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Youth inclusion in labour markets in Niger: Gender dynamics and livelihoods

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Abstract
This paper uses a mixed methods approach to identify factors that challenge and enable young adults' inclusion in the world of work in Niger, through a gender-streamlined analysis of different poverty trajectories of livelihoods and how these are affected by training, education and migration. We find a high prevalence of self-employment activities in rural and urban contexts in the Tahoua and Zinder regions, characterised by low security of income flows, gendered professions and asset-dependent pathways to escape poverty. Among the barriers to labour inclusion, high education fees drastically reduce job prospects, particularly for the poorest. Those accessing schooling attest to the lack of stable offers or civil service contracts, instead engaging in informal service provision. The dearth of savings and the unaffordability of productive assets (land, vehicles) hinder the ability to start an investment. Internal and international migration is seen as a method of occupational upgrading within predominantly non-poor trajectories by young people who can save and invest capital upon return, but it is a capital-intensive and risky investment that may be unaffordable for the poorest. Changing norms influence youth labour trajectories. Divorce and remarriage rates are higher for young women and efforts to obtain training require careful renegotiations of gender and generational norms, including working in innovative ways within local social contexts.

Keywords
Youth, Labour inclusion, Gender, Poverty, Niger

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Résumé
Dans le présent article, nous combinons des méthodes mixtes visant à identifier les facteurs remettant en question et permettant l'inclusion des jeunes adultes dans le monde du travail au Niger. Pour ce faire, nous avons opté pour une analyse de genre portant sur différents parcours dans un contexte de pauvreté et sur l'impact de la formation, de l'éducation et de la migration. Nous constatons une forte prévalence de l'auto-entreprenariat informel dans les contextes ruraux et urbains des régions de Tahoua et de Zinder, caractérisées par une faible sécurité des revenus, des professions genrées et la dépendance aux ressources comme échappatoire à la pauvreté. Les frais de scolarité élevés sont un des obstacles à l'inclusion professionnelle. Ils réduisent considérablement les perspectives d'emploi, en particulier chez les plus démunis. Les individus scolarisés témoignent de l'absence d'offres stables ou de contrats de service public, et s'engagent plutôt dans la prestation de services informels.

L'absence d'épargne et le caractère inabordable des ressources (terrains, véhicules) nuisent à l'investissement. Les migrations internes et internationales sont perçues comme une opportunité professionnelle chez les jeunes les moins pauvres en mesure d'épargner et d'investir du capital lors de leur retour. Mais il s'agit d'un investissement très coûteux et risqué, souvent inabordable pour les plus démunis. L'évolution des normes influence les parcours professionnels des jeunes. Les taux de divorce et de remariage sont plus élevés chez les jeunes femmes. L'accès à la formation implique la remise en question des normes sexo-spécifiques et générationnelles, en travaillant notamment de façon innovante en phase avec les contextes sociaux locaux.

Introduction

The problem of high youth unemployment in Niger, as across sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), was framed in development literature of the early 2000s as one of tackling the youth bulge by reaping the potential from a demographic dividend through youth inclusion in labour markets, rather than risking a further rise in youth gangs and political unrest (World Bank, 2007; AHDR, 2016). In a post-structural adjustment Niger, policy and international non-governmental organisation (I-NGO) programmes have focused on employment creation through market-based entrepreneurship. This contrasts with attempts to stimulate labour absorption through more substantial national and local 'developmental state' reforms (e.g. Wade, 2018) devoted, for instance, to youth absorption in farming, manufacturing (accounting only for 6% of GDP in 2016) and public sector jobs and improving youth capacities through education and vocational training.

Recently, the entrepreneurship approach to youth inclusion in employment in Africa has been criticised, with some suggesting that the study of youth inclusion is disadvantaged by framing the problem as unemployment or lack of economic agency, when instead most youth are in work but underemployed and working in a challenging and precarious labour market (Dolan and Rajak, 2016; Ayele et al., 2017). Further, problems arise from terms such as 'migrant' and 'entrepreneur' – aggregate categories which obscure the range of migrant experiences and the range of 'self-employed' jobs, some of which may even involve earnings less than those from farm labour (ILO, 2015; Ayele et al., 2017). In extremely marginalised communities, newly formed businesses struggle to scale up production or services offered as the demand does not exist to absorb increased production, so they remain small – a problem that is exacerbated when the newly trained compete with each other, driving down prices for their products/services (Bateman et al., 2011). Moreover, in an era of low state intervention, the entrepreneurialism of youth assumes greater self-reliance among young people to solve the problem of inclusion (Herrera, 2017), which may be a barrier for the poor youth given their weak networks and capabilities (i.e. level of education, vocational skills, access to capital, assets).

'Young people' may be considered as the demographic representation of an age group, broadly referring in our study to individuals aged 18–35 years.[1] Youth is a concept deployed in this analysis to capture young people's socioeconomic and political positioning in this unique historical conjuncture, where political, economic, climatic and demographic

[1] While these definitions tend to vary, we focus on individuals aged 18 and over, which avoids interviewing individuals that in some categorisations are classified as minors. This 18+ categorisation is used in various other analyses (e.g. OECD, 2019).

processes converge to create intersecting disadvantages. In this paper, we interpret 'youth' as a social group that occupies a distinct place in power structures and historical processes and is defined by intersecting injustices *vis-à-vis* older generations (Herrera, 2017). We further characterise youth culturally in terms of kinship, hierarchies of power and responsibility, with the representation of 'being part of a young generation' (Peatrik, 2020).[2]

We hypothesise that the decline in state support, which coincides with evolving intersecting political, economic, climatic and demographic challenges faced by youth in Niger at this particular historical conjuncture, together with poor educational endowments will lead to fundamentally different patterns of labour inclusion. Migration, informal education, vocational training and networks act as prominent channels of inclusion and are forcing changes in gender and generational norms to enable young people to have the flexibility necessary to achieve autonomy and escape poverty. While these processes are not necessarily new, the context, drivers and manifestations have evolved. For example, the role of vocational training within a greater reliance on NGOs and some informal labour market inclusion processes are new, in contrast to former formalisation of employment in the public sector and to the former availability of infrastructural and welfare investments. In addition, the impact of declining farm size and yield, privatisation and costs of living have changed. As such, this new informal labour market inclusion and the precariousness of young people appear to evolve on a different basis.

The paper identifies factors which challenge and those which enable involvement in various livelihoods among young women and men in Niger through the analysis of different poverty trajectories. It asks:

How do intersecting macro, meso and micro vulnerabilities affect the quality of youth inclusion in labour markets and their ability to move out of and remain out of poverty over time?

How do different forms of training (formal school, Quranic education, NGO-based and other training) affect youth inclusion?

How does migration affect the integration of young people into the world of work in ways that are conducive to (sustained) poverty escapes?

How do these models vary by gender, generation and area of residence?

To answer these questions, the paper applies a mixed methods approach to inspect various poverty trajectories, identifying how young people in Niger experience chronic poverty pathways, how some realise sustained poverty escapes, or transitionary escapes or

[2] Peatrik (2020) deconstructs the conceptual toolboxes around concepts such as 'young people' (as per the demographic dimension like an age category, or as per the cultural evolution of the human relations behind the term) or 'young generation', which are distinct in contours and use from the connected, old-fashioned concepts of 'cadet social' ('social non-firstborn') or of being 'junior'.

impoverishment. Each trajectory considers how multiple qualitative drivers of escape and descent – usually in combination – affect youth inclusion in labour markets.

The paper reveals a new mode of inclusion emerging from a highly constrained world faced by youth in Niger. Compared to the generations preceding them, young adults (aged 18–35) are found to be economically vulnerable, with increasingly few possibilities to own productive assets (farm land, a rent-free home, livestock, a motorbike, a driving licence, a sewing machine), obtain post-primary education and skills, or access employment in the civil service or manufacturing. In a period of low state development, heightened neo-liberalism and insecurity, the inclusion of youth in rural and urban labour markets is increasingly precarious and characterised by a variety of off- and on-farm self-employment activities in the informal sector. At the same time, this conjuncture also offers rural and urban youth visible possibilities for change, particularly those youth interviewed in the qualitative study sites who are actively challenging gender and generational norms (environmental, among others), thus forging new livelihoods and taking advantage of technological advances.

With little in the way of formal credit or savings mechanisms, for young men escaping poverty and accumulating starting capital most often depends on access to funds in order to finance migration (i.e. transport costs). This is primarily a male pattern, and only half of the chronically poor can muster the savings through relatives or via savings from work. Those who work as local labourers can only access short-term piecework or contract work and appear not to move out of poverty. Some of those who migrate become poor again when they return home. The more successful migrants are those whose earnings are not consumed by large family and kin networks prior to return and are able to bring home some capital. This accrued capital, together with informal training and skills acquired during the migration journey (through local mentors, the migration itself or by observing others), is used to establish small businesses back home. Those young male-owned small businesses which thrive – whether through support and training from relatives or using capital and training from migration – are largely found in the transport sector (taxi driving, garages), import-export (from migration links) and technology repair (mobile phones, computers, printing services). Entry in education-based salaried employment for the lucky few can also lead to sustained escapes (often with the addition of other income-earning activities).

Young women and women who are poor or vulnerable (to abuse or abandonment) respond to the pressure of young men's underemployment and migration by increasing their independent income generation. They increase their labour market involvement in order to meet the costs of their children's basic needs, their health costs and their critical

responsibility of funding their children's primary education. Compared to women in their mid-adulthood or older, young women experience a substantial rise in the scale and array of goods traded and services provided (grain and food processing, home-based work and sales), with the lucky few moving from petty trade to small businesses, and from there to diversification into several businesses. Job training, often proposed in the form of 'second chance education', encounters serious limitations in its financing. NGOs often finance or offer training support in some of these livelihood trajectories (such as learning how to process farm goods into new products, preserve a wider array of foods, or tailoring). More sustained escapes are associated with NGOs that form female credit and cooperative groups, which enable women to set prices as a group and diversify into additional businesses.

These pathways are accompanied by changing norms and networks. Young women's efforts to obtain training are preceded by careful efforts to renegotiate gender and generational norms, including working in innovative ways within their social context and by challenging and adapting social norms. Young women divorce and remarry more frequently than women in mid or late adulthood. Stigmatisation, beating and other forms of domestic abuse continue to be potential outcomes of intra-marital conflict, including conflict relating to participation in the labour market, and neither justice nor conflict resolution is simple or straightforward to achieve through traditional processes. However, the decisive action taken by women to work as traders or to seek training opportunities within and outside of the household is a reflection of improved agency, despite the 'structured inherited spaces available to them' (Cooper, 1997). We also find that there is support for female agency from senior adult men, who believe that young men should not subject young women to domestic abuse for trading, attesting somewhat to the critical role of female entrepreneurial work in Niger in the context of the rising economic and political challenges facing young people.

Some young women and men also draw on support from and reinvent social networks, with examples including women participating in informal credit groups or formal tontines and men leaving gangs – characterised by delinquency (Abdoulkader, 2013) – to join support groups. Support includes enhanced social and economic inclusion via forms of credit, mutual support to meet needs (including ceremonial needs for men to move into adulthood) and sharing ideas about business possibilities and job or migration opportunities. Notably, young men and women also use these alliances to mobilise themselves as a group to solve problems faced in their wider local communities, such as water shortages.

Lastly, throughout the analysis we note that these trajectories are relatively more static for rural youth, whose primary occupation remains grounded in, or is often linked to, agricultural production.

Rural areas tend to be home to youth that are more vulnerable to trajectories of impoverishment or chronic poverty and must resort to activities such as begging. Diversification opportunities within and outside of agriculture are intermittent and it is often challenging to find them, as is selling processed products and services in areas that are dependent on demand from low-income local farmers and farm labourers.

The paper is structured as follows. In Section 1, we define the poverty trajectories used and present the research methods underpinning the analysis. In Section 2, we analyse youth inclusion policies from an institutional and community perspective from 2000–2010 and 2010–2020. Section 3 provides an overview of current key drivers of the quality of inclusion in labour markets, focusing on education and training, livelihoods, migration, and changes in gender and generational norms. Section 4 explores the poverty trajectories of youth inclusion in the world of work in Niger, and Section 5 presents some concluding remarks.

1. Data and methods

The data sources and methods of analysis in this study are presented briefly below and detailed in Annexes and in the methods article (da Corta et al., 2021, forthcoming). Throughout, we distinguish the experiences of youth on different poverty trajectories (see Box 1). In our analysis, youth are generally defined as individuals aged between 18 and 35 years old. This means that our sample mainly comprises individuals for whom (often new) work and marriage were the key life cycle stages.

Box 1. Poverty trajectories referenced in this study

- **Chronic poverty** is long-term poverty that persists over many years, or even a lifetime, and which is often transmitted inter-generationally, and this is how it is viewed in the qualitative data. In the quantitative data, it refers to households that are poor in both survey years.
- **Impoverishment** refers to a poor person or household becoming poorer, or somebody who is non-poor slipping into poverty. In the quantitative data, it refers to households who were non-poor in the 2011 survey and poor in 2014. In the qualitative data, we examine both impoverishment and transitory poverty escapes, and we also look at the distance moved into poverty (see Annex C for wellbeing groups).
- **Poverty escapes** refers to households that escape poverty over time. In the panel data, this refers to households who were poor in 2011 and non-poor in 2014. In the qualitative data, we are also able to explore sustained poverty escapes (i.e. escapes sustained for five years). In the qualitative data, we also look at the distance moved away from poverty, with three wellbeing levels within the 'poor' category and three levels within the 'non-poor' category (see Annex C for more details).
- **Never poor** refers to households who never fell into poverty during their lifetime. In the panel analysis, consists of households that were non-poor in both survey years.

Source: Adapted from Shepherd et al. (2014).

Quantitative methods

This study analyses the Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS) (*L'Enquête nationale sur les conditions de vie des ménages et de l'agriculture, or ECVM/A*), a nationally representative longitudinal survey of 3,436 households in rural and urban areas of Niger that took place in 2011 and 2014. Descriptive analysis of survey data is accompanied by multinomial logistic regressions to investigate drivers of different poverty trajectories across all households, and also restricted to the subset of youth-headed households. Auxiliary regressions are also conducted at the individual level to investigate correlates of salaried employment of young adults. In the survey, salaried employment is defined as the professional categories of 'superior executive', 'middle executive' or 'master agent', 'qualified worker or employee', 'non-qualified worker or employee', or 'labourer'. We disaggregate these into executive agents and qualified workers in one group, and non-qualified workers or labourers as a separate group. Executives and qualified salaried employment are chosen

for analytic ease as proxies for resilient youth inclusion in labour markets, given wider literature pointing to the importance of salaried, stable employment in pathways out of poverty (Diwakar and Shepherd, 2018). However, while certain forms of salaried work re better paid than day work, private salaried work by month is not necessarily stable, as discussed in the findings.

The models rely on baseline values of household (characteristics of head, assets, livelihood) and area/regional regressors, and shocks from the latest survey wave. All variables, summary statistics and regression results are presented in Annex D.

Qualitative methods

The *Enquête Collective Rapide d'Identification des conflits et des groupes Stratégique*s (ECRIS) framework used by Laboratoire d'Etudes et de Recherche sur les Dynamiques Sociales et le Développement Local (LASDEL) offers an opportunity for researchers and other actors involved as research stakeholders to jointly develop work on a common problematic and appropriate it. The ECRIS usually comprises of: (1) a preparatory phase, based on a benchmark survey, to identify target groups (also called strategic groups) and local issues related to the research themes; (2) a theoretical phase to clarify the ECRIS framework with its participants so as to collectively determine the target groups and identify provisional qualitative indicators for the surveys; and (3) a practical phase, alternating between surveying the sites targeted during the preparatory phase and group sessions for analysing and summarising the data collected. The ECRIS took place in Niamey and surveys were carried out over two days. We identified five strategic groups: (1) actors from NGOs, associations and unions; (2) teachers/trainers; (3) members of communities, such as local administrative and customary authorities or young people; (4) young employees and their employers; and (5) institutional (state and non-state) public and private actors, and technical and financial partners. Overall, 27 interviews were carried out as well as systematic observations in the survey sites.

The Chronic Poverty Advisory Network (CPAN) method was sequenced in each of the four sites as follows.

1. Group discussions with knowledgeable long-term residents on key events and systemic changes.
2. Focus group discussions (FGDs) with men and women (separately), with equal numbers of young adults and older adults. These comprised of 16 group discussions of approximately 250 participants in total, and were designed to gather local perspectives on: (a) wellbeing (six rich-to-poor groups, with respondents from a range of socioeconomic statuses and occupations); (b) gender and generational social relations; and (c) Domestic abuse and disputes adjudication.

3. Youth life histories, sampled from the FGDs, for youth on different trajectories. Overall, 49 life histories, balanced between young men and women, were conducted and researchers were encouraged to identify pathways and processes underlying movements in and out of employment.
4. Key informant interviews (KIs) designed to address questions following life histories and group discussions: (a) relational KIs with people influential in the life of the youth (spouses, parents, trainers, mentors, employers, creditors); and (b) district-level and national KIs.

Mixed methods data integration and analysis

A key goal of this paper is to integrate some of the LASDEL and CPAN qualitative methodologies in order to examine the access of young people to employment as a catalyst for their social inclusion. A point of integration was the 'axis' of the ECRIS approach – the focus on conflicts between groups as a 'window' or gateway to understanding youth inclusion (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan, 2014). The combined CPAN/LASDEL approach centralises conflict and uncovers 'invisible' social and bureaucratic norms as key causal drivers of the quality of youth inclusion in labour markets, as well as key moments in poverty pathways when young people negotiate with those more powerful than them and which enable or constrain further movement. The qualitative fieldwork in peri-urban and rural Zinder and Tahoua regions was conducted in 2020. The two rounds of field visits (January and March) involved 18 FGDs, 49 life history interviews (LHIs) and 4 KIs, which were used to analyse the evolution of youth inclusion in these regions of Niger.

Both the quantitative data and qualitative data are triangulated and build on the wider literature on poverty dynamics in Niger to contextualise the study findings. The qualitative data pays particular attention to panel survey years, while exploring in more detail the processes and trajectories of poverty over the respondent's lifetime. As the qualitative data extends beyond the period covered by the survey, an escape from poverty in the quantitative data could turn into either a sustained or transitory escape from poverty in the qualitative data. The analysis was also sequenced, with preliminary analysis of panel data offering insights to unpack in more detail through the qualitative investigations, after which a more thorough quantitative analysis of the panel dataset was conducted that sought to build on the qualitative data findings.

2. Niger policy for youth inclusion: institutional and community perspectives

In this section, we briefly present the perceptions of institutional actors recorded during the ECRIS (2019), focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of policy on youth entrepreneurship in Niger. We compare these with the perceptions of long-term resident community actors and from gender-disaggregated focus group discussions on the impact of government policy, more generally, on youth employment and welfare. In addition to the summary presented below, details on existing national policies are laid out in Annex A and on institutional and community perspectives in Annex B.

Youth policy on entrepreneurship: perceptions of institutional actors

We interviewed officials we met during the ECRIS, asking them how past and present youth policy provisions had evolved and about challenges to their implementation. Institutional actors spoke of a series of policies established in recent decades on employment, population growth, health, education and training, all of which influenced the socioeconomic conditions of the youth. These interviews and supporting documentation reveal a **policy focus on youth and on entrepreneurship as a mechanism for change** (see Annex A).

First, we note that current employment policies are more focused on the needs of young people compared to previous decades, during which 'they were approached in a generic way' as underlined by a member of the Ministry of Youth Entrepreneurship, who added, '*[n]owadays policies are focused toward young people and their improvement*'. Notably, there are policies targeting children's rights, girls and women's health, family planning and women's rights. Initiatives also involve education (see Annex A), agriculture, the environment and climate change (soil recovery, agricultural inputs, development of market gardening, breeding) as well as entrepreneurship. On the latter, current policies emphasise entrepreneurship in particular by promoting self-employment, which it was argued should generate more jobs for young people and '*thus mark the youth's own responsibility in increasing their economic agency and achieving their development goal*s'. This could imply a form of neo-liberal policymaking, leaning towards greater self-responsibility of the policy recipient with a limited institution-led policy framework applied.

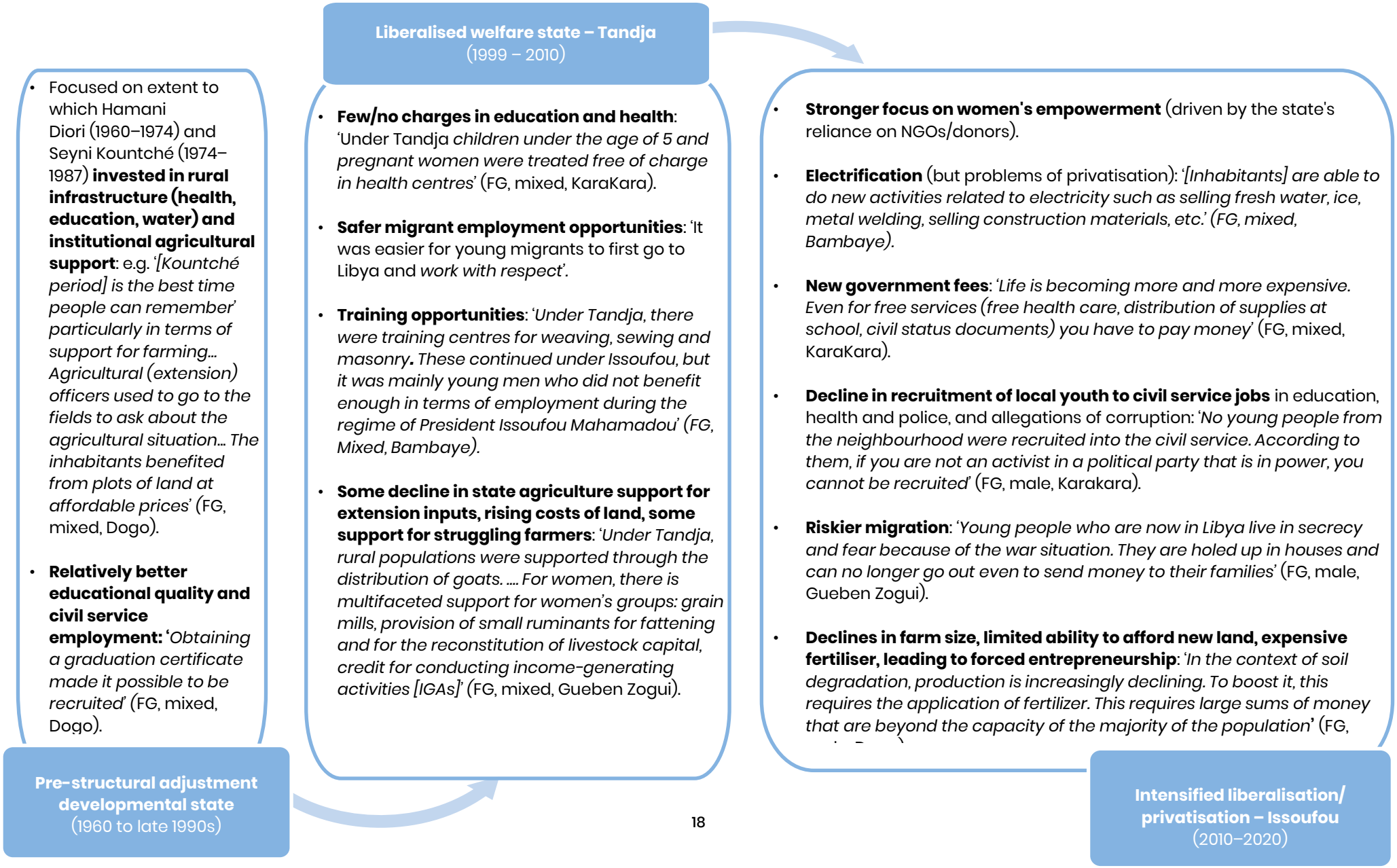
Second, whilst institutional actors emphasised that there is a real political commitment to youth at the state level, they also deplored the lack of financial and other resources being mobilised to support these policies. Reflecting these conditions, Niger is low down in the league table of tax-to-GDP ratios and state revenues have only slowly increased over time (IMF, 2019). According to an official from the Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Security, governments often make statements followed by weak actions. In fact, financial resources to support youth policies come mostly from external aid rather than internal

funding. Moreover, an analysis of policy documents reveals the plurality of ministries involved in pro-youth initiatives, bringing with it problems of coordination. One of the objectives of the Ministry of Entrepreneurship, established in 2016, was to centralise resources and actions undertaken, but the Ministry not yet been able to resolve these problems. For example, a concern raised within the Ministry by one of its members is that 'we risk having double statistics'. In addition, we observe the obsolescence of services and the geographic dispersal of their locations across the capital.

Decline in developmental state interventions: perceptions of community actors

The structure of political relations in the village and in the city often makes use of sponsorship and clientelism to manage decision-making processes in Tahoua and Zinder. Across Niger, various modes of governance coexist and the state has difficulties in occupying its legitimate place in the development process, in both rural and urban areas. In urban municipalities, the presence of the state and its governance is visible through the availability of several technical services.

Figure 1. Summary of respondent perceptions on regime periods



On the other hand, these services are subject to structural problems linked to insufficient financial and human resources, under pressure from the weight of local political power games, and subject to clientelist practices[3] in the procurement of public contracts and the appointment of civil servants. In rural communities, despite the advent of democratisation and decentralisation, we observe a decline in public services and the absence of the state. In contrast, there has been an accentuated rise in the power of national NGOs working as subcontractors for I-NGOs or other development actors. In both rural and urban environments in Tahoua and Zinder, the practice of sponsorship is predominant, provided by locals who have made their fortune or career either in town or through international migration to coastal countries in the region. With decentralisation, the canton chiefdom has been deprived of some of its powers in favour of the mayors, although it retains strong symbolic and political powers in the rural world. We can therefore observe that decision-making and governance practices are characterised more by a clientele-sponsorship model than a participatory model.[4]

Focus groups in Zinder and Tahoua also commented on the role of state intervention under different political regimes since independence (see Figure 1 for a summary and Annex B). They spoke of **declining state intervention in agriculture over time, rising costs of access to education and health, and reduced recruitment of local youth in salaried public sector jobs**. This has led to limited poverty reduction in the country as a whole (Figure 2). Although efforts have been ongoing for service delivery improvement as well as for the decentralisation of financing sectors like education[5], in-depth discussions indicated that these have coincided with economic, climatic and demographic pressure on youth endowments of farm and water resource depletion. These triggers are coupled to competitive employment prospects, rising real costs of living and of productive assets, and poor educational endowments, as elaborated in Sections 3 and 4. These intersect to challenge youth inclusion in labour markets in Niger. In Section 3, we focus on three specific drivers of youth inclusion – education and training, youth livelihoods and changing gender

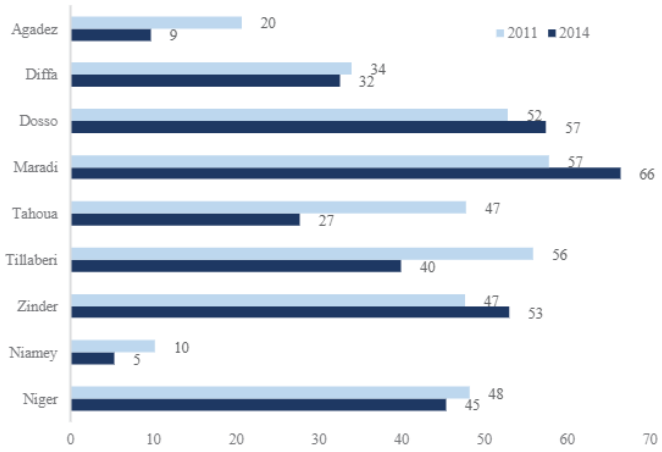
[3] Olivier de Sardan (2004) underlines that 'the recent generalization of a multiparty system has grafted [in addition] an immense and omnipresent system of **partisan preferences**, from the top to the bottom of the state apparatus: electoral clientelism - and its post-electoral and pre-electoral fallout [18] - has superimposed itself over other pre-existing forms of clientelism' (p. 6; authors translation).

[4] Although participatory and inclusive models for decision-making are an increasingly recurrent narrative used in the development practice and NGO world, positing that local actors should have a say in decision-making and in the management of public actions, this is not a reality for Niger in practice. Moreover, the participatory model for decision-making comes up against three major criticisms: (1) the centralist and authoritarian model remains largely dominant; (2) local actors are only invited to participate on minor and secondary points of discussion; (3) in villages and neighbourhoods, participation in fact covers many games of power and influence, such as the so-called 'elite capture' phenomena (Chauveau, 1994).

[5] As example of decentralisation of resources the National Agency for the Financing of Local Authorities (ANFICT), created in 2014, has an education desk since 2018 which allows funding to regions for secondary education and to municipalities for primary education. Funds are used for i) constructing establishments, ii) buying equipment and iii) providing grants to school management committees like the CGDES (*Comités de Gestion Décentralisée des Etablissements Scolaires*) for primary schools and COGES (*Comité de Gestion des Etablissements Scolaires*) for secondary schools. The grants to CGDES and COGES are today the only source of government funding arriving directly to schools and managed by schools to finance part of the plans to improve quality of education and set-up action plans for preparedness, crisis management and response.

and generational norms – which provide context for our findings on poverty mobility in Section 4.

Figure 2. Poverty incidence in 2011 and 2014 (%)



Source: World Bank (2017).

3. Context today – key drivers of beneficial inclusion: education, types and quality of livelihoods, and generational and gender norms

Summary: Quality of education, quality of livelihoods, and changes in gender and generational norms each shape the quality of youth inclusion in labour markets and poverty dynamics. The education of youth varies across public education, Quranic education, training tracks and combinations of them. At national level and in Tahoua and Zinder, state school attendance is higher for youth than older generations and for young men compared to young women. However, a main barrier to accessing education in both Tahoua and Zinder is reported to be the overall school fees collected at school level – for secondary schooling along with those of the *Comité de Gestion des Etablissements Scolaires* (COGES), which hamper retention of the poorest youth in particular. Public schooling in the two regions also has reduced retention due to infrastructure and teaching quality issues as well as, for the poorest, long distances to school, issues of hunger and humiliation linked to inability to cover costs. Quranic education is seen an important site for continued education in Tahoua and Zinder, particularly in the event of dropping out of state school. In the quantitative data, however, the shares of individuals recorded as having attended Quranic education are lower among youth compared to other adults (except for those in impoverished households).

Training or apprenticeships are another mode of learning available in Tahoua and Zinder, but training in the form of second chance education encounters serious limitations with financing. NGOs play a major role in the offering of activities, but there is a distinct bias in the selection of candidates for training that disproportionately benefits those with a certain level of education or stronger social networks, thus excluding the poorest and often women due to the funding or programme structure. Moreover, the main limitation of these educational means is inefficiency in supporting the start-up of or ensuring the continuity of an activity, which acts as real barriers to achieving the effective labour market inclusion of youth.

With low educational endowments and facing rising costs of services and basic needs with no coordinated government support to lay the foundations for improved welfare, youth may be stuck in farming or driven to find niches in a precarious local labour market, on weak terms and without capital to invest in trade. Rural youth engage in on- and off-farm day work or self-employment, and display a higher incidence of impoverishment than those in urban areas. Urban non-farm wage labour and business (rather than petty trade) are stronger. Migration – either internal wage labour migration or working in retail abroad – is observed from both areas too. However, the risks involved mean that many who migrate fall back into poverty, while other (often chronically poor) individuals are unable to find the start-up capital for migration in the first place.

The fortunes of young men and women in Niger are differently determined, but intertwined, in a context of significant changes in social norms and precariousness of occupations and the kinds of job opportunities they have access to. In Tahoua and Zinder, the need for income and involvement in new livelihoods thrusts youth into conflict with elders and spouses, which forces rapid changes in gender and generational norms to accommodate the new and difficult circumstances. Young women more often actively seek training and job opportunities at growing rates, and it is becoming more accepted by young generations that it is not only women who are experiencing the strongest economic hardship

that seek work. However, there are exceptions in other areas of the country or in some fundamentalist households in the middle class. In Tahoua and Zinder, male youth groups act as a support mechanism for finding work and solving daily hardships. They also organise and mobilise labour for community support to deal with health and water problems within the neighbourhood. A financial support function is provided by informal credit groups or formal tontines for women, enabling inclusion amidst pathways out of poverty.

To contextualise the study areas and better gauge our analyses of the next sub-sections on livelihoods, inclusion pathways and poverty, we briefly report some main characteristics of socio-normative practices, spanning religion to intra-household relationships.

In terms of **religious composition**, the populations of the Zinder and Tahoua regions are, like the whole country, predominantly Muslim (99%) followed by a minority of Christians (0.8%). The Muslim faiths practiced are rather diversified and segmented, but two main currents characterise the schools of faith followed. The first is the longstanding establishment of the Sufi brotherhoods: the *Tijaniyya* (still present in the regions) and the *Quadriyya* (formerly a predominant current, but today residual). The second current a fundamentalist one, with the *Izala* (of Nigerian origin) the main movement in the expansion of the last 20 years, but also accompanied by various other sects. The fundamentalist current's 20-year expansion is associated with young people returning from international migration to heavily Islamised areas, mainly northern Nigeria and Libya, which has contributed to the rapid growth in rural areas of the practice of more rigid forms of Islam. The Sufi brotherhoods are considered 'moderate' and tolerant currents, whereas the *Izala* is seen as an 'intolerant Salafist' current (Douada Hainikoye, 2015). Under the Izalists' influence, the practice of wearing a veil has become generalised among women, while the seclusion of women at home is growing in some areas (such as the Maradi region) or among some groups, but without becoming a major practice. There is a relevant presence of religious schooling, and particularly of Quranic education, among the educational and communal activities practiced in the country; see Dia et al. (2021) for an analysis in the Sahel region and Assane Igodoe and Salao (2021) for its characteristics in Niger.

The **standards for regulating marriage unions and intergenerational relations** have been changing in the last two decades. Particularly through the influence of the *Izala* movement, today it is common to reconsider the practice of marriage compensation – which is being reduced to a minimum, if not disappearing from common practice – or to denounce the tyranny of the elders over younger kinship (Meunier, 1998; Sounaye, 2016). Polygamy – in which men are legitimised by Islam to marry up to four women – is the customary marriage regime. It concerns around 20% of married men and one-third of married women (Harouna, 2008) and it is more common in rural than in urban areas. A variety of multifaceted socio-cultural and economic factors accompany religiosity as the norms regulating intra-marital relations in polygamous households. For instance, highly educated individuals are more likely to be either monogamous or bigamous and have fewer children, and this trend

concerns women more than men. For men, the more wives they can provide for, the more they earn in terms of social prestige. Particularly in rural areas, polygamy is combined with a high birth rate to promote the economic and social status of the household through the domestic and agricultural work of household members (Najoum, 2020), but this is not without its issues. Due to the scarcity of resources and the precariousness of the labour market, there is a generalisation of the formation of intra-household maternal microeconomies, where each wife of the household and her children live in isolation with their own income (Nguimfack, 2014). Rivalries (sexual, reproductive, economic and domestic) between co-wives, as well as conflicts between their respective children, are widespread in Niger and have important social repercussions (Olivier de Sardan, 2017), a finding which is also visible widely across West Africa (Fainzang and Journet, 1988). Nevertheless, certain forms of female solidarity may emerge and some women find in their status as co-wife a reduction in their obligations towards their husband.

With respect to the **distribution of tasks, budgets and decision-making within Nigerien households**, no matter the environment (rural or urban) or the couple's age group (young or older), men are typically expected to be responsible for all expenses related to household needs: accommodation, basic food, minimum clothing, health expenses and school expenses. The main male revenue-generating activities in rural areas are in agriculture, livestock and commerce. This notion is widely accepted in the literature for Niger, and our interlocutors during the FGDs in the two regions confirmed this acquired knowledge. Women are responsible for domestic tasks and generally earn through the breeding of small ruminants, the sale of cooked meals or condiments, the sale of market gardeners' products cultivated, or other small businesses such as the sale of mats. They also manage their own capital (livestock, furniture, land). However, these norms are beginning to change, as discussed below.

In rural areas, depending on the farm-household situation, agricultural and livestock activities may rank first or second in order of relevance. Collective field farming, where several generations work together, is increasingly rare, although we see an exception in Dogo (Zinder), where the family field is the site of collective work and the harvests are shared between the members of the family, but trade is the main source of income for our interlocutor (LH, male, Dogo). Men are primarily responsible for agricultural work and hold the majority of the land, but they are helped in certain tasks by women, who may also have a plot of land where they can produce crops for the household or for their own needs (e.g. sale of surplus to buy clothes or participating in social events). These aspects are discussed in Section 2.2. In this patriarchal system, the last word on important decisions concerning the family (recourse to health care, schooling, migration, etc.) generally belongs to the man.[6]

[6] 'Despite the diversity of their beliefs and practices, the ethnic groups in Niger share the same differentiated perception of male and female roles. In all these groups, family relations between men and women are built on the basis of a fundamental inequality between the man, head

Nevertheless, with the reduction in the availability of resources or migration opportunities, the presence of NGOs and the challenges of the multifaceted crises experienced, we notice a greater contribution of women in the family economy as well as their greater visibility in public spaces (in shops, income-generating activities, tontines, market gardening groups, women's organisations and municipal councils). As a result, as we argue in Section 2.3, young women today manage to contribute more financially to children's care (clothing, school fees, and health expenses) and to improving the quality of family meals. Some empowerment is achieved as a natural evolution of young women seeking to cater for novel needs when entering a new family life (negotiating and modifying intergenerational norms) and the world of work (to alleviate the economic precariousness of a household dependent only on the husband). Young women show a strategic interest in acquiring more autonomy and in increasing their participation in intra-household decisions thanks to the acquisition of worker status (compared to previous generations that were expected solely to take care of the household). However, the patrilineal management of capital or rights customary to Niger is not up for discussion in the process (the father, the husband or the brother decide officially on relevant household matters, whilst others can informally advise them).

3.1. Different forms of education and training

Quality of education, quality of livelihoods, and changes in gender and generational norms each shape the quality of youth inclusion in labour markets and poverty dynamics. According to nationally representative data, **Nigeriens experience severe deprivations in health, education, and income**. In 2019, Niger ranked lowest out of the 189 counties in the Human Development Index (HDI) (HDR, technical report, Niger, 2019), with education the lowest performing component of the index. Moreover, there are significant gender disparities in educational achievement, with 64% of women in Niger aged 15–19 never having been to school compared to 37% of men in the same age group in 2012 (INS, 2012). Enrolment in education without achieving literacy is also a widespread problem (Giovetti, 2019) and some of the KI interviews revealed that there is a structural inadequacy in current pedagogic curricula to help realise the desire for 'entrepreneurial solutions' for the youth proposed by national entrepreneurship action plans.

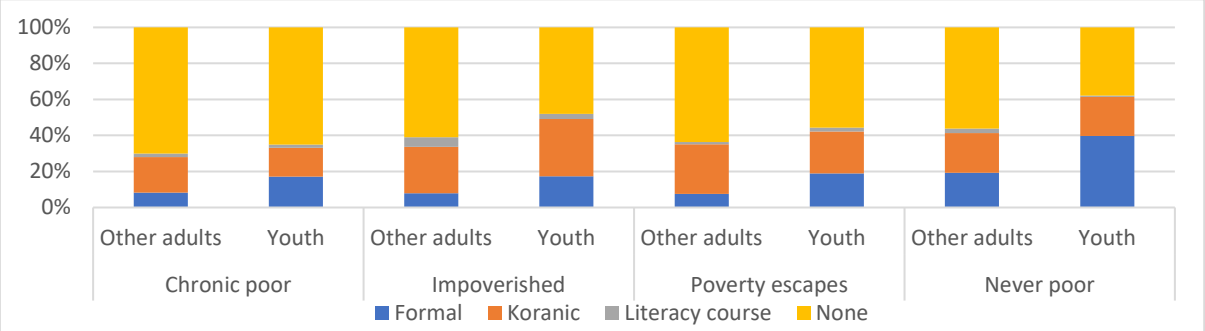
While there are many forms of learning complementary to formal public education, the focus in this analysis is on formal and Quranic education, due to their identification in the survey data and common references made to these modes of learning in the fieldwork. Specifically, in the study areas of Tahoua and Zinder, we examined youth participation in religious education and found a greater number of youth reporting qualitatively attending,

of the family and the woman, mother and wife' (Republic of Niger, 2008a: 18).

or having attended, Quranic schools (informal religious schools or religious centres; see Mohamed-Abdi, 2003) than the other forms of Arab-Islamic educational institutions that are present in the country (Dia et al., 2016; 2021; and for Niger, Assane Igodoe and Salao, 2021). The panel data reveals that a high share of the population has never attended school. Amongst adults who had accessed some form of learning over their lives, **the share of the population with a Quranic education is constant across generations**. In the qualitative data, a Quranic education is seen an important mode of continuing education in Tahoua and Zinder, particularly in the event of dropping out of state school. In the quantitative data, however, shares of people with a Quranic education are lower among youth than other adults in all trajectories except in impoverished households, where 32% of youth attended Quranic education compared to 26% of other adults. In terms of gender, women have slightly more recourse to Quranic education and vocational education but less non-formal education.[7]

In both the quantitative and qualitative data, **there is an increase in access to state education among youth compared to other adults** (Figure 3). Amongst young adults, rates of formal education tend to be higher across trajectories, from 17–18% for youth in households that have been in poverty in at least one survey year up to 40% for youth in never-poor households. Most of the interviewees who dropped out of education early attended literacy classes. In terms of gender, while more young women have some form of education compared to women of other ages, their shares are much lower than young men. For example, 25% of chronically poor young women have attended school, compared to 55% of chronically poor young men. Even amongst households that escape poverty, only 31% of young women compared to 62% of young men have attended school.

Figure 3. Type of school ever attended by poverty trajectory, baseline panel survey year



Source: Analysis of LSMS-ECVMA pooled data.

[7] 'Non-formal education' in the qualitative data refers to individuals learning a trade or skills from someone they know (such as business skills from an uncle or father or some carpentry or construction, but without any certificates).

However, **there are important barriers to inclusion in primary school that can account for Niger's low ranking for schooling** relative to the rest of SSA and in the Human Development Index (HDI). This is particularly pronounced amongst chronically poor households where, as expected, rates of young men and women without any education are particularly high (Figure 3). According to respondents, education costs particularly at secondary level, such as some informal fees associated to the COGES fees, have been introduced recently and represent a significant barrier to inclusion, such that even those who are neither rich nor poor (i.e. wellbeing level 4) find it difficult to meet school costs:

> *In our time, we only paid for the bag, everything was given by the school… Now there is the COGES (=school management committee) to pay, they only give a few notebooks and a blue and red pen. The rest of the materials are paid by the parents. The teachers also ask for money to pay for sweepers, duster and even chalk* (Interview 29, Escape, Bambeye).
>
> *SA and her husband (*wellbeing level *4) did not experience formal schooling but are sending their own children to school. They have 5 children: 3 boys and 2 girls all in school except the last one… The children do the tala tala (street trading) of bread during weekends and holidays to earn money to support their school fees and other costs. Nevertheless… the eldest son was temporarily expelled from school for not paying the COGES (school management committee) contribution of XOF 2,000 per year* (Interview 21, Escape, Karakara).

These fees reflect low levels of state financial aid to schools that particularly affect the capacity to retain children from poorest households, thus contributing to school expulsions. Furthermore, it is clear from our analysis that the level of information and accountability of education institutions about the fee rises and rates applied in the schooling system is perceived as opaque, as no respondent was able to identify what these fees were used for.[8] Even if the substantive modifications to the education system have been picking up on structural adjustment needs over the last 10 years[9], the perception of actors in Tahoua and Zinder appears still of a mixed protection towards vulnerable school children. For example, State financial aid in the form of a quarterly scholarship is perceived as only a partial solution. Parent respondents complain that the amount received is generally insignificant compared to school fees. Furthermore, students report often receiving it with a big delay and that a part of the scholarship is often reserved for parents.

[8] COGES fees are the only means to secure resource accumulation directly at the secondary school establishment level (used for example to repair benches, rebuild straw huts, and cover costs of some equipment for students and teachers). The national government contributes to this operation by paying subsidies to some COGES committees, but to date it does not exist any other mean than primary fees collection to decentralise funding directly towards local schools.

[9] For instance, as new education policy orientations applied since 2011, key informants (KIs) on education (Appendix A) note: the purchase in bulk of school equipment and supplies to support the effectiveness of free education by the Ministry of Primary Education, Literacy, Promotion of National Languages and Civic Education (equivalent to 3 billion FCFA per year on average between 2011 and 2016); the abolition of the first degree (primary) school leaving certificate in 2014; the launch of a curriculum reform including the introduction of national languages for the first cycle of apprenticeships; a decree emanated in December 2017 about the protection and support for young adolescent girls.

In this context, especially amongst the extreme poor, **formal education access and provision are hampered by a confluence of interlocking factors, including long distances to school, some practices of corporal punishment, poor academic performance, hunger and humiliation, poor infrastructure and teaching quality**. According to the KIs, only canteen schools in public primary education in Niger provide lunch, and these meet very specific criteria in nomadic areas tailored to the population's needs. In the qualitative data, the majority of the sample started primary education but dropped out after only a few years of study. For girls, early marriage and family responsibilities are additional reasons for dropping out (see Section 4.1.1).

For those who do not drop out, engagement in informal work or training alongside studies is the norm. After receiving primary education, young workers may engage in a variety of professions, with spells of studying (at a specialised level) while at the same time engaging in informal employment to both finance studies and further specialisations, as well as to contribute to the maintenance of the household. Secondary education is often beyond the reach of people in poverty. Descriptively, the panel data from the baseline year of 2011 indicated that fewer than 3% of adults living in poverty had completed education beyond the primary level. In the qualitative data, the need to feed and support themselves and their families often competes with the need to finance studies. The mixed methods analysis shows that acquiring vocational skills is a common form of learning in the datasets, through training by I-NGOs independently or through partnerships with vocational training centres (VTCs), by joining an apprenticeship, by becoming a trainer, or learning-by-doing by observing skilled workers or business ideas. Among youth who had recorded some years of secondary education as their highest level of learning in the panel data, 14% attended technical and professional school cycles rather than the general secondary cycle. The qualitative data reveals that most VTC programme participants were in fact better-off youth rather than poor ones, as participation generally implies a certain degree of pre-acquired skills, the availability of working materials and some fee payment, all of which prevent access for the most vulnerable.

Many local and international NGOs are mobilised through partnership frameworks with the government to implement programmes aimed at improving the livelihoods of vulnerable populations living in poverty. Job training is often proposed in the form of second chance education and encounters serious limitations in its financing. I-NGOs tend to substitute the state for this type of service provision, often either financing part of a programme or offering training directly using their own agents as trainers, or through a partnership with VTCs. Skills training[10] in several fields may be offered, including home economics and sewing, knitting, mechanics, metal construction, agroforestry, processing

[10] Examples of vocational training include a Support Fund for Vocational Training and Learning (FAFPA training), milk processing and literacy classes (Adaltchi group), electricity installation training (AJPANI Project), and food processing and moringa processing (soap making) (Guidan Ider).

and marketing of agricultural products and carpentry. The duration of the training ranges from one week to two years.

The skills acquired give learners the ability to develop or start an income-generating activity and thus to bring a real change in the course of life because they make it possible to meet daily needs and earn more if they find a stable market access for their activity. '*[T]wo years of training and certification in sewing has enabled her to earn money through this activity. She manages the money she earns and buys loincloths, earrings; she can contribute to ceremonies (baptism, marriage) and cover the transport costs to attend the ceremonies or funerals outside the village. Also, she buys nice clothing, biscuits and bean-based food for her son*' (Interviewee 9, TE, Dogo).

While most participants use the money from apprenticeships for family food expenses, education or social obligations (e.g. participating in social ceremonies), **some may also redistribute money received within their close entourage**. This allows women to engage in forms of mutual aid within the family (Attané, 2009). Interviewee 17 (CP, Karakara) '*received training on how to collect plastic bags for sale. She earned 80,000 FCFA*[11] *from the sale of plastic bags. She gave 20,000 FCFA to her husband, 10,000 FCFA to her mother and 5,000 FCFA to her sister. The rest of the money she bought clothes and shoes for her children*.' By offering varied access to training, I-NGOs also give some people the opportunity to become trainers for their peers, which provides a source of income. We notice that most of the professionals chosen to become trainers have been educated.

However, in spite of these provisions, two challenges arise: starting up an activity and ensuring the continuity of the activity. A key challenge when starting up an activity is accessing the comprehensive interventions by NGOs, which are sometimes perceived as more effective than cash transfers or other, less-supportive training schemes. For instance, comprehensive interventions enable skills training, combined with asset grants, organised credit groupings or tontine development or financial literacy training. Such interventions can enable youth to engage in the labour market successfully by developing a system of professional relations that will endure after the cessation of their training and thus reduce their vulnerability to, or allow them to escape from, poverty.

There is a risk found in the qualitative data that some comprehensive apprenticeships may be targeted to those who already have a certain level of education or stronger social networks, and thus do not necessarily benefit the poorest. In the sewing, embroidery and knitting sector, for example, when joining an apprenticeship it is common to collaborate with people already well established in the business. Most of the time this is with men, who have their own workshops as tailors. The strategy is to work in the workshop as an apprentice

[11] Franc of the Financial Community of Africa.

receiving a salary, or to rely on the indulgence of the boss who can lend his machines. For the majority, though, the need for an activity start-up fund is a significant obstacle.

> *In 2019, she participated with CFM (Tahoua) to a weeklong training on peanut oil extraction. They were 30 women to benefit from this training. She did the practice less than a month ago with a neighbour… They made the peanut paste, the peanut oil extraction and the meal. After the training, none of them performs the peanut oil extraction activity <u>because they did not have working materials to start-up an activity</u>* (Interview 15, TE, Gueben Zogui).

Accordingly, it appears that while some apprenticeships result in favourable skills knowledge, after their rollout they often do not provide the network for maintaining access to inputs of production or the demand for the newly trained, thus forcing them to quit or reduce their activity. For example, in sewing, embroidery and knitting, the strategy is to work only to order or simply to mend patched clothing. In addition, competition is fierce because the activity is widely practiced, in particular by women, as so many have been trained. Another strategy is to integrate women's groups who generally receive multiple support from I-NGOs (access to free training, production materials, capacity building from literacy courses, etc.). In addition, these groups integrate tontine systems that allow members to save, to access small loans and to carry out individual or group activities.

An imbalance in terms of gender access is reported in the interviews, whereby women would be the only target of NGO training programmes. This characteristic shows a main weakness of the present system in Niger, with targeting by gender alone substituting the policy space for a real gender-sensitive definition in training programmes. There is growing evidence in the literature that this type of set-up may be counter-productive and that among education-related initiatives in some countries, programmes that are not targeted at women may be more effective than some targeted ones (Evans and Yuan, 2019). Even in other policy environments such as programmes to address climate change, if the gender-sensitive dimension is not accounted for, results may be considerably weaker (Lau et al., 2021). In short, participation in training – whether as a recipient or a trainer – is an official route for opportunity in the practice of various local activities, but it may be more or less lucrative depending on the sector, the investment capacity, the demand for certain skills/products, and the possible developments within a collective or individual framework.

3.2. Livelihoods

Dropping out of school may lead to youth facing limited economic opportunities that depend on the local labour markets where they live. When this is coupled with structural constraints, like rising costs of services and basic needs and without coordinated government support to lay the foundations for improved welfare, youth may find difficulties in decently earning their livelihoods. Young people have the right to inheritance, especially

of land or livestock (two-thirds for men, one-third for women).[12] However, a **key concern of focus group respondents for local youth related to the combination of poor educational endowments and falling size of farm inheritance** attributed to population and soil fertility trends. This has created a downward spiral whereby households do not have the money to fatten livestock, leading to a declining reliance on livestock as a productive asset.[13] Respondents often referred often to the youth's '*lack of (farm) foundation*', which they ascribed to falling farm size and yields and insurance forms of subsistence that support precarious off-farm employment.

> *By foundation, they refer to a vast productive field whose production covers the family's food needs. In the absence of this… the family most often has a limited number of working days, and therefore low production. This is why people from these families do agricultural labour during weeding, and during the dry season engage in small survival activities…. Due to the lack of means to buy land, the small part of the field inherited will be passed on to future generations, which will become even more insufficient for them* (FGD, male, Gueben Zogui).

The cost of new land is high above many youth's ability to pay. Youth lack of access to a farm foundation may be exacerbated both by liberalisation trends and by the tendency for the rich to accumulate land as a means of investment (rather than off-farm diversification), leaving less land available for young people except through rental. Moreover, in both Zinder and Tahoua there seems to be a lack of local agro-processing on a sufficient scale to absorb rural labour surpluses. Additionally, there are growing evidence that rural recruitment of public sector workers has fallen. As such, many youths survive through on/off-farm wage labour and dry season survival activities, typically in the informal sector. Indeed, more than 60% of the country's GDP derives from the informal sector, almost half of which is from non-agricultural work (World Bank, 2017). Farmland is often shared among large, multi-generational families and is entangled in inheritance patterns among siblings and within complex family compositions, often including multiple wives and intergenerational households. When the land is split, there is not enough to produce enough staples to maintain household subsistence.

Young people's low educational and farm asset 'foundation' is exacerbated by the cost of living they face, which is typically beyond their local rural earning power and which erodes their ability to save above reproduction costs. This includes small but rising costs of public services (education, health, justice), and corruption norms[14] have also evolved in this context that reduce quality of access. This is accompanied by rising monetisation and costs

[12] When available, we notice, for instance in Zinder, that thanks to inheritance of land – especially housing plots – women often reported buying a house, which saves them from paying rent. Moreover, it was thanks to her inheritance that a divorced woman who trades in Karakara was able to cover the guardianship of her children who were abused at their father's home.

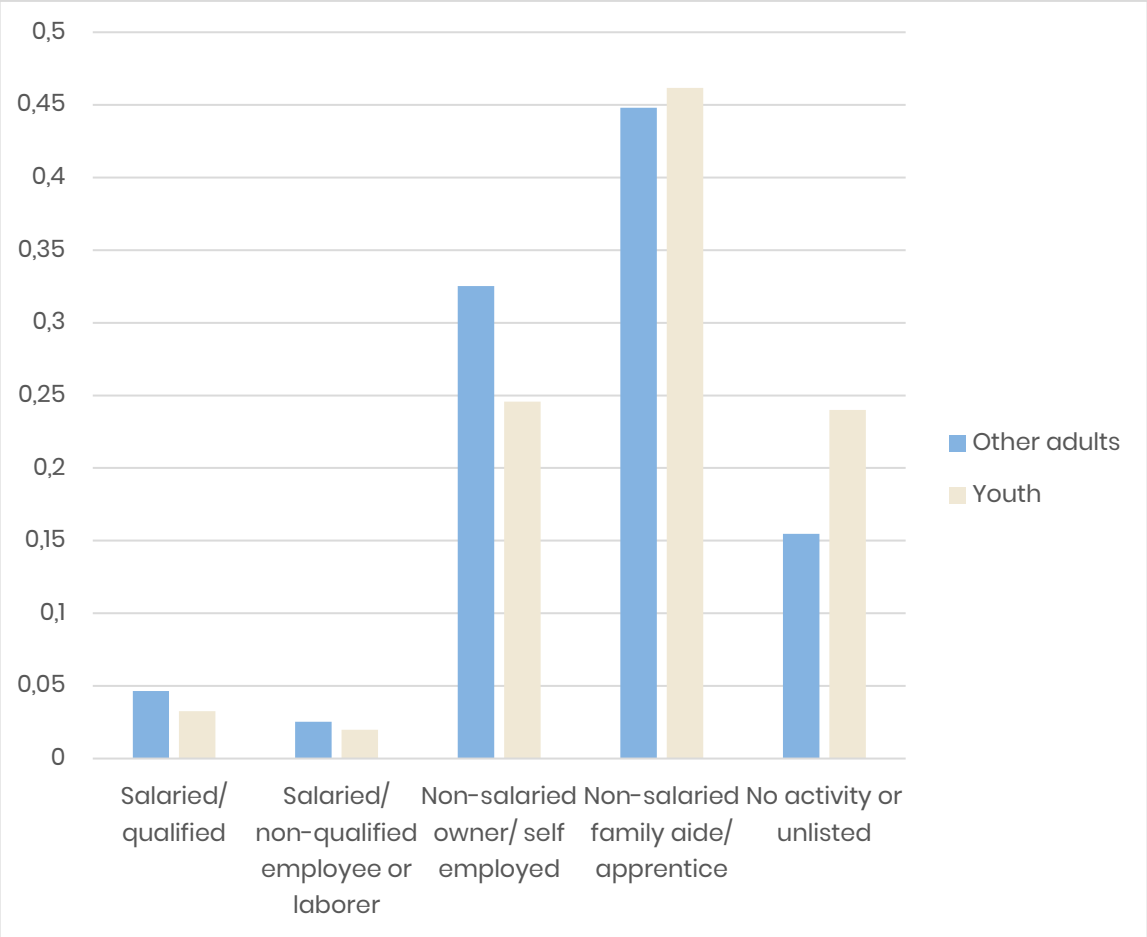
[13] One of the sites was also more likely to hide small livestock assets owned, which might contribute to some of these results.

[14] For more information on corruption, see the literature on minor crimes in Niger (Tidjani Alou, 2001) and on corruption in transport and at border controls (Bako Arifari, 2006) and in the health sector (Olivier de Sardan et al., 2005).

of basic needs (including ceremonial costs) and high costs of productive asset purchases (land, transport vehicles, large livestock) relative to incomes. Lack of sufficient access to credit further limits young people's ability to obtain capital to improve their farms or to start a business.

As a result, youth may be stuck in farming in rural areas, or may be driven to find niches in precarious local rural or urban labour markets characterised by weak contractual terms, with little or no capital to invest. While the lucky turn to migration, others turn to farm and off-farm labour, and trade without the cash/capital necessary for investment (known as 'forced entrepreneurship'). Figure 4 displays employment types by age group from the panel data, while Table 1 reports the number of occupations or economic activities engaged in by type of poverty trajectory in the qualitative data. The **frequencies of livelihoods clearly point to a high vulnerability to poverty in agriculture (particularly subsistence farming), but also in off-farm wage labour activities (the highest rate in the chronic poverty, or CP, column) and off-farm self-employment, such as petty trade sales, or migration**. By gender, rates of all types of employment were lower amongst young women compared to young men. For example, 3% of young women were salaried workers, compared to 8% of young men; 22% of young women and 28% of young men were non-salaried owners or self-employed; and finally, 42% of young women were non-salaried family workers, compared to 53% amongst young men. We explore these types of livelihoods in turn.

Figure 4. Employment type by age group



Note: 'No activity or unlisted' refers no individuals who did not list an economic activity and did not look for work. The main reason for this was because of housework (63%).
Source: Analysis of LSMS-ECVMA pooled data.

Table 1. Economic activities of youth by poverty trajectory (number of LHI cases)

Node	ESCAPE (n=10)	TE (n=8)	IM (n=5)	CP (n=18)	NN (n=8)	Total (n=49)
Begging	0	0	0	3	1	4
Agricultural wage labour	1	1	2	4	0	8
Subsistence farming	3	2	3	9	4	21
Business	5	3	1	4	5	18
Petty trade sales	6	4	1	8	3	22
Wage labour (rural)	5	5	4	15	5	34
Salaried employment	0	2	1	3	0	6
Migration	5	6	2	9	5	27

Note: ***Wage labour includes domestic work and sewing for others (for women), water carriers and freight handlers (for men).
Source: Analysis of qualitative data (LHIs), reporting economic activities per poverty trajectory.

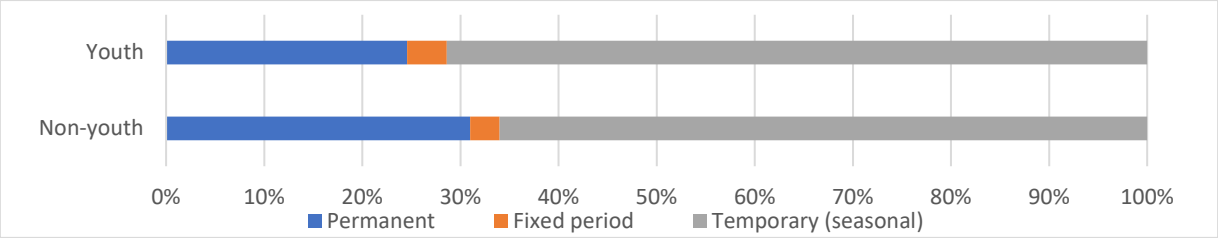
Niger has two main industries – agriculture and extractive. According to the panel data in 2014, 81% of employed people in Niger work in the agricultural sector, while the extractive industry employs fewer than 1% of the working population (World Bank, 2017). Animal husbandry is also important and is in fact the second most important resource exported after mining (Olivier de Sardan, 2019). However, most of the growth observed in recent years has come from the extractive industry as the value of uranium exports multiplied four-fold between 2006 and 2012. The industry now accounts for 10% of GDP, compared to 41% for the agricultural sector (Alkassoum et al., 2015). The agricultural sector, which employs the vast majority of people, is also the sector with the lowest productivity, explaining the very low revenues observed (Filmer and Louise, 2014). Moreover, for most young Nigeriens entering the labour market, a job is likely to be a combination of 'part-time or seasonal low-productivity activities, most often in agriculture' (Gado et al., 2019). Yet, land in Niger – whether cultivable land or residential plots – has been and remains both an economic and power issue in the strategies of actors. Therefore, in its description (see Section 2.3) we reported on its use and relationship to work in the two regions of our analysis.

When comparing youth and other adults in Tahoua and Zinder, **an important generational issue in youth independence is the ability to acquire or purchase assets** that no longer inherited, given large family sizes. The ability to purchase or rent assets is impeded by monetisation and inflation in the cost of new farmland and farmland rental, the cost of transport vehicles, the cost of small and large livestock, rising costs of bride wealth (male marriage costs), and the need to fund travel for migration. These costs combine with the small fees and user costs associated with access to nominally free educational, health and government documents to put pressure on potential savings needed to purchase or rent assets or to invest in trade. This is exacerbated by rises in the prices of food and basic needs. Most youth are themselves young parents and therefore costs associated with education, maternal and child healthcare, and their children's food and basic needs are an important factor in their inability to save to purchase assets or invest in capital in trade or migration. Yet the importance of asset ownership cannot be underemphasised. One taxi driver from a never-poor category clarifies the importance of owning a car rather than having to incur in vehicle rental/time share: '*I want to have my own motorcycle to do this activity. If I have my own motorcycle, I make more money. Everything I've had during the day is mine. That's how I can save. I didn't ask my brothers to buy me a motorcycl*e' (Interview 37, NN, Gueben Zogui).

The reduced reliance on farming, market dynamics and an ongoing urbanisation process induce people, including youth entering the world of work, to diversify their sources of income and to try to improve their socioeconomic status by generating a surplus beyond subsistence needs through several activities. The literature on youth in African countries finds that self-employment is prevalent in both on- and off-farm work, lacks decent remuneration or protection by any legal framework (Elder and Koné, 2014) and is characterised by seasonal and gender-specific characteristics (Carreras et al., 2020).

Moreover, the employment opportunities outside of domestic work for young people in rural areas tend to be intermittent (part-time or occasional) and linked to agriculture (Yeboah and Jayne, 2018; Nilsson, 2019). We confirm these findings for Niger. In the panel data, youth who list an economic activity are less likely than non-youth workers to be employed on a permanent basis and more likely to be employed as seasonal workers, with both differences statistically significant at conventional levels (Figure 5). Amongst youth, there was little difference in these shares by gender.

Figure 5. Status of workers in primary employment, pooled years



Rural and urban differences in youth livelihood activities are pronounced. In the baseline panel survey year (2011), 65% of rural households owned land (compared with 12% of urban households), with figures relatively consistent amongst youth-headed and non-youth, adult-headed households. These differences in assets are reflected in youth livelihoods, where 75% of rural youth engaged in agriculture as their primary activity, compared to 8% of urban youth. By gender, similar to the groupings presented in Figure 5, a lower share of young women (63%) were engaged in agriculture in rural areas compared to young men (88%). A similar trend was observed in urban areas, where 13% of men and 4% of women were engaged in agriculture. The qualitative data for Tahoua and Zinder (Table 2) also shows that more rural youth engage in on- and off-farm work (such as subsistence farming and non-agricultural wage labour). Rural areas also report greater begging (4 incidences compared to 0) and much greater incidence of impoverishment (17 compared to 9), which is testament to a higher vulnerability. Urban areas report equal or greater involvement in non-farm wage labour and business (rather than petty trade) but, surprisingly, no greater involvement in salaried employment. Migration is observed across activities listed in Table 2, for example through wage labour on migration or working in shops abroad.

Table 2. Economic activities in rural and urban sites

Nodes	Rural (n=27)	Urban (n=22)	Total (n=49)
Begging	4	0	4
Agricultural wage labour	7	1	8
Subsistence farming	18	3	21
Business	8	10	18
Petty trade sales	13	9	22
Wage/in-kind/piece labour	17	17	34
Salaried employment	3	3	6

Source: Analysis of qualitative data (LHIs), reporting one or more economic activities per respondent.

In the qualitative data, high vulnerability to poverty is found to be embedded in specific forms of informal activities (see Box 2 for a typology and Section 3.3 for a gendered analysis around occupational segregation). Daily wage labour is prominent and embedded with risk, whilst self-employment activities such as trading are a safer but possibly non-remunerative alternative, due to the absence of available initial start-up capital. This relates to other accounts that self-employment, particularly of the type that requires few formal qualifications, is evolving in Niger and is among the most accessible off-farm opportunity for rural households (Dedehouanou et al., 2018). Self-employment, according to our qualitative data, often goes hand-in-hand with both intermittent study (through formal education, vocational or NGO training or Quranic schooling) as well as activities of own farm and labour work. In the agricultural field, activities range from entrepreneurial work such as cash crop production to farm wage labour for others, and from food processing (grains, vegetable preservation, cooking and selling foods) to herding or labour herding for others and dairy processing. The spread of economic activities observed in the qualitative data is summarised in Box 2. However, the ready availability of casual and temporary work or services does not imply that labour markets work well for every type of job, nor for every type of job seeker (Abebe et al., 2018).

Box 2. Typology of informal work and job vulnerability risk factors in the qualitative data

- **Day work** is part-time for a daily wage piece/commission-based (a pay rate for the amount produced, loaded or sold) or task-based (e.g. for farm harvested or housework done). Examples include on-demand half-day activities (e.g. every second or third weekday in a five-hour job) in gardening or farm work, composed of physical work or tasks (depending on size of garden, yard, farm), or in domestic work (washing dishes or clothes), paid in food or cash. The main risk factors associated with this type of work are insecurity of work pace, high revenue variability, vulnerability and risk of destitution.
- **Self-employment** involves low- to high-skill activities, in multiple sectors such as petty trading, food and beverages sale, transport, beauty or textiles. It is among the recurrent activities for both female and male youth, who tend to be 'price-takers'. Risk factors are high vulnerability, competition and risk of destitution.

- **Salaried work** – in retail or construction, through private or public contracting – is paid monthly and could be seasonal or for a few months. Very few civil servants or private salaried with long-term employment were encountered in the study sites. Temporary or stable project-based employment was found in NGO or trainer work. In Niger it is also associated with part-time government work or seasonal migration to cities and abroad. Risk factors are that contracts could be for a specified time (e.g. a few months of construction work or domestic service contracts) with gaps in employment in between, youth may have to alternate between volunteering and contracted activities in a same establishment to hunt for opportunities (see the case of the health sector in Section 4.2.1.2). NGO-work tends to be a niche market for the few in a closed circle (due to competency and network requirements).
- Business ownership – enterprise ownership with one or more employees (paid/unpaid), including in (male-dominated) sectors as hardware, meat trade and restaurants. Risk factors are the difficulty of accessing financing (particularly if poor or destitute) to start-up such commerce and that it is the least recurring informal work activity among poor young adults.

The combined structural pressures on income can contribute to rural youth exclusion. Rural youth have neither the productive assets nor the savings/capital after meeting the reproduction needs of households. Without a savings buffer, even monthly salaried workers who work for a few months followed by periods of unemployment can experience sharper and frequent movements between being neither poor nor rich and being extreme poor (wellbeing levels 4 and 2, detailed in Annex C). During these periods of unemployment, households are vulnerable to eviction from rented accommodation, drop-outs from school given term fees, and trade-offs to poorer quality food and less food intake. More generally, a higher likelihood of switching among tasks or occupations may have consequences for the human development of children. For instance, women having to move from place to place through domestic or trading work, or separation, can lead to children dropping out of school or repeating grades. In addition to this, as the present system for public school fee payment is structured, there is no way to guarantee some forms of flexibility when due to seasonality, households may not be able to fully cover school fees.

Rural youth exclusion could in turn drive migration, both within Niger and through more frequent youth migration abroad.[15] **A successful international migration can enable the migrant to accumulate savings/capital that can be used to invest in farmland, other assets and new businesses back home**. Migration between 2016–2019 in Niger as reported by IOM (2020) as being characterised by many interacting layers, including circular international movements of Nigerien seasonal workers to Libya and Algeria, or of migration trends to Algeria with a high proportion of women and children. Moreover, internal circular or seasonal migration is also recurrent to regions with economic activities such as crop production, gold mines or oil drilling sites (IOM, 2020). According to a male FGD in Dogo, migrants from the study sites over the last decade 'go to several destinations, mainly the

[15] Overall, migration is an old phenomenon in Niger, recorded as persistent from the beginning of colonisation, especially towards Nigeria. Originally temporary in nature (during the dry season, when there was no work available), migratory trends gradually became permanent, but with constant circular exchanges between the village of origin in Niger and the 'village-bis' or second home in Nigeria.

countries neighbouring Niger: Mali, Libya, Algeria, Nigeria.[16] Migration allows some young people to have funds that they invest once they return home, which allows them to develop an activity that generates important income. Although these people are quite limited in number, thanks to the income from migration, they have managed to start other activities'. The migratory process is considered an opportunity to bring social prestige as well as economic opportunities for the youth. Female migration is a recent but growing practice, both internally and internationally (Oumarou, 2017),[17] and more young men migrate than women (particularly abroad). The means for transferring remittances to villages of origin are easily accessible, either through official companies (like Western Union) or via a network of traders (via cell phones). The destinations reported in the qualitative interviews vary in terms of vulnerability and profitability:

- **Libya** was considered the most profitable, but due to the current political instability it is considered very dangerous (there were some kidnappings reported in our qualitative interviews in Section 4).
- **Nigeria** is the least profitable destination, but is relatively easy to get to and secure employment.
- **Ivory Cost** is a popular destination for trade and working in the shops. Furthermore, there is also some growing migration towards other costal countries of West Africa, but the sample interviewed only reported Ivory Cost as a main destination (and Senegal only in one case).
- **Saudi Arabia** is a destination for some young adolescent girls who go to work as domestic servants. Although this is not a major migration route for Nigerien women, the interviews underline a high level of discrimination and prejudice against Africans experienced among Arab communities.

Moreover, beyond the study areas of Tahoua and Zinder where we collected these main destinations, is worth mentioning that in Kantché (Zinder region), for almost twenty years there has been a migration route composed of female migrants going predominantly to Algeria (Manou Nabara, 2019). This is one example of chain migration coming from a same local area, village or household that frequently uses migration as an outside option. In the study area we see this phenomenon happening both within Niger and abroad.[18]

[16] According to IOM (2020), one traditional main migration route links Niger with northern countries via the city of Kano in northern Nigeria to Tahoua and Agadez, and a second links the western countries of the region to Niamey. The major change to migratory movements particularly towards the northern countries has happened since 2016 with the adoption of the 2015-36 law criminalising irregular migration and the smuggling of migrants. Several informal bypass routes have emerged in response to increased patrols as well as the growing risks posed by armed bandits on the main migration axes in the north of the country (IOM, 2020: 9-10).

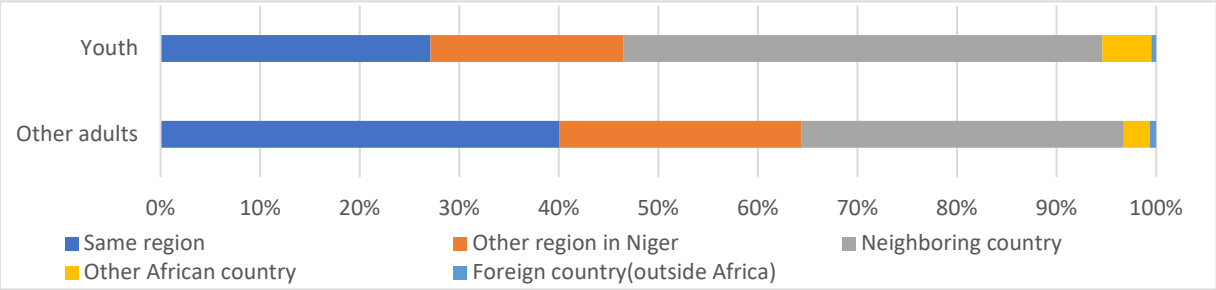
[17] Women migration has been cyclical and first affected middle-aged women as a response to poor and short agricultural seasons. Contemporary female migration, although not strongly captured in our qualitative interviews, is of great importance at individual and collective level. First, it plays a role in the empowerment of women who acquire new social experiences in the city and at times contrasting the authority of men and elders; second, it is seen as collective response via its strong contribution to meeting household needs (Oumarou, 2017).

[18] Moreover, we acknowledge that, due to choice of study areas away from regional borders, our analysis is limited in its depiction of youth migration trends particularly with

Some youth are capable of investing in international or internal circular migration in an attempt to seek new opportunities and escape poverty (Figure 6). In the panel dataset, 36% of youth were absent at some point in the year preceding the survey, compared to 25% of older adults. Of those who had migrated abroad, 85% were men. International migrants tended to be predominantly never poor (43%), though shares were also high amongst the other trajectories. For example, amongst the sample of international migrants, almost a quarter (24%) were chronically poor individuals, 18% were poverty escapers, and 15% lived in households that had fallen into poverty. Just a fraction of international migrants (6%) were salaried workers. Instead, most tended to be owners, self-employed workers, family aides or trainees.

Of those who were absent at some point in the year preceding the survey, **more youth tended to travel for seasonal work, to attend a ceremony or for other family reasons, compared to other adults. Seasonal internal labour migration was also a common coping strategy** in the qualitative research (Figure 7). This was often to Niamey from very poor agricultural areas where elders reside. Workers able to migrate internationally experience a range of employment opportunities, skills, as well as savings used to purchase productive assets and invest in businesses back home. This has resulted in the better-off male youth migrants experiencing a change in their main off-farm employment activity, from low-paid physical labour to trade and business. Although less well remunerated, manual and physical labour in seasonal jobs is a means of smoothing income and consumption needs of the migrant and back home, eventually building up some savings in the hope that capital accumulation leads to a transition into trade opportunities. However, the risks involved mean that many migrants fall back into poverty while others, often chronically poor individuals, are unable to derive the start-up capital for migration in the first place.

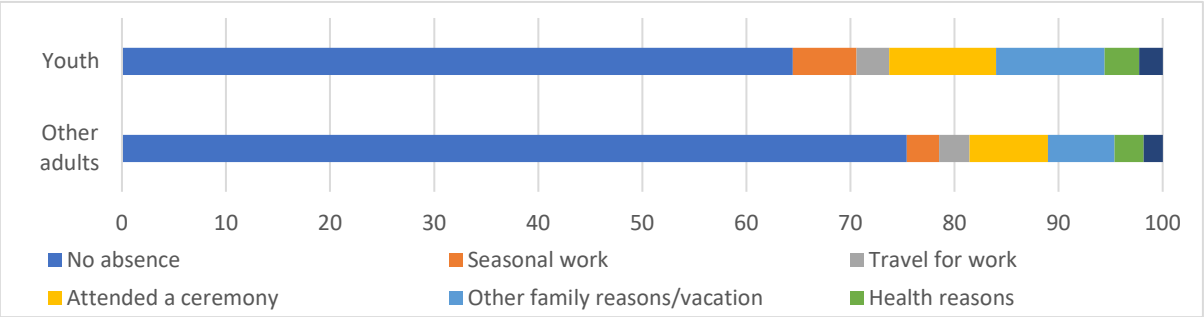
Figure 6. Destination of migration, pooled across years



Source: Analysis of LSMS-ECVMA pooled data, for individuals reporting any migration experienced in the last 12 months.

respect to forced displacement for security reasons or internal displacement. For more analyses for Tahoua and Zinder, see IOM (2017; 2019; 2020).

Figure 7. Reason for absence in the survey data



Source: Analysis of LSMS-ECVMA pooled data, for individuals reporting absence in last 12 months.

More generally, resources for migration are mobilised either by selling part of the agricultural production or a few heads of domestic animals, or by receiving money from a relative who has already migrated. However, children whose parents have low agricultural yields cannot invest in livestock and, because of their lack of assets, cannot access credit and thus find it difficult to mobilise sufficient resources for migration (FGD, male, Gueben Zogui). This inability to finance even internal rural-urban migration is particularly common amongst the chronic poor, a point to which we return in Section 4.

3.3. Gender norms

3.3.1. Occupational segregation with underlying gendered norms

The fortunes of young men and women in Niger are differently determined, but intertwined, in a context of significant change in social norms and precarity in working conditions and the job opportunities they have access to, compared to the generations before them. Women are generally responsible for household domestic work, for water supply (fetching at the well) and the care of children, whereas men are responsible for bringing in the main revenues. Spouses do not customary pool their income and women have as much freedom to spend the money they earn, but they may have to redistribute some to thank their in-laws. Young women, particularly, often remain under the authority of in-laws when they live under the same roof. The negotiation with the in-laws to trade (outside the household), participate in training or continue studies generally has to be done with the mother-in-law, asking for permission. In poor areas, a majority of older household heads follow gender norms regarding domestic arrangements where the husband is the breadwinner and married women are expected to be at home with the children doing unpaid domestic and farm work and small income-earning work from home. This practice persists in some wealthy households and is particularly present in those adhering to the

Salafist religion, where women's activities are primarily within the domestic sphere.[19] This model is being challenged, however, as **increasingly it is recognised that young women need to contribute to economic wellbeing and engage in more income-generating activities (IGAs) in order to sustain the family**: '*Husbands have started to fail in their responsibilities… in the last ten years. As a result, women started to undertake IGAs… [and] then begin to acquire a certain power within the household thanks to the assets that they provide*' (FGD, female, Dogo). Indeed, descriptively, there is a statistically significant difference in the rates of never-poor women reporting economic activities by age group, in favour of youth in the panel data.[20] Specifically, while 75% of young women who were sometimes or always poor engaged in an IGA, the share was 68% amongst other young women. Gender norms that view trade outside the house as 'men's business' have thus changed. Male focus group discussions reveal that while trade is still a man's business, men tend to 'permit' their young wives to work in trade because of its increasing and vital importance to household survival, income and the education of children.

The need for income and for involvement in new livelihoods thrusts youth into conflict with elders and spouses, which forces rapid changes in gender and generational norms to accommodate such new and difficult circumstances. Young women more often actively seek for training and job opportunities at growing rates, and it is becoming more accepted by young generations that it is not only the women who are experiencing the strongest economic hardship that seek work. Such norms characterising the status of the female worker and her bargaining in intra-couple relations also vary in their degree of influence according to the geography where women live. In general, the more urban the village environment, the greater the presence of female occupations involving engagement with the public and the weaker the social restrictions perceived by the community around the acceptability of women working, although we also encountered some rural areas where women were accepted as traders. This is in line with the literature showing that local socially accepted functions such as marital engagements affect a preconceived notion of women's occupational choices (Kabeer, 2016), and that child dependency tends to constrain young women's participation in work in rural but not in urban areas of SSA (Egger et al., 2021).

According to female focus groups, it appears that **this shift has afforded women a certain power in the household as they provide more assets. This change in the social structure has resulted in the blurring of the boundaries between activities usually dedicated to men and to women**. Thus, we observe that men can compete with women by increasingly engaging in activities formerly reserved for women, such as preparing and selling food. It also gives young women freedom to participate in the activities outside the household –

[19] The confinement of women is an extreme form in Niger only practiced in certain regions of Niger (more common in urban contexts, particularly in the Maradi region) and by certain fundamentalist Islamic sects.

[20] The economic activities included here are engagement in an enterprise (household or outside the household), in the field, or as an apprentice in a period preceding the survey (a month in wave one, and a week in wave two).

including trade and wage labour, but also vocational training. Social drivers of change via NGOs support this move through female empowerment/entrepreneurial strategies. They enable some young women to draw support from and re-invent social networks – including informal credit groups or formal tontines for women – which contributes to enhanced social and economic inclusion. At the same time, while women are able to exert more agency, there is the risk of inducing a 'double burden' if not accompanied by a profound change in power relations such that equally men also participate in domestic work.

Older generations that had much larger fertile farms, and therefore more work to do, and less costly educational and health care access (under earlier administrations) do not fully empathise with conditions faced, for example, by young men, particularly their inability to find work to support their new wife and pre-school children. There is a conflict for youth in turn emanating from traditional arduous physical work versus entrepreneurial work. This changing aspiration often results in international youth migration. Some of these clashes of norms are accentuated by youth access to mobile phones and social media, which brings with it renegotiated social networks and norms and also encourages youth to join associations or connect to networks that are found critical for both social and financial support.

The practice of divorce among young couples is common. Conjugal conflicts are most often arbitrated by the chiefdom or ulemas (a jurist or theologist specialised in Muslim law). As the vast majority of marriages are customary or Islamic, requests for termination brought before the courts are very rare. When this is the case, the judgements are made according to several references: modern law (for civil divorces, Law 2004-50 of 22 July 2004), Nigerien customs and Islam.[21] Two situations generally characterise marital breakdowns and divorces in Niger: either the woman flees or leaves the marital home and returns to her parents in order to then ask for her 'release' from the marriage, or she is repudiated by her spouse. In both cases, she recovers her personal belongings that she had brought into the household at the time of the wedding (furniture, clothes, livestock, etc.) but she does not have the right to keep the land property of the husband and granted to her for cultivation. When the break-up takes place in a climate of high conflict, the husband can use his power to prevent the wife from collecting personal belongings for a long time. When she is the one leaving the spouse, he can also refuse to release her, which prevents her from remarrying while he himself has the right to remarry.

[21] Most cases are treated in a very subjective way, as testified by a judge from Niamey: 'In reality, in matters of divorce and repudiation we do not apply the law as such, we only try to manage people' (Najoum, 2020: 252).

3.3.2. From gangs to support groups for young men and mobilising community support

Women's economic empowerment has taken place alongside unemployment of young men. There is at times a generational conflict between young men and elders concerning young men's inability to earn a living outside of migration opportunities. Young male unemployment must be seen in the context of small farm sizes, falling local employment opportunities in the public sector (police, education, health) and the need for capital to engage in trade. Those young men who cannot afford to migrate, or migrant males who return to find their capital has been consumed by family members, may well be unemployed. Thus, there is a tangible risk of social exclusion when people fall into destitution or remain in chronic poverty.

The growing presence of currents of radicalisation have induced some youth to engage in forms of violence, particularly in the border areas of Niger. According to Sounaye (2016), through the phenomenon of re-Islamisation, the Islamic influence in the public domain is growing in Niger, permeating in particular its modes of governance. This vision calls for the establishment of a certain morality and ethics of governance in social and political life, rather than an underlying political plan (Sounaye, 2016). The vision motivated, for instance, the reaction in January 2015 in Niger to the caricature of the prophet Mohammed by the French newspaper Charlie Hebdo, when violence was used as an act of contestation in favour of a more fundamentalist Islam (Sounaye, 2016). The motif is not the same, however, as that of the jihadist movements of Malian and Nigerian origin, which display a stronger aim of radicalisation and possible evolution into violent extremism or terrorism (McCullough et al., 2017). Even so, in cities and more often in rural areas (beyond our study areas), the recruitment of young people in search of social justice and a better life is a recurring practice of these terrorist movements. Existing ethno-political tensions and destabilisation in specific areas of the Nigerien border result in a higher incidence of youth exposure to these movements, and the type of radicalisation and tensions experienced in regions like Diffa, Zinder or Tillabéri are location-specific (e.g. IOM, 2017; 2019). For young people with dwindling opportunities, the possibility of earning an important source of income through criminal activities represents a powerful magnet of attraction (Grégoire, 2015; McCullough et al. 2017).[22]

Extreme poverty is characterised not only by economic deprivation and unemployment, but above all by the absence of social capital and by non-inclusion in local social networks. The risks noted above are often minimised by different forms of solidarity, such as community support and informal social safety nets (Devereaux, 1999). **To overcome the social network**

[22] Note that it goes beyond the scope of the analysis to cover the effects of youth violent crime across Niger (due to no observations in our study-areas) or of the short-term effects experienced since the COVID-19 crisis. However, we could speculate that the security crisis (reflected in sporadic events of conflict or youth violence) could soon experience further reinforcements in its impact on young generations, particularly in relation to the economic consequences of a stronger spread of health risks (malaria and other parasitic or viral diseases) on the livelihoods and learning opportunities as well as on overall vulnerability of youth in the near future.

barrier for young people, some fadas (known in Zinder as Palais), or youth gangs, have recently been transformed into non-violent, drug-free male solidarity groups used for socialisation. These typically involve young men who are locally unemployed, ex-migrants and young male divorcees. Today, they are sites where unemployed men can meet, play football, meet after prayers, eat and socialise, with some KIs noting that fadas have more spaces for mutual aid to develop compared to Palais. For example, Interviewee 43 (CP) notes of the Palais Clair Gang that if one of them has a ceremony of some kind where, as a male, according to local norms he is expected to pay (e.g. a marriage or birth ceremony), the other members assist him. This is an important source of masculine identity, empowerment and social inclusion. It also informally solves the problem of access to credit for these young men.

> *According to the young people, the palais have become spaces of mutual aid and solidarity. The members of these structures all have activities to do. This allows them to help each other. One of the ways that allows them to express this solidarity and mutual aid is through participation and taking full responsibility for the marriage of one of the members. They are the ones who do everything* (FGD, male, Karakara).

Other research indicates that unemployed men challenged by their senior male family members and by their wives over their unemployment find social 'inclusion' in these fadas, where they can speak freely about these problems (Boyer, 2014).

These youth groups/gangs also organise and mobilise labour for community support in response to health and water problems within the neighbourhood. In one example, in the face of withdrawal of state support for water provision and corruption in the supply of privatised water, it was the youth who mobilised the money through association to provide repairs necessary to re-start the work:

> *The peculiarity of his [fada] club is that its members do not use drugs. In addition, they also organize health operations within the neighbourhood. There is no leader at the head of this club. Decisions are made here in a collegial manner. But a single member can influence all the others when the stakes are high, in other words, when one of them is in trouble, all the members of the club must imperatively come to his aid* (Interview 43, CP, Karakara).

> *The water tower has been entrusted in free management to a private manager who could not ensure its repair when it had a major breakdown that required the mobilization of 12 million XOF. It took the intervention of young people from the village organised in an association to mobilise 8 million XOF and seek the complement to finally restart the work* (FGD, mixed, Bambaye).

3.3.3. Domestic violence: new norms discouraging abuse of women who trade

Young women's inclusion in labour markets is critical to their ability to retaliate against domestic violence, which was commonly observed in the qualitative data. Specifically, women's independent earning power via trade and their ability to invest in assets before marriage may save them from abuse or prolonged periods of abuse. There are three issues related to this. First, male FGD participants spoke of two caveats to 'legitimate reasons for abuse' which reveal signs of change in favour of women involved in trade and business:

(1) prohibition of a women from carrying on a business in her own home is a form of 'non-physical' domestic abuse; and (2) if a woman burns a meal, she shouldn't be beaten 'even if when she trades with her husband's consent' (FGD, male, violence, Bombeye). These caveats suggest that young women have the ideological support of elders when they have income-earning power to prevent husband's abuse.

Second, there is recourse for women to report abuse. According to men:

> *It is locally accepted that a woman can appeal to the canton chief when she is abused by her spouse or one of her parents… To do this, she must follow a certain procedure. The first time is to explain the facts to her parents (father, mother, brothers, sisters, husbands). If the solution is not found at this level, she informs her parents and engages in communication with the spouse's family. If the solution is still not found, only then does the woman have the right to lodge a complaint with the village chief, or with the chief of canton or before the judge of the court… In case of problems, we refer to the Quranic precepts and those of the sounna of the prophet Mohamed PAS (conduct of the prophet Mohamed) to do justice to the woman* (FGD, male, violence, Bombeye).

When the women takes the problem to the chief, he proceeds to a process of reconciliation between the spouses. However, this may not resolve the problem, in which case 'the chief would call on the marabouts, who would divorce according to Islamic law. There are no other remedies for women' (FGD, female, violence, Bombeye). Taking the problem of violence outside the household exposes some women to the risk of immediate divorce without reconciliation, which forces some to endure violence in silence. Legal services are rarely a recourse for women due to social reasons (including the risk of strong disapproval from her own family and those around them) and financial and bureaucratic barriers. Moreover, domestic abuse is still tolerated by many parents, and only in the event of severe injuries can parents of the female youth threaten the husband with divorce. In other instances, NGOs raise awareness regarding women's rights, but battered women may find it humiliating to go to an NGO for support in domestic abuse.

These problems can be compounded for women living in poverty. For instance, Interviewee 8 (CP, Dogo) was very severely beaten by her husband since he took a co-wife. She explains the limits to this route for those battered women, like herself, who don't have parental support and are poor: '*There is no solution for the husband to stop beating his wife. If you have parents, you can go see them so that they can talk to your husband. There are also some women who go to the marabouts so that they can [figuratively] tie your husband's hand or mouth so that he won't hit or insult you anymore. Since I don't have any money, I can't do that*.' On the other hand, according to the male FGD participants in Karakara, with outside interventions, women have more power over men at the level of the authorities, especially if the husband is poor. There was even a meeting at the Franco-Nigerien Cultural Centre (CCFN) in Zinder at which it was explained to the women that they can count on the support of a lawyer who will defend their interests when they have problems with their husbands (FGD, male, Karakara).

Third, retaining the wedding trousseau which the young women and mothers build can be a useful fall back to avoid domestic abuse whilst asking for divorce, as they may be able to

pay back the bridewealth by selling items (e.g. furniture).[23] Relatedly, however, a key problem for many women is the ability to raise the money to pay back the bridewealth received on marriage from the husband's family, which could delay the divorce and prolong their abuse. If the canton chief rules in her favour, she may still need to repay the bridewealth to finalise the divorce, which can be a problem for poor women. The ability to build up the brides' trousseau (hope chest), which is ordinarily built by the earnings of the bride and mother, may well allow women to pay back the bridewealth and divorce when abused (see text below on Jogol market). Better-off women who have the support of parents can pay back bridewealth to achieve their divorce:

Interviewee 4's husband stayed in migration for a year without sending her anything… She stayed with her parents and told him on the phone that she wanted a divorce and he told her that in that case she would have to reimburse him XOF 50,000 of dowry, which she accepted. Her family had to contribute… Since the husband was still absent, it was his father who came to take the XOF 50,000. A few days later, her husband having shown his displeasure (by telephone) to her father, the latter came to return 30,000 to Interviewee 4 because he had already spent the 20,000 (Interview 4, Escape, Bambeye).

[23] The process of women's acquisition of the matrimonial trousseau appears disproportionately worrying for females at different ages. The FDG respondents mentioned several elements that go into the composition of the trousseau, including furniture, dishes, loincloths, blankets, house decorations and food reserves for at least three months. Given the generally low level of family income, it is generally future brides and their mothers who mobilise to find the necessary money to build the matrimonial trousseau. Young women work hard to raise money prior to their marriage (or the marriage of their friends). Several authors have underlined the search for goods constituting the trousseau as one of the motivations in the migration of young girls to large urban centres (e.g. Bouju, 2019).

4. Youth poverty dynamic trajectories

Summary: The key argument of the analysis is that recent challenging contemporaneous political, economic, climatic and demographic trends have intersected with rising individual- and household-level vulnerabilities to create new models of inclusion for young adults in Niger. Amongst chronically poor youth in Tahoua and Zinder, barriers to education were high due to the inability to meet fees/feeding needs, which ends in either exclusion by school administrators or self-exclusion. In terms of livelihoods, access to a small amount of capital to make the transition from working as poorly paid farm or family labourers to potentially more rewarding self-employment is highly constrained for both young men and women. As a result, chronically poor youth tend to stay in the same daily part-time farm or off-farm job combinations over time. Limited capital also means that they may rent in productive assets rather than owning them, further limiting their ability to generate a profit from the livelihood over time. Linked to this, price-taking is prevalent in commission-based services, particularly among the less tenured workers. Migration is not an easy outside option for the chronically poor youth due its financing costs, and when endured it is commonly in the form of short spells of seasonal labour migration that does not return the desired surpluses.

Some pathways towards beneficial inclusion reveal that some youth can still escape from poverty amidst these challenging contexts. Poverty escapes depend mostly on accumulating capital and skill earlier in youth, either via education, inheritance (capital or skill) or observation, or migration. Salaried employment for the lucky few can still act as a double-edge sword. For the few that are able to find an occupation escapes are visible, but it is rare to have a long-term contract. For those waiting for a salaried public sector job, a combination of career strategies is common (part-time in the private sector and '*volunteer*' work in public structures while awaiting a job opening). A much more common route out of poverty involves setting up a business based on capital investment and on significant skills acquisition through school or vocational training or observation, and through the support of social networks. For most young men, this route out of poverty begins with acquiring capital for migration transport costs through family and own earnings, then using the earnings from migration to invest in a business on return back home. Female escapes from poverty occur more frequently either when women work within and challenge the social norms to emancipate their role and agency to work, or when young divorced women acquire some form of assets or capital.

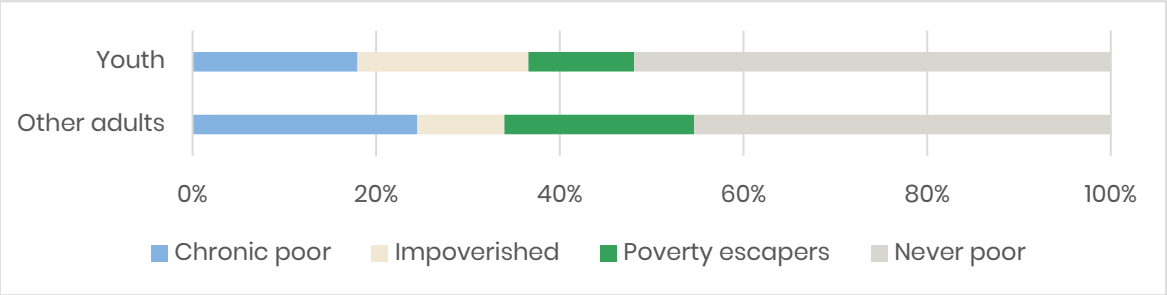
There also exist new models of precarious forms of inclusion in labour and certain forms of self-employment – based on the mortgaging of productive materials, such as goods given on credit – which, under unregulated or adverse conditions, can trap the majority in chronic poverty or which do not provide resilience to shocks/systemic trends driving re-impoverishment. Temporary escapes in Tahoua and Zinder become unstable or lead to impoverishment when young people face a combination of systemic trends (e.g. an unstable economic environment or policy changes such as a spike in the cost of education) alongside micro shocks (e.g. the loss of a breadwinner or a health shock). The sudden loss of salaried employment is found to be strongly impoverishing, but so too is protracted engagement in commission-based work or self-employment without ownership of productive assets (e.g. a sewing enterprise with no machine or a moto-taxi service with costly rented motorbikes). Migration can also become a factor in the failure of temporary escapes – the likelihood of failure is higher the lower the capital and skills the migrant possesses prior to starting his or her journey and the higher the level of indebtedness via informal loans to financing the costs of migration.

This section analyses the causes of escapes, descents and retention in chronic poverty, drawing on the themes identified above on youth inclusion in labour markets. We begin by

discussing chronic poverty amongst youth in order to underline how difficult it is for many Nigeriens to escape poverty and to underscore the systemic and structural trends challenging these escapes. The narrative then focuses on the question of how some youth have managed to overcome these problems to escape poverty, and the factors that enable these escapes to be sustained alongside those that contribute to downward pressures and to new or re-impoverishment.

In terms of poverty inheritance, the youth were less likely to be chronically poor and more likely to be never poor compared to adults/parents in mid and late adulthood (Figure 8). However, in terms of dynamics – i.e. movements over time – they were more likely to be impoverished and less likely to escape. This might be explained by the fact they are more likely than older adults to be involved in the labour market and subject to the vicissitudes of the fortunes of working people in a precarious labour market with fewer foundational assets (farm, livestock) to stabilise them. The analysis that follows investigates youth inclusion in labour markets along different poverty trajectories, as specified above.

Figure 8. Poverty trajectory by youth status of household head, baseline survey year



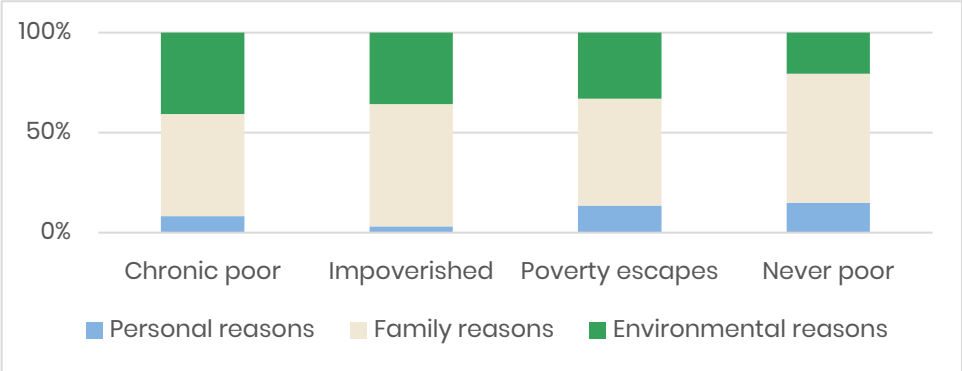
4.1. Chronic poverty pathways

While many respondents had escaped or fallen into poverty, thus experiencing considerable poverty mobility over the course of their lives, a third of our qualitative youth sample (18 out of 49) remained in chronic poverty. A key defining feature of the livelihoods of the chronically poor youth is that they were economically active but had an employment history punctuated with periods of unemployment and low-paid employment. This often means that they cannot yield a surplus above their consumption needs, reducing their ability to invest in assets or small businesses. It is therefore difficult for chronically poor young workers to make the transition from working as poorly paid farm or family labourers to potentially more rewarding self-employment, or even to generate savings to handle health or other shocks. Poverty inherited from parents limited the funds for children to access education, or for adolescents and youth to develop profitable livelihoods or access adequate capital for migration. We examine these topics in turn below.

4.1.1. Education: limited access and (self) exclusion

Amongst the chronic poor, many youth had never been enrolled in school as children, despite the growing importance of education (Figure 8), while some were excluded from adult training because of a lack of social or political connections (see Section 3.1). Regression analysis of all households and the subset of youth-headed households points to a negative association between the number of years of formal education completed and the probability of chronic poverty, with the probability of poverty accompanying an increase in years of school being even lower for youth-headed households. There is a similar relationship between completion of primary and lower secondary school and level of chronic poverty. In the panel data analysis, 'family refusal' was the most common reason (48–59% across trajectories) for youth within households not having attended a formal school. Other key reasons cited for why chronically poor youth had never studied in a formal school were service-related, the main one of which was that there was no school in the area, reflecting the importance of proximity. In contrast, people escaping poverty or who were never poor were slightly more likely to cite individual reasons, mainly early marriage, or work due to completed studies (completed to the level desired). By gender, young women were only two percentage points more likely to cite family reasons compared to young men. However, further disaggregation indicates that youth gender differences are more evident when it comes to reasons to do with family refusal (55% of women compared to 51% of men), marriage (0% of men compared to 7% of women) and requirement for the child must work (1% of women compared to 4% for men).

Figure 9. Primary reason for non-enrolment among youth



Source: analysis of LSMS-ECVMA data, 2011.

Childhoods were often marked by non-attendance of school or dropout from primary school. In the qualitative data for Tahoua and Zinder, this was often linked to poverty (hunger, inability to meet fees and user costs) that could result in exclusion by school administrators (due to non-payment of fees) or self-exclusion (due to hunger, humiliation regarding ragged/torn clothing, corporal punishment, or distance to school). Often families suffering from hunger eat one meal at night. This can affect concentration and academic performance, as well as resulting in corporal punishment due to lateness. In several cases, this contributed to exclusion, sometimes through self-exclusion. Interviewee 22 (Escape)

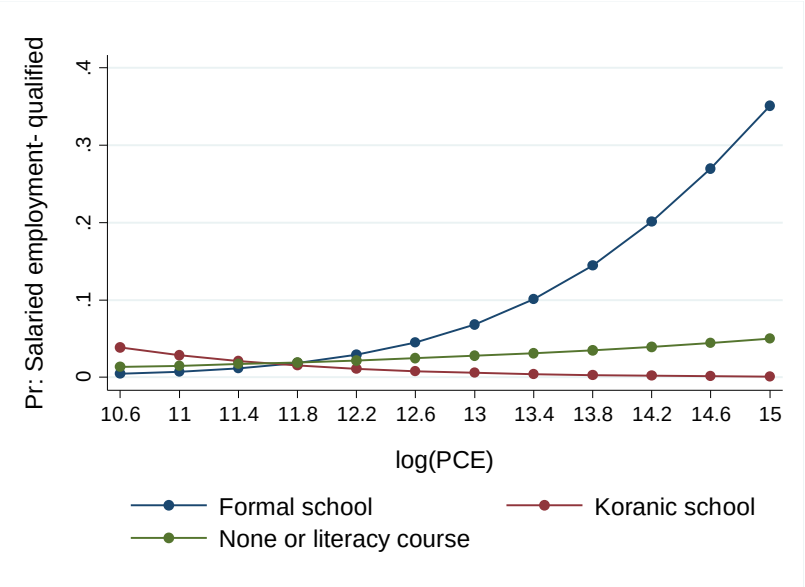
lived in chronic poverty at a young age, and faced a combination of these factors that caused her dropout:

> *At the age of 7, I was enrolled in the public primary school in my village. I had dropped out in CP (second grade). The reason for this dropout was that I didn't like going to school because I was afraid of corporal punishment and the parents didn't force me to go too… The school was far from my home and it was not easy to get there. I often left for school without breakfast, so it was not easy for me to go fast and I was always late. For this the teacher scolded me or hit me.*

Interviewee 22's story is a classic case of exclusion due to extreme poverty, where the teacher does not see or recognise the child's unique poverty and distance challenges. Under-resourced and contract teachers generally favour the retention of children who concentrated more and perform better.

As noted in the methods section, we also explore determinants of salaried employment in the panel data through regression analysis, with a focus on variables specific to young individuals' education, migration and household welfare. Small sample sizes for young women engaged in salaried work preclude us from disaggregating by gender. Instead, the small numbers of young women in these types of employment suggest that findings are particularly salient for young men. **Regarding education, the Arab-Islamic school system offers jobs in teaching for a niche of high-skilled candidates. However, there are marked benefits from a Quranic education in terms of acquiring often informal salaried employment as an imam or preacher for qualified workers at the bottom of the income distribution** (Figure 10). Based on the quality of the Quranic education received, a number of employment opportunities in Tahoua and Zinder are, according to the qualitative data, available to young people: supervising children in informal madrasahs, becoming an imam or a preacher, creating talismans or preparing holy water for washing the Quranic scripts. Interviewee 47 (NN, Dogo), for example, managed to earn a substantial income after attending a Quranic school in Zinder, illustrating the strategy of young people using the route of Quranic education to escape poverty. However, the quantitative data shows that this education pathway may not be as effective as formal schooling. For higher levels of per capita welfare, youth who had received Quranic training were less likely to have salaried employment compared to youth without a formal or Quranic education. Across higher levels, moreover, formal education was associated with a higher probability of securing salaried employment, particularly for individuals in households with higher per capita expenditures.

Figure 10. Predictive probability of salaried work for youth with different types of learning



Source: analysis of LSMS-ECVMA pooled data.

4.1.2. Livelihoods: systemic pressures and price-taking

In addition to education, specific economic activities of the household also affect the wellbeing of youth-headed households. **According to the qualitative data, the extreme poor typically suffer from several systemic pressures on their livelihoods**:

- **Climate change**: high input agriculture, problems including soil erosion and low yields (heightening food insecurity) and covariate shocks like floods or violent winds (causing the destruction of housing or schools).
- **Political changes**: these include overall higher school fees, with few able to complete secondary school[24], or problems with access to quality healthcare (due to hidden fees, unavailability of services, etc.).
- **Demographic pressures**: with 50% Niger's population made up of youth under the age of 14 (United Nations, 2015), pressure comes either from large families (population growth is estimated at 3.9% in 2019, World Bank, 2021) and reduced size of farm inheritances combined with problems of soil fertility, or from reduced asset inheritances and reduced educational endowment per child together with a high number of youth job seekers flooding labour markets. By poverty trajectory, in the panel data analysis, chronically poor households had on average ten members in

[24] Chronic poor respondents perceived the price rise in secondary education as an issue linked to the introduction of the COGES fees. This could be related to the low information received on the reasons of fees variation over time as well as a low perceived accountability towards education institutions. It is worth to mention however, that the education system of Niger has experienced some marked evolutions in the last decade, of which some in favour of promoting participation and support of vulnerable groups, see Annex A on the education policies for more information.

the latest survey year, compared to eight in impoverished or poverty escaper households, and seven in never-poor households.

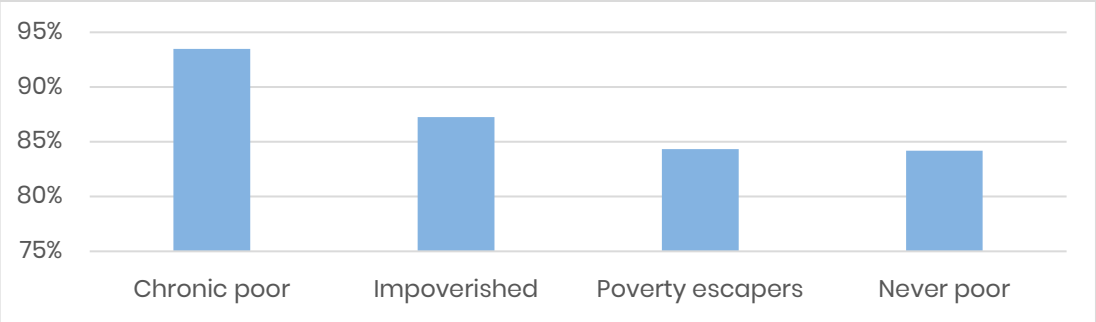
- **Economic monetisation and inflation in assets and costs of living**: costs of living (food, basic needs, education and health) are overwhelming relative to incomes of the poor with underemployment. Meeting minimum food needs reduces the ability to save for educational and capital investments in trade or farms. Any inflation in the costs of living, in ceremonial costs or in rental costs during urban migration or international migration adds significantly to these costs of living. The costs of some productive assets (e.g. motorbikes) and government documentation (e.g. licences) are also high relative to incomes.

Quantitative analysis corroborates some of these trends, particularly around demographic and economic pressures. **Regression analysis indicates that while an increase in the size of cultivable land is significantly associated with a reduced probability of chronic poverty across the full sample, it is no longer statistically significant for youth-headed households**. This is true in the main sample and when stratifying to focus only on rural households. This also links to the qualitative findings on soil depletion and reduced yields in Section 2.3. Similarly, while the household head being engaged in agriculture is associated with an increased likelihood of chronic poverty in the full sample, results lack statistical significance in the youth-headed sample. In other words, the benefits of a rise in land size are no longer associated with reduced chronic poverty, with the benefits going to older adults instead. This is despite the fact that as many as 77% of youth heads of household were engaged in agriculture-related activities, compared to 70% of non-youth heads. This share was highest amongst chronically poor households, where 94% of youth heads were engaged in agriculture (mainly as self-employed workers). Youth-headed households tended to fare worse on other livelihood dimensions. For example, they owned four items of livestock on average, compared to six for non-youth. Just under 60% of youth-headed households owned a non-farm enterprise, compared to 64% of non-youth. The shares were understandably higher in urban areas (70–71%) than in rural areas, where 56% of youth-headed households and 60% of other rural households had a non-farm enterprise. These differences can be understood partly in the context of lifecycles, with opportunities to accumulate assets and capital to develop non-farm enterprises might grow during adulthood.

Many chronically poor held daily farm or off-farm labour or part-day labour jobs (e.g. domestic or yard work) and spent time in unpaid job-seeking or looking for food for the family. There was also a stickiness in livelihood mobility amongst youth in chronically poor households, with 93% working in the same enterprise in the year preceding the first wave, compared to 84% amongst youth in households that went on to escape poverty (Figure 11). In the qualitative data, while there was farming on own farms under low-yield conditions as we described above, the chronic poor we encountered were also heavily involved in labouring work (farm labour, herding/feeding other's livestock, or off-farm labour including domestic and building work). These jobs rarely earned enough to meet reproductive needs each day because of periods of unemployment between daily wage jobs and between short-term contract work. Interviewee 38 (CP) notes: '*Lack of money often prevents me from working on some construction sites. This is the case on construction sites lasting a few days where the labourers are only paid at the end of the contract. I cannot afford to take care of*

myself (feed myself proving energy for arduous work) during the time required for this work, so even if I can get this contract, I let it go.' This highlights the precarity of certain forms of contract work amongst the chronic poor, even in urban areas.

Figure 11. Share of youth working in the same enterprise for over a year, based on 2011 data

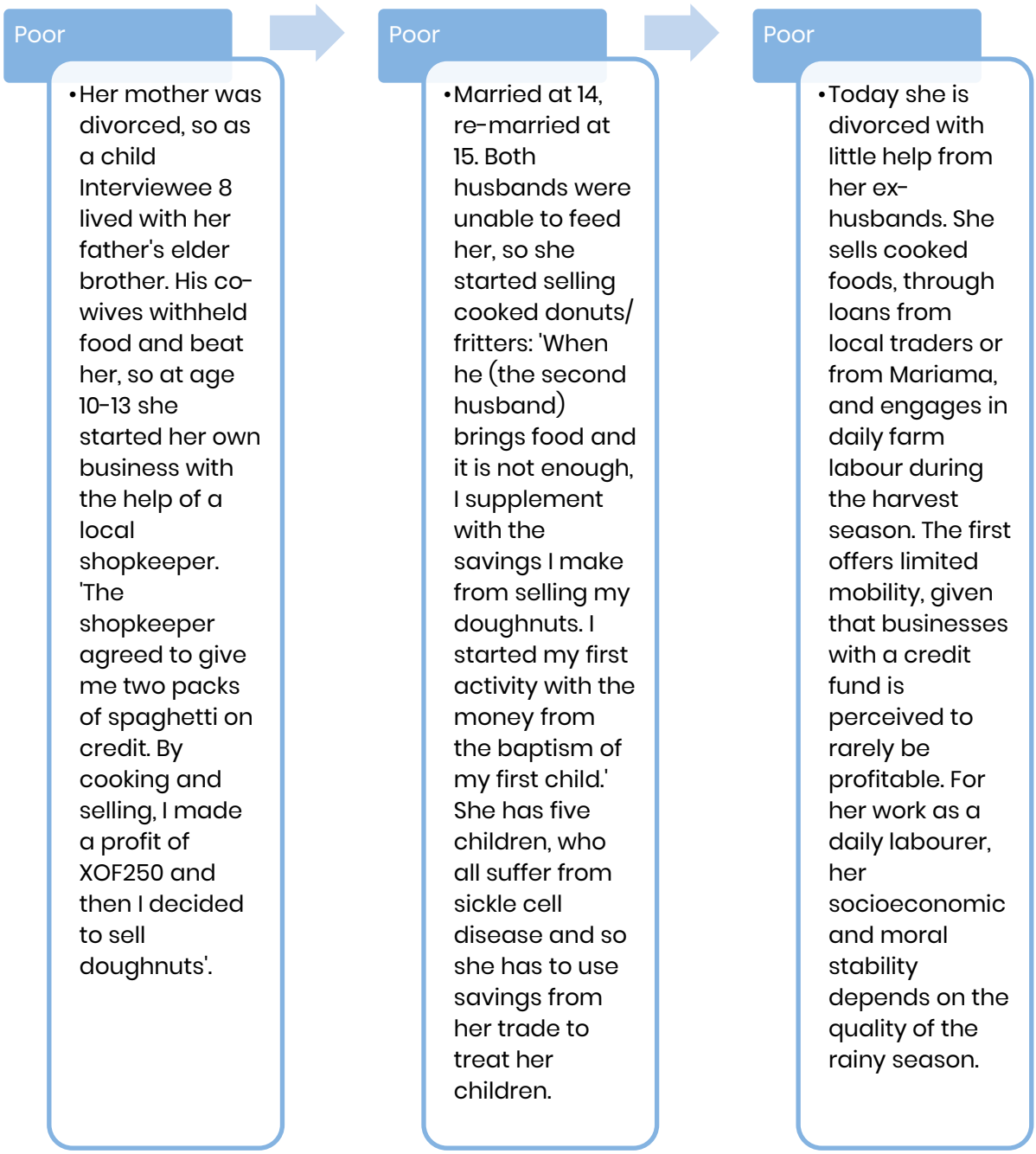


Source: Analysis of LSMS-ECVMA data, 2011.

To survive these conditions, some chronic poor resorted to begging as a survival strategy. Stuck in non-mobility and as a last resort, many individuals go door to door seeking food or asking for work. While the latter is sometimes referred to as begging, this often involves people moving from house to house seeking food for work around the house or yard. Children may be required to support a relative with a disability, taking them to and from begging activities, which affects their schooling. These types of activities can be hazardous and exploitative of children, variably generating an income whilst also implying reliance on local organisations and citizens for assistance. The forms of assistance received through active begging include donations of food, money or housing. In a focus group of women in Karakara, the status of extreme poverty was associated by the participants with the right to beg (and to receive donations in-kind), while those people who are in non-extreme conditions but still poor are constrained in their search for help by social norms. For example, they are mostly blocked by the shame of begging or receiving help, also some poor women do not even attempt to participate in NGO activities because, being 'richer' than extreme-poor women, they do not perceive this right as theirs (FGD, female, Karakara).

In other instances, precarious and low-paid farm labour activities were often combined with home-based activities, such as selling cooked or preserved food for women. However, trading on credit from traders is rarely profitable and the two rural jobs may not enable young women who are mothers to survive difficult times. For instance, Interviewee 8 (CP, Dogo; see Figure 12) is nearly 28 years old and a single mother of five children, with multiple deprivations contributing to her poverty persistence.

Figure 12. Multiple deprivations contributing to exclusion



Moreover, given that the consumers are also from the locality and their purchasing power is subject to seasonality, rural demand is in turn dependent on seasonality, contributing to low negotiating power of laborers (such as farmers at harvest or migrants returning home). Limited capital also means that they may rent in productive assets (e.g. motorbikes) rather than owning them, further limiting their ability to generate a profit from the livelihood over time (e.g. driving a taxi for the taxi-owner or sub-letting from the taxi renter). In these instances, they have less room to bargain for better repayment conditions, their net earnings are lower than those of non-renters and they are more vulnerable if they do not hold a license to perform their job. Some experience an absence of benefits (sickness or injury) but a similar rotation system to that associated with salaried work, with the compounded insecurity of not knowing when or if they may be called back to work. In these conditions, many youth engaged in petty trade or services have confessed that they are price-takers, accepting whatever price (monetary or in-kind) is offered to them for their services, and may even go unpaid because of the poverty of their clients and employers. Price-taking is particularly prevalent in services such as sewing and mending clothing or garage and other services, especially amongst the youth who may be less experienced in setting prices.

In urban areas of Tahoua and Zinder poor youth are still involved in agricultural activities, but two activities support better opportunities for the urban chronically poor: market gardening and sewing. The former involves urban market gardeners (owners) processing, preserving and cooking food (adding value) to sell to an urban market, which has higher demand than poorer rural areas because of the relatively better-off consumer base in urban areas. This offers better opportunities to escape poverty compared to labour, where the margin set by the seller is the labourer's income. The latter is not as lucrative as using own saved capital to buy products to resell, as it involves explicit or implicit interest embedded in the wholesaler's price and diminishes the labourer's profit (e.g. from selling pre-made peanut oil). However, while these labourers have a harder time achieving ownership of or access to rented market gardens, they do benefit from more garden harvest work, which could be linked to opportunities to sell harvest on commission at a price set by the garden owner. The labourer trader would add a margin, and where possible process the food in order to add value. Female market gardeners and female commission traders were more active in women's groups specialising in agro- food processing and the preservation of food products such as preserved tomato, carrot jam, moringa or couscous (FGD, female, Tahoua Geuben). This was often driven in part by NGO mobilisation of women into cooperatives. Forming alliances or engaging in cooperatives was also useful in preventing price-taking. This reaffirms the importance of women's networks of all kinds – whether tontines, associations, or various other groups – in strengthening skills and capacity for individual and collective action.

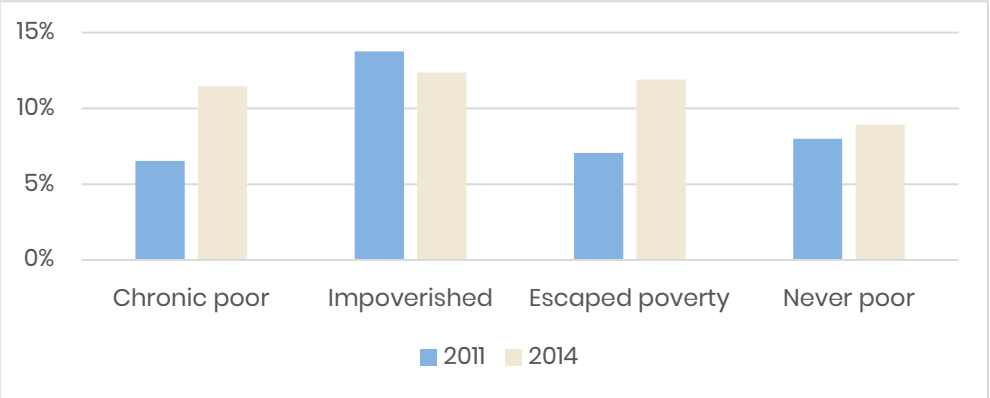
Another common activity in one of the localities, albeit reflecting the gender segregation of occupations, was sewing and knitting, typically by women who had managed to access NGO-sponsored vocational training. Very often, female tailors spoke of price-taking – letting the consumer decide. Moreover, **though many had learned tailoring with a sewing**

machine, they often couldn't afford a machine so instead relied on knitting things such as children's hats, clothing and baby carrier blankets, which are popular during the cold season in the area of Tahoua Geuben (FGD, female, Tahoua Geuben), and embroidery.

4.1.3. Migration: limited rewards for the chronic poor

Migration is sometimes viewed as a solution to the problem of accumulating sufficient savings over reproduction needs; in other words, a solution to the need for the capital that is crucial to setting up an additional income-generating opportunity next to labour. Youth-headed households who had a migrating household member were associated with a 7.3 percentage point lower probability of chronic poverty, according to the regression analysis. The descriptive panel data analysis points to an increase in work-related travel, as a share of all travel, for youth between the survey years. By trajectory, the increase was largest for young adults within chronically poor households and for those escaping poverty (Figure 13). Descriptively, work-related migration was primarily a male phenomenon, with only 1–2% of women migrating for this reason. More generally, Figure 13 indicates that a rising number of chronically poor are migrating, perhaps for farm work or urban work in circular migration, which may suggest distress coping strategies or seasonal short-term internal migration spells.

Figure 13. Changes in work-related migration as a share of total youth absence



Source: Analysis of LSMS-ECVMA pooled data.

Among chronically poor youth, there is a propensity to be absent from the household for short durations, sometimes for work-related migration, which has direct implications for the level of education completed. Some of this absence was to work to support individual or household subsistence, and may have been seasonal agricultural labour migration within the country. These absences were shown to affect education completion rates. The panel analysis reveals that youth in chronically poor households who were absent at some point in the year preceding the survey generally had completed one year of education, compared to 2.9 years of education on average among youth in never-poor households. The share of youth completing at least primary education was also slightly lower in chronically poor households (7%) than in households that escaped poverty (11%) or that were never-poor (16%). Moreover, much of the seasonal internal migration was to rapidly growing Niamey rather

than being spread across other areas, begging the question of how more inclusive secondary city development planning could eventually help to diversify migrant destinations within Niger.

Migration is only a real option if it is possible to cover the initial expenses. Some chronically poor are able to mobilise resources through parents, relatives or friends 'in migration' who send money to them for transport. Women sometimes participate in financing migration transport costs, playing the role of patrons or 'wise women' in the community. For example, for Interviewee 31 (TE, Bambey) this patron was a close relative (his mother-in-law). Others save from higher-paid off-farm wage work, while some pay for migration by offering their transporters a service in return, such as supervision of products in the truck used to transport migrants: '*I went on migration once. I got into a truck that was transporting onions to Côte d'Ivoire. Our role was to take care of the onions so that they would not get damaged before they reached their destination… The trip was difficult. Often, we unloaded and reloaded the truck to check the bags with damaged onions*' (Interviewee 46, CP, Bambeye). Other times, not captured in our interviews, networks of formal and informal brokers play a significant role in the negotiations of pricing and in the power relations that facilitate and control migration (Awumbila et al., 2019). The difficulty in financing the costs of travel also apply to return migration, with some returnees relying on extradition/deportation procedures in order to secure a return journey for free. Interviewee 11 (TE, Dogo) from Zinder, who engaged in this process, 'had to stay in the hands of the police for about 20 days before being repatriated to the country… Once she arrived in Niamey, she had almost nothing and, it was necessary to call on relatives in Niamey to buy her a bus ticket to return to the village.'

The allure of migration often does not meet the expectations for people in chronic poverty, who are often linked to migrating with very low levels of schooling. For instance, Interviewee 38 (CP, Geuben Zogui) and his older brothers did not go to modern school, but they all attended Quranic school. As a result, he has not obtained any qualifications that would allow him to find a decent job (Box 3).

Box 3. Reasons why Interviewee 38 (CP, Geuben Zogui) was unable to escape poverty through migration

1. Interviewee 38 did not bring enough capital when migrating, which is often necessary to move from migration labouring into a migrant trading business that earns more money and enables resilience. In 2008, at the age of 21, he decided to migrate to Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire. His parents, who were poor, were able to find transportation costs for him to travel to Côte d'Ivoire (XOF 40,000 in transportation costs and XOF 20,000 in road costs). He went to Abidjan, where he joined the second-hand goods trade and just managed to earn enough to eat and send money back to his parents.
2. After six months, Interviewee 38 migrated to Libya with the aim of earning more income. The money transfers were more regular. He notes: 'I often sent XOF 50,000, XOF 65,000 to XOF 100,000. In Libya, I was employed on construction sites, I had monthly contract jobs where I earned 300 dinars or XOF 100,000, I was also a militia man where I was paid 150 Libyan dinars or about XOF 50,000.' However, he suffered xenophobic and racism-enabled forms of exploitation of labour. He recalls that in Libya, 'as long as you have black skin, you are a victim of all kinds of stigmatisation'. He noted that there were times when he worked but his employers refused to pay him his salary.

3. Security in Libya was risky for migrants, with kidnapping of migrants for ransom pay-outs (very common), violent attacks and the need to form alliances with migrants from other countries. For example, in January 2020, less than a month since the younger brother of Interviewee 38's friend was kidnapped, XOF 1,500,000 had to be mobilised for his release. INT 38 recalls: 'Before, in Libya we used to be able to earn money and cope with the needs; but now migrants go there just so they don't stay here and do nothing. This migration is simply more than unemployment, but it carries enormous risks.'
4. His parents were poor. On his return from Libya, Interviewee 38 was surprised to find that everything he had sent as a start-up fund for the business had been used for other purposes (e.g. family reproductive costs). 'When I was there, I sent money to my parents for their own needs and to buy me goods to use when I return home'. Unfortunately, what he sent as capital upon his return was wasted and he found nothing when he returned home. This has contributed to his pessimism to the point where he was overcome by despair.

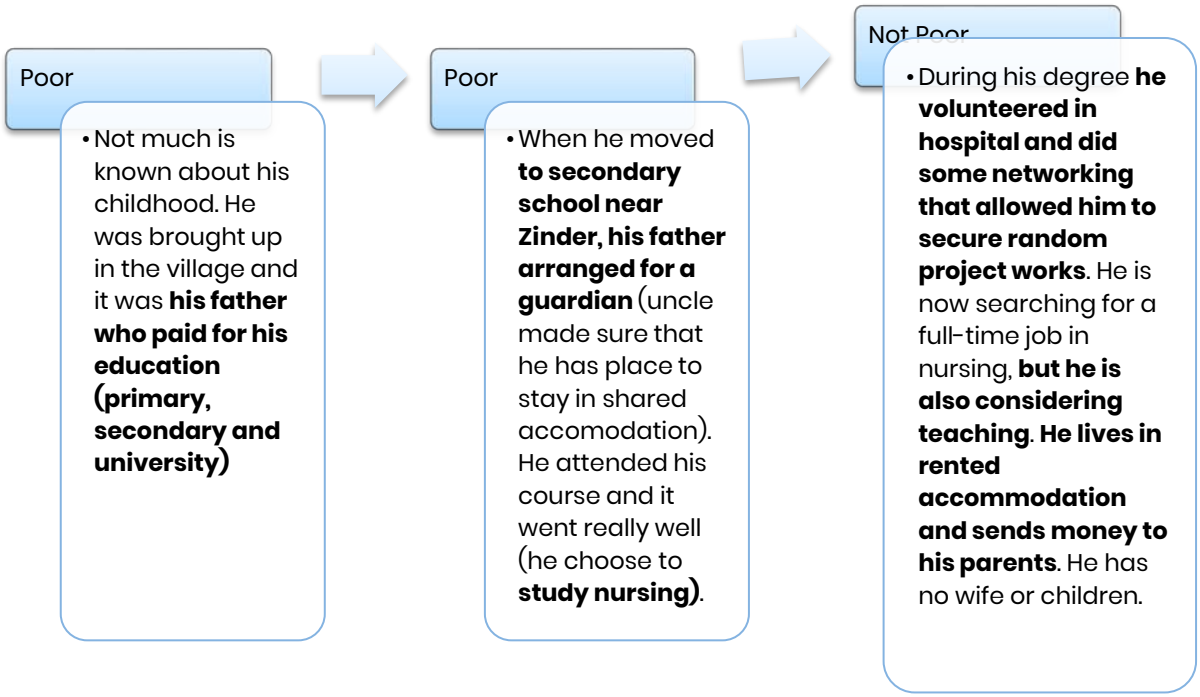
4.2. (Sustained) poverty escapes

Having analysed some systemic and structural constraints, we next seek to uncover how some youth managed to escape poverty. Youth who had escaped poverty recently, or managed to sustain a poverty escape, often did so through a combination of resilience capacities underpinned by skills acquired through education or other forms of vocation-based learning. They typically built on learning (some formal, but also Quranic, vocational skills from training and apprenticeships mentorships, or observing others) to secure livelihoods or social status that maintained or improved their wellbeing amidst difficult contexts and vulnerabilities. These combinations are discussed below.

4.2.1. Education and continued learning for livelihood improvements

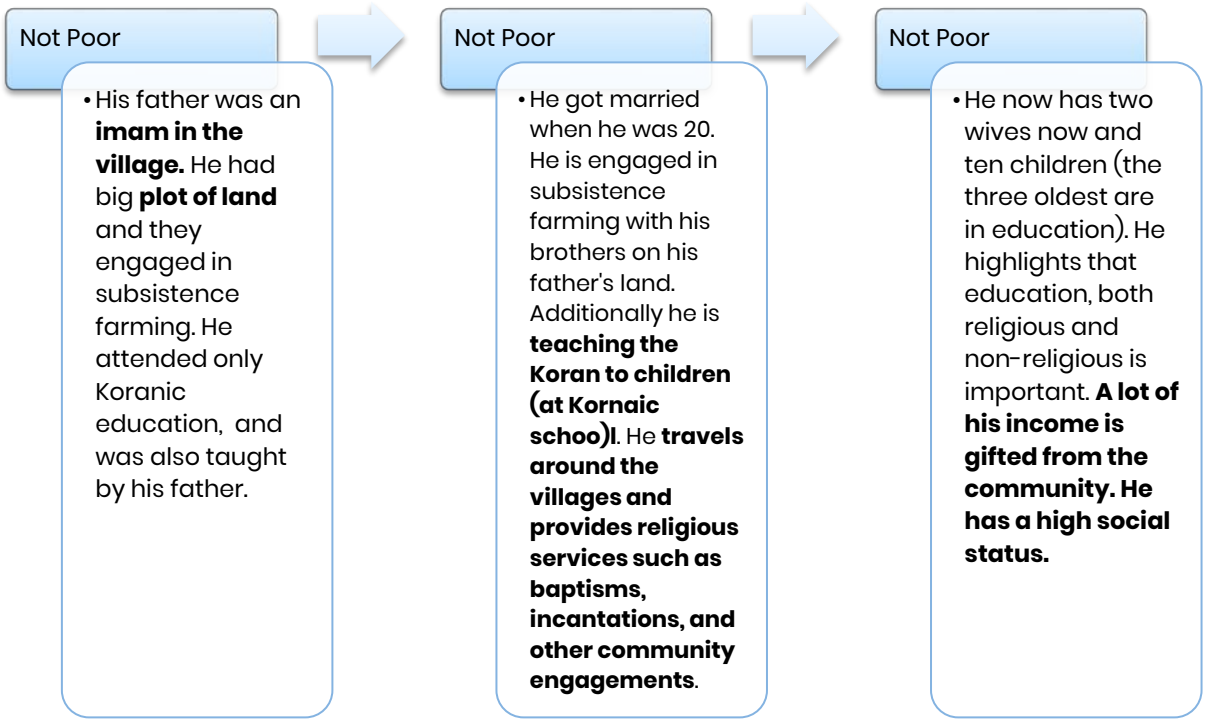
Education is the first step that allows individuals to secure livelihoods or social status that maintain or improve their wellbeing. Some manage to escape poverty through state and Quranic education. Though Interviewee 44 (Escape, Karakara) escaped poverty via substantial investments in state education, what is interesting is how hard he still has to work in many different jobs in order to keep his income above the poverty line in the absence of a full-time job – something this level of education would have led to under earlier administrations (Figure 14). He retains his position by volunteering and networking to find part-time random contracts, and is considering teaching as well. It is notable that he has to pay for rented accommodation and may not be able to afford a wife and family at this stage.

Figure 14. Interviewee 44 (Escape, Karakara)



Another young man escaped poverty through Quranic education, and today maintains his wellbeing through work as a Quranic teacher and a provider of religious services (Figure 15). This endows him with significant social status in the community.

Figure 15. Interviewee 47 (NN, Dogo)

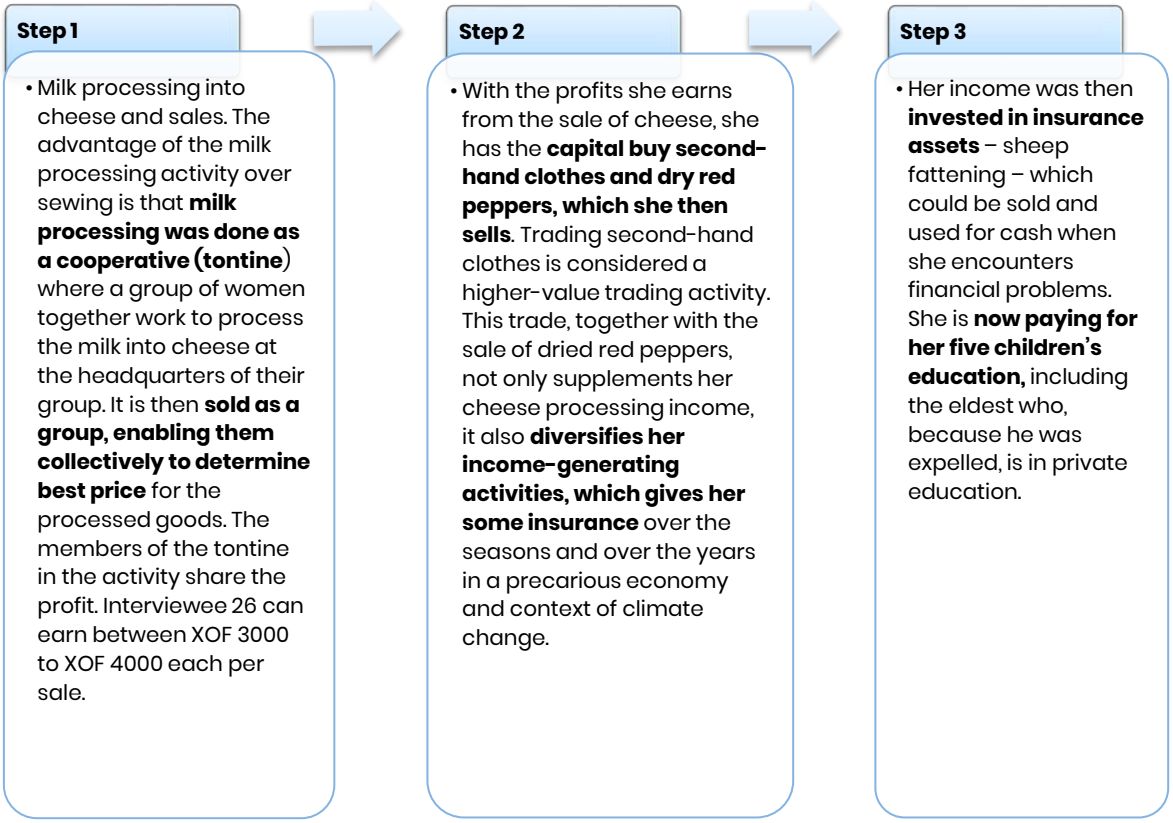


Interestingly, panel data analysis at national level indicates that years of formal education was not a significant correlate of the probability of initial poverty escapes in either the full sample or for youth-headed households. Variable quality of education could explain this lack of association with poverty escapes in the data, in particular low literacy rates even among household heads with education (Diwakar et al., 2021). Education was, however, a statistically significant correlate for never-poor households. Whether examined through years of education or in a separate regression exploring primary and lower secondary education completion by the household head, there was a significant positive association with the probability of a youth-headed household never being poor. It could be that never-poor households can access better quality education that contributes to the persistence of improved welfare and prevents a return poverty in the country. Indeed, regression results point to a negative relationship between years of education and the probability of impoverishment across the full sample and for youth-headed households.

Besides state and religious education, some of the most useful and relevant skills that contribute to escapes from poverty are vocational skills gained either through formal training or informal apprenticeships. Vocational training is especially popular among female household members. In many cases, women's participation in training is supported by their spouses and, reflecting the normative aspect of obtaining spousal agreement for engaging in activities beyond the household realm, it is explicitly mentioned that the wife receives permission from the husband to attend the course (it is seen as a good investment for the household finances). The training and subsequent income earning-potential to help maintain the family contributes to the independence of young women in the household. For example, Interviewee 26 (Escape, Gueben Zogui) began life poor, only reaching grade 3

education. When she was married to a taxi-driving husband (who did not own the taxi), he encouraged her to take advantage of vocational training in sewing as they had five children to support. She took literacy courses and vocational training in how to process milk into cheese, followed by diversification into two further trading occupations. She also purchased insurance assets. She did this by acquiring a capital amount that was in turn invested in higher-value products and through higher-value services (mechanic, repair). The steps in Interviewee 26's escape are outlined in Figure 16.

Figure 16. Interviewee 26's steps out of poverty

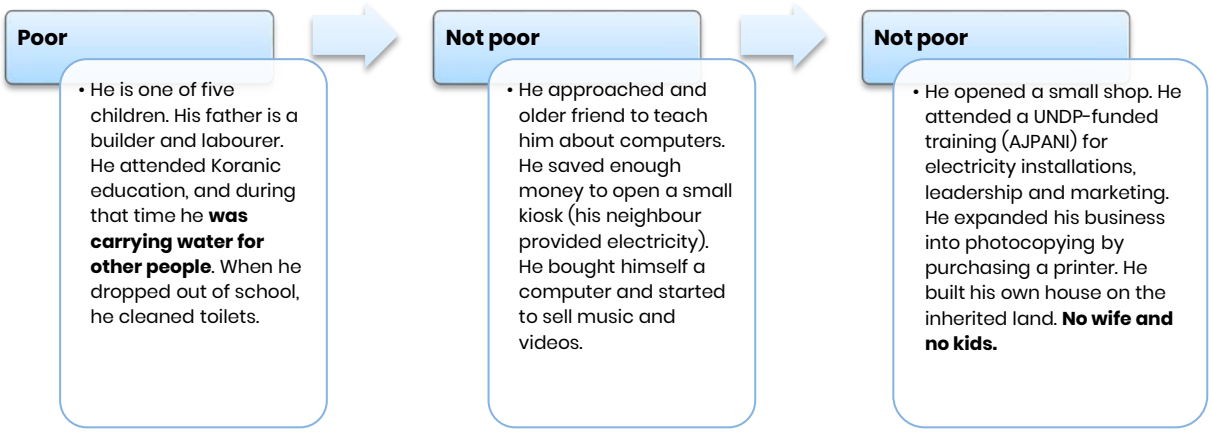


Finally, others (mostly men in the sample) were sometimes able to improve wellbeing through skills transmitted by family or by frequently observing others, even if not enough to escape poverty. Interviewee 34 (CP, Dogo) recalls that there was a radio repairman in the village: 'As I was not doing any work, I would go and observe him while he repaired the radios. In the meantime, I had bought a radio. When it broke down, I repaired it myself using the repairman as an inspiration... Gradually, the people around me brought their radios to me for repair. I didn't set prices for repairs. It was up to the person to decide what they would give me after the radio was repaired.'

Interviewee 45 (Escape, Karakara) is an illiterate 22-year-old man who cleaned toilets after dropping out of school but found a way out of poverty by **learning the skills 'mobile phone repair' by observing others**. By migrating, he obtained the capital to set up a kiosk to repair phones and use a computer and printer to print photos for locals (Figure 17). Having no wife and kids may have helped this escape (no initial bridewealth costs, baptism costs, maternal

health costs or early childhood educational costs to cover, which would have eaten into his capital).

Figure 17. Interviewee 45's sustained escape from poverty by skills acquisition



4.2.2. Gendered escapes via the world of work: combinations of processes alongside manoeuvring gender norms

The gender segregation in skills acquisition noted above implies gender differences in poverty escapes due to inclusion in the world of work of Tahoua and Zinder. Training at local NGOs in tailoring and in forms of food cooking, preservation, processing and selling have enhanced the value of the goods sold by young female entrepreneurs. Food production and selling is an entrepreneurial occupation largely dominated by women, which largely reinforces gender segregation in occupations. Women participate in the expansion of street catering with the sale of ready-made meals and food prepared and generally sold either at the entrance of schools or in front of their homes. If they decide to perform street catering by the roadside or at the market, female entrepreneurs turn to the children's practice of *tala tala* (ambulatory sale). Moreover, interviews in Niamey reveal that despite social norms around women's engagement in public spheres, many older women are trading openly in markets and on streets. One female interviewee said if you are over 35 you have more freedom and they have their teenage (pre-married) girls running around delivering food, not just those under 10 (the norm).

Male entrepreneurs, in contrast, are not prohibited from attending their own ambulatory sales, which allows them to sell several types of food, drinks and ready-made meals in containers or in pouss-pouss (literally 'push-push', a small human-powered cart). Men also sometimes get involved in certain catering activities that are usually carried out by women, as we observed with the sale of fried foods in Niamey. They compete with women through equipment and customer service, making a difference in terms of product presentation, hygiene or comfort for customers. The ownership of simple equipment, such as a table on which to place the food container or the provision of a bench for consumers, is a value addition based on preferential gendered access to capital – via men's preferential access

to migration, male property inheritance, male access to informal and formal credit, as well as men's greater ability to be involved in busy public spaces without disapproval. Finally, we encountered more male than female entrepreneurs active in formal restaurant catering services, again likely underpinned by differential access to capital and gender norms.

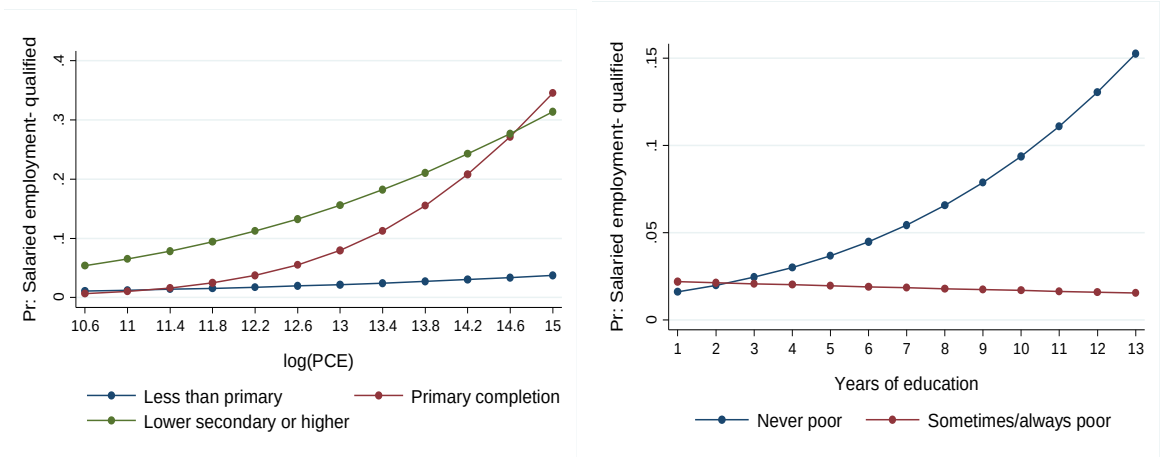
Young women are also involved in newly expanded water-related income-generating activities (differentially for women compared to men) in the context of water shortages. In Bambaye, for example, '*[w]omen are more concerned by this problem of access to water because it is they who are responsible for collecting water for the household needs. For this reason, they are forced to get up late at night [to fetch water], because the flow is generally low during the day*' (FGD, mixed, Bambaye). Men are mostly involved in transport activities. An activity popular with women is the sale of drinking water by cup or in small plastic bags at markets, although this obviously has environmental consequences. Water sachets are best sold when they are chilled or iced, so this activity is best done when you have a refrigerator or freezer and have access to electricity. Unlike men, women generally have to rely largely on children's help (through the practice of *tala tala*) to dispose of the water and ice packets for sale in public places such as bus stations or markets. 'The young girls who are involved in this practice are between 5 and 9 years old. As soon as they have reached the age of 10, they stop this activity to protect them from frequentation by young boys' (FGD, female, Bambeye). However, these normative restrictions that especially affect young women are increasingly being challenged by the reality of women's movement in trade also being challenged, as outlined above.

4.2.3. Salaried employment: a double-edged sword?

Among those who had managed to access state education, especially beyond primary level, a lucky few were able to access stable, salaried employment. **Where this salaried form of employment was as an executive or qualified worker or employee, it was associated with a higher likelihood of poverty escape and a lower likelihood of impoverishment amongst the subset of youth-headed households, according to regression analysis**. There may be a bi-directional relationship underpinning this result, where access to salaried employment is more available for better-off households. Even so, the reliance on baseline employment at a time before the household escaped poverty in the regression does provide some support for salaried employment as a pathway out of poverty.

We also separately regress the probability of acquiring stable, salaried employment for all youth in the dataset pooled across years against a similar set of covariates to understand how education and poverty trajectories might in turn influence the ability of youth to access this employment. The results of this regression for our variables of interest are depicted in Figure 18. **As expected, youth who have completed lower secondary education or above are much more likely to access this type of salaried employment across most of the welfare distribution** (Figure 18, left-hand panel). When disaggregated based on whether the household was ever in poverty, the benefit of additional years of education beyond primary increases much more for individuals in never-poor households (Figure 18, right-hand panel).

Figure 18. Predictive probability of salaried work for youth depending on school and welfare



Source: Analysis of LSMS-ECVMA pooled data.

In the qualitative data, salaried work was often in the public sector – typically in health and education. This requires some specific educational qualifications, but the pathways to a stable contract are complex for youth. Just 3% of young adults and 5% of other adults were engaged in salaried employment as an executive or qualified worker in the panel data. Another 2% of young adults and 3% of other adults were engaged in salaried employment either as a non-qualified worker or labourer (mostly men). The few young people who manage to complete their studies and who are employed through the institutional sector can be often found in the education and health sectors, where they have opportunities for salaried employment at the end of their course. NGOs, which represent a second opportunity for those with contacts, require applicants to have at least five years of experience: '*Currently, I am looking for a job. I have submitted at least a dozen applications for projects and other institutions, but I am faced with the problem of lack of experience. Offers require at least 5 years of experience in a project*' (Interviewee 44, Escape, Karakara). While waiting for a stable job, a combination of career strategies can be common, such as working contemporaneously in the private sector and in public health. In the latter case, they become '*volunteers*' – a category of health worker that is quite common in public health facilities and at all levels of qualification (doctor, nurse, midwives, support staff, etc.) in Niger. Given the difficulty of engaging in the recruitment process for civil servants, volunteers have no choice but to attempt to secure a position as contractor with the state, the town hall or directly with the health structures in an increasingly saturated market.

While awaiting recruitment, volunteers also job-seek by participating in the implementation of vertical programmes (national immunisation days, vaccination campaigns, reproductive health outings, etc.). The resident staff involve them in the activities that generate bonuses and even facilitate volunteers' engagement because they are aware that a large part of the work in services rests on them. This relationship can thus be characterised as a system of exchange between the two groups of agents – volunteers and staff – albeit with limits. On the one hand, although the volunteers receive a portion of the bonuses, the amounts are generally insignificant. On the other hand, the incumbent staff members do not have great authority over the volunteers, some of whom go absent when

opportunities arise elsewhere. Some consequences that could arise from these types of engagement for non-formally employed health workers are a very precarious status, petty corruption such as patient racketeering (due to additional user fees for services), corrosion of motivation affecting workers' performance and a deterioration in the quality of care. This points more generally to the threefold problem of underfunded health, with costs borne by the patients.

For some, a solution to obviate these conditions is to switch to teaching: '*I plan to switch to teaching if I ever find a position that suits my profile*' (Interviewee 44, Escape, Karakara). The education sector is a way out for many young graduates – in all fields – as well as for those who are struggling at secondary level. However, not all transitions are linear (Box 4), which has consequences for the quality of teaching for poor children. This fast job accession might imply a possible difficulty in ensuring easily the identification of knowledge gaps in teachers or the provision of on-the-job training to strengthen the capacities of new teachers, particularly with respect to sensitive situations (like the provision of psychosocial support, how to create teaching-learning environments conducive to cooperation, problem-solving, non-violence and respect, and appreciation of students more vulnerable to risks in the event of crises and emergencies).

The young graduates either reorient their professional pathway or simply cannot undertake further long curricula or studies, finding in education an opportunity for rapid positive change in the course of their career life in ways that can drive poverty escapes, with a monthly salary of 75,000 FCFA for primary school and 100,000 FCFA for secondary teaching.

> *When I worked, I had a salary of 75,000 FCFA for the post of teacher and 87,145 for the post of Director. With this job, I got married (in 2016) and had a child. During this period, I was faring well as I could take care of my small family whilst contributing to the care of the large family, since in the meantime my father died* (Interviewee 28, TE, Bambaye).

Box 4. An example of non-linear trajectory to school teaching

Interviewee 30 (IM, Bambeye) was born in 1994 in Bambeye. He is the second in a family of eight children (six of whom are girls). His father is a schoolteacher from the canton of Bambeye. He went through his primary studies following his father's professional assignments: (1) He took an introductory course in Bawade in the department of Gaya (Dosso region). (2) He moved to Kukupce in the department of Bouza (Tahoua region) for a preparatory course to CM2,[25] obtaining the CFEPC.[26] (3) He continued his education at the general education college of Tama (Bouza department, Tahoua region). He obtained his BEPC[27] undergraduate degree in 2015. (4) After a consultation with his father about his future, Interviewee 30 decided to continue his training in a private vocational school in the city of Tahoua to learn accounting.

[25] Primary school, 6th grade.

[26] *Certificat de fin d'études du premier cycle* ('first cycle end of studies certificate').

[27] *Brevet d'études du premier cycle.*

His father bought him a motorbike. Unfortunately, the experience was short-lived since once in Tahoua, he had stopped going to classes for around a term. When his father found out he did not go to high school, he stopped paying school fees and Interviewee 30 returned to Bambaye to the family home. Concerned about his son's future, his father used his networks in the education system to find his son work as a contract teacher in primary education. Interviewee 30 took office in January 2016 at the primary school in Mulela, a village located 20 km from Bambaye. From an irregular student at Tahoua's vocational high school, Interviewee 30 thus became a teacher with a monthly salary of 75,000 FCFA.

While some young people in teaching are pleased to finally find a job, which is also socially rewarding, it should be highlighted that the category of contract worker in education has been the subject of debate at the political and trade union level in Niger. In 2003, the Ministry of Education, with the support of the World Bank, carried out a large contract recruitment programme in order to improve the level of coverage of the education system at primary and secondary level. However:

> *These contract teachers are usually of a low or very low level... Due to agreements between the government and the central trade unions, several thousand contract workers were integrated into the civil service... without competition, without benefiting from training, and without their level of qualification being one of the recruitment criteria* (Olivier de Sardan, Ali Bako and Harouna, 2018: 81) (authors translation).

This also speaks to the issue of why so few in the qualitative sample have graduated primary school. There are examples of salaried work available which does not require a formal education, such as the rise in demand for security guards for residential properties owned by the better off (Box 5). However, it is worth noting that Interviewee 39's (CP, Geuben Zogui) life story seems to differ from that of the ordinary farm labourer in several ways that may have contributed to his being able to access to this type of salaried work:

- He migrated to Nigeria and Cameroon, taking on many jobs over time (as a shoe-shiner, a docker, a labourer, a water carrier) and ultimately working as a taxi driver. He and his cousin took turns to quickly raise the money and buy their own tricycle. He got married again and his uncles in Tahoua suggested the security work. He also assisted his aunt's husband in his masonry and plumbing activities, which might have been useful in applying for this type of job.
- Notably, he had a mobile phone so he could be contacted when his job came open.

Box 5. Security guard: a male salaried job

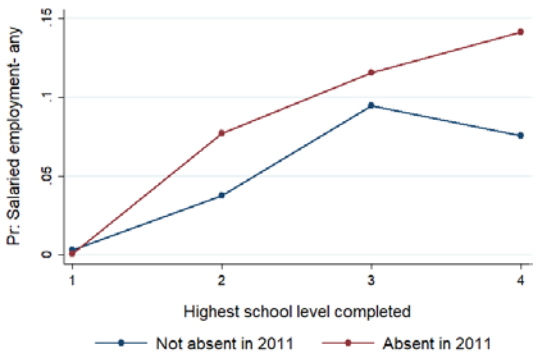
Growing urbanisation and increasing insecurity, whether local or from terrorist groups, has opened up opportunities for wage income through the creation of security agencies in cities. The proliferation of entrepreneurship and the timid deployment of basic public services have created the need to secure more and more professional spaces. Added to this is the growing need to secure domestic spaces such as private villas. This job opportunity allows people who have not necessarily received formal education or training to qualify for a monthly salary. Interviewee 39 (CP, Geuben Zogui) 'had not attended school, he spent his childhood between Quranic school and accompanying his parents in their daily activities in the countryside (field work, cutting wood, collecting straw) and engaging in games with his peers of the same age'. Contracting with a local security company as a security guard, he earns a regular monthly income by working and living in residential properties, which has enabled him to improve his standard of living:

"With this position I have thank God, I manage to make my ends meet. But I must tell you that I had a problem with the [previous] job my aunt found for me. In fact, the person was not fair to me. On the contract, I result receiving a salary of 35,000 FCFA. However, at the end of the month I found myself with 30,000 FCFA. Every month he said he had billed me with money for my uniform and the like. Despite everything, I was patient until one day I would have to work as security guard with a man whose house does not have an annex room where I can enter when it rains. He told me to shelter in the home of the man in case it rains, yet [when it happened] the man is not there and there was only his wife. I told him that I could not be a security guard around this house because it is risky for a man. We talked until I told him I was going to stop this job. After that, I went to meet a director of a babysitting agency. I asked him if there is a position available, to contact me, I will be available. He had made contact with me. I got to know this agency through my colleagues. Between us, we saw each other and talked about job opportunities. That was how I learned about this agency. A few days later, he contacted me. I had gone to meet him. After the job presentation and the salary grid, I signed the contract for 50,000 FCFA per month. With that thank God, I can pay the rental in it and I meet my needs. After three months I was remarried and brought my daughter to me."

4.2.4. The role of migration in combining skills and livelihood profitability

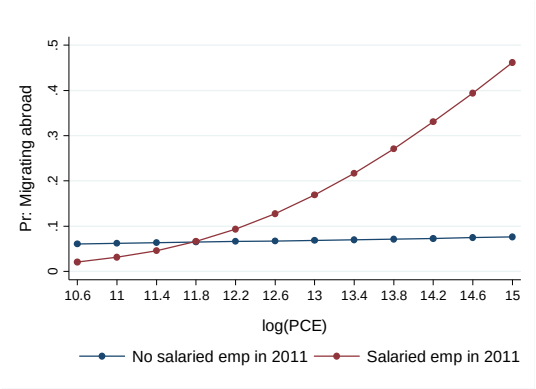
Regression analysis offers key insights into the links between migration, employment and education to create poverty escapes, with results provided in Annex B. First, individuals in the panel data who had migrated in the first survey year were generally more likely to have a salaried job in the second survey year, compared to those who had not migrated. When disaggregating by type of salaried employment, the differences are much more pronounced for qualified salaried employment. Moreover, the probability of salaried jobs increased for youth who had migrated and also who had high levels of education, at least completion of primary school and beyond (Figure 19). The second key finding is that not only was migration amongst educated youth a first step towards salaried employment, but the relationship also worked in reverse. Specifically, salaried employment in wave one increased the probability that youth (predominantly young men, as noted above) would migrate abroad in wave two, particularly at higher levels of per capita household expenditures (Figure 20). When disaggregating by type of salaried employment, this relationship was observed only for those with qualified salaried employment.

Figure 19. Predictive probability of salaried work in 2014 for youth depending on migration in 2011



Source: Analysis of LSMS-ECVMA pooled data.

Figure 20. Predictive probability of migrating abroad for youth in 2014, by salaried work in 2011



Source: Analysis of LSMS-ECVMA pooled data.

The qualitative data for Zinder and Tahoua offers further insights on these **combinations and pathways. In the LHIs of those in the poverty escape or sustained escape trajectories, combinations of resilient flexible livelihoods, sometimes with migration and typically underpinned by skills gained through school or vocational training or observing successful others, are often fundamental to the process of escaping and staying out of poverty**. Sustained escapes often build on an initial escape by building resilience to shocks and systemic pressures on income and employment. This can be achieved through efforts to expand an enterprise or to add value to it (selling higher quality items, using vehicles to reduce transport costs, etc.) and/or by diversifying into a new enterprise (additional skills) The transition out of poverty is facilitated by multiple migration experiences of household members across different generations (known as chain migration) between place of origin and those migration sites where the household network is. The youngest replace older people in migration, and the latter then ensure the management of the remittances sent back to the village as well as taking on the role of head of household for all the wives and children, who remain in the village. This process is found, for instance, in the role of housekeeper and remittance handler for Interviewee 27 (NN) in Bambey and Interviewee 33 (CP) in Dogo. Furthermore, there is a complementarity between migration and agriculture because the income from migration is often invested in agriculture, and part of the agricultural harvest sold is used to finance transport costs for return migration. Both are used to finance reproductive and ceremonial costs.

The analysis also identifies ongoing investments in social networks and 'social capital' as forms of insurance. Assets (livestock herds, vehicles such as motorbikes, and even household furniture) are a key insurance mechanism as they can be sold in times of stress. Other potential insurance activities include investments in streams of income through real estate (rental income) in children's vocational or further education (age security). Women are also involved in saving capital and investing from migration. When they join their husbands in the destination country, most do not participate in income-generating activities but may instead practice savings strategies for their own use in the medium term. They may save a portion of the daily money the husband gives them to buy condiments or keep part of the cereals given by the husband to prepare meals for their own account (one

out of four tins, for example). The savings accumulated are then sent back to the village for the purchase of small ruminants for fattening under the responsibility of a member of their household. If women do not join their husbands, they tend to do the same with what the head of household gives them in the village, and then they themselves take care of their animals.

In some of the life histories, wellbeing was not associated with diversification per se but rather with a households' involvement in 'high-return sectors' and more remunerative jobs within those sectors, such as:

- small- to medium-scale trade (where scale relates to size of capital invested, returns, and value of items sold);
- work as a skilled builder or a taxi driver with experience;
- salaried employment;
- metal work, which can range from village-level repair of agricultural tools, to welding for rural house construction (tin roofs), to piping for water/sanitary building purposes, to welding metal rods for manufacturing supply chains;
- petty trade, which can range from low-level sales of fried dough (pancakes) in rural areas with low demand, to selling higher-value products or the same product but next to a busy road in a peri-urban area.

Livelihood sequences out of poverty typically involve a low-wage labourer becoming skilled (sewing, driving), leading to higher wage labour, which can lead to capital being saved for investment in petty or small businesses (female) or migration (male), and then capital for larger (usually male) businesses. These larger business are typically garage and auto-parts sales, butcher shops, small computer shops, trading, or digital media and printing. They are well-established businesses in a good location (a few local businesses collapsed when the market in one of the regions closed down for renovation). As noted, most are the result of obtaining capital and skills earlier, for example through migration, inheritance (capital or skill) or observation. Activities that allow the move from petty trading to small- to medium-scale regular trade with the ability to earn profits involve higher-value or more processed/preserved goods: moringa, locust, couscous, cooked cabbage, peanut oil and 'ball', rising to higher-value aphrodisiacs (which may be imported), processed milk and cheese products, second-hand clothes. Higher-wage labour includes sewing, or driving a taxi or motorbike. In this process, migration is a common means of generating capital to start up a business. In some cases, migration offers an avenue for an initial poverty escape, and repeat investments at home thanks to this migration enable this escape to be sustained over time (Box 6). In the absence of access to credit, savings or local earning opportunities, migration acts as a method of accumulating savings for investments in businesses.

Box 6. Successful migration and investment in businesses back home

As a child, Interviewee 29 was enrolled in public school but he was expelled from school in the fourth grade, which he attributes to malicious gossip. He considers this the biggest shock of his life because a friend who stayed on is now continuing his studies in China. It was at this time that his uncle, who repaired motorcycles, encouraged him to learn from him. The uncle influenced his future, as Interviewee 29 became his apprentice and learned how to be a mechanic and repair motorcycles.

Interviewee 29 wanted to migrate at 15 but his parents would not let him. He worked as an apprentice and learned skills which would be useful in later life, but did not make much money at the time so, around the age of 15-19, he decided to become the 'boy helper' to a butcher in the village. The money he earned was variable: 'I only earned for the meal. When I sold the meat for XOF 100, I earned XOF 10. It is according to the sales effort that I am paid. I often earn up to XOF 500 a day.' These early life experiences explain his entrepreneurial skills prior to his migration.

When he was 19, he used the money saved from the garage work and from selling meat himself to fund the cost of travel (XOF 40,000) to Abidjan, in Côte d'Ivoire, in 2001. When Interviewee 29 arrived in Abidjan, he followed the people of his village by working as a docker for six months. When he had XOF 25,000 he gave up this activity and started a cosmetics business, under the advice of one of his friends. With the people of his village, he looked for a place to set up a small kiosk. He began to save money and his business started to prosper.

At this point, he started sending money home to save for a dowry to marry a girl in his village. After two years, he returned to the village. The first thing he did was to pay XOF 90,000 for a plot of land and build his own house so he could leave the family home. He then got married. He remained in mechanics and agriculture and started buying and selling motorcycles.

In 2008, and then again in 2015, Interviewee 29 returned to Côte d'Ivoire, each time staying for ten months. He says he worked in the same business in cosmetics, and that he left to earn money and to invest in the trade of motorcycles and spare parts, because he saw that it works. He opened a garage, and then a spare parts shop. He is the first in the village to have a garage and a spare parts shop here.

Interviewee 29 also is involved in a project that recruits out-of-school children in the commune and entrusts them to motorcycle mechanics, who teach them mechanics. The children have been following his teaching for six months, but he says it is difficult at the moment to see any results. 'The children I supervise are between 15 and 16 years old. Among them, there are those who attended the traditional public school and those who attended the Franco-Arab school. They all have the primary school level. There are no girls among them.'

4.2.5. Women, gender norms and poverty escapes

Women who escaped poverty typically found ways to acquire some capital. This was often through an 'invisible' process of negotiating traditional norms with elders and male kin. This may involve working innovatively within traditional norms, such as being a 'good daughter-in-law' until a good reputation with in-laws is achieved that allows them to begin a negotiation that challenges a norm (e.g. trading, getting a skill, or re-marrying to a migrant to obtain capital to start a business). These are discussed below.

4.2.5.1. Negotiating norms to enable poverty escapes through divorce and remarriage

The material basis of traditional models of divorce and remarriage for this generation of youth has changed. The common assumption in the past was that a divorce occurs when a man takes on a second wife or divorces and marries a new wife, as men ordinarily had preferential and wider ownership of and access to assets, employment, education, public networks, and so on. This can lead to diminished resources for the first wife or for the deserted wife and her children, who may suffer downward mobility thanks to a diminished share of the family assets, harvests and the husband's income to fund her and her young

children's maintenance needs. However, with the combination of poverty, deteriorating land access, saturated local labour markets and problems the chronically poor have in raising money to migrate or in accumulating capital for trade, we find that many young men are unemployed or severely underemployed and do not own assets.

It is within this context that women appear to be initiating divorce early if their first husband cannot provide enough for them to live. Young women and men divorce and re-marry in a more fluid way than their elders. In the regression analysis, amongst youth-headed households, widowhood, divorce or separation of the head is associated with a lower likelihood of impoverishment (the relationship is not significant for the full set of panel households). Most heads who fall in this category are women. Descriptively, almost half (44%) of the small number of female-headed households are widowed, divorced or separated, compared to 1% of male-headed households. Qualitatively, in Tahoua and Zinder divorce is often part of a strategy to escape poverty. Increasingly, we see young men becoming poorer after separation from employed women, and we find young women divorcing their first, 'poor' or 'polygamous' husband and 'marrying up' in a second marriage as a strategy to escape poverty. When a divorce takes place, the woman returns the bridewealth money to the man, but the trousseau, and in particular the furniture, remain the property of the divorced woman.

Intergenerational support may be reduced or replaced by young people increasingly paying for their own marriages. This may be because the young now own their own assets or have their own income (e.g. sheep, trading or migration earnings) or, in rural areas, because of the dwindling access of parents to fertile land and yields – the 'lack of foundation' cited by youth in the FGDs (see Section 3.2 and Annex B). The commercialisation of bridewealth means that young men may have to delay marriage. It also means that women or their parents have to retain savings for the possibility of divorce. The pieces of furniture constitute both assets and savings for the divorced woman, who could use them for an upcoming marriage or sell them to deal with unforeseen events or for needed investments, such as migration.

The fieldwork also pointed to ways in which older women trade/accumulate the capital necessary to support the younger generation, who do not have the collateral (assets) necessary for taking out formal loans, as noted in Section 3.3.3. Indeed, there seems to be no formal credit provider serving destitute or poor rural youth who do not own sufficient collateral (assets). The credit market may therefore work informally through generations (i.e. the wealth of the older generation funding youth migration and trade). One way this might happen is through the accumulation of furniture after divorce (based on the Hausa concept that moveable property is inherited by the woman after divorce). This has led to the development of markets for *jogoI* ('barter'),[28] managed by female entrepreneurs who mainly

[28] The definition of barter is often given as the 'exchange of goods (other than money) for one or more others', implying an economic operation by which each participant transfers ownership of one good (or a group of goods) and receives another good. In Niger, the concept of *jogoI* is somewhat similar but not exclusively related to the above definition of 'barter, and usually refers to informal practices that may also involve money or services in exchange. According to the sector in which *jogoI* occurs, it could also be deemed illicit. For example, in the health sector, *jogoI* implies a type of informal practice designating 'all transactions of lucrative nature, whether of legal or more often illegal nature, which happen in the health establishments' (Gruénais and Fall, 2002).

trade furniture accompanied by other ancillary products and services. From the few encounters that occurred in the field, the team noticed three main features of this occupation. First, women engaging in this activity are in their prime age (roughly estimated to be above 35 and below 55) and it is their primary activity. They buy items of furniture from other women at a low price, refurbish them using a network of workers such as carpenters and painters (in the process, creating employment) and then re-sell them in the marketplace. Second, the locations of these markets were in urban/peri-urban areas; the team did not encounter them in small rural villages. Third, most items purchased by the *jogol* female entrepreneurs was obtained through divorced women's sales of assets from their trousseau, as well as sales to fund baptisms or festivities. Moreover, in the *jogol* market traders often sell houseware products in addition to furniture.

Despite the success of the marriage market, there are still some gender norms which can inhibit remarriage for women. In Niger, pre-marital sexual relations are socially banned though frequent, and marriages are thus also frequent (Diarra et al., 2019). The cultural drive for marriage goes hand-in-hand with experiences of early marriage among adolescent girls. The Nigerien government has made the fight against early marriage one of the flagship strategies of its population policy and, in our survey sites, our focus group interlocutors confirmed a decrease in this phenomenon.[29] According to a group of women from Dogo, the decline in the marriage age of girls is due to the increase for dowry that is requested, suggesting that men would then find it difficult to take a wife:

> *'The increase in the dowry for marriage causes young girls to marry a little late because before it was 12000 FCFA with two loincloths and concerned all categories. On the other hand, over the past ten years, it has varied from 50,000 FCFA (for average households) to over 300,000 FCFA for the rich' (FGD, female, Dogo).*

In the life histories, too, gender norms inhibiting remarriage were sometimes observed. In a second marriage, Interviewee 4 (Escape, Bambeye) divorced her husband to escape a polygamous and very early marriage (age 14). '*She divorced and got married again to the son of the village chief. However, this second husband asked her to send her daughter from the previous marriage back to her father's family (a common norm in SSA), and after she refused, her second husband divorced her. She then returned to her first husband but found a way to form an alliance with the second wife who had earlier received vocational training in sewing. They worked together sewing and selling clothes*' (Interview 4). This example suggests that while youth are financially pressured, they have perhaps also become more autonomous as they have their own sources of income rather than always depending on their parents.

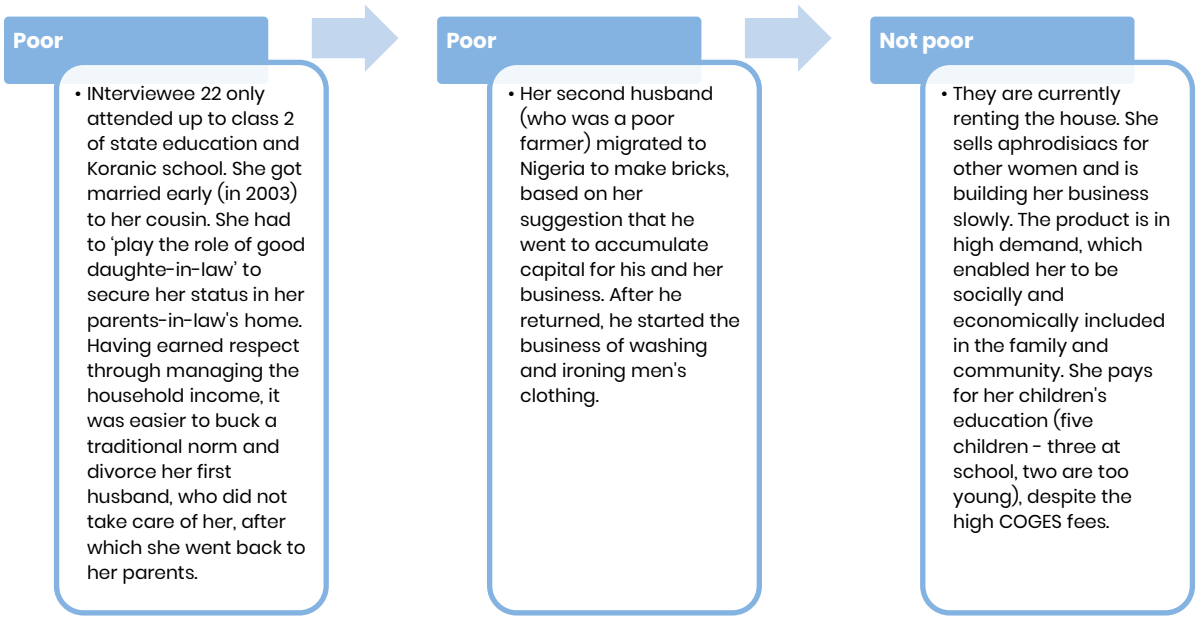
4.2.5.2. The acquisition of agency and joint family work

Given these varied and sometimes fluid norms, some women play by the rules to escape poverty while maintaining social inclusion (Box 7). Poverty escapes are more likely to be sustained when young women manage to gain trust in and legitimacy for their actions as

[29] 'We see that early marriages have declined a lot. About ten years ago, girls were married at the age of 13. However, in recent years, they are at least 17-18 years old before they get married. There are, however, a few cases of early marriage of 13-year-old girls' (FGD, female, Dogo).

active and productive economic members of the household. This requires particular crafting and consideration, given the local and intra-household dynamics where they live. For instance, Interviewee 22 (Escape, Dogo) from Zinder worked within the gender norms dictated in her intra-household relationships (the 'good daughter-in-law') but navigated through them in order to buck other norms and eventually develop her own independent trade. She is profiting from a product which enabled women's need to 'play the game' as good wives to keep their employed husbands from straying.

Box 7. Young female escapers 'playing by the rules' to escape



Interviewee 21's (Escape, Karakara) life story offers an example of a combination of these processes (Box 8).

Box 8. A combination of processes contributing to poverty escape

Reason 1: She attended Quranic school as a child (also doing *tala tala*) and still attends an Arab-Islamic adult school. Interviewee 21 (Escape, Karakara) spent her childhood in Quranic education. Her day was busy with domestic chores, the *tala tala* and the Quranic school. When she woke up, she had a breakfast of the previous day's dough if any was left over, then she swept, went to the market to buy the foodstuffs to prepare the beans with rice that she sold by doing *tala tala*. From 9am to 11am, she went to the Quranic school; when she returned home she prepared for *tala tala*. She came home between 2 pm and 3 pm after having sold everything, but sometimes she ate the rice she was selling for her lunch. She then returned to the Quranic school, which ended at 6 pm.

Reason 2: The whole family works. At 15 years old, Interviewee 21 met her husband at the Dolé market (where young migrants would chat to friends on their breaks). Her paternal uncle arranged the wedding and received the dowry. He migrated to Nigeria when they were married and sent money home; this is when she transitioned from her job street selling (*tala tala*) to home-based work, more befitting of a married woman.

Reason 3: Commission trading with savings from migrant husband. For her first income, Interviewee 21 sold peanut oil, which she received on credit (commission trading). She sold 4–5 litres of oil at a rate of XOF800 per litre. After 3–4 days, she earned XOF150 per litre as a profit (this worked out to roughly 150 per day in earnings). She saved the money she received from her migrant husband for household expenses.

Reason 4: Access to vocational training course in sewing. For her second income, Interviewee 21 enrolled in a two-year training course (CFM) in sewing, embroidery and knitting. She was told about this course by the little sister of the neighbourhood chief. Access to this training requires a registration fee of XOF 13,000 per year, which she paid in instalments. She also bought small equipment such as threads and needles. She completed the first year, but could not continue because of financial difficulties, and so did not get the diploma at the end of the course. However, this was sufficient for her to have a new income-generating activity. Lack of demand prompted her to focus instead on mending torn clothing. She has a tabletop sewing machine. (In the male and female FGDs, there was mention of children who would not go to school because of torn clothing, so the demand for mended clothes for this purpose, rather than making new clothes or tailoring, may also speak to the poverty of the area where she resides).

Reason 5: She has some assets. She lives in an inherited house shared with her brother's family in Karakara, and we think she has three sheep.

Reason 5: Her husband returned from migration ten years ago. He has an irregular income but it is sufficient in combination with her and her children's income. Nearly a month after the marriage, Interviewee 21's husband left again for exodus (migration). He worked in a bakery and was paid daily. Every month for the first three years, her husband sent her XOF 6000 when he was in Nigeria. He regularly returned home. It has now been ten years since the husband stopped migrating. He was then involved in three activities to provide for his family: managing a water fountain at the Dolé market, which was unprofitable because of high water bills; serving as a rickshaw transporter of water cans to market traders; and catering selling cowpea and rice dishes. They still have difficulty paying the COGES costs (her eldest son had to leave school because they could not pay) and thus face difficulty keeping their children in school.

4.3. Impoverishment and transitory poverty escapes

Even for youth who do manage to escape poverty, and others who were originally non-poor, the prevalence and manifestation of a range of shocks and stressors within their contexts render them susceptible to falling into poverty. From the qualitative data, most of the youth interviewees from Tahoua and Zinder are living in large intergenerational households (i.e. they live in their parent's or parents-in-law's house even if they have a spouse and young children of their own). Those in rural areas engage in some subsistence farming on the land of the father and contribute to the household with the income they earn. In this context, they are prone to sharp changes in wellbeing. The sections below discuss key livelihood shocks

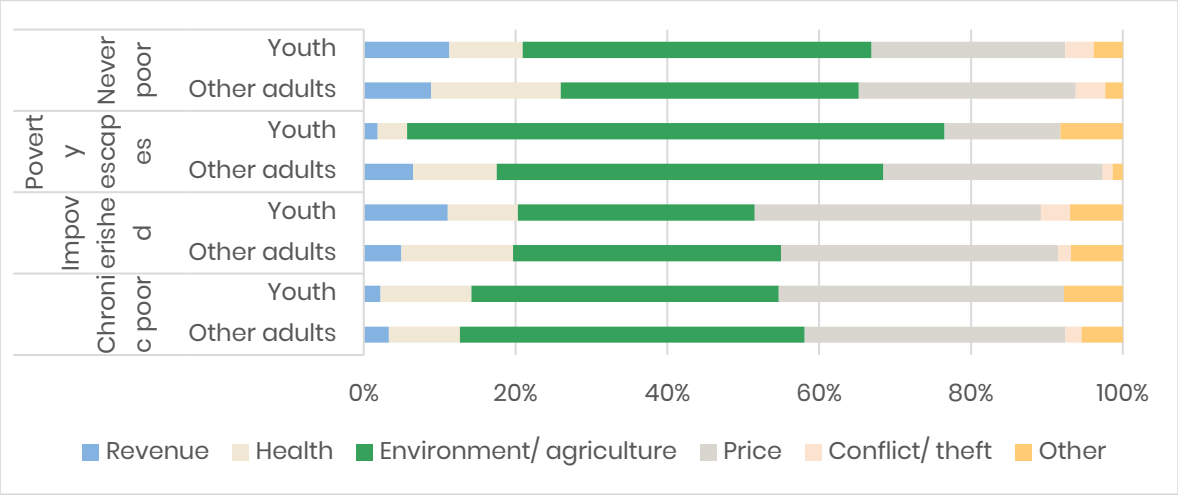
that plunge households into new or deeper poverty, and how these might interact with the household composition shocks noted above.

4.3.1. Livelihood shocks

4.3.1.1. Prevalence and types of shocks

In the panel data analysis, households that fell into poverty between the survey years were more likely to report price and health shocks compared to other trajectories (Figure 21). Environmental or agriculture shocks were common, and in many cases revenue shocks may also be linked to climatic conditions that drive price changes. This points to the need to address issues of sustainability in growth and inclusion trajectories. There was little difference in the presence of these different shock types by youth status. A slight exception was health shocks and price shocks, where differences emerged by poverty trajectory. Specifically, amongst households escaping poverty, just 3% of youth-headed households suffered from health and price shocks, compared to 9% of other households. Revenue shocks, however, were much more common amongst impoverished youth-headed households. It is also interesting to note that conflict and theft were more frequent amongst impoverished youth than other adults, a point we revisit below.

Figure 21. Shocks by poverty trajectory, latest survey year



Source: Analysis of LSMS-ECVMA data, 2014.

A key consequence of these shocks is a higher rate of reduction in revenues, assets and food production for impoverished households compared to other trajectories (Figure 22). For example, 88% of impoverished households that experienced a shock suffered a decrease in food production as a result of that shock, compared to 79% of chronically poor households and 73% of poverty escapers. This suggests a strong need to extend social protection to reach more people in poverty. From a social assistance point of view, the set-up of ad-hoc responses to shocks (such as subsidies and emergency safety nets against food security crises) could be revised to develop a more extensive national cash transfer programme, whereby local authorities play a greater role in helping with targeting and distribution,

increasing the agency of local populations to request an expansion of transfers when people experience shocks.

Figure 22. Decrease in stocks and flows as a consequence of shock, latest survey year

Source: Analysis of LSMS-ECVMA data, 2014.

Interestingly, though, there is some evidence of variable effects of shocks depending on the age of the household head. Regression analysis indicates that while the presence of a shock in the latest survey year was associated with an increased probability of impoverishment and reduced probability of poverty escapes amongst all households, the result is no longer significant when the regression is focused on youth-headed households. This might reflect a stronger ability of youth-headed households to manœuvre into new livelihoods, or to weather shocks more generally, relative to older household heads. It also suggests that the youth stage has the potential to be a critical one for escaping poverty, given this greater resilience in the face of shocks. However, it is also worth noting that amongst poverty escapers, youth-headed households were much less likely to experience revenue or health shocks and instead more likely to experience agricultural or environmental shocks (Figure 21). The shock profile of these households suggests that the presence of relative healthier individuals in younger households, and perhaps a greater ability to manœuvre into diversified livelihoods to weather revenue shocks, might contribute to the resilience of young adults.

Even so, shocks related to conflict were generally associated with reduced poverty escapes. Data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)[30] allows us to investigate. Descriptively, zone-level conflict data from ACLED indicates that 9% of households in 2011 lived in areas that were up to 20 km away from a battle event (typically, armed clashes) in the year of the survey. Regression analysis indicates, moreover, that amongst the full sample of household heads, conflict fatalities more generally (from battles, explosions, strategic events, protests, riots or violence against civilians) did not have a statistically significant association with poverty trajectories. For youth-headed households, however, a higher number of conflict fatalities was associated with a lower probability of sustained escapes and a higher probability of impoverishment. At the same time, it was also associated with a lower probability of chronic poverty and a higher probability of being never poor. It could be that some youth at both ends of the welfare distribution are using violence as a strategy to maintain consumption or to improve wellbeing. Indeed, in the literature for Niger there is some evidence of economic incentives for repeated violence, such as young Fulani in northern Tillabéri acting against Malian Dawsak Tuaregs rustling

[30] https://acleddata.com.

their livestock (Oumarou, 2015). Violence-based or illicit trade situations may be reinforced by existing inter-ethnic tensions or events of destabilisation (ICG, 2018), but they are highly location-specific and should be contextualised within ethno-political grounds (Olawale, 2013; IOM, 2019).

Besides conflict, there are other shocks and stressors that can prevent escapes from poverty. According to the qualitative data, temporary escapers from Tahoua and Zinder are unable to withstand the combination of systemic trends alongside micro shocks. **Systemic trends (or 'covariate shocks') include the effects of a declining economy, climate change or policy changes (affecting, for example, the costs of education). Micro shocks (or 'idiosyncratic shocks') include, for example, the death of a breadwinner and health, debt or social problems**. Economic shocks and stressors which lead to unemployment at the macro level can accompany an unsuccessful return home for respondents following migration, which can be further aggravated by health shocks. A health shock might manifest as a treble shock – the illness of a breadwinner (loss of livelihood), the loss of the earnings of the carer for the ill person and medical costs – all of which can combine to impoverish.

Table 3. Number of LHI cases with particular type of shock across poverty trajectories

Nodes	Poverty escapes (n=10)	Never poor (n=8)	Transitory escapes (n=8)	Impoverished (n=5)	Chronic poor (n=18)	Total (n=49)
Death of breadwinner	0	0	1	3	5	9
Health	1	3	1	1	5	11
Social problems	0	0	0	1	3	4
Traditional issues	3	2	1	0	1	7
Gangs	0	0	0	0	2	2
Debt	0	0	0	1	1	2
Declining economy	0	3	0	0	2	5
Environmental shock	0	1	0	1	3	5

In the regression analysis, youth heads of households who were in salaried employment as an executive or qualified worker had a lower probability of impoverishment compared to those without this type of stable livelihood. However, the loss of this source of livelihood was sometimes enough to impoverish. Indeed, one covariate livelihood shock in the qualitative data was the reform of teaching staff in 2017, which led to the loss of salaried employment for some teachers. In 2017, given the very low level of knowledge of primary school students (a situation revealed by the results of tests carried out by the *International evaluation of the education system performance*, PASEC for Niger), the Ministry of Primary Education, Literacy, Promotion of National Languages and Civic Education organised national assessments of primary school contract workers.[31] Interviewee 30 (IM, Bambeye)

[31] The actions to improve the teaching quality have been multiples according to our KIs: the evaluation of contractual teachers "chalk in hand" in June 2017; the monitoring of the development and implementation of a roadmap for restoring quality in September 2017; the redeployment of excess teachers from urban to rural areas, with more than 1000 teachers redeployed in 2017 from Niamey to the interior of the country and a second

recalls that they took the practical test and were evaluated on the conduct of the class, assuming that this would improve the level of teaching and correct shortcomings. The shock his life was failing the Contract Teacher Assessment Test. All his plans – such as to build a house or get married – were falling apart: '*I was fine when I was a teacher, I had my salary, my motorbike … I was well looked after in the village; I helped my mother and my brothers and sisters…. Now I have lost everything.*'

The outcome was a great disappointment but also a source of public humiliation, as those around them interpreted their failure as proof of their incompetence, thus producing social as well as economic exclusion: 'People have a different understanding of this evaluation of contract teachers. The inhabitants of the village think that we do not know anything and are incompetent, which is why we were dismissed. Hence the stigma we are subjected to' (Interview 28, TE, Bambeye). This stigma made it even harder to return to unemployment as it was accompanied by a drop in their standards of living. The challenge became to seize employment opportunities in other public institutions and, at the time of our qualitative interviews (the first half of January 2020, prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic), the announcement of the entrance examination to the police had mobilised many of these young people in search of employment. We encountered several job-seeking teachers training for the tests scheduled for 19 January 2020.

4.3.1.2. Precarity of peri-urban labour work

A common alternative to forms of salaried work is to carry out low-income and unstable activities, often precarious peri-urban labour work in the transport sector given increased urbanisation and the associated processes that require the transport of goods or people. The job of freight handler appears to be an activity within the reach of any individual with physical strength. Young men often work as truck freight handlers, keeping watch near large commercial establishments for trucks with imported goods to help with the unloading, stocking in stores or delivery to retail traders, receiving a wage at a piece rate for each truck unloaded. For example, Interview 31 (TE, Bambeye) notes that: when vehicles come loaded with goods (millet, sorghum, maize), they [the establishment owners] call upon the most physically fit young people to unload them. For this job, each of them may end up with a sum up to 4,000 FCFA per truck unloaded. The interviewee is one of the strongest young people of the village. To maximise their income from unloading trucks, some use a pouss-pouss or, more rarely, an animal-drawn cart. Children are observed as engaging in this activity as well, but they are generally boys engaging in lightweight deliveries on a smaller scale, such as carrying the bags of condiments from home-producers to the markets.

In the transport of people, the kabou-kabou (taxi-motorcycle) system very quickly became widespread as a lucrative activity among young men in most towns, peri-urban and countryside areas in Niger, as in all of sub-Saharan Africa. Those with motorcycle taxis are among the better off.[32] This can constitute as a full or part-time occupation, providing a

wave that took place in 2020; the management of contractual primary teaching staff by the municipalities; the improvement of the quality and reliability of statistical data collected and analysed at the level of the Ministry of Primary Education.

[32] A vast literature has shown, however, that moto-taxis pose some issues in terms of accidents, traffic management and also noise and air pollution (Diaz Olvera et al., 2016).

main source of income or as a strategy for cumulating interdependent activities, as we will explore below. The average journey through the city is relatively inexpensive, estimated at 200 to 300 FCFA per passenger transported, while journeys to villages can reach between 2,500 and 3,000 FCFA. The revenue by the end of the day can be substantial when the driver is transporting two passengers at the same time, especially during markets that attract many potential customers. As Interviewee 37 (NN, Gueben Zogui) notes: 'With the *money earned, I manage to support myself, save something, and often give to my friends... I help them out so that one day when I do not have the money, they will help me. Often I also give money to my mother.*' This also speaks to the alliances amongst young male taxi drivers, who support and sustain each other through hard times. However, this type of financial support isn't always available for individuals living in poverty.

Certain forms of engagement in this activity may be particularly precarious. In some cases, the driver rents a motorcycle (*kamamini*) and pays the lender a daily cut (rent per day). The driver becomes a worker or tenant in this relationship, not a business owner. This is very common and cuts into the income of the driver and his ability to earn a surplus to invest in his own taxi and own business. It is also common to do this several times, with the taxi owner receiving a cut of profits from the driver, who in turn lends the taxi to another driver when he is off-duty and receives a cut, and so forth. The last driver in this chain is the least empowered economically and the first to lose his job, though it does help young men to learn to drive.

> *It is with the motorcycle taxi that he manages to reach his means. Regarding his livelihood, he gets his financial resources from a motorbike bought by his friend's big brother. Every day, he pays him 2000 FCFA at the end of the day. (...) 'I didn't have the opportunity to change my bike. It is difficult when you do not have your own motorcycle. If the person has their own motorcycle, they can buy another motorcycle. However, it takes time and depends on the courage and luck of the person*' (Interview 37, NN, Gueben Zogui)

Other constraints also emerge in the data. One is the risk of being intercepted by the police when you do not have a driving license, which costs 65,000 FCFA. A second challenge is that *kabou kabou* drivers face competition from other means of transport such as the *adaidaita* (tricycle-taxi), which has the advantage of being able to accommodate several passengers and luggage. In addition, according to a female focus group in Karakara, female passengers prefer this means of transport as, unlike in the *kabou-kabou*, they have no physical contact with the drivers. Finally, the *adaidaita* grants women much greater mobility in their commercial activities, particularly when transporting their goods during provisioning.

Other economic shocks could also result in a treble shock, similar to the health shock described above. For instance, Interviewee 42 (TE, Karakara) notes that the closure of the Dolé market in Zinder for renovations caused him to lose his shop, his clientele and his equipment. His standard of living has dropped. He now describes himself as poor, even though he still does repairs and maintenance when he is called upon. Non-participation in local planning for rehabilitation or renovation initiatives may be a major issue for the employment survival of vulnerable and poor young workers. The participation of traders in municipal urban planning is limited in the areas researched, and this feature is common to

many other countries in SSA.[33] Urbanisation in secondary cities should include a better space and voice for traders (whether formal or not), as the lack of this greatly exacerbates the precarity of their jobs.

Women often have an added burden, as they have to manage with reduced economic resilience capacities due to prevailing gender-based norms that limit their access to certain livelihood opportunities outside of the house. Box 9 describes how a 48-year-old woman's impoverishment was linked to a lack of own disposable assets and income. She depends on marriage to secure social and economic inclusion.

Box 9. Female impoverishment – from princess to destitution

Interviewee 24 (IM, Dogo) notes: '*From my status as a princess I fell into the status of a domestic servant and therefore into a situation of destitution… I got married at the age of 15, it was a marriage arranged by my parents, a family marriage to a cousin [neither poor nor rich, wellbeing level 4]. At my husband's house I did not do any work, he [a canton chief] gave me everything I needed [rich/resilient, wellbeing level 5] but then he died. My situation of destitution began with my second husband. He was Dan Banga [village police]. He gave me nothing, so I had to go to work as a domestic servant to find food. My job as a servant consisted of cleaning, washing clothes, and doing the dishes and she, my boss, would give me food as payment [poor, wellbeing level 3]. I had been doing this job for about 6 years before I came back home as a divorced woman [extreme poor, wellbeing level 2] because my husband hit me because of my co-wife. My husband hit me until he hurt me, all my body had scratches and my face was swollen. I spent a week lying at home because I had pain all over.*

Since then, I have been living alone in a situation of destitution because I do not work, and it is the canton chief who gives me food every day. I do not (cannot) beg because I am of the royal family of Dogo. In addition to the canton chief, I have other relatives who help me a little… My plan is to remarry and get out of poverty.'

A neighbour confirmed her account and elaborated: 'She has two sons (a builder and telephone repairman) who live in Nigeria but who do not support her. Without the help of the canton chief I do not know how she would become because she has nothing, even the house she lives in despite the precariousness of the house it is a cousin who told her to live there.'

Interviewee 24 does work – she farms her cousin's land (the canton chief) during the rainy season and engages in paid labour (she does it for meals); she also did domestic work for an employer (again paid in meals). She has a field that she inherited from her father, but it is very far from the village. As a woman, she cannot go there to cultivate it and she has no money to pay for labour.

4.3.2. Migration as a possibility, but high vulnerability and risks remain

In the regression analysis, having a migrant household member is associated with an increased likelihood of impoverishment amongst the sample of youth-headed households, a relationship that is statistically significant. Though a similar relationship is seen for the full set of youth and non-youth household heads combined, the results lack statistical significance. The qualitative data also indicates that temporary escapes were sometimes associated with migration vulnerability, a key type of livelihood shock. Some

[33] As an example, in Kenya it is claimed that the Special Planning Area of Mukuru in Nairobi is full of employment promise, while Nairobi City Council is evicting thousands of poor people from other informal settlements.

households depend entirely on this source of income, and it can also be an important source of social capital:

> *We do everything with migration money: buy food, clothes, animals. When we are sick, we take care of ourselves with migration money. Me, for example, through migration, I bought a field. That is what my children are cultivating right now. People have succeeded through migration… I sent between XOF 20,000, XOF 40,000 or even XOF 50,000. It depends on the need to be satisfied. In terms of social benefits, I think that the transfers carried out had made me more respected. That made me responsible* (Interview 27, NN, Bambeye).

However, the money is sometimes sent home on an irregular basis, which can reduce the sustainability of savings as a response to household members' urgent needs at origin. While the migrant may be aiming to save, they might find that some of the money has been used by household members under duress and so cannot be accessed when the migrant returns. Often this relates to strong family obligations that can impoverish the migrant, who is responsible for repaying debts incurred by other family members or repaying the debt used to finance the migration upon their return home.

A successful escaper explained that many young people do not succeed when migrating or returning due to the activity they did at the destination, but also to the type of activity they did before they migrated. This is a critical point: it is not migration per se, but migration that involves entrepreneurial work, capital and skills accumulation that contributes to pathways out of poverty. As one respondent questions: 'When you do not have a substantial start-up fund, the only activity you can do in Côte d'Ivoire is being a docker, but that does not allow you to earn a lot of money' (Interview 29, Escape, Bambeye). Indeed, a key issue for migrants was that while the migration may have provided essential capital either to support families or to fund farms or a business back home, learning a skill (either prior to migration or during it) is hugely beneficial to success when starting a business back home with the migration capital. However, coming home with a skill or savings is not guaranteed.

Moreover, migration – both the journey and living abroad – can be perilous. In this context, strengthening migration routes abroad, but also internally through the development of industrial planning and local value chains, would be merited. In the fieldwork, migration to Libya is reported as being particularly difficult and the country is seen as a 'high risk, high-reward' destination. High risk was often additionally related to not having enough money for transport, which led to some respondents running out of money when travelling and created the additional problem of not having money to invest in entrepreneurial activities. Working and living abroad can also be dangerous, with the risk of kidnapping for ransom or jobs that simply go unpaid (exploiting the migrant's illegal status):

> *I have not mastered the circuit we followed… We were so scared. We thought that the driver was going to put us in the hands of the traffickers, because that is one of their practices. It was a hard trip. We were overloaded in a Hilux vehicle. There were about 30 migrants in this vehicle… It was during the cold dry season… It was in Libya that I had encountered some difficulties, in particular my incarceration by an Arab… A man stopped in his vehicle and told me to get back in his vehicle. I thought he was going to employ me at a construction site. Along the way, he pulled out an automatic gun and showed it to me, telling me to be quiet. He took me to a house and locked me in. A few minutes later, he came back and handed me a telephone and asked*

> *me to call my parents to tell them that I was incarcerated and that they had to pay 500 Libyan dinars or XOF150,000 for my release… He explained to the person I called where they are going to meet to take the money and free me. The same day, I was freed as I had some money saved that I entrusted to someone* (Interview 27, NN, Bambeye).

Moreover, if we link this finding to the facts that internal migration is relatively skewed to some specific urban settings in the country and that poor households may experience permanent effects from idiosyncratic shocks (e.g. a bad migration experience) or covariate shocks (e.g. a bad harvest), social protection could play a role in Nigerien society. Policy-making should explore the feasibility of moving beyond existing cash-for-work programmes to a legally based employment guarantee scheme. The latter could systematically provide seasonal employment at times of high seasonal unemployment, allow for people's mobility in nearby areas when work is available, and provide a wage floor to enable the poorest young women and men to participate in the labour market on better terms.

Lastly, desperation for capital to cover migration costs drives many parents and families of young women to sell farms, risking huge debt (and the safety of their daughters) in order to fund, for example, a young women's migration to Saudi Arabia for domestic service. The minimum age for girls to migrate is 13, and a female FGD in Dogo revealed that migrant adolescent girls are often forced to work for two years to reimburse the parent or acquaintance in Saudi Arabia who funded the trip. Reimbursement is at an interest rate of 100%, so if the cost of the trip amounts to roughly 1,500,000 FCFA, the girl must repay 3,000,000 FCFA. The parents may sell their land to pay an advance amount. This migration route is attracting more and more young girls and women, despite the potential repercussions in terms of violence (physical violence, rape) and income instability (FGD, female, Dogo). This example points to multiple sources of vulnerability of international migrants as well as the multiple disadvantages these create in contributing to new or deeper impoverishment of young women and men.

5. Concluding remarks

This study explores youth inclusion in labour markets and how training, education, social norms and migration affect inclusion for youth on different poverty trajectories. With regards to these trajectories, across Niger, **youth-headed households in the panel data were less likely to escape poverty and more likely to be impoverished than households with older heads**. However, fewer youth-headed households lived in chronic poverty, and more were never poor, relative to other households, suggesting that youth is a key stage in the life cycle for improving wellbeing. However, the decline in state support over the last decade, which coincides with falling farm and educational endowments and increasing costs of access to education and health, means that the pattern of youth inclusion is fundamentally changing. Understanding youth inclusion in labour markets as a key driver of improved youth wellbeing is thus of instrumental importance. The study investigates how some youth today manage to navigate challenging contexts and changing norms to forge pathways out of poverty, while others fall into poverty or remained trapped in poverty.

5.1. Trends over time contributing to challenging labour market contexts

Under the pre-liberalisation regimes of Diori Hamani and Kountché, is worth to highlight the role of a pre-democracy form of developmental state, with robust state investments made in infrastructure such as schools and health facilities, institutionalised agricultural support (e.g. pest management, famine support) and cheaper farm land prices. This was combined with better educational quality and employment in the public sector. Notably, respondents did not mention problems during this early period 'before democratisation', serving as a useful reminder of how they see challenges in the present period (such as missing state investment). After structural adjustment, the focus of the liberalised welfare state regime of Tandja moved away from institutional support of agriculture and away from large infrastructural investments in public services and public sector employment. However, Tandja did attempt to compensate this with some welfare support for youth, including promoting youth employment through rural livelihood diversification (small livestock, grain milling, credit), some vocational training, lower-cost or free health care and educational, and some food and basic needs interventions when prices rose.

In the recent decade of the Issoufou regime liberalisation intensified, with less welfare state support manifesting itself through state costs for public services, falls in public sector jobs, and privatisation of water and electricity. Respondents were very concerned about the future for youth under these conditions, given the narrowing of capabilities and traditional avenues for employment. Respondents argued that the new costs imposed on young families for free services is high and accumulates across categories – health care, schooling, obtaining legal documents – as well as number of children, impacting the amount of capital young people can save for entrepreneurial activities. Moreover, schools, health facilities and hydroelectric facilities that were built in the pre-structural adjustment period are falling into disrepair, and perceived overall teaching quality has fallen compared

to earlier years (even if the recent reforms on teachers performance and allocation are welcome). Notwithstanding important ongoing education policy advancements, like the existence of an Education and Training Sector Transition Plan (PTSEF) for the period 2020-2022 (Republic of Niger, 2019) focusing the public action on a small number of priorities likely to produce significant transformations for the education system in the near future, the communication and accountability of public education establishments at the local level faces room for improvement, particularly on their funding uses and fees needs. Electricity is beneficial for some employment generation through markets, but privatised electricity, together with private water management, imposes costs on poor youth associated with water access and supply problems. Salaried employment is falling, particularly for men, as a result of falling public sector recruitment in villages. Perceived corruption is reported in the delivery of training for young men in particular, as NGOs favour female employment. Moreover, the potential of farms as a source of income generation and insurance has been depleted by reductions in size, soil depletion, and what is described as the unaffordable cost of fertilisers and of new farmland.

A common theme is the withdrawal of the state, as noted in Section 2. At this particular historical conjecture – characterised by perceived withdrawal of state support for education, adult literacy, farming knowledge and support, healthcare and access to capital — youth are in a unique position in terms of economic disempowerment that constrains routes out of poverty. The commitment and engagement of the incoming administration in 2021 could either perpetuate this path or take into consideration a renewed reconciliation with the state investment required in rural and urban areas.

5.2. Navigating uncertain times: enablers and barriers to youth inclusion

With the withdrawal of the state and rising costs, the question then is: what is the state of youth inclusion in labour markets, and how do training, education, social norms and migration affect this for youth on different poverty trajectories? Overall, we find a high prevalence of self-employment activities in rural, urban and peri-urban areas of the Tahoua and Zinder regions of Niger, characterised by low security in income flows, gendered professions and asset-dependent pathways for escaping poverty. **The analysis recognised the multiple, intersecting disadvantages limiting youth inclusion**.

One challenge involves the costs associated with primary state education, which prevent most from completing primary school and leads to a reliance on Quranic education and family and informal modes of vocational skill transmission. The variable quality of education available within some educational institutions means that there is a lack of association of greater number of years in education with poverty escapes in the quantitative data. The quantitative data also revealed that amongst the chronic poor, most youth had not attended formal school despite the growing importance of education. Two main recommendations stem from our analysis. First, the national government should continue to take steps to decentralise funding and expand investment in teaching quality and infrastructure. School are already facing different types of crises (climate-related like floods or strong winds, food insecurity, health risks like parasitic disease spreads and the threat of

armed conflict in some areas). At the level of local public school establishments, more should be planned for to prepare for crisis response, particularly in terms of revising further the decentralisation of funds. Local establishments should be induced to improve their current accountability with respect to funds management and clarify the information about fees structures, including the functioning of COGES and CGDES.

Second, better support to children from chronically poor households may require stronger interventions through more decentralised measures at the local level. For instance, strengthening local authorities' identification efforts with a dedicated budget to develop local-level data collection on households' conditions and monitoring. Likewise, better tailoring of national programming at the local level should include wider introduction of measures like free school meals or partial/seasonal fee exemptions, to reduce drop-outs whilst guaranteeing a stronger accountability of public schools for the support of vulnerable groups.

Nevertheless, the analysis of how educational channels influence labour inclusion by poverty trajectory suggests that while Quranic school may be better than no schooling in terms of contributing to salaried employment amongst the poorest people, it is not as effective as formal school for the youth overall. Among those with higher levels of per capita welfare, youth who had received Quranic training were less likely to have salaried employment than youth without a formal or Quranic education. However, it may be important in creating or maintaining social networks, as well as offering some job opportunities within Quranic institutions (but not beyond that). In any case, across all levels, youth **formal education was associated with a higher probability of securing salaried employment, particularly for individuals in households with higher per capita expenditures**.

As outlined in the qualitative data, other barriers to inclusion include **dwindling access to fertile farmland, soil fertility problems and the prohibitive costs of fertilisers. These are exacerbated by the rising costs of purchasing own farmland and other productive assets**, such as transport vehicles, and the need to raise capital to invest in trade or to cover the transport costs of migration. Most productive assets are beyond the local rural earning power of most young Nigeriens in our qualitative sample, many of whom live in the parental home with their spouses and often young dependents. Rising costs of food and basic needs further cut into the potential savings of poor youth – food, school and marriage costs can thrust them into the labour market on weak terms, and without capital to invest in trade. Moreover, there is insufficient local agro-processing/manufacturing capacity to absorb labour surpluses. There has also been a reported decline in youth access to local civil service jobs in local education, health and local police forces over the decade, and a shift from salaried to contract work for many of these jobs.

Faced with these challenges, the youth of Tahoua and Zinder are forced to find niches in a flooded and precarious local labour market or, for those disposing of the right means, through international and circular migration in their attempted pathway out of poverty. This finding is in line with studies that depict self-employment dominating both farm and non-farm youth work, and where the African youth employment 'crisis' is explained by the

absence of decent work opportunities and protection (Elder and Koné, 2014; Dolan and Rajak, 2016; Carreras et al., 2020). Youth who had escaped poverty in the quantitative analysis often had access to stable, salaried employment. Migration and training also sometimes contributed to increasing subsequent youth inclusion in labour markets. Youth pathways out of poverty in the qualitative data are also supported by business on various scales, in particular petty and small-scale trade in a widening array of goods and services. However, these jobs are subject to periods of unemployment, loss of capital and a variety of shocks. The desperate need for income and involvement in new livelihoods not only forces young adults to be price-takers, but also thrusts youth into conflict with elders and spouses, which forces rapid changes in gender and generational norms to accommodate the new and difficult circumstances. It also encourages youth to join associations, which are found to be critical for both social and financial support.

Policies should account for the intrinsically informal nature of self-employment and the casual exchange of work and adjust initiatives in support of savings and capital accordingly. At the urban level, the concept of secondary city development could be favoured to include job protection measures for self-employed workers, via the creation of regulations that support and involve micro-businesses. These can be subject to real income shocks as a direct effect of urban planning policies (as evidenced by the evictions reported in Dolé market in Zinder), and local institutions should plan their interventions so as to avoid harming micro or small entrepreneurs. The recognition and support of the informal economy should start with business development services as well as basic service provision, to allow stronger inclusiveness of young generations in urban settings. Moreover, we show that the creation of youth networks matters for policy effectiveness, so policy initiatives at the local level should focus on promoting the formation of social network. Another important policy alleyway is fostering local-level governance to promote mentoring schemes in the local labour market (both urban and rural) with a gender-sensitive lens, so that both young men and women can benefit from more sound information channels outside of their family.

Forging pathways out of poverty, **young women in the qualitative data sometimes actively challenge their father, in-laws or spouses in order to gain consent to engage in paid work in order earn a living**. Some young brothers and husbands are supportive of this move and of women's vocational training (with NGOs, for example), given pressure on men's employment and income. In this context, NGOs should adjust their work to include and even focus on poor young women and men, and pay attention to supporting existing and new ladders out of poverty through combinations of second chance education, financial inclusion and post-training asset transfers, wherever possible linked to social protection. Care should be taken to invest in gender-sensitive and highly diverse technical training, which is relevant to avoid the creation of skill gluts. Young women can also be encouraged/supported to invest in assets before marriage and post-divorce to enhance their status in the household and make escaping poverty possible.

With increasing involvement in paid work, young women have also assumed greater responsibility for paid needs in the household, such clothing and educating their children through primary school, with meeting school costs a key priority in their minds. Young women are also found to use early divorce as a strategy to cope with poverty and

unemployment of young men who cannot contribute to household earnings and use remarriage as a strategy to move up the social ladder. Indeed, divorce and remarriage are common in the qualitative sample of young women. Finally, young women are more likely to be involved in tontines (cooperatives) that provide credit and social support among young women, which is needed to maintain their small businesses. Though norms legitimising domestic abuse under specific circumstance still prevail, there are also new norms suggesting that women who trade should not suffer domestic abuse for doing so, and women can use the threat of divorce or intervention by the canton chief, or other small retaliatory strategies.

Young men in the qualitative data endure both a lack of employment and underemployment. As a consequence, as well as the threat of divorce by young wives, they face condemnation by elders who feel that their daughters and their children would be better fed at the parental home. Older generations, who had much larger fertile farms, less costly education and health care access (under earlier administrations) do not fully empathise with the conditions faced by young men, particularly their inability to find work to support their new wife and pre-school children. One response of unemployed men is to join all-male groups – some of which are former gangs now turned into social support groups (e.g. fadas) – that offer a sense of social inclusion where there is no economic inclusion, in which the men share information about jobs and migration opportunities. Migration is another option for young men who can find a way to finance transportation. In the absence of a strong credit market or local earning opportunities, migration acts as a method of accumulating savings for investment in businesses. However, many fail to transition out of poverty upon returning home from migration. There is a worrying number of impoverished and transitory escapers among migrants due to the inability to amass savings that are consumed back home by unexpected needs and large families. Moreover, migration is often not an option for the chronically poor, who cannot fund the costs of transportation to migrate in the first place unless they have wealthy friends.

In this context, developing policies that target the inclusion of poor and vulnerable non-poor young men and women in labour markets would be a critical step in supporting sustained pathways out of poverty for the current generation of young adults and those that follow. These policies should consider the inputs of training, whether through formal state education, Quranic education, or informal skills development, and ways to enable more secure, profitable migration and an enabling context with opportunities for return migrants. Policy responses also need to work towards recovering several forms of state response, but also draw on ways to re-build local communities through the existing dynamism and ability of youth to mobilise networks. Drawing on informal local responses could be particularly effective in the short-term response to Covid-19, a crisis that might otherwise exacerbate the constraints to opportunities facing young adults. Policy implications of this study, focused on livelihoods, education, and migration are presented in the associated policy briefs (Shepherd et al., 2021a, 2021b, 2021c).

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Annex A – CURRENT SOCIAL POLICIES AND ACTORS FOR YOUTH PROMOTION IN NIGER

The government of Niger, with its aim of enabling youth to make a better contribution to meeting the challenges of development, is implementing a policy focused on employment that provides a privileged avenue for the social and economic development of youth. This institutional commitment translates into political levers specifying government action on behalf of young people.

Two main policy documents – the National Employment Policy (*Politique nationale de l'emploi*, or PNE) and the National Youth Policy (*Politique nationale de la jeunesse*, or PNJ) – are aligned with the Accelerated Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (*Stratégie de Développement accéléré et de Réduction de la pauvreté*, or SDRP), a national framework benchmarking economic and social development. Although the institutional arrangements recorded therein mark the strategic orientations of youth employment and their social inclusion, several other policies address the same concerns across various sectors, owing to the transversal nature of issues related to youth. We report their characteristics in detail, but note, among others: (1) the national population policy and the three strategic axes of the 2019-2035 roadmap, which are controlling population growth, strengthening human capital and improving the empowerment of women, including those with disabilities; (2) the national health policy; (3) the national education and training policy; and (4) the national gender policy.

Overall, **the national population policy** is dominated by strategies aimed at curbing population growth. Niger is on its third national population policy. The first, adopted in 1992, already featured this political orientation with the objective of combining demographic growth and economic development through a decline in fertility to reduce the burden on families and increase productivity at the individual and collective level. This orientation remained the guiding force in the political strategy documents that framed the second national population policy in 2007 through the 'government declaration on population policy' (*déclaration du gouvernement en matière de politique de population*, or DGPP). However, these two policies were not found to affect indicators relating to fertility. Quite the contrary – the rate of demographic growth increased from 3.3% per year between 1988 and 2001 to 3.9% per year between 2001 and 2012. The third, and current, national population policy builds on lessons from the past and applies a more holistic approach, focusing not only on social and economic development but also on the promotion of human rights, in particular those of women who suffer the full force of social inequalities. The strengthening of basic social services across various sectors accompanies this policy so as to create conditions for capturing the demographic dividend in accordance with the vision of the Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth Strategy 2035 (*Stratégie de Développement Durable et de Croissance Inclusive*, or SDDCI). Young people are central and their involvement in social and economic development comes in part through the empowerment of parents, as subtitled in the national population policy document (*politique nationale de population*, or PNP 2019-2035): 'A responsible parentage with healthy children, a well-trained youth for a prosperous Niger'. This document specifies three strategic axes around which the population roadmap is based: (1) control of demographic growth; (2) strengthening of human capital; and (3) enhancing the empowerment of women, including those with disabilities. Contrary to previous policies that advocated birth distancing, it stresses the reduction in the desired number of children per woman as a necessary condition for the control of demographic growth, while recognising the difficulty of reversing this trend due to the prevalence of favourable attitudes towards having offspring.

The **national health policy** is one of the frameworks enabling the implementation of the national population policy through the provision of reproductive health services. These focus on planning, adolescence and youth sexual and reproductive health. However, the rate of contraceptive

prevalence remains low (around 12% for modern methods according to the 2012 EDS). This can be explained by inadequacies in supply (shortages of inputs, dysfunction in the organisation of services, geographical obstacles, etc.) and socio-cultural and religious norms (gender and birth right relationship, polygamy, the significance of Islam and the power of the Wahabist ideology), the latter influencing access to and use of the services concerned.

The Nigerien education system presents certain difficulties, however the political will to transform the situation has been evident in the last decade and particularly since 2017, including at the highest level of the State with in particular the promulgation of the obligation and the free education until age 16 as part of the Renaissance Program II of the President of the Republic (with which several reforms and measures have been put in place, see Présidence de la République du Niger, 2016).

The National Education and Training Policy is based on '[e]quity of access to full basic education and guaranteeing quality learning allowing for professional integration and development of Niger's human capital'. The government's efforts are particularly focused on so-called 'non-formal education' in order to train young people (aged 15–24) who have not been able to benefit from schooling in conventional education structures. This training is offered through: (1) the activities of literacy centres and adult training; (2) vocational training in community development training centres (*centres de formation en développement communautaires, or* CFDC) and other alternative formulas; and (3) Quranic schools (Republic of Niger, 2008b).

The National Gender Policy (*Politique Nationale Genre*, or PNG) is understood to be a transversal policy across all governance areas. Niger has experienced two PNGs (2008 and 2017). The vision advocated in the PNG is to '[b]uild, with all stakeholders, a society without discrimination, where men and women, girls and boys have the same opportunities to participate in its development and enjoy the benefits of its growth'. Commitment to the introduction of a gender approach across all bodies is reinforced by a decree relating to the protection, support and accompaniment of young girls during schooling; a National Observatory for the Promotion of Gender; and a strategy for the economic empowerment of women.

The Education and Training Sector Plan (Plan Sectoriel de l'Education et de la Formation, PSEF) was delineated in 2013 for the period 2014-2024. The PSEF defines objectives for each education sub-sector, such as:

- For preschool, a progressive extension oriented towards the rural environment and carried by public kindergartens, strengthening of the quality of services, adding new managerial and institutional arrangements, and stronger advocacy in favour of taking charge of early childhood through in particular the reduction of the preschool cycle from three to two years, the distribution of hygiene kits, pedagogical and edutainment materials, the initial and continuing training of community animators with in particular the opening of a sector specific training for preschool educators in teacher training colleges (ENI), the construction of classes and the adoption of a National Policy for the Integrated Development of Young Children (PNDIJE).
- For basic education cycles 1 and 2 (primary and college), the policy provided for: redeployment of excess teachers in schools in urban areas; systematic recourse to multi-gradation for small classes in small schools; the establishment of a teaching policy (under development) likely to make the teaching profession more attractive; the establishment of new mechanisms for the allocation and management of teachers; recruitment in teacher training colleges based on regional teacher needs; construction of classrooms; he construction of teacher training colleges (ENI); the introduction of national languages from the first years of primary school (reform of the primary school curricula and of the initial teacher training curricula in progress); overhauling the model of rural local colleges; initial and

in-service teacher training; the introduction of the versatility of teachers and the improvement of their allocation according to their discipline.

- In middle education (high school), it was planned that technical and vocational training courses intended to accommodate those leaving the basic education cycle would be developed and that the staffing of the middle cycle be put in place, depending on the absorption prospects of the upper level.
- In the field of literacy, Niger delineated in 2014 a National Policy Document on Literacy and Non-Formal Education, giving the General Directorate of Literacy and Non-Formal Education a more important role in implementing an illiteracy eradication program by 2024. However, the difficult mobilization of resources, in particular due to the increased security spending, has not made it possible to properly implement the planned measures.
- The vocational and technical training sub-sector, through its strategy based on the exhaustive assessment of the different training methods, provided for: strengthening apprenticeship and training systems in the agricultural sector; the reorganization of formal training, their diversification and their targeting to the needs of the labour market (CAP, BEP, Bac); more autonomous management of TVET centres for a better public/private partnership; the development of an information system on integration and employment opportunities; strengthening of the Fund for Financing Vocational Training (FAFPA); improving the quality of the training offered (effective implementation of the reform of curricula and assessment and certification methods, etc.); strengthening staff by recruiting additional trainers; the development and improvement of the legal framework for dual apprenticeship.
- The modernization of higher education and its adaptation to the social, economic, scientific and technical changes of the country in a context of strong demographic pressure were considered essential to enable Niger to achieve the ambitious development objectives set in the new PDES. It went through a development strategy for short professionalizing courses in connection with the sectors of activity that are promising for the territory.

These policies, at the centre of development priorities, are linked to Niger's adherence to several international (the Sustainable Development Goals, ILO, and UNESCO) and regional (the Youth Charter and the African Union's Agenda 2063, Vision 2020 of ECOWAS/ CEDEAO) conventions. They are referenced in a multitude of programmes, including:

- The Education and Training Sector Programme (*Programme sectoriel de l'éducation et de la formation*, or PSEF 2014-2024)
- The Act 2 rebirth programme (*Programme de renaissance Acte 2*)
- The Sustainable Development and Inclusive Growth Strategy (*Stratégie de développement durable et de croissance inclusive*, or SDDCI)
- The National Strategic Investment Framework for Sustainable Land Management (*Cadre stratégique d'investissement national pour la gestion durable des terres*)
- The Economic Orientation Document (*Document d'orientation économique*)
- The Economic and Social Development Plan (*Plan de développement économique et social*)
- The Youth Professional Integration Assistance Program (*Programme d'Aide à l'Insertion professionnelle des jeunes*, or PAIJ)

Several ministries are involved in the implementation of these programmes. Based on an updated list, the ministries close to the issue of youth access to employment are:

- Ministry of Youth and Sports (*Ministère de la jeunesse et des sports*)
- Ministry of Trade and Private Sector Promotion (*Ministère du commerce et de la promotion du secteur privé*)
- Ministry of Population (*Ministère de la population*)
- Ministry of Employment, Labor and Social Security (*Ministère de l'emploi, du travail et de la sécurité sociale*)

- Ministry of vocational and technical education (*Ministère de l'enseignement professionnel et technique*)
- Ministry of Cultural Renaissance, Arts and Social Modernization (*Ministère de la renaissance culturelle, des arts et de la modernisation sociale*)
- Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Protection of Children (*Ministère de la promotion de la femme et de la protection de l'enfant*)
- Ministry of Youth Entrepreneurship (*Ministère de l'entreprenariat des jeunes*)
- Ministry of the Civil Service and Administrative Reform (*Ministère de la fonction publique et de la réforme administrative*).

Several directorates are attached to these ministries. In addition, there are public structures such as the National Agency for the Promotion of Employment (*l'Agence nationale pour la Promotion de l'Emploi*, or ANPE), whose main missions towards young people include managing job applications, the economics of migrants and regularisation of workers, monitoring young people seeking employment, strengthening the employability of young graduates and encouraging companies to recruit them.

Annex B – NIGER POLICY FOR YOUTH INCLUSION AND IMPACT OF WIDER DEVELOPMENT POLICY ON YOUTH: INSTITUTIONAL AND COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

In this annex, we compare the perceptions of institutional actors recorded during the ECRIS, focusing on the strengths and weaknesses of youth policy on entrepreneurship in Niger. We compare these with the perceptions of long-term resident community actors on the impact of government policy more generally on youth employment and welfare (KPFGDs), and from gender-disaggregated focus group discussions on different regime periods over recent decades.

B.1 Niger youth policy on entrepreneurship: perceptions of institutional actors

We interviewed the officials we met during the ECRIS in late 2019 and asked them how the past and present youth policy provisions had evolved and about challenges to implementation. From the point of view of the institutional actors interviewed, a series of policies established in recent decades on employment, population growth, health, education and training all influence socioeconomic conditions of youth. These interviews and supporting documentation reveal that a **policy focus on youth and a focus on entrepreneurship as a mechanism of change** (see Annex A).

First, we note that current employment policies are more focused on the needs of young people compared to previous decades, during which they were '*approached in a generic way*', as described by a member of the Ministry of Youth Entrepreneurship, who adds, '*nowadays policies are focused towards young people and their improvement*'. State partners, such as technical and financial partners and I-NGOs, are promoting various youth-related initiatives (see Annex A). Notable amongst these are initiatives for children's rights (fighting child marriage, promoting free healthcare for children under five, fighting child labour and particularly tala tala, which is discussed in Section 2), for girls and women's health and family planning (access to contraceptives, free maternal care and female cancer prevention) and women's rights (notably in the fight against gender-based violence, or GBV). Initiatives also address agriculture, the environment and climate change (soil recovery, agricultural inputs, development of market gardening, breeding) as well as entrepreneurship.

Second, current policies put more emphasis on entrepreneurship in particular by **promoting self-employment, which, it is argued, should generate more jobs for young people and thus allow youth to take their own responsibility for increasing their economic agency and achieving their development goals**. This self-reliance has its basis in a liberalisation in polices in general, and is specifically linked to the history of employment policies in Niger. The notion of entrepreneurship can be related to the first economic reforms implemented following the structural adjustment programmes initiated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in the late 1990s. Strategies such as the Support Program for Private Initiative and Job Creation formed the first framework for using the concept, which was then applied in the framework of the policy for retraining civil servants, who were encouraged to leave voluntarily to create their own businesses (Malam Souley, 2018).

Third, whilst institutional actors emphasised that there is a real political commitment to youth at the state level, appreciating the merits of interventions set up in favour of young people, they also deplored the lack of financial and other resources mobilised to support these policies. According to an official from the Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Security, governments often make statements that are followed up by weak actions. In fact, financial resources to support youth policies come mostly from external aid rather than internal funding.

Moreover, an analysis of policy documents reveals that although the multiple ministries involved in pro-youth initiatives are all committed to promoting access to employment for young people, the

governance structure of youth employment relies on diverse, non-congruent action-strategy documents rather than on a coordinated orientation plan outlining guidelines in relation to the context and current issues of the employment situation in Niger.34 The plurality of ministries brings with it problems of coordination and synergy in interventions across levels of governance. One of the objectives of the Ministry of Entrepreneurship, established in 2016, was to centralise resources and actions undertaken. However, the ministry not been able to resolve these problems yet. A concern raised by one member of the Ministry of Entrepreneurship is that 'we risk having double statistics'. In addition, we observe the obsolescence of services and the dispersal of their geographical locations across the capital.

B.2 Decline in developmental state interventions for youth employment and welfare: perceptions of community actors

The perceptions of women and men at the community level were collected in different sites across the Zinder and Tahoua regions, including in mixed focus group discussions with long-time male and female residents of the four areas. The participants were invited to compare the different political regimes that have followed Independence (1960), commenting briefly on the pre-liberalisation regimes and then focusing more closely on the period since 2000 through a comparison between the governing of Mamadou Tandja (1999–2010) and that of Mahamadou Issoufou (2010–2020). They focused on the policy measures that have influenced youth employment and youth welfare and incomes. Note that with 16 focus groups, we had approximately 250 participants involved in these in-depth conversations.

B.2.1 Pre-structural adjustment developmental state infrastructural investments in health, education, water and agriculture (1960 to late-1990s)

In historical focus group discussions of this type in CPAN studies,35 people often choose to focus on those aspects of policy in early administrations that provide a mirror to the key problems they and their children face today. In the four study areas, opinions converge on a vision of the state which is less favourable in terms of the impact on youth employment and general welfare. The discussions began with memories of more state support in the period after Independence but before structural adjustment. Respondents focused specifically on the extent to which Hamani Diori (1960–1974) and Seyni Kountché (1974–1987) invested in rural infrastructure (health and education) and institutional agricultural support:

> *No one has done better for the people of this village than President Diori Hamani 1960 – 1974 (civil regime). He is the one who built their health centre and their classrooms. In addition, there is also the agriculture department* (FGD, mixed, Bambaye).

> *This [Kountche period] is the best time people can remember, particularly in terms of support for farming. …The population benefited from the support of the State in case of difficulties such as famine …Agricultural (extension) officers used to go to the fields to ask about the agricultural situation… The inhabitants benefited from plots of land at affordable prices (400 m² between XOF 10,000 and XOF 25,000 in 1976)* (FGD, mixed, Dogo).

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34 For instance, the evaluation of the National Employment Policy (PNE) 2008-2012 at the time of the interviews had not yet been followed up with a new PNE publication. However, this is one of two main policy documents, together with the National Youth Policy (PNJ), that are in line with the Accelerated Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (SDRP), a national framework benchmarking economic and social development. During the ECRIS surveys (Q4 2019), we were only informed of an ongoing 'draft' preparation for this policy.

35 For a list of these studies, see www.chronicpovertynetwork.org/poverty-dynamics.

Another key feature of this period was relatively higher educational quality and more civil service employment. Respondents perceived that youth were better off back then because the educational curriculum was of a higher quality and also resulted in documentation that enabled the young to move forward into employment: 'Education was of good quality. At the time, obtaining a graduation certificate made it possible to be recruited. There was less unemployment (FGD, mixed, Dogo).

B.2.2 Liberalised welfare state under Tandja (1999–2010) and intensified liberalisation/privatisation under Issoufou (2010–2020)

The perception of insufficient support from the state for youth employment and youth welfare continued in discussions comparing the Tandja presidency (1999–2010) with the current Issoufou period (2010–2020).

B.2.2.1 Education and health costs

The majority felt that during the Tandja regime, youth had benefitted from few or no charges for education and health. Young parents in general are very concerned about the new charges in health care: 'Under Tandja children under the age of five and pregnant women were treated free of charge in health centres. But now this is no longer this free, care requires payment (FGD, mixed, KaraKara). These rising health costs for young parents with small children can prevent young women from seeking treatment for themselves or their children, and thus increase the risk of impoverishment from illness (due to medical costs and loss of adult earnings). Moreover, health costs weigh on the overall ability to save, combined with other costs for what were previously free services. As a result, respondents argued that for the young in this decade, '[l]ife is becoming more and more expensive. Even for free services (free health care, distribution of supplies at school, civil status documents) you have to pay money' (FGD, mixed, KaraKara).

While the costs for education and official documents (proving levels of education and of training) under the Tandja regime were limited, new government fees together with other expenses (school supplies, unform) rose during the Issoufou period, imposing costs on young parents and a forming reason for today's youth to leave school early: 'Another problem that parents face is paying their children's school fees both in traditional schools and at Koranic schools. Because many of their parents do not have stable jobs, their children are chased away for not paying school fees' (FGD, Mixed, Karakara). There thus appears to be an issue with the understanding of how such fees are set, what they aim to cover and particularly what are the utilisation objectives from the side of schools. In addition to this, as the present system is structured, there is no way to guarantee some forms of flexibility when due to seasonality, households may not be able to fully cover these fees. Moreover, in the recent decade parents feel that schools have become dilapidated and teachers less qualified, and there is a sense that quality of teaching has deteriorated since the Tandja regime that is affecting parents' decisions to keep children in school: 'Parents have in mind that the children of the poor will not be able to succeed, so they have stopped sending their children to school. In addition, Karakara is a neglected area because the only school in the area is not even fenced … and the teachers there lack the necessary skills' (FGD, mixed, Karakara). Yet, without basic literacy it is difficult for the youth to engage in income-generating activities and to participate effectively in youth training schemes.

> *For adults, there is a demand for literacy, in support of the activities of women's groups (tontines, fattening, agro-food processing, manufacture of soap and ointment, production and sale of milk, yogurt and cheese), activities market gardening (practiced by women and men) in terms of inputs, seeds and phytosanitary products and in the activities of cutting and selling firewood* (FGD, mixed, Gueben Zogui).

Vocational training is preferred over long academic studies because it is a less expensive and more secure route to employment. Respondents argued that 'vocational training centres (electricity, auto mechanics, refrigeration, masonry, carpentry) are preferred among young people because with a little support, can set up on their own trade …the formal education circuit is too long and too expensive. Often, even if young people finish and graduate, accessing jobs is very difficult' (FGD, mixed, Gueben Zogui).

B.2.2.2 Declining opportunities for youth employment in farming, off-farm and in the public sector

During the Tandja regime, under a more liberalised economy, there was some decline in state agricultural support for extension and inputs, together with rising costs of land (see Section 2). However, there was some compensatory support for struggling rural farmers and workers through initiatives for youth employment in livestock, grain processing and credit, enabling some job diversification: 'Under Tandja, rural populations were supported through the distribution of goats… For women, there is multifaceted support for women's groups: grain mills, provision of small ruminants for fattening and for the reconstitution of livestock capital, credit for conducting IGAs (FGD, mixed, Gueben Zogui). Respondents perceived a decline in these forms of rural livelihood support in the decade under Issoufou (2010–2020).

A second key concern was the decline in recruitment of local youth to local civil service jobs under Issoufou, primarily education, health and local police, in the recent period: 'No young people from the neighbourhood were recruited into the civil service. According to them, if you are not an activist in a political party that is in power, you cannot be recruited' (FGD, male, Karakara). Similarly:

> [The Tandja regime (1999–2010) was characterised by] *less youth unemployment, by massive recruitment of contract teachers, health workers and the creation of schools and health huts… and the national participation service (free vocational training for young people who have dropped out of school. By contrast, under Issoufou, the period is characterised by a significant number of unemployed graduates…. This is why people are sceptical about the fact that school is a lever for success* (FGD, mixed, Dogo).

Whilst some participants linked failing recruitment under Issoufou to failings in educational quality (and teacher quality), others made allegations of corruption, embezzlement and politicised interventions. Support of youth vocational training and employment was identified as one area of suspected corruption or mismanagement: 'In 2018, IOM provided support to young people in various sectors of activity (small businesses, transport, electricity, sewing, etc.), but in most cases this support was diverted from its initial objectives and did not produce the desired results' (FGD, mixed, Karakara). These accusations based on suspicions – whether justifiable or not – refer to the logic of a clientelist type of governance (Olivier de Sardan, 2004: 6).

Respondents also remarked on previous young male employment through migration to Libya, which is no longer possible. During the Tandja period, migrants had safer employment opportunities. 'It was easier for young migrants to first go to Libya and work with respect', according to community actors. By contrast, under the regime of Issoufou, young returning migrants say that, 'the young people who are now in Libya live-in secrecy and fear because of the war situation. They are holed up in houses and can no longer go out even to send money to their families' (FGD, men, Gueben Zogui).

Thus, according to community actors in the FGDs, the Issoufou period was marked by both pressures on youth employment (rural assets and employment, public sector jobs, suspicions of corruption in IOM support for youth) and rising costs associated with health, education, and documentation that cut deeply into young adult incomes. There were some enablers of youth inclusion during this decade,

such as a stronger focus on female employment. However, even enablers require qualifications. Stronger female involvement in employment, for example, derives largely from the state relying on NGOs and donors to run programmes on female empowerment and entrepreneurship, given the absence of a well-resourced public salaried sector or a plan to provide more generous support for new sustainable agricultural policies, marketing and extension programmes. In particular, there was a general view that due to the combined effect of reduced recruitment into civil service employment, fewer training opportunities for men and problems with migrating to Libya, men now have fewer employment opportunities in the current decade compared to women: 'Under Tandja, there were training centres for weaving, sewing and masonry. These continued under Issoufou, but it was mainly young men who did not benefit enough in terms of employment during the regime of President Issoufou Mahamadou' (FGD, mixed, Bambaye).

Another enabler of youth employment under the Issoufou regime is the electrification of some rural areas, which stimulates new forms of employment: 'In 2016 President Issoufou Mahamadou, who is currently in power, electrified the village… [Inhabitants] are able to do new activities related to electricity such as selling fresh water, ice, metal welding, selling construction materials, etc.' (FGD, mixed, Bambaye). Several young male sustained escapers rely on electricity to operate printing and computer services, phone repairs, garage repairs, and so on (see Section 3.2). However, community actors also commented on problems associated with privatised electricity combining with privatised management of water infrastructure to reduce or weaken water supply. This has increased real costs through the opportunity costs of female domestic labour and/or the concrete costs of purchased water (see Section 3.3). Thus, whilst there were important interventions under the Issoufou regime, respondents felt that these were less impactful as a consequence of privatisation and perceived corruption in distribution. This prompted grassroot, local informal alliances to form to address local problems directly (as summarised in Section 2).

B.3 Impact of decline in farm size and yield on youth employment

A key concern for local youth among focus group respondents related to the combination of poor educational endowments and falling size of farm inheritance. They did not directly relate this to policy, but to population and soil fertility trends instead. This has created a downward spiral where households do not have the money to fatten livestock, leading to a declining reliance on livestock as a productive asset.36 Respondents often referred to the youth's 'lack of (farm) foundation', which they ascribed to falling farm size and yields and insurance forms of subsistence that support precarious off-farm employment.

> *By 'foundation', they refer to a vast productive field whose production covers the family's food needs. In the absence of this… the family most often has a limited number of working days, and therefore low production. This is why people from these families do agricultural labour during weeding, and during the dry season engage in small survival activities… Due to the lack of means to buy land, the small part of the field inherited will be passed on to future generations, which will become even more insufficient for them* (FGD, male, Gueben Zogui).

The purchase of new land is beyond many youth's ability to pay. Youth access to a farm foundation may be exacerbated by liberalisation and the polarising economic tendency for the rich to accumulate land as a means of investment (rather than off-farm diversification), leaving less land available for young people except through rental. Moreover, in both Zinder and Tahoua there seems to be insufficient local agro-processing on a scale sufficient to absorb rural labour surpluses, while rural recruitment of public sector workers has fallen. As such, many youths survive through agricultural and wage labour and dry season survival (desperation) activities. What little farmland is inherited is

[36] One of the sites were also more likely to hide small livestock assets owned, which might contribute to some of these results.

often shared among large, multi-generational families and is entangled in inheritance patterns among siblings and within complex family compositions, often including multiple wives and intergenerational households, where siblings farm together with the older generation. When the land is split, there is too little to produce enough to even cover subsistence.

In the past, large farms with fertile soil could lead to farm surpluses, which could be used to invest cash into capital for trade or to rear/fatten livestock. Now, even on large farms yields are declining, and the price of fertiliser is beyond the means of the majority of the population: 'In the context of soil degradation, production is increasingly declining. To boost it, this requires the application of fertilizer. This requires large sums of money that are beyond the capacity of the majority of the population' (FGD, men, Dogo). With reduced yields, the majority of households produce barely more than three months' worth of food, and so young farmers are forced to find work under pressure:

> *In recent years, agricultural yields have been declining. I used to harvest 420 bunches of millet in the field I was farming. Last year, we only had 60 bunches. This yield can only cover two months of the year. The rest is covered by migration. They (the government) only say to 'stay at home', but people cannot. The state cannot give work to everyone. This is why people are forced to migrate. You earn a lot through migration* (LH-M-Bambeye-II-27).

Many youth are forced into the labour market on weak terms. While the lucky turn to migration, others turn to farm and off-farm labour or trade without the cash/capital necessary for investment (known as 'forced entrepreneurship'). According to FGD respondents, this is why many youth eventually give up.

The low educational and farm asset 'foundation' of young people is exacerbated by the costs of living they face, which are typically beyond their local rural earning power and erode their ability to save. This includes small but rising costs of public services (education, health, justice). Corruption norms have also evolved in this context, which reduces quality of access. This is accompanied by rising monetisation and costs of basic needs (including ceremonial costs) and high costs of productive asset purchase (land, transport vehicles, large livestock) relative to incomes. Lack of sufficient access to credit further limits young people's ability to obtain capital to improve their farms or to start a business.

B.4 Summarising institutional and community perspectives on youth inclusion policies

In summary, institutional actors noted that there was a focus on youth entrepreneurship building in the first economic reforms implemented following the structural adjustment programmes in the late 1990s. Since 2000 and more recently, there has been a clear political commitment to focus on youth employment and multiple plans at the state level involving various themes and interventions by technical and financial partners as well as I-NGOs. However, institutional actors pointed out that such plans lacked financial resourcing and that there was weak political commitment to implementation and little coordinated action strategy across government ministries.

The knowledgeable long-term residents in each community (KP FGDs) identified further weaknesses in the impact of government policy on youth employment and welfare arising from declining state intervention in agriculture, rising costs of access to education and health, and reduced recruitment of local youth into salaried public sector jobs. They also recounted that in recent years, state withdrawal has coincided with economic, climatic and demographic pressures on youth such as depletion of farm endowments water resources, a competitive employment environment, rising real costs of living and productive assets, and poor educational endowments. These intersect to challenge further youth inclusion in labour markets in Niger.

Annex C – PARTICIPATORY WEALTH RANKING TABLE

The ranking reported in the table below is necessary for the local analysis of differentiation and to help the life historians recognize movements from one group to the next in local terms. The wellbeing scheme has three categories of poor and three categories of non-poor, see Table XX below. In this FGD, we start by explaining the 'universal/conceptual based wellbeing scheme' to the FGD participants (used to compare wellbeing across countries in earlier research). The scheme has six wellbeing classifications, ranging from 'destitute' (1) to 'rich' (6).

Table XX. Participatory wealth ranking definition

Levels and name	Conceptual/universal definitions
1. Destitute	People who cannot work, and so depend on others for basic needs (food, housing), including: • Very old, physically, or cognitively impaired • Tend to be socially, economically and politically excluded
2. Very poor	Extreme poor working people who are physically able to work but who have no or few productive assets: • Income is erratic and some days they don't eat • They must accept whatever wage is offered, and often negotiate adverse labour relationships • They eat when they work • Shocks will push them into destitution • They have little or no negotiating power with employers and so tend to be included adversely in labour markets and other institutions (family, community, polity) accept whatever wage/crop price is given
3. Poor	Poor is the classification for people with: • Labouring capacity (not infirm) • And some productive assets but not enough to escape labouring for wages or food to make ends meet. • This group also must rely on adverse credit and labour relationships • May have land /cattle/small business but cannot save enough in good years necessary to withstand shocks (health, drought) • Often must sell assets to cope in a crisis and go hungry • Vulnerable to downward mobility to 'very poor' category
4. Not poor but not rich	Those who have relatively more productive assets and assets made more productive through inputs and which can provide the income necessary to feed the family through the year • Some resilience showing as diversification in assets and livelihoods rises • During good times, can save • During bad times, will reduce family consumption • Vulnerable to downward mobility with a significant shock, often worse in urban areas

	• During bad times, will reduce family consumption, but it isn't as regular as above
5. Rich/resilient	• Enough assets, social networks necessary to prevent significant downward mobility relative to overall productive wealth • May employ small amounts of labour on farm or be involved in small - scale trade
6. Very rich	• Significant assets and local power • Involved in large-scale trade or employment of labour • Owns large scale non-farm assets • May lend money usuriously

Annex D – SUMMARY STATISTICS AND REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Table D1. Summary statistics, baseline survey year, adults aged 18 and over

Variable	All (youth and other adults)	Chronic poor	Impoverished	Poverty escapes	Never poor
Years of education	1.46	0.88	0.89	1.04	3.05
Household has migrant worker	0.23	0.26	0.34	0.27	0.23
Salaried on-qualified employee or labourer	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.03
Salaried executives or qualified workers	0.05	0.02	0.04	0.05	0.05
Log (asset value)	10.32	9.70	10.59	10.25	11.28
Cultivable land size	7.69	7.84	6.29	12.03	5.77
Number of livestock	6.62	5.24	5.75	8.37	5.49
Household size	7.93	9.27	6.56	9.33	6.68
Female	0.54	0.66	0.61	0.59	0.53
Age	37.32	26.94	26.17	26.18	25.37
Widowed/divorced/separated	0.08	0.02	0.01	0.03	0.04
Employed in agriculture	0.62	0.78	0.77	0.70	0.46
Household owns NFE	0.64	0.66	0.67	0.59	0.65
Number of shocks in 2014	1.12	1.11	1.35	0.98	1.03
Urban residence	0.20	0.02	0.03	0.09	0.38

Note: Statistics above are presented at the individual level. Hence, for household-level variables such as asset value or number of livestock owned, the summary statistic is an average for the household to which the individual belongs.

Table D2. Correlates of poverty trajectories, overall and for youth-headed households, AME

Variables	All households				Youth-headed households			
	Chronic poor	Impoverished	Poverty escapes	Never poor	Chronic poor	Impoverished	Poverty escapes	Never poor
Years of education	-0.0074	-0.0105**	-0.0041	0.0220***	-0.0143**	-0.0182**	-0.0011	0.0336***
	(0.0049)	(0.0051)	(0.0051)	(0.0046)	(0.0073)	(0.0083)	(0.0064)	(0.0077)
Migrant member in hh	-0.0414*	0.0245	-0.0031	0.0200	-0.0726**	0.0837**	-0.0117	0.0007
	(0.0231)	(0.0198)	(0.0257)	(0.0300)	(0.0357)	(0.0369)	(0.0311)	(0.0480)
Head with salaried job (non-qualified)	0.0484	-0.0285	0.0345	-0.0543	0.1770	-0.0924	0.0232	-0.1078
	(0.0989)	(0.0652)	(0.0462)	(0.0657)	(0.2039)	(0.1386)	(0.0548)	(0.1673)
Head with salaried job (qualified)	-0.0835	0.0070	-0.0073	0.0838*	-0.0019	-0.4537***	0.1660***	0.2896***
	(0.0543)	(0.0478)	(0.0519)	(0.0491)	(0.1015)	(0.1537)	(0.0608)	(0.1082)
Log (asset value)	-0.0238***	0.0122**	-0.0195***	0.0311***	-0.0166**	0.0052	-0.0072	0.0186
	(0.0039)	(0.0049)	(0.0039)	(0.0063)	(0.0071)	(0.0103)	(0.0100)	(0.0124)
Cultivable land size	-0.0012*	-0.0013	0.0013**	0.0012	-0.0009	0.0006	0.0014	-0.0012
	(0.0006)	(0.0010)	(0.0005)	(0.0008)	(0.0011)	(0.0012)	(0.0009)	(0.0012)
Number of livestock	-0.0068***	0.0007	0.0009	0.0052***	-0.0071**	0.0022	-0.0044*	0.0093***
	(0.0014)	(0.0007)	(0.0014)	(0.0016)	(0.0031)	(0.0020)	(0.0027)	(0.0027)
Head engaged in agriculture	0.0763**	-0.0001	0.0140	-0.0903***	0.0339	-0.0223	0.0135	-0.0251
	(0.0322)	(0.0307)	(0.0300)	(0.0340)	(0.0625)	(0.0689)	(0.0561)	(0.0704)
Non-farm enterprise	-0.0335	0.0007	-0.0116	0.0444*	-0.0467	0.0060	-0.0193	0.0600
	(0.0211)	(0.0189)	(0.0214)	(0.0240)	(0.0319)	(0.0374)	(0.0290)	(0.0417)
Household size	0.0387***	-0.0022	0.0149***	-0.0514***	0.0506***	-0.0005	0.0375***	-0.0877***
	(0.0028)	(0.0031)	(0.0029)	(0.0044)	(0.0066)	(0.0090)	(0.0061)	(0.0139)
Widowed/divorced/separated head	-0.0533	-0.0245	0.0045	0.0734	0.1045	-0.4175**	0.0872	0.2257
	(0.0593)	(0.0499)	(0.0536)	(0.0728)	(0.1091)	(0.1767)	(0.0853)	(0.1519)
Female head	0.0306	-0.0631	0.0265	0.0059	0.0668	-0.1175	0.0113	0.0394

	(0.0487)	(0.0448)	(0.0484)	(0.0648)	(0.0784)	(0.1210)	(0.0718)	(0.1265)
Age of head	0.0033	-0.0025	-0.0009	0.0001	-0.0082	-0.0168	0.0601	-0.0351
	(0.0061)	(0.0050)	(0.0057)	(0.0064)	(0.0493)	(0.0508)	(0.0573)	(0.0590)
Age-squared	-0.0001	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0002	0.0003	-0.0011	0.0006
	(0.0001)	(0.0000)	(0.0001)	(0.0001)	(0.0009)	(0.0009)	(0.0010)	(0.0010)
Shocks in latest survey	-0.0011	0.0175***	-0.0233***	0.0069	-0.0208	0.0256*	-0.0124	0.0076
Contd.	**All households**				**Youth-headed households**			
Variables	Chronic poor	Impoverished	Poverty escapes	Never poor	Chronic poor	Impoverished	Poverty escapes	Never poor
	(0.0078)	(0.0067)	(0.0088)	(0.0093)	(0.0137)	(0.0137)	(0.0129)	(0.0171)
Urban residence	-0.2351***	-0.1206***	0.0339	0.3218***	-0.3263	-0.0844	0.0289	0.3818***
	(0.0574)	(0.0435)	(0.0347)	(0.0418)	(0.2187)	(0.1152)	(0.0606)	(0.1126)
Youth head	-0.0293	0.0338	-0.0296	0.0251	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	(0.0378)	(0.0340)	(0.0418)	(0.0446)				
Region controls	Yes				Yes			
R-squared	0.2353				0.2857			
Observations	3,020				887			

*Note: Average marginal effects (AME) reported; standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1*

Table D3. Correlates of salaried employment and migration of young adults

Variables	Salaried employment		Salaried employment		Salaried employment		Salaried employment		Migration abroad	
	AME	SE	AME	SE	AME	SE	AME	SE	AME	SE
Quranic school (ref= formal)	-0.0317***	(0.0055)								
No school (ref= formal)	-0.0193***	(0.0063)								
At least primary, but not lower sec			0.0306***	(0.0077)			0.0461***	(0.0088)		
Lower secondary or higher			0.1034***	(0.0241)			0.0977***	(0.0238)		
Upper secondary or higher							0.0910***	(0.0222)		
Years of education					0.0037***	(0.0008)			-0.0054***	(0.0018)
Any period poverty					-0.0102	(0.0063)				
Migration in wave1							0.0115**	(0.0050)		
Salaried employment in wave 1									0.0390	(0.0325)
Household controls	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
Region controls	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	
Year control	Yes		Yes		Yes		No		No	
Observations	8,939		8,926		8,925		3,476		3,815	

*Note: Average marginal effects (AME) reported; standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1*

Table D4. Conflict correlates of poverty trajectories, overall and for youth-headed households, AME

Variables	All rural households				Youth-headed rural households			
	Chronic poor	Impoverished	Poverty escapes	Never poor	Chronic poor	Impoverished	Poverty escapes	Never poor
Battle events (e.g. armed clashes)	0.1040***	0.0047	-0.0767***	-0.0320	0.1222**	-0.0016	-0.0915**	-0.0291
	(0.0278)	(0.0265)	(0.0250)	(0.0299)	(0.0523)	(0.0525)	(0.0355)	(0.0540)
Protests (peaceful and non-peaceful)	0.4741***	0.1463	-0.2361***	-0.3842***	0.6289***	0.2159	-0.2841***	-0.5607***
	(0.1013)	(0.0894)	(0.0865)	(0.0986)	(0.1788)	(0.1538)	(0.1056)	(0.1669)
Violence against civilians (e.g. attacks, abductions)	-0.0285	-0.0468	0.0414	0.0340	0.0567	-0.1293*	0.0574	0.0152
	(0.0358)	(0.0406)	(0.0373)	(0.0431)	(0.0507)	(0.0772)	(0.0425)	(0.0677)
Household and region controls	Yes				Yes			
R-squared	0.1898				0.2524			
Observations	1,839				599			

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