validation of village distribution plans for each district, and the analysis of sub-district results. Helen Keller is working with the NTDP logistician and the NTPD-appointed drug managers to provide additional support in implementing these drug management activities.

Quantification of medicines for NTDs and WHO JAP 2024 completion meeting

As every year, and in 2024, Act | West will finance the drug quantification meeting (Albendazole and Praziquantel) for the 2025 campaign in preparation for the submission to the WHO. This one-day meeting, which will bring together the coordinators and logisticians of all NTD programs, will validate the annual order of Albendazole and Praziquantel. Submission of the drug request will take place 10 to 12 months before the scheduled MDA dates (usually in April of each year), in line with the MDA timetable. Another drug quantification and campaign implementation plan validation meeting will be funded by Act | West in the coming year. This meeting will bring together participants from the various programs, the ONPPC, the Directorate of Statistics but also technical and financial partners. Through this meeting, the targets of the campaigns and the implementation plans are discussed and validated.

The ONPPC will use these validated plans to do its packaging of drugs (with the programs), then implementing the distribution plan including the transport of medicines and consumables (registers, dose poles) to the HDs. I.

Supply chain management and reverse logistics for PZQ and FTS

In FY 2022, the Direction de la Pharmacie et de la Médecine Traditionnelle (DPH/MT) drew up a national guide to good practice for the storage and distribution of health products. In addition, the DPH/MT collaborated with the ONPPC to develop new procedures for assessing warehouses where medicines are stored to give the NTDP the opportunity to advocate for improvements if conditions are not optimal. Significant improvements have been made to reverse logistics processes in collaboration with the NTDP. This began in FY 2020, with the support from Helen Keller and the NTDP, with the development of drug distribution plans from HDs to CSIs and from CSIs to villages and schools in order to minimize discrepancies, avoid shortages and ensure reverse logistics after the campaign. CSI staff usually carry out a physical inventory of the remaining medicines before they are transported from the CSI back to the HD and then back to the regions. The Act | West logistician and ONPPC will monitor this procedure. The reverse logistics operational guide will be made available to ONPPC for the FY 2024 campaign, so that the MOH can direct reverse logistics processes in future years.

The ONPPC is solely responsible for the safety of NTD drugs stockpiled at the regional level. This process ensures that all drugs remaining after a campaign are properly counted and stored and facilitates track expiry. All management of the drug supply chain by the ONPPC is done in accordance with the ONPPC best practices guide for storage and distribution. This guide, available at all levels of ONPPC offices, is used for implementation, in accordance with the Strategic Procurement Plan. Indeed, ONPPC has two procedures: a procedure for the storage and organization of medicines and a procedure for the preparation of customer orders (programs). These procedures formalize the storage processes for NTD drugs and avoid difficulties linked to delays. The ONPPC is now implementing this guide. The warehouse is insured and has a functional fire-fighting system in line with WHO standards for better storage, better visibility of drugs and compliance with drug delivery deadlines. This is an improvement over past implementation, and it makes the management of all products more efficient. The ONPPC has been responsible for storing, packaging, transporting and shipping medicines from the central warehouse to the regions and HDs as part of the implementation of the MDA campaigns for several years. Medicines are stored in compliance with international standards, from central to district level. The ONPPC has recently (in 2022) modernized its infrastructure funded by the Global Fund to improve drug management and logistics, with new modes of transport, new drug management and tracking software, and new pricing (as noted above, this new pricing scheme will not be applied to NTD drugs). All vehicle movements from the central level to the HDs are communicated via e-mail and WhatsApp and a mailing list to the drug logistics team (with detailed information on drugs and quantities).

Technical assistance to strengthen the prevention, monitoring and management of adverse events (AEs) and serious adverse events (SAEs).

During the course of the MDA campaign, adverse events (AEs) may occur. The Community Drug Distributors (CDD) have AE reporting and summary forms, which indicate who to contact in the event of an adverse event. In Niger, reported cases are generally minor and do not require medical attention. All serious adverse events (SAEs) must be managed by ANRP's pharmacovigilance department. According to the procedures for reporting SAEs, the ANRP is responsible for informing the Ministry of Health, which in turn informs the WHO regional office, Helen Keller, FHI 360 and USAID, as well as the donor pharmaceutical company. The PNLMTN is a member of the pharmacovigilance committee. All

AEs and SAEs are monitored by the CDD and their local supervisors, who have been trained with the support of Act | West funding. The Niger Ministry of Health requires as indicated above in the introductory section the quality control of medicines distributed by ONPPC. This operation is financed by Act | West for NTD drugs distributed during MDA campaigns. Act | West does not play a direct role in the management of AE. Rather its role is upfront with lab analysis of the drug for quality control. If minor AEs require management, this is carried out at peripheral health centers, using the national case management protocol. The monitoring and reporting process used in previous MDA campaigns will continue in FY 2024. DCs and school principals will receive training focusing on adverse reaction (AR) surveillance and reporting procedures. All AEs reported in the field will be entered into an Excel file at CSI level and communicated to HD level.

b. Sustainability

Niger has progressed to phase 4 to the implementation of the sustainability plan. The bilateral negotiation process is planned to begin in FY 2024.

In parallel to the development of the sustainability plan, the Minister of Health signed in 2021, the ministerial decree officially establishing the NTD Multisectoral Coalition. The Coalition launched in 2022 and developed action plans for the five commissions. The Coalition's first biannual coordination meeting was held in September 2022. Two main recommendations were made as the next steps for their activities: the election of new executive board members and the drafting and validation of internal regulations. During FY 2023, the NTD Multisectoral Coalition elected its executive board members and validated its internal regulations. This platform also played an active role in organizing the World NTD Day, with the illumination of a monument as its flagship activity.

In FY 2022 and FY 2023, as part of its strategy to institutionalize multisector coordination and to integrate NTD interventions across sectors, the NTDP collaborated with different ministries (environment, national education, water and sanitation). The strategic engagements included raising awareness and advocating for strategic alignment and integration of NTDs into sectoral policies and evaluating progress and discussing mechanisms for integrating NTD interventions into the essential health package. This resulted in commitments to integrate NTDs into the various ministries' regular activities at both the national and regional levels. In addition, a proposal for an annual meeting was made to follow up on commitments. This meeting will be held during FY 2024

Act | West provided support to the MOH/NTDP to continue strengthening engagement with the Ministry of National Education, a key partner to advance the fight against NTDs in Niger by organizing two workshops following the NTD and education collaboration meeting held in September 2021. Through a small committee, the NTDP and School Health Division produced a draft joint action plan, which was reviewed and validated by cross-sector stakeholders. Act | West will continue to provide TA in FY 2024 to support the NTDP in developing legislative documents related to integrating NTDs into elementary school curricula.

i. Governance activities:

Bilateral Negotiations between Ministry of Public Health, Population, and Social Affairs and USAID

The NTDP in Niger has made great strides in advancing the sustainability phased approach over the last five years, which has resulted in a completed sustainability plan that was politically validated in

December FY 2023. In FY 2024, the NTDP will lead two meetings for the bilateral negotiation. First Hellen Keller and WV teams in Niger will hold a series of technical consultations with the NTDP to help the NTDP determine the priorities from the validated plan to include in the negotiations with USAID. After this, the NTDP will present and discuss their priorities with the DLM for approval and sensitization of the MOH senior leadership. Based on MOH agenda and readiness to engage the consultation with USAID, a date will be confirmed by the MOH to engage in the bilateral negotiation with USAID. A preliminary meeting will be organized between the NTDP and USAID where the NTDP will present and discuss in detail their priorities for sustainability in Niger. This meeting will be followed by a high-level meeting between the senior leadership of the MOH, the NTDP and USAID. Throughout the planning and implementation of the bilateral negotiation process, FHI 360 and Hellen Keller will provide support to the NTDP and support additional engagements or consultations as needed with the USAID Niger mission.

Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for the NTD Master Plan and NTD Sustainability Plan

The NTD Master Plan and Sustainability Plan were both politically validated in FY 2023. The next stage to support the monitoring and evaluation of these key policies for the NTDP is to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for these documents that are well aligned across both national policies. The two frameworks will be combined to ensure continuity and alignment across the two documents. The sustainability plan is considered in the master plan, and the monitoring and evaluation plan of the master plan will integrate the monitoring of the sustainability plan. Leading up to the workshop, a cross-sector committee will be identified by the NTDP to support multisector collaboration to lead the workshop that will assign indicators and key stakeholders for monitoring implementation and reporting on progress during routine meetings to ensure that there is collaborative learning and adaptation. The workshop will focus on the development of a single plan but that considers both strategic plans as a whole and can be used to monitor the implementation to enhance the ownership of the two and ensure that sustainability is not siloed from other routine meetings and decision making. Helen Keller will support facilitation during the workshop while Deloitte will remotely support in the drafting of the framework that will list key trackable indicators to monitor the progress to achieving Sustainability Plan and Master Plan's activities.

Workshop to elaborate a roadmap to integrate NTDs into National Community Health Service

In 2019, the Directorate for Community Health in Niger elaborated a policy for integrated health services at the community level (2019-2023), delivered by locally elected community relais. The policy outlines that salaries are financed in part by the MOH, and the remainder of costs are pooled from other donors (UNICEF, World Bank, USAID mission in Niger). The MOH identified a package of preventative and curative services including malaria, HIV, maternal and child health, and NTDs that are delivered by community relais and supervised by the CSI. The policy includes training and implementation of MDA, but it has not been operationalized. The policy also includes NTDs communications messages, social mobilization, and awareness raising and community relais have been trained to include these in routine activities.

After the FY 2024 work plan workshop in Niger that took place in FY 2023, the NTDP Coordinator requested a meeting with the Director of Community Health Programs, Helen Keller, and World Vision to discuss opportunities to include SCH MDA, OV surveillance, WASH activities, and other priorities and NTDs, which will be determined in the roadmap development workshop, in the community health strategy. The roadmap workshop will outline the process to operationalize NTD services and surveillance in the revised community health strategy that will be developed in 2024 and determine

other areas that may need to be updated to ensure sustainable NTD services, such as the training modules for relais to conduct SCH MDA, and the updating and revision of the monthly reporting tools or supervisor tools used by the CSI.

The Directorate of Community Health is leading an evaluation of the integrated approach across the country in September FY 2023 and will include the NTDP, which will inform the development of an updated strategy for community health in FY 2024. This platform has thus far included communications messages for NTDs. In FY 2024, the NTDP and NTD coordinators, with support from Act | West, will conduct a scoping review of the current community health policy and participate in the evaluation of the previous policy. The lessons learned from the scoping will be applied to a three-day workshop in Niamey to develop a roadmap for sustainable integration of NTD services into routine service delivery and determine priorities from all programs for the revised community health strategy that will be developed by the Directorate for Community Health in late FY 2024. The workshop will define the process first to include the identified priorities in the revised community health policy, and then define the steps to operationalize the policy, such as potential reforms to the community health relais curriculum and identify the steps needed to transition to the community health platform. The workshop will include NTD programs, participants from all regions, a select number of relais, the Directorate for Community Health, and other cross sector partners involved in the approach to build consensus on the path to more sustainable NTD service delivery.

Provide technical support for biannual meetings to facilitate the operationalization of the national multisectoral coordination platform and its subcommittees.

In FY 2024, Act | West will support for biannual meetings of the multi-sector coalition, considering its five subcommittees. These meetings will aim to achieve the following: 1) a follow-up on activities, deliverables, objectively verifiable indicators that will be defined and monitored in the sustainability M&E framework, and needed resources for the action plans for each of the five subcommittees; 2) a follow-up on efforts to engage the MSP/P/AS on allocating resources for the fight against NTDs, for the PNLMTN to engage the private sector; and 3) monitoring of the implementation of the action plan jointly developed with the PNLMTN and all the relevant cross-sector ministries.

Develop administrative decisions (implementing decrees, ministerial or inter-ministerial policies) related to the further integration of NTDs into elementary school curricula.

In FY 2024, Act | West will support the integration of NTDs into elementary school curricula in several steps. These steps involve the development of legislation and collaboration mechanisms with relevant stakeholders.

Organize advocacy workshops with the communes of the Madarounfa and Gazaoua departments to support funding for the fight against NTDs in FY 2024

Currently, NTDs are still not included in the strategic, operational plans that guide medium-term resource allocation and local development interventions in all sectors in Niger. This is a missed opportunity to prioritize critical investments to contribute to the fight against NTDs. In FY 2022 and FY 2023, Act | West continued to provide technical and financial assistance to the Ministry of Health and the NTDP. In FY 2022, WV supported the engagement of local governance bodies in Guidan Roundji, and in FY 2023, in two communes of Aguié (Maradi region). In FY 2024, Act | West will support the departments of Madarounfa and Gazaoua (Maradi region). The methodology to be used is an exchange meeting at the regional level to explain what is expected of communes and prefectures. There will then be advocacy sessions with the prefects, then with the mayors, followed by the signing of commitments.

There will then be follow-up missions to evaluate the process. These advocacy sessions lasting one day in each commune and one day at the departmental level.

ii. Prioritized functions activities

Identify an NTD ambassador to champion NTD priorities in the sustainability agenda in Niger

In Niger, NTDs remain under-represented in the national commitment compared to other health programs. There is a need to intensify advocacy strategies to raise awareness of NTDs and advocate for the systematic integration of NTD-related functions at all national health priorities. An influential ambassador for NTDs would play a vital role in sparking the visibility and importance of NTDs on the national health agenda.

4. IR3 PLANNED ACTIVITIES: SCH, STH:

i. Schistosomiasis

Proposed FY 2024 activities:

➤ MDA

For FY 2024, the PNLBG request Act | West support for the SCH MDA, which is planned in 18 HDs (out of a total 38 HDs eligible for treatment during 2024). These 38 HDs were targeted per the recommendations of a national workshop in 2014 that classified HDs by endemicity and revealed 32 HDs would require annual treatment and 37 HDs would require biannual treatment.

➤ DSA

SCH/STH Impact Assessment Surveys in Dosso and Niamey regions (13 HDs)

In FY 2024, SCH/STH impact assessment surveys are proposed in 13 HDs in two regions that have conducted at least five effective rounds of MDA by the end of FY 2023.

ii. Soil-transmitted helminths

Proposed FY 2024 activities

➤ MDA

No STH-only MDA is planned for FY 2024 with the support of Act | West. At present, STH cannot be treated opportunistically through the treatment of LF, since LF treatment has stopped (pending the results of a re-pre-TAS in the one district of Aguié).

➤ DSA

Please see the description of the SCH/STH impact assessment above. No STH-only DSA is planned for FY 2024 with the support of Act | West.

➤ Strategic Planning

In FY24 following activities are programmed:

Evaluation Workshop of the STH Transition Plan (2021-2023)

In FY 2018/2019 with funding from End in Africa/Act | West and technical support from WHO, a STH transition plan was developed and implemented between 2021 and 2023. The purpose of this STH transition plan was to incorporate STH control into the wider health system as MDA for LF MDA came

to an end. In FY 2024, the PNLBG will organize a meeting to evaluate the effectiveness of the transition plan, with support from Act | West. This will be a three-day meeting in Niamey to bring together central-level stakeholders engaged in activities that impact on STH from the Ministry of Health, programs, regions, the NTD coalition including UNICEF and other partners and other sectors including education, WASH, and environment. Recommendations will be made following this meeting that will be used to inform the development of the STH transition plan that will align with the priorities of the NTD Sustainability Plan to integrate STH into other integrated routine service delivery platforms. Act | West SCH/STH and Health Systems Strengthening Technical Advisors will provide technical assistance to support this activity.

Development Workshop for the new 2024-2028 STH Transition Plan

STH MDA is currently integrated with nationwide vaccination days and semi-annual deworming campaigns for children aged 12 to 59 months, in health facilities for pregnant women. Previously, STH MDA was integrated with LF but treatment has since stopped in all districts in Niger (pending the results of a re-pre-TAS in Aguié). As a result of the stopping LF MDA, a STH transition plan has been implemented between 2021-2023. Following a central-level evaluation (described above), a regional-level workshop will be held to discuss the recommendations made from the central-level evaluation workshop. The purpose of this regional-level meeting is to ensure regional-level feedback is considered in the 2024-2028 transition plan. The STH transition plan will serve as a five-year roadmap to transition STH services to the national health system. The NTD Sustainability Plan outlines under the governance and service delivery interventions that integrating STH into routine service delivery is a priority and the STH transition plan will determine the concrete steps necessary to support the health system in this transition and determine what financial resources will be necessary to sustain integrated service delivery at health facilities and in schools. This workshop will include stakeholders from the PNLBG, PNLMTN, regional health services, school health program, and the vaccination program to 1) consolidate existing deworming platforms in nationwide vaccination days for children aged 12 – 59 months and health facilities for pregnant women, 2) explore and plan for school health program for SAC, and 3) plan to fill the gaps and scale up to the national coverage. This five-day workshop will be held in Dosso. This meeting is preceded by a smaller group three-day preparatory phase in Niamey which will consist of developing the outline of the STH plan but also the draft zero of the strategic document. It is an internal meeting of the PNLBG program under the technical assistance of the DLM, the NTDP and Helen Keller.

Validation Workshop of the new 2024-2028 STH Transition Plan

This workshop will aim to develop the second strategic STH transition plan for the period 2024-2028. Targets will be defined by an action plan to lead to a draft one of the STH transition plan. The PNLBG will continue internally to revise the draft and deliver a finalized version. A two-day meeting will be held under Act | West funding to validate the finalized plan that will be presented. A new action plan with guidelines will be presented which will constitute the new STH roadmap for sustainable integration into the national health system over the period 2024-2028. This validation workshop will bring together WHO representatives, senior officials from the Ministry of Health, representatives of NTDP, partners from MOE, WASH, and technical and financial partners (Helen Keller, Word Vision).

Proposed FY 2024 activities: Onchocerciasis elimination committee meeting

In FY 2024, the PNDOEFL will host an OV expert committee meeting. This meeting, which will bring together both national and international experts, aims to review and add information to the dossier as

needed after WHO's feedback and to advise Niger on the main activities to be planned to demonstrate the elimination of transmission.

Annual World NTD Day Celebration

In FY 2024, Act | West, Speak Up Africa, and WHO will support the NTDP to celebrate World NTD Day. The NTDP will coordinate this activity. The activity will be held in Boboye HD. Boboye was chosen because it is endemic to SCH, and recently LF. It is a district surrounded by permanent water bodies, where the population carries out horticulture activities. The proximity to Niamey will enable the participation of all stakeholders invited. In addition to visibility, this ceremony will raise community awareness of NTDs.