



Background Paper: City Profile and Risk Context for Niamey, Niger

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Dr. Boubacar Soumana
Abdou Moumouni University

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1. Introduction

Urban agglomerations are inherently subject to multiple intensive and extensive risks related to the complexity of their physical and socio-economic systems of production and decision-making process by urban actors at multiple scales. Indeed, there is uncertainty about the harmful effects of some hazards and / or loss that adversely affects the living conditions of populations. As such, some authors propose that risks are the product of the sensitivity of the subject, the risk intensity and frequency of the phenomenon in question (Seydou, 2014).

Urban risks can cause significant damage and partially or completely paralyse the normal developmental activities of the urban population. Thus, while city living can offer multiple advantages there are concurrently many possible disadvantages due to a number of interacting factors which influence urban vulnerability (Adelekan et al, 2015). There are several external factors that shape the vulnerability of urban environments. Firstly, the acceleration of urban growth over the 20th century, especially during the past 30-40 years in developing countries. The urban population of developing countries rose from 17% in 1950 to 34% in 1990 and will probably reach 57% in 2025 (WRI, 1990). The population of "mega cities" (more than one million inhabitants) are fastest growing. 75% of mega cities that are predicted to account for one quarter of the world population in 2025 are located in developing countries and on coastlines. The second element relates to the unbalanced external socio-economic development factors and policy choices in regional planning: excessive concentration of cities and industrial centers, urban networks, inadequate housing policy and relocation, etc. The other two urban environmental vulnerability driving factors are intrinsic. First, the destructive effects of natural phenomena, which are aggravated by the very structure of materials and urban morphology. Urban morphology accentuates induced effects, since at the early stages of development city areas are often quickly overwhelmed by the rapid occupation of urban space, often on hazardous sites. The second factor is the pronounced division of urban society, reflecting the underdevelopment and socio-economic conflicts that exist within close proximity in cities and are driven by multiple interacting factors such as elite control of land and competing financial and political interests (Jean-Claude and Robert, 1996). Due to their immense diversity Sub-Saharan cities are exposed to a variety of different hazards and therefore suffer various degrees of damage. The city of Niamey, Niger, is no exception and suffers multiple interacting risks at different scales.

2. Governance framework including risk governance

In the recent past the global population has experienced an almost exponential explosion increasing from about 2.5 billion people to 7.3 billion over a period of approximately sixty years (Ecosavoie, 2015). According to a UN report, 54% of the world population currently lives in urban areas; a figure expected to rise to 66% in 2050 (UN, 2014). An estimated one billion urban dwellers still live in overcrowded slums with the total expected to reach 1.4 billion by 2020 (Alvergne, 2010). Africa is home to 1.2 billion people or 16.1% of the world population. With population growth rate of 3 to 5% per year, the continent is populated route (Alvergne 2010) and will house a quarter of the world's population.

Millions of urban dwellers living in low- and middle-income countries are exposed to unacceptable levels of risk, compounded by rapid urbanization, poor local governance, population growth, insufficient health services and a wave of urban violence. Risk appears to be a global social evil that destabilizes economies, complicates the exercise of political activity and undermines social trust between citizens and institutions. While disasters are often caused by natural hazards, the main urban disaster risk factors are poor governance systems that ignore risk management in development processes. Appropriate infrastructure and other investments are key to addressing urban risk: "We cannot prevent urbanization, but disasters can be avoided," said Matthias Schmale, Under Secretary General of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in Nairobi at Global presentation of the 2010 Report on the World Disasters. According to Schmale (2010), solutions for reducing the risk of disasters and disaster preparedness must be found through dialogue with the affected communities, in other words through good governance. It is essential to ensure that people are empowered and invested in the development of their urban environment and that they are not marginalized or exposed to disasters, climate change, violence and poor health (Schmale, 2010). In a similar same vein Satterthwaite (2010) explains that urban poverty crisis, the significant and rapid growth of informal settlements and urban disasters are increasingly the result of the failure of governments to adapt their institutions to urbanization. Urban governance is not an innovative concept; nevertheless it brings a new perspective on urban policy (DARDY-DUMEURC, 2008). The idea of governance, is opposed to a single authority imposing its orders unilaterally and vertically. Key emphasis

is on ensuring policy coherence between heterogeneous entities linked by mutual issues. (Clementine DARDY, 2008). In order for city Disaster Management bodies to deploy an adequate response and recovery efforts following a disaster they require well governed and effective local institutions with adequate organizational capacity and resources and action plans to remedy the consequences of disasters (UNDP, 2010). The effectiveness of local governance is also shaped by the magnitude of cumulative risks and daily dangers faced by city dwellers such as that of vector-borne diseases and traffic accidents.

Improved risk governance is urgently needed for sub-Saharan African cities faced with multiple long standing risks and new challenges such as the Ebola threat and increasing violence in various forms. With the acceleration of urbanization, sub-Saharan Africa has also experienced processes of socio-economic, cultural and political change (CODESRIA, 2004). In many countries, decentralization is seen as leverage for good governance. Governance problems arise when, for various reasons such as property right disputes, technical issues and political unrest can longer be addressed through decentralized equilibrium (Frédéric GILLI,). Therefore, in Niger, the poorest country in the world (UNDP, 2013) at the crossroads of sub-Saharan Africa region, the issue of good governance is central.

3. Profile of disasters, hazards and risks in Niamey including epidemics

In developing countries natural disasters cause excessive damage and lead to many casualties. It is estimated that over 40% of the urban population in developing countries are threatened directly or indirectly by natural phenomena that can cause extensive damage to people and property (Bechler et al, 2000). West African countries occupy among the weakest positions globally in terms of development conditions and capacities for risk reduction. This is largely due to the combination of adverse socio-economic conditions in these countries and pressing issues relating to land use and built environment (DARA, 2013).

In Niamey vulnerability has become a common denominator for the majority of populations. In the capital of Niger, the main risks identified relate to flooding, disease, food insecurity and lack of employment (Sumana, 2015, Balla, 2013; Hamadou, 2010). In reality these risks are often compounding and occur simultaneously. These risks have economic, social and environmental implications and lay bare the dysfunctions of urban management (Hamadou,

2010). Urbanization increases the exposure of people and economic assets to hazards and creates new risk profiles thereby making disaster management particularly complex in urban areas. Nevertheless, urban areas also offer opportunities for disaster prevention and risk management (Hamadou, 2010 and UNDP, 2010). These are opportunities that need to be seized by governments and non-government actors at multiple scales to help develop policies to secure populations at risk. Cities with high populations. Several neighborhoods in Niamey are highly vulnerable to flood risks that may adversely impact on property, livelihoods, health and so forth (Hamadou and Dominique, 2013). Most of these areas are vulnerable because of the high levels of poverty of the people living there. The absence of prior site development for housing and occupation of flood zones by large populations aggravates flooding risk and its adverse associated impacts such as malaria. But the floods may also be caused by rain water because of climate change. The number of people affected by flooding and linked economic losses have increased considerably in Niamey in recent years. Hydro meteorological hazards (droughts, floods and winds) are dominant. For example, the flood of 2013 caused loss of 26 lives, 75 347 people affected, 13 000 ha of rain fed and irrigation schemes flooded at a cost of 32 billion CFA francs (Ousmane, 2014).

Health risks recorded in Niamey are linked primarily to diseases, traffic accidents and pollution. The presence of these risks in the city are due to high population densities and inadequate infrastructure and service provision. Communicable diseases such as malaria, as well as HIV and other STIs pose formidable challenges. Niamey receives many foreign visitors and newcomers to the city from rural areas and is a commercial center; all these factors affect health risks across the city. There is a gradual increase of malaria incidence since 2004 with the risk being highest in young children (under 5) due to their low antimalarial immunity. In Niger, malaria remains endemic and epidemic and is the leading cause of morbidity and mortality especially in children under five years. It is a major public health problem not only due to its high mortality and morbidity but also its socio-economic consequences. During floods, the presence of sewage and unsanitary facilities further exacerbate malaria in the city.

The consequences of these risks are increasing vulnerability, loss of livelihoods, worsening poverty, insecurity and marginalization of affected populations. Malaria is observed every year during the rainy season (August-September). The warm period (April-May) of 2015 has

recorded exceptional cases of meningitis that caused loss of life although the situation has been addressed. The level of vulnerability and resilience of a household or a community to one or more risks depends on human factors, socio-economic, institutional, cultural, resources mobilized and resources dedicated to the management of these risks. The frequency and intensity of events are also factors increasing the vulnerability of populations.

In this context, the issue of risk assessment, disaster prevention and risk management should be at the center of development policies in Niamey in Niger. The country has a National Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction in place. However, implementation remains inadequate due to, amongst other factors, weak government capacity and weak capacity among vulnerable populations to cope with the adverse consequences of risks calls (Balla, 2013). This situation also reflects the inability of the state to cope with the multitude of interacting urban risks. In addition, certain risk management strategies exist to enable an integrated assessment and dynamic adaptation and mitigation of its effects, but these strategies have not yet been combined in a way to be useful to vulnerable populations. As such, prevention and effective management of short, medium and long term disaster risk are required, as well as extensive research on the nature and extent of major risk to improve the situation, especially in the case of floods and epidemics Niamey.

4. Infrastructure, demography and urban-rural linkages, in particular around the subject of conflict and migration

The West African region has major infrastructure deficiencies. For example, only 10% of the total population have access to electricity. In rural areas, this proportion may be less than 1%. There is a significant need for tailored development plans through which risks could be better managed, both in rural and urban areas (DARA, 2013). The complex demographic distribution characteristics render the development of infrastructure particularly challenging (IBRD, 2011). Further, the poor state of Niger's infrastructure adversely affects economic growth. For example, the poor state of the road network has reduced per capita growth by 0.56 percentage point in recent years and infrastructure deficiencies hinder the productivity of public and private companies. Roads, energy, water supply, sanitation, and national ICT networks are concentrated in urban areas, particularly around Niamey with surrounding rural areas having a marked absence or insufficiency of such services Only 11% of households

overall and 52% of urban households have the privilege of having access to an improved water source (DARA, 2013).

5. Youth / Children

Young people and adolescents represent a significant segment of the population in most developing countries. In Niger, young people and adolescents from 10 to 24 years account for almost 29% (83% live in rural areas) [1] of the total population estimated at 17.1 million inhabitants (RGPH, 2012). They are a fragile and vulnerable target population and in the absence of adequate supervision and guidance through family, social and other circles are often poorly informed about sexuality and responsible parenthood. This is especially the case in the cities, where early sexual experience (15.1 years for females and 20.4 years for boys) is commonplace. Using very little modern methods of contraception over 36% of adolescents have had at least one child at the age of 17 years with an average rate of 7.5 children per woman (the highest rate in the world). Abortion rates are increasingly high and often the consequences are fatal. Furthermore, youth / adolescents are the most vulnerable to STI / HIV / AIDS: 75.6% of boys aged 15-25 have heard of AIDS, against 42.5% for females (87.5% in urban areas, 47.7% in rural areas) [2]; Only 28% of young people aged 15-24 using a condom during intercourse while the average sexual partners is around three. On the sociocultural level, girls are subject to greater discrimination than boys in education (school enrollment rate is 34.1% in Niger with 26.9% for girls; 78.4% of girls aged 15-25 are out of school) (UNFPA, 2002).

The data collected on child discipline within the EDSN-MICS 2012 reveal that most children experience violence in the home environment as part of their education. Indeed, 67% of children aged 2-14 years suffer corporal punishment and for 29% of them these punishments are severe. The percentage of children victims of severe corporal punishment varies effect of 29% nationally and 40% among children separated from their father (EDSN-MICS, 2012). Children martyred in their childhood often become 'Men outlaws'. According to data from the Statistical Yearbook of the Ministry of Justice relating to the period 2009-2011, 981 case of minors in conflict with the law were counted, among whom 90% are boys. These statistics show that children are certainly victims of violence, but some also inflict physical and sexual violence. The above situation raises complicated human rights issues. During a national forum

on children in Niger the following telling statement was made: 'we, boys and girls of Niger still suffering from non-fulfillment of our fundamental rights. Among us:

- Six out of ten children live in poverty;
- Every second child suffers from malnutrition;
- One in five children dies before the age of five years;
- Two out of five children have never been to school;
- Eight out of ten children are denied an environment with adequate sanitation;
- a high proportion of children are not registered at birth.

Us girls, are victims of numerous violations of our rights: early and forced marriage, non-schooling and schooling.

- Six out of ten girls between the ages of 15-19 years are married, and one in three girls is married before the age of 15;
- Four out of 10 girls do not have the same chance to start studying;
- Nine out of ten girls between the ages of 13-16 years do not have the chance to go to college (MP, 2013).

6. Women and development

For decades, women have been at the center of development issues and debates. Indeed, there is a well established literature on the issue of integration of women in developing countries into the economic and social development of their country (Colette, 1996).

Key distinctions are often made between rural women and their urban counterparts.

The issue of women's participation and contribution to development processes is a long standing concern. In Niger, women are increasingly visible and participative in political and economic agendas and growing calls for "empowerment" of women in development (Ziguélé, 2012). Economic empowerment of women is recognized as a key factor in poverty reduction and economic growth. Through economic and social empowerment, women become powerful vectors of change (Fatima, 2013).

In Niger, as in most West African countries, women play an important role in the informal sector, thereby contributing to the development of the economies of their countries (Mahamane, 2008). However, in most cases their role and contribution to this sector is not formally recognized or documented and thus escapes national accounts (Fatima, 2013). In

Niger, the contribution of women in economic and social development is through mainly agriculture, petty trade, wage employment and politics. The contribution of women in agricultural production activities in rural areas is well known however, less is formally known for women in urban areas. As such, the role of women in the social and economic urban development of Niger requires greater attention and research. Women are often more vulnerable than men to natural disasters since their access to the means of production is more limited and gender-based discrimination has the effect of increasing women's vulnerability to climate disasters such as drought (FAO, 2010)

7. Conclusion

African urban populations like those of Niamey in Niger face multiple risks that affect human life. These risks are influenced by the combination of current development processes and deeply embedded historical structural forces and development patterns. Understanding, characterising and analysing the broad spectrum of urban risks are prerequisites for any action to reduce or manage disaster risk in urban centres. In Niamey we have identified multiple predominant and interacting risks relating to health security, conflict and violence, agricultural productivity, education and employment all in the context of a changing climate. In Niger, most of these risks have not been the subject of extensive study and those analysed show that Niameyens become more exposed and vulnerable given the combined effect of external and internal risk factors to the city. Risk reduction and strengthening resilience for urban dwellers in Niamey is essential. Governance of urban risks in Niamey is a challenge for the Urban ARK Programme to investigate.

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