



Niger: Capacity Statement 2021

Search for Common Ground (Search) is an international organization committed to conflict transformation. Since 1982, we have led programs around the world to help societies channel their differences away from adversarial approaches and towards collaborative solutions. Our long-term programming in **43 countries with 839 local partner organizations and a network of over 1,200 partners around the world enabled Search to reach 309,430 participants from artists and media professionals to political and religious leaders to deliver strong peace messages.** Through our large collaboration with 313 radio stations and 26 TV stations world-wide, we estimate that we have reached 39.3 million people through media programs in many of the world's most challenging conflicts. We have built a toolbox of tactics that are tailored to each conflict's specific dynamics and history. While our programs may vary, they are based on the same foundation.

Our approach is based on the [Common Ground Approach](#), which is a methodology that transforms how we respond to conflict, away from confrontation and violence and toward collaboration. Guiding principles inform the design and application of peacebuilding programs, which generate tangible, positive outcomes. We shift the everyday interactions between hostile groups of people, so they can work together to build up their community, choosing joint problem-solving over violent means and a unified [Theory of Change](#) to align people's aspiration systematizing the process through which we achieve transformations that last well beyond our intervention and maps the thresholds we need to cross to catalyze change at the highest order.

All of Search's actions integrate a combination of 5 strategies targeting the different stakeholders at all levels:

- *Taking the intervention to scale.*
- *Committing for the long term.*
- *Engaging all sides with equal respect and compassion.*
- *Grounding our work in the local culture.*
- *Being social entrepreneurs.*

Search's Work in Niger

Search has been working in Niger since 2011 through programs focused on youth engagement and violence prevention. Since then, our programming has shifted to work on trust-building and communication between populations and security/defence forces, along with stabilization and sustainable peace efforts in border communities. To that end, we have conducted a multi-faceted set of activity streams focusing on peacebuilding, stabilization, preventing violent extremism, re-insertion and reintegration of ex-combatants, security sector engagement as well as related sub-themes. In Niger, Search has a network of over 100 "peace ambassadors" including young people, women, religious leaders, and other local influencers. We also use our in-house radio production studios and partnerships with over 50 community radio stations to disseminate public health information and strong peace messages.

Search has its main office in Niamey and three sub offices in Tillaberi, Tahoua and Diffa. We currently work in the country's most affected conflict zones, including border areas, with a staff of more than 70 persons.

Engaging Children and Youth as Actors of Social Cohesion and Stabilization

Funded by the [USAID conflict Mechanism](#), Search works in five communes of Tillabéri's northern band, on **An Integrated Approach to Youth-led community cohesion in Northern Tillabéri** to strengthen youth agency in order to reduce vulnerabilities to push and pull factors that draw youth into Violent Extremism. On this project, Search partners with the High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace (HACP), the Governorate of Tillabéri, the National and Regional Youth Councils, local conflict management structures, community-based radio stations, and youth leaders.

"Youth, Peace and Security : a community-based initiative for increased stabilization in Diffa." (August 2019 - July 2021). Funded by the [German Cooperation](#), the project aims to reinforce the efficiency of the local peace architecture by fostering mutual trust and collaboration between authorities, security and defence forces, and communities. Through its activities, it reinforces the participation of youth in local peace infrastructures and empowers them to actively contribute to conflict prevention efforts through innovative outreach and socio-economic initiatives.

[Reintegration of former combatants of extremist groups.](#) Search actively works at reintegrating former Extremist Group combatants, including youth and young adults.

Kallo Lenio, Klla Founa, Together moving forward (March 2018 - Juin 2020). Funded with \$3,350,000 by the European Union through the [Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace \(IcSP\)](#), Search has supported the government of Niger to ensure the peaceful return and reintegration of ex-combatants and individuals associated with Boko Haram, both those detained in the prisons of Kollo and those in Goudoumaria transit center located in the Diffa region. The program has adopted an inclusive strategy that ensures the involvement of all stakeholders, including local authorities, traditional leaders, and youth from host and return communities, to mitigate the risks implied by this process. Through capacity building, psychosocial support, information sharing, outreach and sensitization, this project has successfully led to the social and professional reintegration of 500+ individuals.

"Jadeniyo - Let's talk about it!" Reintegration of Boko Haram Defectors in Niger (April 2018 - December 2020). In collaboration with the [US Department Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations](#) and with a \$500,000

grant, this project aimed at promoting the disengagement and support of the reintegration process of individuals formerly associated with Boko Haram. Search has worked on a conflict-sensitive, inclusive multimedia communication campaign providing all stakeholders with concrete and specific information on the framework, conditions, and implementation of the provisions for the peaceful return of Boko Haram defectors.

At a global level and in a will to **transform Violent extremism**, Search plays a key leadership role and was invited to be a part of the Countering Violent Extremism Summit, held by The White House, and co-organized the Global Youth Summit against Violent Extremism, resulting in the development of a [Youth Action Agenda to Prevent Violent Extremism and Promote Peace](#). In Niger, Search supports the program adopted by the Government of Niger for the reintegration of ex combatants and those formally affiliated with Boko Haram. Search is one of the very few actors who has been able to concretely support this process.

Reinforcing community resilience and Supporting local conflict resolution mechanisms and community-based approach

"Building Peace from the Inside: Supporting Insider Mediation for Sustainable Transformation of Conflict" (January 2021 - December 2021). In collaboration with the [European Union](#) and funded with \$1,086,000, the initiative seeks to strengthen local and national peace architectures by building insider mediator capacities for conflict transformation in the region of Tillabéri, Tahoua and Diffa.

"On est ensemble!" (Better Together) (March 2020-November 2021). Funded by USAID through its Conflict Management and Mitigation Program (CMM), Search collaborates with the local organization ComDev, and has the support of the State's technical services as well as regional authorities. This youth-led project targets five communes in northern Tillabéri, and aims to create opportunities and strengthen the skills for young women and men from different backgrounds to engage and mobilize their peers around common values and interests, and improve trust and collaboration within and between groups. To this end, Search will conduct a mapping and identify 150 young people to conduct the project's peacebuilding activities in collaboration with their peers and local leaders, such as preparatory meetings, training, and workshops.

"Mugina Gobe" Construisons demain (November 2020 -

February 2022). With a budget of \$ 5,911,130 and in collaboration with the [EU Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace \(IcSP\)](#), Search contributes to the stabilization of border communities in the regions of Tillabéri and Tahoua in Niger. For this, we use our capacities to strengthen social, inter and intra-community cohesion and empower communities and authorities to manage conflict peacefully. We aim to lead to an inclusive process for state-building, peacebuilding and development with national partners such as HACP and international implementing organizations such as Enabel and Expertise France. Among the activities, Search will use its expertise in conflict transformation training to train peace ambassadors in conflict analysis/transformation and prevention of violent extremism to lead dialogue sessions. Dialogues play a key role in Search's work, whether between authorities or between communities. Community radio stations play a fundamental role as the main channels for disseminating information in these rural areas. The media component of the project plans to equip local journalists and producers.

"Adalci" Niger Human Rights and Access to justice activities (September 2020 - September 2024). Through its Human Rights Support Mechanism (HRSM), [USAID](#) is funding a \$15,000,000 program in partnership with the American Bar Association and Freedom House. The project seeks to improve access to justice, strengthen alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and support CSO-led documentation of human rights violation to reduce vulnerability to violent extremism in the Niger's target regions of the NOFO (Tillabéri, Tahoua and Diffa).

"PROGRESS" Programme de résilience et de cohésion Sociale au Sahel (May 2020 - May 2024). As part of the **"Emergency program for the stabilization of the cross-border spaces of the G5 Sahel"** conducted by the [European Union Trust Fund](#), PROGRESS is funded with \$6,800,000 and is implemented by a consortium of several NGOs, including local actors and international NGOs such as Search, ACTED, Terre des hommes (Burkina Faso and Mali), and Action contre la Faim. Through this cross-border project in the most fragile border regions between Mali, Burkina-Faso and Niger, Search works with humanitarian and development partners, both local and international organizations, to strengthen horizontal (inter-community) and vertical (state-populations) cohesion and improve the conditions of life in a context of conflicts and vulnerability. In Niger, the project targets the Tillabéri and Tahoua region and aims to strengthen access to health services, resilience to food and nutrition insecurity as well as social cohesion between communities and local institutions. To develop participatory, inclusive and responsive local governance frameworks, Search will train Community mobilizers to facilitate dialogue frameworks in collaboration with local partners to ensure the active participation of communities in the process.

An important part of the program's success lies in its Mass Media Awareness Campaign. Search will lead the selection of the most suitable format to promote the messages developed in the campaign. These messages will be defined by journalists participating in the initiative, in partnership with Search's media team and its network of partner community radio stations active in the target areas, but will focus on misinformation and transforming attitudes by deconstructing stereotypes and prejudices.

Just future (January 2021 - December 2025). In collaboration with the [Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs \(MFA\)](#), this \$5, 911 130 program will address Niger's chronic insecurities in conflict-affected areas and provide protection to populations. The program will focus on addressing the lack of trust and communication between state security institutions and the population, as well as the lack of accountability mechanisms for injustices committed by security actors in the region. Within five years, the capacities of community representatives and CSOs engaging with security actors and policymakers will be strengthened.

Encouraging Dialogue and Mutual Accountability and Collaboration between the Civilian Population and the Security/Defense Forces

"Trust building and cooperation for stability and security in border regions" (November 2019 - December 2021). Through this cross-border [DANIDA](#)-supported Program, Search has been working in improving communication and collaboration between security providers and community stakeholders for enhanced border management and security across the Liptako Gourma region. Search's experience in building mutual trust between communities and security/defence forces and promoting community security will contribute to improved responses to local security issues and enable greater violence prevention thereby contributing to addressing the root causes of instability and violent extremism in the region. Through activities like training in nonviolent communication for security providers, joint capacity-building and planning sessions, dialogues, social communication tools, joint peace initiatives and radio programming, the program improves communication, then collaboration and gradually works towards accountability in a way that emphasizes the mutual benefits to civilians and security providers. It will contribute to helping security forces better fulfill their protection mandate and support community-led stabilization efforts in areas affected by conflicts and military operations. In Niger, the project will go on until the end of 2021 and target the Tillabéri region. This project follows Search previous "Better together" action,

An integrated Approach to Security Sector and Community Engagement in Tillabéri. Implemented from December 2017 to March 2019, the project was supported by the [United Kingdom Foreign Commonwealth Office](#) through the Conflict Stability and Security Fund (CSSF). The project aims to strengthen community leaders' capacity and the leadership of the security forces to identify, analyze, and mitigate conflict, communicate effectively, and engage each other on issues related to security and stability.

Fostering Social Cohesion and Peaceful Coexistence among Displaced Populations

Since 2013, Search extends its collaboration with the [UNHCR](#) in strengthening the protection of populations in Niger (Tillabéri, Tahoua and Diffa), and promoting a peaceful coexistence between refugees, displaced, returnees and host communities.

Strengthen social cohesion among refugees, IDPs, and host populations (April 2016 - November 2020). In collaboration with UNHCR, this project funded \$350,000 addresses key issues related to refugee return and displacement, community-level conflict, and access to credible information in refugee camps and IDP sites of the Tillabéri and Diffa regions. Since 2016, Search has equipped hundreds of community and camp managers with rumor management, leadership, and conflict transformation skills.

Irmakay Tillabéri "Unis pour la paix" (United for Tillabéri) (January 2019 to December 2020) has a focus on Tillabéri and Tahoua regions. In order to strengthen the protection of populations in the Diffa Region, and promote a peaceful coexistence between refugees, internally displaced persons, returnees and host communities, Search activities included the production and broadcast of a magazine and community solidarity activities. In the same vein, **Kallo Karayé ! On est Ensemble** (January 2020 - December 2020) aimed at supporting the implementation of community activities, the production of a radio program (Kallo Karayé), as well as supporting the participation and involvement of women in the decision-making bodies of community structures.

Search Approach

Search's [transformative dialogue and engagement](#) approach is particularly relevant and useful in active conflict, post-conflict, and closing (or closed) environments. Our expert facilitators are trained to effectively engage diverse groups that range from community and traditional leaders to local, state, and federal government and security personnel. Search also deliberately mainstreams divided and/or adversarial stakeholders and groups, supporting them to foster understanding by focusing on commonalities and humanisation of the "other." This ultimately promotes collaboration and engagement based on shared interests aimed at bridging divides and building relationships that support joint win-win solutions to critical issues and grievances

Capacity Building. While our capacity building is always tailored to the needs and concerns of specific target groups, all of our sessions are underpinned by our **conflict transformation and peacebuilding modules**. Our training typically includes modules on [conflict analysis and transformation](#), [community-based mediation](#), human security, interest-based advocacy, and strategic communication. They provide the skills, tools, and knowledge essential for project participants to understand and act on conflict in a way that is non-adversarial, inclusive, and collaborative. Additionally, our **capacity-building workshops allow participants to jointly identify issues related to security and stability**. Together, they define locally rooted community safety plans and design a joint set of dialogue and community activities to advance peace, social cohesion, and security. To support local ownership, we also provide capacity building to partner CSOs and CBOs to build their core organisational capacities to operate effectively.

Evidence-based Approach to Address Root Causes. Our **interventions are bolstered by rigorous research methods**. Our dedicated global Institutional Learning Team supports in-country monitoring and evaluation (M&E) teams with research design and implementation, and quality learning and adaptation. Given the fluidity of conflict settings, we house a set of core research tools designed to analyze the context; assess and reassess assumptions and conflict dynamics; rapidly and regularly scan target zones for changes in context; and identify barriers, entry points, and stakeholders to address and leverage for a successful intervention. Moreover, M&E is tailored to the needs and contexts of all interventions, including tools for ongoing monitoring of activity implementation as well as rigorous baseline, midterm, and final evaluation processes to assess overall project impact. All of our [evaluations](#) are made public to support wider learning across the sector through our public website and our dedicated platform www.DMEforPeace.org. Finally, we also use participatory research.

Track II mediation. Search has a long history of working behind the scenes to support governments in transforming conflict. The tool of Track II mediation has been at the heart of the organisation for 35 years. Through unofficial shuttle diplomacy, back-channel talks, facilitated dialogue, and people-to-people projects, Search helped develop and implement confidence-building measures that support official agreements and understandings between the US and Iran, Israel and Jordan, and between opposition groups in Burundi and Sierra Leone. The Track II Mediation Unit is dedicated to conducting dynamic, multi-level processes to restore trust between conflicting parties, uncover areas of common interest, and support official processes. Search programmes complement official negotiations by dealing with issues on both the substantive and the human levels, and provide an avenue for influential, non-official participants to discuss informally, advancing possible solutions collaboratively. The organisation's Track II strategy allows parties to establish personal connections, overcome stereotypes, nurture commitment to working constructively toward mutually agreeable solutions, build bridges of communication and trust, and discuss issues as collaborators rather than adversaries.

Gender and youth empowerment. Informed by our methodologies for gender inclusion and our Children and Youth Department experts, toolkits, and methodologies, Search ensures that gender and youth is mainstreamed throughout all components of all projects. Some projects place a specific focus on ensuring that women are strongly represented and actively involved in leading local mediation initiatives and crafting and disseminating radio messages.

A Unique Access and Trust

Over the last eight years of committed support in Niger, Search has earned a unique level of trust and access at all levels of government leadership: at the **national, regional, and departmental level**, with a variety of ministries such as the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, or other governmental organizations such as the High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace and the Center for Strategic National Security Studies. A key noteworthy partner in our programming is also the National Youth Council that operates at all administrative levels. Search also works with various partner civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations. At the **local and community-level**, we have successfully engaged youth, religious, and traditional leaders and local authorities, who have all welcomed our activities. Through our interventions, we aim to establish and/or strengthen locally-based structures and key individuals within the structures that will last beyond our programs and allow for the sustainability of our activities.

Our work in Niger is made possible by the support of our generous donors:

